

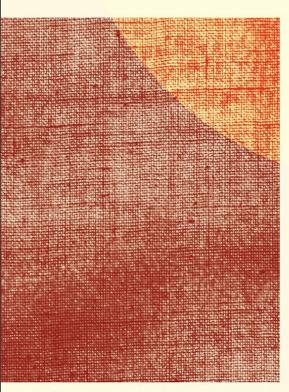


INTRODUCING

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE











MILLARD J. ERICKSON

EDITED BY L. ARNOLD HUSTAD

INTRODUCING

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

THIRD EDITION

MILLARD J. ERICKSON

EDITED BY L. ARNOLD HUSTAD



© 1992, 2001, 2015 by Millard J. Erickson

Published by Baker Academic a division of Baker Publishing Group P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287 www.bakeracademic.com

Ebook edition created 2015

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

ISBN 978-1-4412-2254-1

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture quotations labeled KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture quotations labeled NIV 1984 are from the 1984 edition of the NIV.

Scripture quotations labeled NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations labeled RSV are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1952 [2nd edition, 1971] by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

In memory of Siri Mahal Erickson Inoferio January 24–October 14, 1991

"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" (Matthew 19:14)

Contents

Cover
Title Page
Copyright Page
Dedication
Preface

Part 1 Introduction

1. What Is Theology?

<u>The Nature of Theology</u>

The Method of Theology

2. Contextualizing the Christian Message

The Contemporary Context of Theology

Approaches to Contextualizing the Christian Message

The Permanent Element in Christianity

The Nature of Contextualization

The Criteria of Permanence in Doctrine

Part 2 Revelation

3. God's Universal Revelation

The Nature of Revelation

The Modes of General Revelation

Biblical Passages Dealing with General Revelation

<u>Differing Assessments of the Value of General Revelation</u>

General Revelation and Human Responsibility

Implications of General Revelation

4. God's Particular Revelation

The Definition and Necessity of Special Revelation

The Style of Special Revelation

The Modes of Special Revelation

Special Revelation: Propositional or Personal?

Propositions or Narrative?

Scripture as Revelation

5. The Preservation of the Revelation: *Inspiration*

Definition of Inspiration

The Fact of Inspiration

Theories of Inspiration

The Extent of Inspiration

The Intensiveness of Inspiration

A Model of Inspiration

6. The Dependability of God's Word: *Inerrancy*

Various Conceptions of Inerrancy

The Importance of Inerrancy

Inerrancy and Phenomena

Defining Inerrancy

Ancillary Issues

7. The Power of God's Word: Authority

Religious Authority

The Internal Working of the Holy Spirit

Objective and Subjective Components of Authority

The Bible and Reason

Historical and Normative Authoritativeness

Part 3 God

8. The Doctrine of God

The Immanence and Transcendence of God

The Nature of Attributes

<u>Classifications of Attributes</u>

9. The Greatness of God

Spirituality

<u>Life</u>

-
Сŧ

15. Evil and God's World: *A Special Problem The Nature of the Problem*

Types of Solutions

Themes for Dealing with the Problem of Evil

16. God's Special Agents: Angels

Good Angels

Evil Angels

The Role of the Doctrine of Angels

Part 4 Humanity

17. Introduction to the Doctrine of Humanity

Images of Humankind

The Christian View of Humanity

The Biblical Account of Human Creation

The Theological Meaning of Human Creation

18. The Image of God in the Human

The Relevant Scripture Passages

Views of the Image

Evaluation of the Views

Conclusions regarding the Nature of the Image

Implications of the Doctrine

19. The Constitutional Nature of the Human

Basic Views of the Human Constitution

Biblical Considerations

An Alternative Model: Conditional Unity

<u>Implications of Conditional Unity</u>

20. The Nature and Source of Sin

The Difficulty of Discussing Sin

Biblical Perspectives on the Nature of Sin

The Source of Sin

21. The Results of Sin

Results Affecting the Relationship with God

Effects on the Sinner

Effects on the Relationship to Other Humans

22. The Magnitude of Sin

The Extent of Sin

The Intensiveness of Sin

Theories of Original Sin

Original Sin: A Biblical and Contemporary Model

Part 5 The Person and Work of Christ

23. The Deity of Christ

The Biblical Teaching

Historical Departures from Belief in the Full Deity of Christ

Functional Christology

Implications of the Deity of Christ

24. The Humanity of Christ

The Importance of the Humanity of Christ

The Biblical Evidence

Early Heresies regarding the Humanity of Jesus

The Virgin Birth

The Sinlessness of Jesus

<u>Implications of the Humanity of Jesus</u>

25. The Unity of the Person of Christ

The Importance and Difficulty of the Issue

The Biblical Material

Early Misunderstandings

Other Attempts to Solve the Problem

Basic Tenets of the Doctrine of Two Natures in One Person

26. Introduction to the Work of Christ

The Stages of Christ's Work

The Functions of Christ

The Manifold Theories of the Atonement

27. The Central Theme of Atonement

Background Factors

The New Testament Teaching

The Basic Meaning of Atonement

<u>Objections to the Penal-Substitution Theory</u> <u>Implications of Substitutionary Atonement</u>

Part 6 The Holy Spirit

28. The Person of the Holy Spirit

The Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

<u>Difficulties in Understanding the Holy Spirit</u>

The Nature of the Holy Spirit

<u>Implications of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit</u>

29. The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Christian

The Miraculous Gifts Today

Implications of the Work of the Spirit

30. Recent Issues regarding the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit and Prophecy Today

The Holy Spirit and Other World Religions

The Holy Spirit and Other "Spirits"

Part 7 Salvation

31. Conceptions of Salvation

Details on Which Conceptions of Salvation Differ

Current Conceptions of Salvation

32. The Antecedent to Salvation: Predestination

Differing Views of Predestination

A Suggested Solution

Implications of Predestination

33. The Beginning of Salvation: Subjective Aspects

Effectual Calling

Conversion

Regeneration

<u>Implications of Effectual Calling, Conversion, and Regeneration</u>

34. The Beginning of Salvation: Objective Aspects

Union with Christ

Justification

Adoption

35. The Continuation and Completion of Salvation

Sanctification

Perseverance

Glorification

Part 8 Church

36. The Nature of the Church

The Basic Meaning of the Term "Church"

The Unity of the Church

Biblical Images of the Church

Implications

37. The Role and Government of the Church

The Functions of the Church

The Heart of the Ministry of the Church: The Gospel

Forms of Church Government

A System of Church Government for Today

38. The Ordinances of the Church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism: The Initiatory Rite of the Church

The Lord's Supper: The Continuing Rite of the Church

Part 9 The Last Things

39. Introductory Matters and Individual Eschatology

Introduction to Eschatology

<u>Death</u>

The Intermediate State

<u>Implications of the Doctrines of Death and the Intermediate State</u>

40. The Second Coming and Its Consequents

The Second Coming

Resurrection

<u>The Final Judgment</u> <u>Implications of the Second Coming and Its Consequents</u>

41. Millennial and Tribulational Views

<u>Millennial Views</u> <u>Tribulational Views</u>

42. Final States

<u>Final State of the Righteous</u>
<u>Final State of the Wicked</u>
<u>Implications of the Doctrine of the Final States</u>

Scripture Index

Name and Subject Index

Notes

Back Cover

Preface

Christian doctrine studies and articulates the faith "once for all given" to the church. In that sense, it is unchanging. Yet the questions posed to it and the situations to which it must relate change with time. Several years ago a number of instructors who were using my *Christian Theology* as a textbook in undergraduate courses expressed a desire for a briefer version of that book that would eliminate some of the more technical portions. The result was the first edition of *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, and instructor and student responses confirmed that it was meeting a genuine need. Over the years, as student interests have changed and new doctrinal issues have come to prominence, a second edition of each of these books was prepared, and recently a third edition of the longer work. This edition of the shorter work parallels the changes effected in *Christian Theology*.

Introducing Christian Doctrine is designed to provide a preparation for and transition to Christian Theology. It agrees in style and in perspective with that larger work, many sentences having been taken over unchanged from it. Students and others who desire more extended discussions of some of the issues raised here, or treatments of some issues not addressed here, are encouraged to consult that larger work.

L. Arnold Hustad, professor of theology and philosophy at Crown College, did the original work of selection and condensation and has once again worked closely with me on this edition. His knowledge of current developments and his extensive experience in teaching undergraduates have been invaluable and his judgment wise. It has been a pleasure to work again with my onetime student and teaching assistant in this collegial relationship. I am grateful to Mr. Jim Kinney, editorial director of Baker Academic, for his encouragement to make these revisions and for his numerous helpful suggestions. Robert Hand and Arika Theule-VanDam skillfully guided the project through the editorial process. I am also appreciative of the comments and observations made by several instructors and students. These have all helped to make this work a better book than it might otherwise have been.

Millard J. Erickson

Introduction

What Is Theology?

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Compose a brief definition of theology.
- **2.** Demonstrate the need for doctrine in contemporary society.
- 3. Identify alternative starting points for studying Christian doctrine.
- **4.** List and explain each of the steps involved in developing an adequate theology.

Chapter Summary

Christian theology seeks to understand the God revealed in the Bible and to provide a Christian understanding of God's creation, particularly human beings and their condition, and God's redemptive work. With Scripture as its starting point, theology is most effectively developed by following a definite methodology.

Chapter Outline

The Nature of Theology

- Theology as the Study of Doctrine
- The Necessity for the Study of Doctrine
- Theology as Science
- The Starting Point for the Study of Christian Doctrine

The Method of Theology

- Collection of the Biblical Materials
- Unification of the Biblical Materials
- Analysis of the Meanings of Biblical Teachings
- Examination of Historical Treatments
- Consultation of Other Cultural Perspectives

- Identification of the Essence of the Doctrine
- Illumination from Sources Beyond the Bible
- Contemporary Expression of the Doctrine
- Development of a Central Interpretive Motif
- Stratification of the Topics

The Nature of Theology

Theology as the Study of Doctrine

To some readers, the word "doctrine" may prove somewhat frightening. It conjures up visions of very technical, difficult, abstract beliefs, perhaps propounded dogmatically. Doctrine is not that, however. Christian doctrine is simply statements of the most fundamental beliefs the Christian has, beliefs about the nature of God, about his action, about us who are his creatures, and about what he has done to bring us into relationship with himself. Far from being dry or abstract, these are the most important types of truths. They are statements on the fundamental issues of life: namely, who am I, what is the ultimate meaning of the universe, where am I going? Christian doctrine is, then, the answers the Christian gives to those questions that all human beings ask.

Doctrine deals with general or timeless truths about God and the rest of reality. It is not simply the study of specific historical events, such as what God has done, but of the very nature of the God who acts in history. The study of doctrine is known as theology. Literally, theology is the study of God. It is the careful, systematic study, analysis, and statement of Christian doctrine. Certain of its characteristics will help us to understand the nature of the theological enterprise:

- 1. Theology is biblical. It takes its primary content from the Old and New Testament Scriptures. While additional insight may be obtained by the study of God's creation, or what is sometimes referred to as the book of God's work, it is primarily God's Word that constitutes the content of theology.
- 2. Theology is systematic. It does not look at each of the books of the Bible separately, but attempts to draw together into one coherent whole what the entirety of Scripture says on a given topic, such as human sinfulness.
- 3. Theology is done in the context of human culture. Theology, particularly in its more advanced or technical sense, must relate the teachings of Scripture to data found in other disciplines that deal with the same subject matter.

- 4. Theology is contemporary. The aim of theology is to restate timeless biblical truths in a form that is understandable to the people who are living today.
- 5. Theology is practical. Paul did not expound doctrine merely to inform his readers, so that they might have more data. Rather, he intended that the doctrine be applied to everyday life. The doctrine of the second coming of Christ can, of course, become the object of speculation—people attempt to ascertain when it will occur in relation to other events. Paul, however, in 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18 urges his readers to comfort one another with this truth. That the Lord will return and will resurrect all who have believed in him is a source of peace and encouragement in a world in which so much of value appears to be undergoing destruction.

The Necessity for the Study of Doctrine

Is there really a need to study doctrine? Isn't it sufficient if I simply love Jesus? In the view of some people, doctrine is not only unnecessary but also undesirable, and may be divisive. There are, however, several reasons why such study is not optional.

1. Correct doctrinal beliefs are essential to the relationship between the believer and God. Thus, for example, the writer to the Hebrews says, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Also important for a proper relationship with God is belief in the humanity of Jesus. John writes, "This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (1 John 4:2). Paul emphasizes the importance of belief in the resurrection of Christ: "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess and are saved" (Rom. 10:9–10).

Far from being dry or abstract, Christian doctrine deals with the fundamental issues of life: namely, who am I, what is the ultimate meaning of the universe, where am I going?

- 2. Doctrine is important because of the connection between truth and experience. Our age is one in which immediate experience is highly valued. Thus many utilize drugs because of the excitement or stimulation they provide. Fantasies supply satisfying experiences to some. Yet in the long run, our experience is affected by—indeed, depends on—reality. A person who falls from an upper story of a tall building may shout while passing each window on the way down, "I'm doing fine," but eventually the facts will catch up with the person's experience. Simply feeling good about Jesus cannot be divorced from the question of whether he is genuinely the Son of God. Hope for the future depends on whether his resurrection took place and whether ours will some day.
- 3. Correct understanding of doctrine is important because there are many secular and religious systems of thought that compete for our devotion these days. Marxism, the basis of communism, long claimed the allegiance of many. Popular self-help philosophies and psychologies abound. Among the religious options are large numbers of sects and cults in addition to a great variety of Christian denominations. And not only are alternative religions found in foreign lands, but they also claim significant numbers of devotees in the United States. It is, therefore, not simply a question of *whether* one shall believe, but *what* one shall believe.

It has been suggested that the way to deal with the numerous alternatives is a thoroughgoing refutation and systematic exposing of their shortcomings. A positive approach of teaching the views of the Christian faith would seem to be preferable, however. This approach provides a basis on which to measure the alternative positions. Authentic merchandise is studied in order to recognize counterfeits. Similarly, correctly understanding the doctrinal teachings of Christianity is the solution to the confusion created by the myriad of claimants to belief.

Theology as Science

A question is sometimes raised regarding the legitimacy of the study of Christian doctrine in an institution of higher education. Is the teaching of theology not mere indoctrination? To be sure, there are limits to the teaching of Christian theology in a state institution, where there cannot be any official connection with a given form of religion. However, there is nothing prohibiting an objective, scientific study of Christianity as well as of other religions. In a private institution, and particularly in one that has a

commitment to Christianity, the study of Christian doctrine is quite appropriate. It need not in any way be inferior to the other disciplines studied.

To be a proper topic for study, theology must in some sense be a science. We do not mean to say that it must be a science in the narrow sense of the natural sciences. [1] Rather, it must have some of the traditional criteria of scientific knowledge: (1) a definite object of study; (2) a method for investigating the subject matter and for verifying assertions; (3) objectivity in the sense that the study deals with phenomena external to the immediate experience of the learner and therefore accessible to investigation by others; and (4) coherence among the propositions of the subject matter so that the content forms a definite body of knowledge rather than a series of unrelated or loosely connected facts.

Theology as we will be dealing with it meets these criteria. It also occupies common ground with the other sciences. (1) It accepts the same rules of logic as do the other disciplines. Where difficulties appear, theology does not simply invoke paradox or incomprehensibility. (2) It is communicable—it can be expressed in propositional verbal form. (3) To some extent, it employs methods used by other specific disciplines, particularly history and philosophy. (4) It shares some subject matter with other disciplines. Thus, it is possible that some of its propositions may be confirmed or refuted by natural science, behavioral science, or history.

And yet theology has its own unique status. Some of its subject matter is unique to it: for example, God. It also deals with common objects but in a unique way; for example, it considers people in terms of their relationship to God. Thus, while Christian theology or the study of Christian doctrine is a science, it is a science with its own peculiar status. It cannot be reduced to any other science, either natural or behavioral.

The Starting Point for the Study of Christian Doctrine

One of the questions that must immediately be faced when we study Christian doctrine is the source from which our knowledge will be drawn. Even in Christian circles, several answers have been given:

1. *Natural theology*. The created universe is studied to determine certain truths about God and about human nature. (This empirical approach to

- doctrine will be examined in chap. 3.)
- 2. *Tradition*. Inquiry is made into what has been held and taught by individuals and organizations identifying themselves as Christian. Thus, what has been believed is made normative for what should be believed.
- 3. *The Scriptures*. The Bible is held to be the defining document or the constitution of the Christian faith. Thus, it specifies what is to be believed and what is to be done.
- 4. *Experience*. The religious experience of a Christian today is regarded as providing authoritative divine information.

We will follow the third approach. A similar practice can be found in various institutions and organizations that have some charter, constitution, or articles of incorporation defining what the institution is to be and the procedures it is to follow. Where there is a dispute between two claimants to be the true representative of such a group or movement, a court of law will ordinarily rule in favor of the party deemed to adhere to the basic charter. In the United States, the Constitution is binding. Indeed, any law that contradicts the Constitution will be declared invalid by a court.

The Bible is the constitution of the Christian faith: it specifies what is to be believed and what is to be done.

In the case of Christianity, we also are dealing with a constitution, namely the Bible. Christians are those who continue in the teachings that Jesus Christ himself laid down. They cannot deny or modify what was taught and practiced by Jesus, or by those whom he authorized. In theory, of course, it would be possible to amend the Constitution. Note that in human dealings, however, only certain persons are eligible to make such an amendment; an external organization cannot alter the Constitution. In the case of Christianity, its constitution, the Bible, was not created or formulated by the humans who make up the Christian church. Rather, it originated from God himself. That being the case, only God has the authority to change the standards of belief and practice. The Bible is the

guideline that is to be followed since it possesses the right of defining correct belief and practice.

This is not to say that Christianity down through the ages has repeated and will continue to repeat the accounts of the Bible in exactly that form. Much of the Bible deals with specific cases and was written to specific situations in history. To repeat the same words in the same fashion would be to distort the meaning. Rather, what is to be done is to express for today what Jesus or Paul or Isaiah would say if he were addressing the present situation. This does not involve an alteration of the fundamental meaning, but a re-expression and reapplication of it.

The Method of Theology

We have said that theology is a science. That means in part that it has a definite procedure. While the steps we will describe need not be rigidly followed in sequence, there is a logical development to them.

Collection of the Biblical Materials

The first step will be to identify all the relevant biblical passages dealing with the topic being investigated and then to interpret them very carefully. This is the process known as exegesis. The exegete will want to use the very best of theological tools and methods. These tools include concordances, commentaries, and, for the person who knows the original languages, the biblical texts, grammars, and lexicons.

It is important even at this step to think carefully about the materials being used. We should consider the position of the author of a commentary, for example. We should at least be aware of the author's theological perspective so that presuppositions inconsistent with our own general orientation are not imported unknowingly. The potential problem here is like what may occur when we use an instrument for navigation. A small error in a compass can, when we have traveled a long distance, result in our being far off course. Thus, careful evaluation of our interpretational tools is important.

At this point, the crucial consideration is to determine precisely what the author was saying to his particular audience. This will involve the study of biblical backgrounds so that we understand, as it were, the other partner in

the dialogue. Reading a biblical passage is somewhat like hearing one-half of a telephone conversation. Paul, for example, wrote to specific groups and related to positions that they held. Unless we are familiar with those positions, it will be difficult to determine Paul's meaning.

Such biblical inquiry will involve examination of various types of biblical material. In some cases we will do word studies; for example, we might determine the meaning of "faith" by a study of all occurrences of the Greek noun *pistis* and the verb *pisteuō*. It will frequently prove profitable to examine didactic passages of Scripture in which an author addresses a particular topic in forthright fashion. Because the specific intent of these passages is to teach, the doctrinal significance is often quite overt. More difficult, but also extremely important, are the narrative passages. Here we have descriptions of divine and human actions rather than discourses on theological matters. These passages frequently serve as illustrations of doctrinal truths. In some cases, the author also gives an interpretation or an explanation in which the doctrinal import is evident.

<u>Unification of the Biblical Materials</u>

It is important to learn what a biblical author says in different settings about a given subject. Doctrine, however, is more than a mere description of what Paul, Luke, or John said; and so we must draw these several witnesses together into some sort of coherent whole. In this, the theologian is following a procedure that is not totally different from that of other disciplines. In psychology, for example, one would ordinarily look first at the points of agreement among psychologists of a given school of thought and then seek to ascertain whether apparent differences are actual disagreements.

This very endeavor, of course, assumes a unity and coherence among the several biblical materials and biblical witnesses. While that should not make us blind to unique emphases and nuances of meaning, it does mean that we will look for agreement rather than disagreement. As a New Testament scholar once commented to me, "We interpret the 5 percent of materials in which the synoptic gospels [Matthew, Mark, and Luke] differ in light of the 95 percent in which there is clear agreement rather than the other way around."

<u>Analysis of the Meanings of Biblical Teachings</u>

When the doctrinal material has been collected into a coherent whole, we must ask what it *really* means. Part of the issue here is making certain that we do not read contemporary meanings into biblical references. It is also possible, when most of our conversation is with people who have long been familiar with a particular interpretation of Scripture, to simply assume that a concept such as being born again will be understood by everyone in the same way.

Theologians, therefore, must relentlessly press the question, "What does this really mean?" If biblical concepts are to be accurately translated into a contemporary form, it is important that they be correctly understood. If they are not, there will be even greater imprecision at later points in the process as the ambiguity is compounded. As is commonly said, unless something is clear in the mind of the speaker, it will never be clear in the mind of the hearer. Likewise, unless something is clear in the mind of the theologian as exegete, it will not be clear in the mind of the theologian as preacher seeking in turn to communicate to others the results of exegesis.

Examination of Historical Treatments

One of the tools of theology is a study of church history. Here we are able to put our own interpretations in the context of how a particular doctrine has been viewed in the past. The purpose of this is not simply to formulate the lowest common denominator of what has been held at various points in the past, but also to help us realize that frequently our interpretations or constructions are parallels of earlier ones. We can, therefore, often tell the implications of a current view by looking at the historical results of a similar view.

Another benefit of the study of historical theology is that we learn the doing of theology by observing how others have done it. As we see the way Augustine and Thomas Aquinas adapted the expression of the Christian message to a particular situation of their time, we may learn to do something similar for our own period.

Consultation of Other Cultural Perspectives

We may have been blinded to our own cultural perspective to the point where we identify it with the essence of the doctrine. For example, one Japanese Baptist pastor told a Baptist theology professor from the United States, "Your view of the priesthood of the believer is based more on the American Constitution than it is on the New Testament." Was he right? That is not the point. Perhaps his view is based more on the Japanese structure of society than on the New Testament, but the point to be borne in mind is that we may unconsciously read our own experience into the Scriptures. Interaction with other cultural perspectives will help us to distinguish the essence of the biblical teaching from one cultural expression of it. [2]

<u>Identification of the Essence of the Doctrine</u>

Bearing in mind that the biblical teachings were written to specific situations and that our current cultural setting may be in some respects considerably different from that of the biblical writers, we must make sure that we do not simply re-express the biblical message in the same form. We must discover the underlying message behind all its specific forms of expression. We must ascertain, for instance, the common truth about salvation that is found in the book of Deuteronomy and in the book of Romans. If we fail to do this, one of two things may happen. We may insist on preserving a particular form of a teaching. We might, for example, insist on retention of the Old Testament sacrificial system. The other danger is that we will, in the process of attempting to declare the message, so alter it that it becomes in effect a different genus rather than a different species within the same genus. In the example of the sacrificial system, what is permanent and unchanging is not the form of the sacrifice, but the truth that there must be a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of humanity. This task of identifying the permanent truth within temporary forms of expression is so important that we will be devoting a large portion of the following chapter to this subject.

<u>Illumination from Sources Beyond the Bible</u>

We said earlier that the Bible is the primary source of our doctrinal construction. While it is the major source, it is not the only one. God has revealed himself in a more general sense in his creation and in human history. Examination of that revelation will help us to understand more fully the special revelation preserved for us in the Bible.

An example is the question of the image of God in humankind. The Bible teaches us that God created humans in his own image and likeness. Though there are some general indications of its nature, we are not able to

determine from Scripture what the image of God involves specifically. The behavioral sciences, however, may give us some insight into the image of God by enabling us to identify what is unique about the human among the various types of creatures.

It is worth noting that in the history of biblical interpretation some nonbiblical disciplines have in fact contributed to our theological knowledge—sometimes despite the reluctance of biblical exegetes and theologians. For example, the scholarly effort to determine whether the days referred to in Genesis 1 are to be thought of as twenty-four-hour periods, longer periods, or even nontemporal concepts has not been limited to biblical exegesis. Natural sciences, particularly geology, have contributed to our knowledge of what God did.

We need to make certain, however, that the Bible is the primary authority in our endeavor. We also need to be certain that we do not draw conclusions prematurely about the relationship between biblical and nonbiblical materials. While the Bible, when completely understood, and the creation, when completely understood, are in perfect harmony with one another, we must recognize that we do not have a perfect understanding of either one. Accordingly, there may well be some tension at times in our treatment of them.

<u>Contemporary Expression of the Doctrine</u>

Once we have determined the abiding essence or permanent content of the doctrine, we must express it in a fashion that is reasonably accessible to persons of our day. One of the ways this might be done was first formulated by Paul Tillich and is known as the method of correlation. The first step is to inquire what questions are being asked by our age. By this we mean not simply the immediate existential issues that individuals face but the whole way in which the general culture views reality. These questions then become the starting point for our presentation of the Christian message; that is, we relate the content of biblical theology to them. To be sure, we must not allow the non-Christian world to set the agenda completely, for in many cases it may not ask or even recognize the existence of the most important questions. Nonetheless, it is frequently helpful to ascertain what questions are being asked.

A number of themes will present themselves as fruitful for exploration as we seek to formulate a contemporary expression of the message. Although our age seems to be increasingly characterized by depersonalization and detachment, there are indications that there is a craving for a personal dimension in life to which the doctrine of the God who knows and cares about each one can be profitably related. And although there has been a confidence that modern technology could solve the problems of the world, there is a growing awareness that the problems are much larger and more frightening than realized and that humans are the greatest problem to themselves. Against this backdrop the power and providence of God have a new pertinence.

Today it is popular to speak of "contextualizing" the message. This term is frequently used in the discipline of missiology, where there is a need to translate concepts from one's own culture to a different contemporary culture. There seem to be three dimensions of the contextualizing process. The first we may call length. This involves taking the message from biblical times to the present and re-expressing it.

The second dimension we may call breadth—Christianity may assume different forms of expression in different cultures. Western missionaries must be certain that they do not simply carry their own culture to other parts of the world. Little white chapels with spires have sometimes been built for Christian worship in Africa. Church architecture is not the only realm where this problem occurs. It is imperative, for instance, that we find out the philosophical distinctives of the various cultures. It has been observed that increasingly the most important distinction culturally will be between North and South, rather than East and West, as the third world grows in prominence. We must develop the ability to express concepts like sin and atonement in culturally relevant ways, for these concepts are of the essence of the Christian message.

There is also the dimension of height. A message can be expressed at different levels of complexity and sophistication. This may involve simply the age of the hearers. One should not, for example, communicate the Christian message in the same form to a child as to a university professor. Beyond that, there is the question of background in biblical and theological concepts. Frequently, students will read the work of a professional theologian who is at a much more advanced level than are those to whom they in turn will bear testimony to the truth. The ability to express biblical truth at different times and places and to different audiences is vital.

<u>Development of a Central Interpretive Motif</u>

It is not always necessary for individual Christians to formulate a basic central characterization of their theology. Often, however, this is helpful. Sometimes this motif reflects one's denomination. For example, some persons of the Reformed tradition stress the sovereignty of God, whereas some Lutherans emphasize the grace of God and the role of faith. The way in which we characterize our theology is often related to our own personality and background. The customizing touch will make biblical truth more functional when we install it into our own lives.

Stratification of the Topics

It is important that we decide what the major issues of theology are and what the subpoints or subissues are. The more major a given point, the greater should be the degree of tenacity with which we insist on it. Thus, while one may not as a condition of fellowship with another believer insist on agreement as to whether the church will be removed from the world before or after the great tribulation, there must be agreement on the issue of whether Christ will return. In part, this is a matter of simply outlining our theology so that we can determine the major points, the subpoints, and the topics that are subordinate to the subpoints.

Having said this, however, we recognize that there is still a gradation among the major doctrines. For example, the doctrine of Scripture is fundamental because our understanding of all other doctrines is derived from it. Further, the doctrine of God is basic because it supplies the very framework within which all other theological construction is done. It also may be the case that at a given time a particular issue or topic requires more attention because it is under attack or because it receives special treatment in the world we are addressing. Clearly, a careful consideration of the relative significance of theological topics is essential.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What are the five facets of the definition of theology?
- Why may theology be considered a science?
- What are the potential sources for Christian doctrine, and why is this question important?

- What steps are involved in the process of doing theology? Illustrate how it should be done.
- How might theology be significant in solving an ethical dilemma?

Contextualizing the Christian Message

Chapter Objectives

Following your study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Recognize the complexity of the theological environment today.
- 2. Describe the elements of Christianity that are eternal and unchanging and contrast them with the temporal expressions.
- **3.** Compare and contrast different approaches to contextualizing theology and differentiate among the values of each.

Chapter Summary

The acceleration of change and the explosion and fragmentation of information have made doing theology more difficult in today's world than was true in the slower-paced centuries of the past. It is important to state the gospel message in terms that will be understood in the twenty-first century. In doing so, some theologians have changed not merely the form of expression but also the substance. The goal for contextualizing the Christian message is to retain the content and biblical doctrine while making the message more understandable today. Five criteria are presented to assess the integrity of the message.

Chapter Outline

The Contemporary Context of Theology

Approaches to Contextualizing the Christian Message

The Permanent Element in Christianity

The Nature of Contextualization

The Criteria of Permanence in Doctrine

The Contemporary Context of Theology

The way theology is done has varied considerably throughout church history. There have been periods in which there was a considerable uniformity within theology, with an accompanying uniformity of method. The era of Roman Catholic Scholasticism is an example. Protestant theology has on occasion exhibited similar homogeneity. The period immediately following the Reformation was such a time in Lutheranism. Today, however, there is considerable diversity.

One characteristic of our time is the relatively short life spans of theologies. In a sense, the great theological synthesis constructed by Augustine lasted approximately eight centuries. Thomas Aquinas formulated a theological system and methodology that endured for two and a half centuries (and in Catholic circles for as long as seven centuries). John Calvin's theology prevailed for almost three centuries. When we come to Friedrich Schleiermacher, however, we find the liberalism he inspired lasting little more than one century. Karl Barth's theology was supreme for only about twenty-five years, and Rudolf Bultmann's demythologization for only about a dozen years.

A further dimension of the present theological environment is the decline of great theological schools of thought. In the 1950s one could basically identify most theologians as belonging to a particular camp, whether neo-orthodox, neoliberal, Bultmannian, or some other group. Now, however, there are often only individual theologians and theologies. While there may be general consensuses or clusterings of ideas, there are no strong commitments to systems of thought as such. Thus, one can no longer simply decide to espouse a ready-made system.

Concurrent with this decline is the fact that the theological giants have now passed from the scene. The early part of the twentieth century featured the thought of Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and Reinhold Niebuhr. Recently, however, few have equaled their thought, and none has gathered a following such as they had. For the most part, it is every theologian for himself or herself.

To a considerable extent, evangelical or conservative theology has avoided decline. Because evangelicalism is clear that its source is the Bible,

it does not suffer from fluctuations of opinion regarding the relative place of experience or of tradition, nor does it debate whether religion's primary focus is feelings or ethical activity. Although there have been significant nuances in theological approach through the centuries, the evangelical's concern is simply to investigate what the Bible says on a given issue and coalesce that into some sort of coherent whole. The methodology advocated in this chapter maintains that basic stance.

We can learn certain lessons from this quick glance at the contemporary theological environment. First, we must beware of identifying too closely with contemporary culture. Because culture is changing so rapidly with the explosion of knowledge and with shifting social factors, those theologies that align themselves too closely with contemporary developments will likely become obsolete. An analogy here is a piece of machinery: on the one hand, there must not be too much slack, lest there be excessive wear; on the other hand, if it is tightened too severely, the parts will break under the strain. Similarly, it is important to strike a balance between stating the timeless essence of Christian doctrine and contextualizing it to a specific situation. If in our endeavor we must favor one or the other, it will be the former.

A second lesson from the contemporary scene is that a certain amount of eclecticism is possible in doing theology. This is not to suggest that we take inconsistent elements from different theologies and combine them uncritically. Rather, no one system has an exclusive corner on the doctrinal market, and therefore it is possible to learn from several different theologies.

A third lesson is the importance of maintaining a certain degree of independence when one studies a particular theologian's ideas. While there is value in being, at least to some extent, a disciple of another, one must not fall into a discipleship that uncritically accepts whatever a theological master says. To do so is actually to make one's faith dependent on that of another. Even in the case of those with whom one most closely agrees (and perhaps especially in such cases), it is essential to question what one reads. The decline of the great giants should, of course, contribute to creative and independent thinking. Although this makes the theological endeavor somewhat more difficult, it is worth the effort.

Approaches to Contextualizing the Christian Message

When we compare the present world and the world of biblical times, we notice some significant differences. Modes of transportation, for example, have changed tremendously. In biblical times it was common to walk or to ride a horse or a donkey. Thus, travel over vast distances was almost unheard of. Paul's journeys throughout the Mediterranean were an experience that very few equaled. Most people lived and died within walking distance of their birthplace. Today, however, it is possible in one day to have meetings thousands of miles apart. Space travel has been achieved, and horizons are ever expanding. Communications are similarly revolutionary in that one may, through television satellites, observe at the very moment of occurrence something happening on the other side of the world, whereas in biblical times it could take weeks and even months to convey a message from Rome to Palestine.

Other aspects of culture have changed greatly as well. Various concepts are understood quite differently today than in biblical times. For example, in biblical times heaven and hell were thought of in terms of up and down: heaven was somewhere very high above the earth. Today we understand that such directions are relative. We do not live on a flat earth that lies beneath heaven. Rather, we understand the term "heaven" to connote that God is somehow different from and, in a nonspatial sense, far removed from us.

The problem is how to express biblical truths in imagery that makes sense today. In some cases the task is quite simple; for example, we can readily provide contemporary equivalents that will be understood by people not familiar with the images of a shepherd and sheep. More difficult, however, is the problem of making demon possession intelligible to persons who think of illness exclusively in terms of bacteria and viruses, and who simply cannot conceive of invisible spiritual beings.

Contemporizing the message is one dimension of the process of contextualization. There are different types of approaches to the task of contextualizing the Christian message. First, those who may be referred to as transplanters simply say that we should present biblical concepts in biblical terminology. It is not the task of the Christian messenger to try to make the message intelligible. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. We, therefore, do not need to translate or interpret the message into

contemporary expression, particularly since non-Christians and the spirit of the modern age are opposed to anything supernatural. To make the message intelligible and acceptable to such people would be to pervert it.

A contrasting extreme is the approach of the group sometimes referred to as transformers of the Christian message. These people say that portions of the biblical view are obsolete and therefore must be eliminated. There is no way to make intelligible to contemporary persons ideas that carry over from an earlier period of human ignorance. For example, someone living on the basis of modern technology cannot be asked to believe in supernatural answers to prayer. That would call for a sacrifice of the intellect. Thus, certain portions of the Christian message must be surrendered. Belief in such antiquated ideas as angels, demons, and hell must be abandoned. In the process of restating the Christian message, it may even on occasion be necessary to alter its essentials.

A third position is midway between these two. It is that of the translators of the Christian message. These people are basically conservative in that they desire to retain the essential content of the biblical teaching. At the same time, however, they desire to restate it or translate it into more modern concepts, to find contemporary equivalents for the concepts drawn from the biblical era. Translators endeavor to make the biblical message understandable to the modern mentality, but do not believe that it necessarily can or should be made acceptable on modern grounds. To do so would be to alter the very nature of the message, for it has a built-in dimension that will always be a cause of offense to sinful humans.[1]

The Permanent Element in Christianity

We must now try to identify the unchangeable factor in Christianity. Various theories have been propounded.

One theory holds that the permanent element is institutional. This is the position of the Roman Catholic Church. What is permanent and persistent throughout time is the institution of the Catholic Church. Its teaching, therefore, is what is to be maintained. In the Catholic view an oral tradition that descended from the apostles has been entrusted to the Catholic Church. Through its history, the church has made explicit what is implicit within that tradition and has promulgated it as doctrine. To the outsider this

appears to be a propounding of new ideas; but in actuality, according to the Catholic Church, these doctrines were present within the tradition from the beginning. They are verified by their connection with the institutional church, which has been present from the very beginning of Christian history.

A second theory holds that the permanent element in Christianity is experience. Harry Emerson Fosdick suggests that Christianity is, in essence, abiding experiences that are expressed in changing categories. Accordingly, we need not believe in, say, the second coming of Christ. That is merely a temporary category that was used to express confidence in the ultimate triumph of God. Is there a modern-day category that will adequately express or evoke the same experience of confidence in ultimate triumph? Fosdick believes that there is—namely, the concept of progress. He does not necessarily mean automatic or invariable progress, but simply the idea that advance is being made within this world. A person who has this hope in the future, which resembles the hope of the early Christians, has retained the essential element of Christianity, even though the categories or doctrines have greatly changed. [2]

A third approach maintains that certain actions or certain ways of living constitute the permanent element. One who held this view was Walter Rauschenbusch, perhaps the best-known exponent of the social gospel. Rauschenbusch insisted that it is the teachings of Jesus regarding ethical living and the kingdom of God that constitute the abiding or permanent factor.[3] Whether one happens to hold the particular conceptions of God, the world, and the afterlife that Jesus held is not the crucial question. Rather, it is whether one follows the moral teachings of Jesus and lives as Jesus and his disciples did. The permanent factor in Jesus's teaching, therefore, is to be found in "Love your neighbor as yourself," rather than in "I go and prepare a place for you, [and] I will come again and will take you to myself."

Finally, there are those who insist that the permanent element is to be found in doctrines.

J. Gresham Machen vigorously argued this position. He pointed out that simply adopting the moral teachings of Jesus is not sufficient. Take, for example, the Golden Rule. It might actually not work for good but for evil. If, for instance, a recovering alcoholic's former drinking partners were to do unto him as they would want done unto them, they would give him another

drink. Thus, the Golden Rule depends for its effectiveness on the moral and spiritual character of the person practicing it.[4]

There are other problems as well with trying to separate moral action from the doctrinal teachings of Jesus. One is that Jesus taught his ethical dictums in such a way that they are virtually inseparable from his teaching about himself. If we hold that he was not the Son of God but merely a teacher of morality, then we have a person who either spoke falsely about himself or was mentally deranged. In either case there would be little reason to follow his ethical teachings.

A similar problem occurs when we regard as the permanent element in Christianity experience independent of doctrine. We pointed out earlier (see p. 5) that experience is very much tied up with doctrine. Furthermore, in the process of changing from belief in a supernatural establishment of the divine kingdom by the return of the Lord to belief in human progress, we are actually altering the experience. In the latter case our confidence is based on an estimation of human capability, whereas in the former case it is based on divine and supernatural working. Obviously, while doctrine may not be the whole of the permanent element within Christianity, it is an indispensable part of it.

The Nature of Contextualization

From our determination that doctrine is the unchangeable factor in Christianity, it should be apparent that we advocate the approach of the translators. It is true that God is the one who in the final analysis must give understanding and conviction regarding biblical truths, and that he does so through the working of his Holy Spirit. This does not mean, however, that he does not use our efforts to convey the meaning in a form as understandable as possible. Thus, we must retain the essential meaning of the biblical teaching while we apply it in a contemporary setting. This is a matter of changing the form but not the content of the teaching.

The process is not as simple, however, as finding twenty-first-century equivalents for first-century concepts. Rather, we must determine the essence of the first-century doctrine. In doing so, we will be following a method often used in the teaching of languages. One approach is to teach what a word in one language is equivalent to in another language. For

example, English-speaking persons learning German are taught that *der Stuhl* means "the chair." Such an approach, however, does not truly get students thinking in the other language. Better is the approach used in courses where the students do not speak the same language. The instructor will point to a chair and say *der Stuhl*, then touch the wall and say *die Wand*. The aim is to get the students thinking *der Stuhl* when they see a chair. The focus is on the common meaning that exists in all languages.

We must retain the essential meaning of the biblical teaching while we apply it in a contemporary setting.

Similarly, we must distinguish between the permanent or abiding essence of a concept and its temporary forms of expression. To use the example cited earlier, the permanent essence of the concept that God dwells in heaven is the transcendence of God—he is other than and superior to us in many respects. This is the truth that must be retained from biblical times to the present. That God is high above us spatially is simply the form in which that idea was once expressed.

The Criteria of Permanence in Doctrine

Finally, we must ask ourselves what criteria will help us to distinguish between the permanent, timeless content or essence of doctrine and temporary expressions or forms of it. In some cases, this is not too difficult to do, for the essential doctrine may explicitly appear in a didactic passage in which its permanence is emphasized. An example is found in Psalm 100:5.

For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Here is an indication that we are dealing with an aspect of the nature and work of God that is timeless. In other cases, however, the task may be more difficult. It may involve extracting the timeless truth from a narrative passage or from a teaching written for a particular group or individual and

dealing with a specific problem. In such cases, there are several criteria or measures that we may apply to help identify the permanent factor.

1. Constancy across cultures. We are generally aware of the variety of cultures that exist today and also of the difference in culture between our present time and biblical times. It is easy, however, to forget that within the biblical period there were also a variety of temporal, geographical, linguistic, and cultural settings. There was no uniform culture. Many centuries intervened between the writing of the first books of the Old Testament and the last books of the New. Geographical and cultural situations range from a pastoral setting in ancient Palestine to the urban setting of imperial Rome. While the differences between Hebrew and Greek culture and language have sometimes been exaggerated, they are nonetheless real. If, then, we can identify factors that are found in several of these settings, we may well be dealing with permanent or changeless elements in the message.

One example of such constancy across cultures is found in the principle of sacrificial atonement together with the rejection of any type of worksrighteousness. This principle is found in the Old Testament sacrificial system and in the New Testament teaching regarding Christ's atoning death. Another example is the centrality of belief in Jesus Christ, which is emphasized in both Jewish and gentile contexts. Peter, for example, preached it at Pentecost in Jerusalem to Jews from various cultures. Paul declared it in a gentile setting to the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31).

2. *Universal setting*. Some doctrines are taught in a fashion that makes clear that they apply universally. An example is baptism. There are, of course, various biblical references to specific situations where it was practiced, but baptism also plays a significant part in the universal setting of the Great Commission: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:18–20).

Note three respects in which this can be regarded as a universal setting. (1) Jesus's statement that *all* authority has been given to him suggests that as he transfers authority to his disciples, he has in mind a task that is to be carried out indefinitely. (2) The "all nations" suggests a universality of place and culture (cf. the commission of Acts 1:8—"and you will be my

witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth"). (3) Jesus would be with his disciples always, even to the end of the age. This suggests that the commission is to apply permanently. We may, on the basis of these considerations, conclude that the practice of baptism was not limited to a few specific times and places, but that it has universal applicability.

Another practice sometimes regarded as similarly permanent and universal is the foot-washing described in John 13. Note, however, that there are no general or universal references here. While Jesus did say, "You also should wash one another's feet" (v. 14), he said nothing about the duration of the practice. While he did say that he had given his disciples an example, that they should "do as I have done for you" (v. 15), the underlying reason for his action is suggested by his statement that the servant is not greater than his master (v. 16). What Jesus was attempting to instill was the attitude of humility and willingness to subordinate oneself to others. In that particular culture, washing the feet of others symbolized such an attitude. In another culture, something else might be a much more effective expression of it. We do find humility taught elsewhere in Scripture without mention of foot-washing (Matt. 20:27; 23:10–12; Phil. 2:3). We therefore conclude that the attitude of humility, not the particular act of foot-washing, is the permanent component in Jesus's teaching.

3. A recognized permanent factor as a basis. Sometimes a particular teaching is based on a recognized permanent factor. This may argue for the permanence of that particular teaching. For example, when Jesus teaches about marriage, he bases it on the fact that God made humans as male and female and pronounced them to be one (Matt. 19:4–6, citing Gen. 2:24). This act of God was a once-for-all occurrence; his pronouncement about the uniting of male and female was intended to have permanent force. By citing God's act and pronouncement, Jesus is declaring the marriage relationship to be permanent.

Another example is the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The writer to the Hebrews bases it on the fact that our great High Priest has once and for all "gone through the heavens." We therefore can "approach the throne of grace with confidence" (Heb. 4:14–16). What Jesus did was done once and for all. There is, therefore, no reversing of the process and no need for renewing it. Furthermore, because Jesus is a High Priest forever (Heb. 7:21, 24), it is always the case that all who draw near to God through him are saved (v. 25).

- 4. *Indissoluble link with an essential experience*. In dealing with the resurrection, Rudolf Bultmann attempted to separate the question of whether Jesus was actually raised from the Christian's experience of renewal of hope and openness to the future. Paul, however, says in 1 Corinthians 15:17 that it is not possible to maintain the experience independently of the resurrection of Christ: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." However, if our experience of the resurrection is real and permanent, the resurrection of Christ must also be factual, permanent, and universal. Any alteration of this doctrine will result in a similar alteration of the experience.
- 5. Final position within progressive revelation. One of the reasons that some forms of expression were replaced is that they were but imperfect anticipations of the final work to be done by God in the New Testament era or under the new covenant. As God revealed himself more completely, the later forms elaborated on and progressed beyond the earlier expressions. Thus, for example, Jesus frequently said, "You have heard that it was said . . ., but I say to you that. . . ." In these cases, Jesus was giving a final expression of a truth that had been incompletely stated earlier.

Another example pertains to the sacrificial work of Christ. Whereas in the Old Testament there were continual offerings of sacrifice in the court, twice-daily offerings of incense in the outer tent, and the annual sacrifice by the high priest in the inner place, the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:1–10), Christ brought this process to an end by fulfilling it (v. 12). The offering of his own blood was once for all. The permanent factor here is the need for sacrificial atonement and the satisfaction of that need through the death of Christ. The earlier forms were simply anticipations or reflections of what was yet to come.

In some cases, the essence of a doctrine was not explicitly realized within biblical times. It was only approximated. For example, the status of women in society was elevated dramatically by Jesus. Similarly, Paul granted an unusual status to slaves. Yet the lot of these groups did not improve as much as it ultimately would. So to find the essence of how such persons should be treated, we must look to principles laid down or implied regarding their status, not to accounts of how they actually were treated in biblical times.

We will attempt to get at the basic essence of the message, recognizing that all revelation has a point. Sometimes this process has been compared to separating the kernel and the husk of grain. Adolf von Harnack advocated

separating the kernel from the husk and then discarding the husk. We maintain, instead, that even the form of expression conveys something significant. Nor are we talking about "discarding the cultural baggage," as some anthropologically oriented interpreters of the Bible say. We are referring to finding the essential spiritual truth on which a given portion of Scripture rests, and then making a contemporary application of it. Our aim is not to eliminate any portion of Scripture, but to find out the meaning of all of it.

It is common to observe (correctly) that very few Christians turn to the genealogies in Scripture for their personal devotions. Yet even these portions must have some significance. An attempt to go directly from "what a genealogy meant" to "what it means" will probably prove frustrating. Instead, we must ask, "What are the underlying truths?" Several possibilities come to mind: (1) all of us have a human heritage from which we derive much of what we are; (2) we have all, through the long process of descent, received our life from God; and (3) God is at work providentially in human history, a fact of which we will be acutely aware if we study that history and God's dealings with humankind. These truths have meanings for our situations today. Similarly, the Old Testament rules of sanitation speak to us of God's concern for human health and well-being, and the importance of taking steps to preserve that well-being. Pollution control and wise dietary practices would be modern applications of the underlying truth. To some exegetes this will sound like allegorizing. But we are not looking for symbolism, spiritual meaning hidden in literal references. Rather, we are advocating that Christians ask themselves the real reason why a particular statement was spoken or written.

In doing all of this, we must be careful to recognize that our understanding and interpretation are influenced by our own circumstances in history, lest we mistakenly identify the form in which we state a biblical teaching with its permanent essence. If we fail to recognize this, we will absolutize our form, and be unable to update it when the situation changes. I once heard a Roman Catholic theologian trace the history of the formulation of the doctrine of revelation. He then attempted to describe the permanent essence of the doctrine, and stated very clearly and accurately a twentieth-century, neo-orthodox, existentially oriented view of revelation!

It is important to note that finding the abiding essence is not a matter of studying historical theology in order to distill out the lowest common denominator from the various formulations of a doctrine. On the contrary, historical theology points out that all postbiblical formulations are conditional. It is the biblical statements themselves from which we must draw out the essence, and they are the continuing criteria of the validity of that essence.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What are the three lessons to be learned about the present-day theological environment, and what is the significance of each?
- How would you explain the theories of what constitutes the permanent elements of Christianity that the author mentions?
- In what ways are the views of the transplanter, the transformer, and the translator of contextualizing theology today similar? In what ways are they different?
- What criteria are used to identify the essence of a doctrine?
- How would you contextualize the Christian message within the culture with which you are most familiar?

Revelation

God's Universal Revelation

Chapter Objectives

After completing the reading of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Recognize the nature of revelation and distinguish general from special revelation.
- 2. Identify the modes of general revelation.
- **3.** Comprehend the importance of general revelation.
- **4.** Appreciate the significance of personal human responsibility in response to general revelation.
- **5.** Develop an understanding of the implications of general revelation.

Chapter Summary

The study of God's revelation of himself to humanity has been classified in two ways: general revelation and special revelation. The general revelation of God has been found in three areas: nature, history, and humanity. Theologians concerned with the comprehensiveness of general revelation have developed what is known as natural theology. This type of theology studies the way in which God's existence is known outside the Bible, specifically through the use of reason. There is general revelation without natural theology, but the effect of sin prevents the unbeliever from coming to the knowledge of God. The salvation of the individual through God's general revelation can be measured only by faith.

Chapter Outline

The Nature of Revelation

The Modes of General Revelation

Biblical Passages Dealing with General Revelation

<u>Differing Assessments of the Value of General Revelation</u>

- Natural Theology
- The Denial of General Revelation

- Evaluation of These Two Views
- General Revelation, but without Natural Theology

General Revelation and Human Responsibility

Implications of General Revelation

The Nature of Revelation

Because humans are finite and God is infinite, if they are to know God, that knowledge must come about by God's taking the initiative to make himself known. There are two basic classifications of revelation. General revelation is God's communication of himself to all persons at all times and in all places. Special revelation involves God's particular communications and manifestations of himself to particular persons at particular times, communications and manifestations that are available now only by consulting certain sacred writings.

General revelation refers to God's self-manifestation through nature, history, and the inner being of the human person. It is general in two senses: its universal availability (it is accessible to all persons at all times) and the content of the message (it is less particularized and detailed than special revelation). Traditionally, a number of questions have been raised. One concerns the genuineness of the revelation. Is it really there? If it exists, what can be made of it? Can one construct a "natural theology," a knowledge of God from nature? Could someone who has not been exposed to special revelation be related in a saving way to God through the general revelation alone?

In the twenty-first century, general revelation is especially significant. In a religiously pluralistic world, each religion appeals to its own, often written, source of authority. General revelation might provide a common source of experience as a basis for conversation among religions. Further, in countries such as the United States that have a separation of the state from any official religion, matters of public policy cannot be settled by appeal to considerations unique to any single religion. The rise of more inclusive views of salvation, even among evangelicals, based on a belief in the efficacy of general revelation, calls for careful examination of this issue. The high regard for nature held by Christians outside Western Europe and English-speaking North America, as well as the growing awareness of the world's ecological problems, have focused attention on the function of nature in communicating God.

Because humans are finite and God is infinite, if they are to know God, that knowledge must come about by God's taking the initiative to make himself known.

The Modes of General Revelation

The traditional modes of general revelation are three: nature, history, and the constitution of the human being. Scripture itself proposes that there is a knowledge of God available through the created physical order. The psalmist says, "The heavens are telling the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1 NRSV). And Paul says, "Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20 RSV). These and numerous other passages, such as the "nature psalms," suggest that God has left evidence of himself in the world he has created. The person who views the beauty of a sunset and the biology student dissecting a complex organism are exposed to indications of the greatness of God.

The second mode of general revelation is history. If God is at work in the world and is moving toward certain goals, it should be possible to detect the trend of his work in events that occur as part of history. An example often cited of God's revelation in history is the preservation of the people of Israel. This small nation has survived over many centuries within a basically hostile environment, often in the face of severe opposition. Anyone who investigates the historical records will find a remarkable pattern. This, however, requires access to the facts of history. More general is God's constant provision through the ordinary courses of nature, producing "rain from heaven and crops in their seasons," as Paul puts it in Acts 14:15–17.

The third mode of general revelation is God's highest earthly creation, the human. Some think of God's general revelation as seen in the physical structure and mental capacities of humans. It is, however, in their moral and spiritual qualities that God's character is best perceived. Humans make moral judgments, that is, judgments of what is right and wrong. This involves something more than our personal likes and dislikes, and something more than mere expediency. We often feel that we ought to do

something, whether it is advantageous to us or not, and that others have a right to do something that we may not personally like.

General revelation is also found in humanity's religious nature. In all cultures, at all times and places, humans have believed in the existence of a reality higher than themselves, and even of something higher than the human race collectively. While the exact nature of the belief and worship practice varies considerably from one religion to another, many see in this universal tendency toward worship of the holy the manifestation of a past knowledge of God, an internal sense of deity, which, although it may be marred and distorted, is nonetheless still present and operating in human experience.

Biblical Passages Dealing with General Revelation

Among the Old Testament passages pointing to God's witness to all persons through the cosmos are the nature psalms, the clearest of which is probably Psalm 19.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.

There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.

Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. (vv. 1–4 NIV 1984)

Here the psalmist speaks of how the heavens declare the glory of God. Psalm 104, in contrast, has a somewhat different emphasis. It consists of a recitation of all God has done. Here the psalmist does not emphasize the witness the creation gives to the Creator, but rather the effect that these works have on him, the observer.

It is notable, however, that the psalmist was a believer, who presumably had come to know God as a result of what we would term today special revelation. Although these psalms indicate that a witness is objectively present in the creation, they do not indicate whether that witness brings

about faith in Jehovah for someone who has not been exposed to his special revelatory action.

When we come to Paul's writings, we find more direct indications of the locus of divine general revelation. In the opening chapter of his letter to the Romans, especially verses 18–32, it is noteworthy that the whole framework of the passage is the objective nature of things. William Barclay observes that Paul does not speak of God's being angry, but of the wrath of God as a fact.[1] The parallel is that the witness to God is there, objectively, apart from the human response to it.

Paul seems to emphasize the reality and clarity of the witness. Thus, if there is a failure of knowledge, the problem appears not to lie with the witness itself. In Romans 2:14–16 the locus is quite different. Rather than being located in the external, created world, Paul here emphasizes the human heart. Referring to those who do not have the law, presumably the law revealed in the Old Testament, he speaks of those who nonetheless do the things required by the law (v. 14). He says that by so doing, they show that "the requirements of the law are written on their hearts" (v. 15). It appears Paul is asserting that God has left some witness within the human moral makeup of his requirements for them.

Other passages to be considered are the narratives, the descriptions of persons and of the type of faith they may have had without prior exposure to the special revelation. However, these instances are not as helpful in understanding the scope and efficacy of general revelation as we might hope.

For example, in Genesis Melchizedek comes from outside the covenant community of Israel, and yet is a priest of the true God, which Abraham recognizes by offering tithes and sacrifices to him (Heb. 7:1–11). The problem is that we do not know enough about Melchizedek to know the basis for his relationship with Jehovah. It may be that God had appeared to him by a special revelation, not recorded for us in Scripture. Another instance is Cornelius, who, as a gentile "God-fearer," was, in the judgment of some, already a saved person when he came to Peter (Acts 10).[2] The case of Cornelius is even less impressive. In his recounting of what the angel had said, presumably informed by what Cornelius had told him, Peter says, "He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved'" (Acts 11:13–14).

This seems to indicate that Cornelius did not experience salvation until Peter presented the gospel to him. Note, as well, that an angelic appearance is special, not general, revelation.

Perhaps more helpful are those cases where, when presented with special revelation, a person recognizes that this is the true God. Among these cases could be mentioned Pharaoh (Gen. 41:37–39), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:47; 3:26), and the sailors on the ship that Jonah took (Jon. 1:3–16). While these instances do not offer evidence that these persons from outside the covenant community knew Jehovah solely on the basis of general revelation, they do bear witness to the possibility that general revelation enabled them to recognize the genuineness of the God who specially revealed himself. A final set of narrative considerations are those in which the speaker seems to assume some prior acquaintance with God. In Acts 14:15–17, the people of Lystra think Paul and Barnabas are gods, and begin to worship them. In attempting to divest the people of this idea, Paul points out that even while God has allowed the nations to walk in their own ways, he has left a witness of himself to all peoples, by doing good, providing rain and fruitful seasons, and satisfying their hearts with food and gladness. The point is that God has given witness of himself by the benevolent preservation of his creation. Here the argument appears to relate to God's witness to himself in nature and (perhaps even more so) in history.

The final passage of particular significance for our purposes is Acts 17:22–31. Here Paul appears before a group of philosophers, the Athenian Philosophical Society, as it were, on the Areopagus. Two points are of particular significance in Paul's presentation. First, Paul notices an altar "to an unknown god" in the Athenians' place of worship. He proceeds to proclaim this god to them. The god whom they have sensed from their speculations, without special revelation, is the same God whom he knows from special manifestation. Second, he quotes an Athenian poet (v. 28). The significant item here is that a pagan poet had been able to come to a spiritual truth without God's special revelation.

Differing Assessments of the Value of General Revelation

Natural Theology

There are some rather sharply contrasting views regarding the nature, extent, and efficacy of general revelation. One position that has had a long and conspicuous history within Christianity maintains not only that there is a valid, objective revelation of God in such spheres as nature, history, and human personality, but also that it is actually possible to gain some true knowledge of God from these spheres—in other words, to construct a valid theology apart from the Bible.

Certain assumptions are involved in this view. One is, of course, that God actually has made himself known in nature and that patterns of meaning are objectively present even if no one perceives, understands, and accepts this revelation. Moreover, nature is basically intact—it has not been substantially distorted by anything that has occurred since the creation. In short, the world we find about us is basically the world as it came from the creative hand of God, and as it was intended to be.

A second major assumption of natural theology is the integrity of the person perceiving and learning from the creation. Neither the natural limitations of humanity nor the effects of sin and the fall prevent one from recognizing and correctly interpreting the handiwork of the Creator.

Another assumption is that there is a congruity between the human mind and the creation about us. The mind is capable of drawing inferences from the data it perceives, since the structure of its thought processes coheres with the structure of what it knows. The validity of the laws of logic is also assumed. Natural theologians assiduously avoid paradoxes and logical contradictions. They regard a paradox as a sign of intellectual indigestion; if it were more completely chewed, it would disappear.

At the core of natural theology is the idea that it is possible, without a prior commitment of faith to the beliefs of Christianity, and without relying on any special authority, such as an institution (the church) or a document (the Bible), to come to a genuine knowledge of God on the basis of reason alone. Reason here refers to the human capacity to discover, understand, interpret, and evaluate the truth.

Perhaps the outstanding example of natural theology in the history of the church is the massive effort of Thomas Aquinas. According to Thomas, all truth belongs to one of two realms. The lower realm is the realm of nature; the higher is the realm of grace. While the claims pertaining to the upper realm must be accepted on authority, those pertaining to the lower realm may be known by reason.

Thomas contended that he could prove certain beliefs by pure reason: the existence of God, the immortality of the human soul, and the supernatural origin of the Catholic Church. More specific elements of doctrine, such as the triune nature of God, could not be known by unaided reason, but must be accepted on authority. These are truths of revelation, not truths of reason. Reason rules the lower level, while the truths on the upper level are matters of faith.

One of the traditional arguments for the existence of God is the *cosmological* proof of which Thomas has three or possibly even four versions. The argument proceeds somewhat as follows: In the realm of our experience, everything that we know is caused by something else. There cannot be an infinite regress of causes, however, for if that were the case, the whole series of causes would never have begun. There must, therefore, be some uncaused cause (unmoved mover) or necessary being. And this we (or all people) call God. Anyone looking honestly at the evidence must reach this conclusion.

Another argument frequently employed, and found in Thomas as well, is the *teleological* argument. This focuses particularly on the phenomenon of orderliness or apparent purpose in the universe. Thomas observes that various parts of the universe exhibit behavior that is adaptive or that helps bring about desirable ends. When such behavior is displayed by humans, we recognize that they have consciously willed and directed themselves toward that end. Some of the objects in our universe, however, cannot have done any purposive planning. Certainly rocks and atmosphere have not chosen to be as they are. Their ordering according to a purpose or design must come from somewhere else. Some intelligent being must, therefore, have ordered things in this desirable fashion. And this being, says Thomas, we call God.

In addition to these two major arguments, two others appear in the history of philosophy and theology, although perhaps less prominently than the cosmological and the teleological arguments. These are the anthropological and the ontological.

The *anthropological* argument sees some aspects of human nature as a revelation of God. In Immanuel Kant's formulation (in the *Critique of Practical Reason*) it appears somewhat as follows: We all possess a moral impulse or a categorical imperative. Following this impulse by behaving morally is not very well rewarded within this life, however. Being good does not always pay! Why should one be moral then? There must be some

basis for ethics and morality, some sort of reward, which in turn involves several factors—immortality and an undying soul, a coming time of judgment, and a God who establishes and supports values, and who rewards good and punishes evil. Thus, the moral order (as contrasted with the natural order) requires the existence of God.

All of these are empirical arguments. They proceed from observation of the universe by sense experience. The major a priori or rational argument is the *ontological* argument. This is a pure-thought type of argument. It does not require going outside one's own thinking. In the *Proslogion*, Anselm formulated what is undoubtedly the most famous statement of the argument: God is the greatest of all conceivable beings. Now a being that does not exist cannot be the greatest of all conceivable beings (for the nonexistent being of our conceptions would be greater if it had the *attribute* of existence). Therefore, by definition, God must exist.

There have been several responses to this, many of which follow Kant's contention that, in effect, existence is not an attribute. A being that exists does not have some attribute or quality lacked by a similar being that does not exist. If I imagine a dollar and compare it with a real dollar, there is no difference in their essence, in *what* they are. The only difference is in whether they are. There is a logical difference between the sentence "God is good" (or loving, or holy, or just) and the sentence "God is." The former predicates some quality of God; the latter is a statement of existence. The point here is that existence is not a necessary predicate of the greatest of all conceivable beings. Such a being may exist—or it may not. In either case its essence is the same.

With the increase in competent Christian philosophers, there has been something of a revival of formulations of the theistic arguments. Some of these are propounded by clear evangelicals. These have been advanced in conjunction with a strong belief in special revelation. [3]

The Denial of General Revelation

In the first half of the twentieth century, Karl Barth, who had been educated in a liberalism that did not take the Bible very seriously and rested many of its assertions on a type of natural theology, rejected both natural theology and general revelation. [4] Barth's understanding of revelation is significant because for him, revelation is redemptive in nature. To know God, to have correct information about him, is to be related to him in a

salvific experience. Disagreeing with many other theologians, he comments that it is not possible to draw from Romans 1:18–32 any statement regarding a "natural union with God or knowledge of God on the part of man in himself and as such."[5]

Barth is skeptical of humans' ability to know God apart from the revelation in Christ. This would mean that they can know the existence, the being of God, without knowing anything of his grace and mercy. This would injure the unity of God, since it would abstract his being from the fullness of his activity. [6] A human who could achieve some knowledge of God outside the revelation in Jesus Christ would have contributed at least in some small measure to his or her salvation or spiritual standing with God. The principle of grace alone would be compromised.

For Barth, revelation is always and only the revelation of God in Jesus Christ: the Word become flesh. [7] Apart from the incarnation, there is no revelation. Barth recognizes that several biblical passages have traditionally been cited as justification for engaging in natural theology (e.g., Ps. 19; Rom. 1). However, in interpreting Psalm 19, Barth understands verse 3, "There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard," as a denial of what the psalmist seems to affirm in verses 1 and 2. Barth also maintains that the first six verses of the psalm must be understood in light of verses 7–14. Thus the witness that humans see in the cosmos "does not come about independently, but in utter coordination with and subordination to the witness of God's speaking and acting [the law of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, etc.] in the people and among the people of Israel."[8] Barth must admit that Romans 1:18–32 definitely states that humans have knowledge of God. But he denies that this knowledge of God is independent of the divine revelation of the gospel. Rather, he maintains that the people Paul has in view have already been presented with the revelation that God declared.[9]

In later portions of *Church Dogmatics*, Barth seems to have modified his position somewhat. Here he grants that although Jesus Christ is the one true Word and Light of life, the creation contains numerous lesser lights that display his glory. Barth, however, does not speak of these as revelations, reserving that designation for the Word, but as "lights." It is also notable that in his later summary statement, *Evangelical Theology*, Barth makes no mention of a revelation through the created order.[10] Thus it seems to have made little or no real practical impact on his theology.

Barth's offensive against natural theology is understandable, especially given his experience with how some had applied it, and of certain assumptions that he seems to bring to the discussion:

- 1. God's revelation is exclusively in Jesus Christ.
- 2. Genuine revelation is always responded to positively rather than being ignored or rejected.
- 3. Knowledge of God is always redemptive or salvific in nature.

Evaluation of These Two Views

When we look at these two diametrically opposed views, each seems to draw on cogent considerations, and yet the shortcomings of each seem evident. The arguments of natural theology in many cases rest on assumptions that may in the past have been universally made, but no longer are. For example, Thomas's arguments all assume that there cannot be an infinite regress of causes. Not everyone would agree today. Further, he assumes that motion (in the broad sense of activity) must have a cause. Yet many philosophers, especially those of a process orientation, and some contemporary physicists, consider motion or activity as simply present in the cosmos, and need not be accounted for or have a cause. Further, there is the problem of proportional causation. Thomas assumes that if something needs a cause, that cause is God. The problem is that in order to account for a finite effect, it is not necessary to posit an infinite cause. If I lift a fiftypound weight, that does not prove that I could lift a seventy-pound weight. Only a cause sufficient to produce the effect need be posited. Similarly, if a God is required to cause a finite effect (a limited universe), that does not establish that this God is omnipotent, which Christianity has generally claimed is the nature of its God. Perhaps this was as much as he was capable of doing.

Thus, even if the arguments succeed in proving the existence of a divine being, there is still a problem if this is to be considered a proof for the Christian God, or even a good and wise god. This is a bare theism. Further argumentation is needed to establish that this is the Christian God, with the attributes that are unique to him. And in the case of Thomas's fourfold proof, there is still the necessity of demonstrating that the unmoved mover, the first cause, the designer, are all the same God. The teleological

argument has come in for special criticism in the past century and a half. One critique was brought by evolutionists, who offered an alternative explanation of the apparent order in the world. It is there, said the evolutionists, not because some all-wise and all-powerful being structured it into creation, but rather because those forms that did not have the physiological or psychological qualities that enabled them to survive did not, whereas those that possessed them did.

More recently, there have been some renewed efforts at construction of at least elements of a natural theology. One of these is the work of process theologians. [11] Another is the intelligent design movement, which has worked particularly with mathematical probability theory to suggest an alternative to the natural selection argument of evolution. [12] The increasing number of Christian philosophers, even in secular departments, has produced a growing body of arguments for the existence of God. [13] Finally, physicists, especially in quantum mechanics, have contributed significantly to discussions of issues of cosmology. In one way or another each of these either has some of the shortcomings noted here or problems unique to its own system.

Similarly, there are problems with such a strong rejection of general revelation as that of Barth, for the texts cited earlier are hard not to understand as indicating an objective manifestation of God in the creation. In the case of Psalm 19, Barth's rendering "there is no speech" seems to be an inaccurate exegesis of the passage. It appears that Barth's assumptions have overwhelmed the rather clear teaching of the passage. Some other forms of rejection of general revelation seem to assume that any knowledge of God humans might have independently of special revelation would be a human accomplishment; but if there is general revelation, it is by God's initiative, as genuinely as in the case of special revelation. The desire to protect the uniqueness of special revelation is commendable, but if special revelation bears witness that there is general revelation, then we do not honor the former by denying the latter.

General Revelation, but without Natural Theology

Calvin's position appears more consistent with the biblical data and with the philosophical observations than those of Thomas and Barth. Basically, this is the view that God has given us an objective, valid, rational revelation of himself in nature, history, and human personality. Paul asserts, however, that humans do not clearly recognize and acknowledge God in the general revelation (Rom. 1:21–23). Sin (meaning here both the fall of the human race and our continuing evil acts) has a double effect on the efficacy of the general revelation. First, sin has marred the witness of the general revelation. The created order is now under a curse (Gen. 3:16–19). While it is still God's creation and thus continues to witness to him, the testimony to the Maker is blurred.

The more serious effect of sin and the fall, however, is on humans themselves. Scripture speaks in several places of the blindness and darkness of humans' understanding. In Romans 1:21, Paul says that they knew God but rejected this knowledge, and blindness followed. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul attributes this blindness to the work of Satan. Although Paul is here referring to ability to see the light of the gospel, this blindness would doubtless affect the ability to see God in the creation as well.

General revelation evidently does not ordinarily enable the unbeliever to come to the knowledge of God. Paul's statements about general revelation (Rom. 1–2) must be viewed in light of what he says about sinful humanity (Rom. 3—all persons are under sin's power; none is righteous) and the urgency of telling people about Christ (10:14): "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" Thus in Paul's mind the possibility of constructing a full-scale natural theology seems seriously in question.

What is necessary, then, is what Calvin calls "the spectacles of faith." He draws an analogy between the condition of the sinner and a person with a sight problem.[14] The latter looks at an object, but sees it only indistinctly. Spectacles clarify the view. Similarly, the sinner does not recognize God in the creation. But when the sinner puts on the spectacles of faith, spiritual sight improves, and God can be seen in his handiwork.

God has given us an objective, valid, rational revelation of himself in nature, history, and human personality. Paul asserts, however, that humans do not clearly recognize and acknowledge God in the general revelation.

When persons are exposed to the special revelation found in the gospel and respond, their minds are cleared through the effects of regeneration, enabling them to see distinctly what is there. Then they can recognize in nature what was more clearly seen in the special revelation.

Scripture contains nothing constituting a formal argument for the existence of God from the evidences within the general revelation. The assertion that God is seen in his handiwork is scarcely a formal proof of his existence. Thus the conclusion that there is an objective general revelation, but that it cannot be used to construct a natural theology, seems to fit best the full data of Scripture on the subject.

General Revelation and Human Responsibility

But what of the judgment of humankind, spoken of by Paul in Romans 1–2? If it is just for God to condemn human beings, and if they can become guilty without having known God's special revelation, does that mean that humans without special revelation can do what will enable them to avoid the condemnation of God? In Romans 2:14 Paul says: "When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law" (RSV). Is Paul suggesting that they could have fulfilled the requirements of the law? But that never happens even for those who have the law (see Gal. 3:10–11 as well as Rom. 3). Paul also makes clear in Galatians 3:23–24 that the law was not a means of justifying us, but a guide to make us aware of our sin and to lead us to faith by bringing us to Christ.

Now the internal law unbelievers have performs much the same function as does the law the Jews have. From the revelation in nature (Rom. 1), people ought to conclude that a powerful, eternal God exists. And from the revelation within (Rom. 2), they should realize that they do not live up to the standard. While the content of the moral code will vary in different cultural situations, all humans have an inner compulsion that there is something to which they ought to adhere. And everyone should reach the conclusion that he or she is not fulfilling that standard. In other words, the knowledge of God that all humans have, if they do not suppress it, should bring them to the conclusion that they are guilty in relationship to God.

What if someone were to throw himself or herself on the mercy of God, not knowing on what basis that mercy was provided? Would not such a person in a sense be in the same situation as were the Old Testament believers? The doctrine of Christ and his atoning work had not been fully revealed to these people. Yet they knew that there was provision for the forgiveness of sins, and that they could not be accepted on the merits of any works of their own. They had the form of the gospel without its full content. And they were saved. Now if the God known in nature is the same as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (as Paul seems to assert in Acts 17:23), then it would seem that persons who come to a belief in a single, powerful God, who despair of any works-righteousness to please this holy God, and who throw themselves on the mercy of this good God, would be accepted, as were the Old Testament believers. The basis of acceptance would be the work of Jesus Christ, even though the person involved is not conscious that this is how provision has been made for his or her salvation. [15] We should note that the basis of salvation was apparently the same in the Old Testament as in the New. Salvation has always been appropriated by faith (Gal. 3:6–9); this salvation rests on Christ's deliverance of us from the law (vv. 10–14, 19–29).

What inference are we to draw, then, from Paul's statement in Romans 2:1–16? Is it conceivable that one can be saved by faith without having the special revelation? Paul seems to leave this possibility open. Yet we have no indication from Scripture how many, if any, actually experience salvation without having special revelation. Paul suggests in Romans 3 that no one does. And in chapter 10 he urges the necessity of preaching the gospel (the special revelation) so that people may believe. Thus it is apparent that in failing to respond to the light of general revelation that they have, humans are fully responsible, for they have truly known God but have willfully suppressed that truth.

Implications of General Revelation

The implications of general revelation include the following:

1. There is a common ground for a point of contact between the believer and the nonbeliever, or between the gospel and the thinking of the unbeliever. All persons have a knowledge of God. Although it might be suppressed to the extent of being unconscious or unrecognizable, it is nonetheless there, and there will be areas of sensitivity to which the message may be effectively directed as a starting point.

- 2. We may understand more about the specially revealed truth by examining the general revelation. This should be considered a supplement to, not a substitute for, special revelation. Sin's distortion of human understanding of the general revelation is greater the closer one gets to the relationship between God and humans. Thus sin produces relatively little obscuring effect on the understanding of matters of physics, but a great deal with respect to matters of psychology and sociology. Yet it is at those places where the potential for distortion is greatest that the most complete understanding is necessary.
- 3. God is just in condemning those who have never heard the gospel in the full and formal sense. No one is completely without opportunity. All have known God; if they have not effectually perceived him, it is because they have suppressed the truth. Thus all are responsible. This increases the motivation of missionary endeavor, for no one is innocent.
- 4. General revelation serves to explain the worldwide phenomenon of religion and religions. All persons are religious, because all have a type of knowledge of God. From this indistinct and perhaps even unrecognizable revelation, religions have been constructed that unfortunately are distortions of the true biblical religion.
- 5. Since both creation and the gospel are intelligible and coherent revelations of God, there is harmony between the two and a mutual reinforcement of one by the other. The biblical revelation is not totally distinct from what is known of the natural realm.
- 6. In a pluralistic society, particularly one such as the United States, where there is official separation of church and state, religious sources may not be appealed to in disputes over matters of ethics and politics. General revelation provides a possibility of arguing for these on a broader basis. For example, in an issue such as abortion, official church dogma cannot be introduced, but scientific evidence that the fetus is a living human organism may be.
- 7. As the third-world church continues to grow, we may expect a greater interest in nature and matters related to it. This will not take the form of formal arguments, so much as a direct relationship to and appreciation for nature, as the locus of God's activity.

8. Genuine knowledge and genuine morality in unbelieving (as well as believing) humans are not their own accomplishments. Truth arrived at apart from special revelation is still God's truth. Knowledge and morality are not so much discovery as they are "uncovery" of the truth God has structured into his entire universe, both physical and moral.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- In what areas do we find God's general revelation?
- What are the assumptions of natural theology? How would you evaluate them?
- What makes natural theology ineffective in bringing the Christian message to the unbeliever?
- How is humanity involved in the general revelation of God outside special revelation?
- How does the understanding of general revelation affect your view of the importance of telling people about the good news of Christ?

God's Particular Revelation

Chapter Objectives

At the conclusion of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Define and identify the need for God's special revelation to humans.
- 2. Identify three characteristics of special revelation, including personal, anthropic, and analogical.
- **3.** Comprehend and restate the modes of God's special revelation through historical events, divine speech, and the presence of God in Christ.
- **4.** Distinguish between propositional and personal revelation and identify the significance of each.
- **5.** Affirm the importance of Scripture as God's special revelation to humanity.

Chapter Summary

People need a more personal understanding of God than is available through nature and general history. God has provided particular revelation of himself. The modalities that God uses include historical events, divine speech, and the incarnation of God in Christ. Theologians have disagreed as to whether special revelation is propositional or personal. The Bible provides both cognitive and affective knowledge of God.

Chapter Outline

The Definition and Necessity of Special Revelation

The Style of Special Revelation

- The Personal Nature of Special Revelation
- The Anthropic Nature of Special Revelation
- The Analogical Nature of Special Revelation

The Modes of Special Revelation

- Historical Events
- Divine Speech
- The Incarnation

Special Revelation: Propositional or Personal?

Propositions or Narrative?

Scripture as Revelation

The Definition and Necessity of Special Revelation

By special revelation we mean God's manifestation of himself to particular persons at definite times and places, enabling those persons to enter into a redemptive relationship with him. The Hebrew word for "reveal" is *galah*. A common Greek word for "reveal" is *apokalyptō*. Both express the idea of uncovering what was concealed. The Greek *phaneroō*, which especially conveys the idea of manifesting, is also frequently used.

Special revelation was necessary because humans had lost the relationship of favor they had with God prior to the fall. They needed to come to know God in a fuller way if the conditions of fellowship were once again to be met. This knowledge had to go beyond the initial or general revelation that was still available because now, in addition to the natural limitation of human finiteness, there was also the moral limitation of human sinfulness. After the fall humans were turned away from God and in rebellion against him; their understanding of spiritual matters was obscured. So the human situation was a more complicated matter than had originally been the case, and more complete instruction was consequently needed.

Special revelation was necessary because humans had lost the relationship of favor they had with God prior to the fall.

Note that the objective of special revelation was relational. The primary purpose of this revelation was not to enlarge the general scope of knowledge. The knowledge *about* was for the purpose of knowledge *of*. Information was to lead to acquaintance; consequently, the information revealed was often quite selective. For example, we know relatively little about Jesus from a biographical standpoint. We are told nothing about his appearance, his characteristic activities, his interests, or his tastes. Details such as are ordinarily found in biographies were omitted, because they are not significant for faith. The merely curious are not accommodated by God's special revelation.

A further introductory word is needed regarding the relationship of special to general revelation. It is commonly assumed that special revelation is a postfall phenomenon necessitated by human sinfulness. It is frequently considered *remedial*.[1] Of course, it is not possible for us to know the exact status of the relationship between God and humankind before the fall. We simply are not told much about it. Adam and Eve may have had such an unclouded consciousness of God that they were constantly aware of him everywhere, in their own internal experience and in their perception of nature. There is no indication that such was the case, however. The account of God's looking for Adam and Eve in the Garden subsequent to their sin (Gen. 3:8) gives the impression that this was one in a series of special encounters. Further, the instructions given to humans (Gen. 1:28) regarding their place and activity in the creation suggest a particular communication from Creator to creature. If this is the case, special revelation antedated the fall.

When sin entered the human race, however, the need for special revelation became more acute. God's direct presence, the most direct and complete form of special revelation, was lost. In addition, God now had to speak regarding matters that were previously not of concern. The problems of sin, guilt, and depravity had to be resolved; means of atonement, redemption, and reconciliation had to be provided. And now sin diminished human comprehension of general revelation, thus lessening its efficacy. Therefore, special revelation had to become remedial with respect to both human knowledge of, and relationship with, God.

It is common to point out that general revelation is inferior to special revelation, both in the clarity of the treatment and the range of subjects considered. The insufficiency of general revelation therefore requires special revelation. The special revelation, however, requires the general revelation as well.[2] Without the general revelation, humans would not possess the concepts that enable them to know and understand the God of the special revelation. Special revelation builds on general revelation. Only if the two are developed in isolation from one another does there seem to be any conflict between them. They have a common subject matter and perspective, yielding a harmonious and complementary understanding.

The Style of Special Revelation

The Personal Nature of Special Revelation

We need to ask about the style of special revelation, its nature or fashion. It is, first of all, personal. A personal God presents himself to persons. This is seen in a number of ways. God reveals himself by telling his name. Nothing is more personal than one's name. When Moses asks who he should say has sent him to the people of Israel, Jehovah responds by giving his name, "I AM WHO I AM [or I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE]" (Exod. 3:14). Moreover, God entered into personal covenants with individuals (Noah, Abraham) and with the nation of Israel. The Psalms contain numerous testimonies of personal experience with God. And the goal of Paul's life was a personal acquaintance with God: "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Phil. 3:10).

All Scripture is personal in nature. What we find is not a set of universal truths, like Euclid's axioms in geometry, but rather a series of specific or particular statements about concrete occurrences and facts. Neither is Scripture a formal theological presentation, with arguments and counterarguments, such as one would find in a theological textbook. Nor are there systematized creedal statements. There are elements of creedal affirmation, but not a thoroughgoing intellectualization of Christian belief.

There is little speculation about matters not directly concerned with God's redemptive working and his relationship with humankind. Cosmology, for example, does not receive the scrutiny sometimes found in other religions. The Bible does not digress into matters of merely historical concern. It does not fill in gaps in the knowledge of the past. It does not concentrate on biographical details. What God reveals is primarily himself as a person, and especially those dimensions of himself that are particularly significant for faith.

The Anthropic Nature of Special Revelation

The God who is revealed is, however, a transcendent being, outside our sensory experience. The Bible claims that God is unlimited in his knowledge and power; he is not subject to the confines of space and time. Consequently the revelation must involve God's condescension (in the good sense of that word). We humans cannot reach up to investigate God and would not understand even if we could. So God has disclosed himself by a revelation in *anthropic* form. This should not be thought of as

anthropomorphism as such, but simply as a revelation coming in human language and human categories of thought and action. [3]

This anthropic character means the use of human languages common at the time. Koine Greek was once believed to be a special, divinely created language since it is so different from classical Greek. We now know, of course, that it was simply the vernacular language. Idioms of the day appear in Scripture. And it utilizes ordinary ways of describing nature, of measuring time and distance, and so on.[4]

The revelation is also anthropic in the sense that it often came in forms that are part of ordinary, everyday human experience. For example, God frequently used dreams to reveal himself. Yet few experiences are as common as dreams. Not the particular type of experience employed, but the unique content supplied and the unique utilization of this experience distinguished revelation from the ordinary and natural. The same is true of the incarnation. When God appealed to humanity, he used the modality of an ordinary human being. Apparently Jesus carried no visible sign of distinctiveness. Most persons took him for an ordinary, average human being, the son of Joseph the carpenter. He came as a human, not an angel or a being clearly recognizable as a god.

To be sure, there were revelations that clearly broke with typical experience. The voice of the Father speaking from heaven (John 12:28) was one of these. The miracles were striking in their effect. Yet much of the revelation was in the form of natural occurrences.

The Analogical Nature of Special Revelation

God draws on those elements in the human universe of knowledge that can serve as a likeness of or that partially convey the truth in the divine realm. His revelation employs analogical language. When a term is used analogically in two clauses, there is always at least some univocal element (i.e., the meaning of the term is in at least one sense the same in both clauses), but there are differences as well, as when we say that runners run a marathon and that a train runs between Chicago and Detroit.

Whenever God has revealed himself, he has selected elements that are univocal in his universe and ours. Langdon Gilkey has pointed out that, in the orthodox view, when we say that God acts, we have the very same meaning in mind as when we say that a human acts.[5] When we say that God stopped the Jordan River, we have the very same thing in mind as

when we say that the Army Corps of Engineers stopped a river from flowing. The acts of God are occurrences within a space-time universe. The death of Jesus was an event observably the same as that of James, John, Peter, Andrew, or any other human. And when the Bible says that God loves, it means just the same sort of qualities that we refer to when we speak of humans loving (in the sense of $agap\bar{e}$): a steadfast, unselfish concern for the welfare of the other person.

As we are here using the term "analogical," we mean "qualitatively the same"; in other words, the difference is one of degree rather than of kind or genus. God is powerful as humans are powerful, but much more so. When we say that God knows, we have the same meaning in mind as when we say that humans know—but while humans know something, God knows everything. We cannot grasp how much more of each of these qualities God possesses, or what it means to say that God has humans' knowledge amplified to an infinite extent. Having observed only finite forms, we find it impossible to grasp infinite concepts. In this sense, God always remains *incomprehensible*. It is not that we do not have knowledge of him, and genuine knowledge at that. Rather, the shortcoming lies in our inability to encompass him within our knowledge. Although *what* we know of him is the same as his knowledge of himself, the degree of our knowledge is much less.

This analogical knowledge is possible because God selects the components he uses. Unlike humans, God is knowledgeable of both sides of the analogy. If humans by their own natural, unaided reason seek to understand God by constructing an analogy involving God and humanity, the result is always some sort of conundrum, for they are in effect working with an equation containing two unknowns. For instance, if one were to argue that God's love is to humans' love what God's being is to humans' being, it would be tantamount to saying x/2 = y/5. Not knowing the relationship between God's being (or nature, or essence) and that of humanity, humans cannot construct a meaningful analogy. God, however, knowing all things completely, knows which elements of human knowledge and experience are sufficiently similar to the divine truth that they can be used to help construct a meaningful analogy.

The Modes of Special Revelation

We now turn to examine the actual modes or means or modalities by which God has revealed himself: historical events, divine speech, and the incarnation.

Historical Events

The Bible emphasizes a whole series of divine events by which God has made himself known. From the perspective of the people of Israel, a primary event was the call of Abraham, to whom they looked as the father of their nation. The Lord's provision of Isaac as an heir, under most unlikely conditions, was another significant divine act. God's provision in the midst of the famine during the time of Joseph benefited not only the descendants of Abraham but the other residents of the whole area as well. Probably the major event for Israel, still celebrated by Jews, was the deliverance from Egypt through the series of plagues culminating in the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea. The conquest of the promised land, the return from captivity, even the captivity itself, were God's self-manifestation. Jesus's birth, wondrous acts, death, and particularly his resurrection were God at work. In the creation and expansion of the church, God was also at work bringing his people into being.

All of these are acts of God and thus revelations of his nature. Those we have cited here are spectacular or miraculous. God's acts are not limited to such events, however. He has also been at work in the more mundane events of the history of his people.

Divine Speech

The second major modality of revelation is God's speech. A common expression in the Bible and especially in the Old Testament is the statement, "The word of the LORD came to me . . ." (e.g., Jer. 18:1; Ezek. 12:1, 8, 17, 21, 26; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 3:1). The prophets had a consciousness that their message was not of their own creation but was from God. In writing the book of Revelation, John was attempting to communicate God's message. The writer to the Hebrews noted that God had spoken often in times past, and now had particularly spoken through his Son (Heb. 1:1–2). God does not merely demonstrate through his actions what he is like; he also speaks, telling us about himself, his plans, his will.

We may be inclined to think that God's speech is really not a modality at all. It seems so direct. However, it always comes in some human language,

the language of the prophet or apostle, whether that is Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. Yet God presumably does not have a language in which he speaks. Thus the use of language is an indication that God's speech is mediated rather than direct revelation. [6]

Divine speech may take several forms. [7] It may be an audible speaking. It may be a silent, inward hearing of God's message, like the subvocal process in which slow readers engage (they "hear" in their heads the words they are reading). It is likely that in many cases this was the mode used. Often this inaudible speech was part of another modality, such as a dream or vision. In these instances, the prophet heard the Lord speaking to him, but presumably anyone else present at the time heard nothing. Finally, there is "concursive" inspiration—revelation and inspiration have merged into one. As the authors of Scripture wrote, God placed within their minds the thoughts that he wished communicated. This was not a case of the message's already having been revealed, and the Holy Spirit's merely bringing these matters to remembrance, or directing the writer to thoughts with which the writer was already familiar. God created thoughts in the mind of the writer as he wrote. The writer could have been either conscious or unconscious of what was happening. In the latter case, he may have felt that the ideas were simply dawning on him. Although Paul occasionally indicates that he "thinks" he has the Spirit of God (e.g., 1 Cor. 7:40), at other times he is more definite that he has received his message from the Lord (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:23). There are also some cases, (e.g., Philemon) where Paul does not indicate consciousness of God's directing his writing, although God was doubtless doing so.

Quite frequently, the spoken word of God was the interpretation of an event. While this event was usually something past or contemporary with the writing, there were times when the interpretation preceded the event, as in predictive prophecy. Our contention, despite some strong recent disagreements, is that not only the event but also the interpretation was revelation from God; the interpretation was not merely the insight or product of the reflection of a biblical writer. Without this specially revealed interpretation, the event itself would often be opaque and thus mute. It would be subject to various interpretations, and the scriptural explanation might then be merely an erroneous human speculation. Take such a central event as Jesus's death. If we knew that this event had occurred, but its meaning had not been divinely revealed to us, we might understand it in

widely differing ways, or find it simply a puzzle. It might be regarded as a defeat, or a sort of moral victory, a martyr dying for his principles. The revealed word of explanation tells us that Jesus's death was an atoning sacrifice. We must conclude that the interpretation of certain events is a modality of revelation as genuine as that of God's acts in history.

The Incarnation

The most complete modality of revelation is the incarnation. The contention here is that Jesus's life and speech were a special revelation of God. We may again be inclined to think that this is not a modality at all, that God was directly present in unmediated form. But since God does not have human form, Christ's humanity must represent a mediation of the divine revelation. This is not to say that his humanity concealed or obscured the revelation. Rather, it was the means that conveyed the revelation of deity. Scripture specifically states that God has spoken through or in his Son. Hebrews 1:1–2 contrasts this with the earlier forms of revelation, and indicates that the incarnation is superior.

Here revelation as event most fully occurs. The pinnacle of God's acts is to be found in the life of Jesus. His miracles, death, and resurrection are redemptive history in its most condensed and concentrated form. Here too is revelation as divine speech, for Jesus's message surpassed those of the prophets and apostles. Jesus even dared to place his message over against what was written in the Scriptures, not as contradicting, but as going beyond or fulfilling them (Matt. 5:17). When the prophets spoke, they were bearers of a message from and about God. When Jesus spoke, it was God himself speaking.

Revelation also took place in the very perfection of Jesus's character. There was a godlikeness about him that could be discerned. Here God was actually living among humans and displaying his attributes to them. Jesus's actions, attitudes, and affections did not merely mirror the Father, but were the actual presence of God. The centurion at Calvary, who presumably had seen many persons die of crucifixion, apparently saw something different in Jesus, which caused him to exclaim, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matt. 27:54 RSV). Peter, after the miraculous catch of fish, fell on his knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8). These were people who found in Jesus a revelation of the Father.

Here revelation as act and as word come together. Jesus both spoke the Father's word and exhibited the Father's attributes. He was the most complete revelation of God, because he was God. John could make the amazing statement, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched" (1 John 1:1). And Jesus could say, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Special Revelation: Propositional or Personal?

It is necessary at this point to speak briefly of neo-orthodoxy, which views revelation not as the communication of information (or propositions) but as God's presentation of himself. According to neo-orthodoxy, God does not tell us information about himself. We simply know him through encounter. Revelation, then, is not propositional; it is personal. To a large extent, our view of faith will reflect our understanding of revelation. [8] If, on the one hand, we regard revelation as the communication of propositional truths, we will view faith as a response of assent, of believing those truths. If, on the other hand, we regard revelation as the presentation of a person, we will correspondingly view faith as an act of personal trust or commitment. According to this latter view, theology is not a revealed set of doctrines. It is the church's attempt to express what it has found in God's revelation of himself.

Revelation is both personal and propositional. What God primarily does is to reveal himself, but he does so at least in part by telling us something about himself.

The neo-orthodox approach presents at least a couple of problems. The first is to establish a basis on which faith can rest. Advocates of both views —that revelation is personal, and that it is propositional—recognize the need for some basis of faith. The question is whether the nonpropositional view of revelation provides a sufficient basis for faith. Can the advocates of

this view be sure that what they encounter is really the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? In order to trust someone, we must have some knowledge about that person.

That there must be belief before there can be trust is evident from our own experiences. Suppose I have to make a bank deposit in cash but am unable to do so in person. I must ask someone else to do this for me. But whom will I ask? To whom will I entrust myself, or at least a portion of my material possessions? I will trust or commit myself to someone whom I believe to be honest. Believing *in* that person depends on believing something *about* him or her. I will probably select a good friend whose integrity I do not question. Similarly, how can we trust that it is the Christian God whom we are encountering unless he tells us who he is and what he is like?

Another problem is the problem of theology itself. Those who maintain that revelation is personal are nevertheless very concerned about correctly defining belief, or stating correct doctrinal understandings, while insisting that faith is not belief in doctrinal propositions. Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, for example, argued over such issues as the nature and status of the image of God in humans, as well as the virgin birth and the empty tomb. Presumably, each felt he was trying to establish the true doctrine in these areas. But how are these doctrinal propositions related to, or derived from, the nonpropositional revelation? There is a problem here.

This is not to suggest that there cannot be a connection between nonpropositional revelation and propositions of truth, but that this connection has not been adequately explicated by neo-orthodoxy. The problem derives from making a disjunction between propositional and personal revelation. Revelation is not *either* personal *or* propositional; it is *both/and*. What God primarily does is to reveal *himself*, but he does so at least in part by telling us something *about* himself.

Propositions or Narrative?

In recent years some have expressed a preference for the idea that revelation is narrative in form, rather than propositional.[9] Part of the objection to propositional theology has been that it converts the various genres of Scripture into a cognitive-propositional form. The narrative

emphasis has largely been a result of postmodern epistemology.[10] It is certainly true that much of Scripture is in story form. For example, Jesus used parables extensively. Further, the psalmists and the prophets frequently used illustrations and imagery to convey their point. It is notable, however, that Jesus also gave his disciples a propositional interpretation of his parables. This phenomenon is found elsewhere in Scripture, for example, Ruth 4:7, where an explanation of the narrative is given, without which it would be opaque.

A number of books have been written advocating the use of narrative theology.[11] What is interesting, however, is that virtually without exception, they are propositional or nonnarrative discussions of narrative theology, supplemented by narrative or story illustrations. This suggests that the polemic against propositional revelation and theology might be misplaced and that, rather than exclusive of one another, propositions and narrative might be complementary, with the propositional being primary.

Scripture as Revelation

If revelation includes propositional truths, then it is of such a nature that it can be preserved. It can be written down or *inscripturated*. And this written record, to the extent that it is an accurate reproduction of the original revelation, is also by derivation revelation and entitled to be called that.

The definition of revelation becomes a factor here. If revelation is defined as only the actual occurrence, the process or the *revealing*, then the Bible is not revelation. Revelation is something that occurred long ago. If, however, it is also the product, the result or the *revealed*, then the Bible may also be termed revelation.

If revelation is propositional, then it can be preserved. And if this is the case, then the question of whether the Bible is in this derivative sense a revelation is a question of whether it is inspired, of whether it indeed preserves what was revealed. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

We should also note that this revelation is *progressive*. Some care needs to be exercised in the use of this term, for it has sometimes been used to represent the idea of a gradual evolutionary development. That approach, which flourished under liberal scholarship, regarded sections of the Old Testament as virtually obsolete and false; they were only very imperfect

approximations of the truth. The idea we are here suggesting, however, is that later revelation builds on earlier revelation, complementing and supplementing rather than contradicting it. Notice how Jesus elevated the teachings of the law by extending, expanding, and internalizing them. He frequently prefaced his instruction with the expression, "You have heard . . . , but I say to you. . . ." Similarly, the author of Hebrews points out that God, who in the past spoke by the prophets, has in these last days spoken by a Son, who reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature (Heb. 1:1–3). Like redemption, revelation was a process that moved to an ever more complete form. [12]

We have seen that God has taken the initiative to make himself known to us in a more complete way than general revelation, and has done so in a fashion appropriate to our understanding. This means that lost and sinful humans can come to know God and then go on to grow in understanding of what he expects of and promises to his children. Because this revelation includes both the personal presence of God and informational truth, we are able to identify God, to understand something about him, and to point others to him.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- How would you describe the three characteristics of special revelation? What does each contribute to our understanding of special revelation?
- Through what three means has God chosen to reveal himself? How does each contribute to our understanding of special revelation?
- Why is the incarnation the most complete modality of special revelation?
- How would you compare and contrast personal and propositional revelation?
- Do you find personal or propositional revelation more important? Why?

The Preservation of the Revelation: *Inspiration*

Chapter Objectives

At the conclusion of this chapter, you should be able to achieve the following:

- 1. Define inspiration of Scripture and the relation of the Holy Spirit to that process.
- 2. Review the ways in which Scripture indicates the nature of its own inspiration.
- **3.** Compare and contrast theories of inspiration.
- **4.** Measure the extent of inspiration in the Scriptures.
- **5.** Analyze the intensiveness of inspiration within Scripture.
- **6.** Construct a model of inspiration that integrates both the didactic material and the phenomena of Scripture.

Chapter Summary

One topic that is hotly debated today is the degree to which Scripture is inspired by God. Inspiration is necessary because it confirms the nature of God's special revelation through Scripture. An important part of biblical theology is the formulation of a theory regarding the extent to which the Bible is inspired. A variety of theories are scrutinized and evaluated. While in the proper sense inspiration is of the writers, in the derivative sense we may also say that the writings themselves are inspired.

Chapter Outline

Definition of Inspiration

The Fact of Inspiration

Theories of Inspiration

The Extent of Inspiration

The Intensiveness of Inspiration

A Model of Inspiration

Definition of Inspiration

By the inspiration of Scripture we mean that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the Scripture writers that rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or that resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God.

While revelation benefits those who immediately receive it, that value might well be lost for those beyond the immediate circle of revelation. Since God does not ordinarily repeat his revelation for each person, there has to be some way to preserve it. It could, of course, be preserved by oral retelling or by being fixed into a definite tradition, and this certainly was operative in the period that sometimes intervened between the occurrence of the initial revelation and its inscripturation. Certain problems attach to this, however, for over centuries and even millennia oral tradition is subject to erosion and modification. Anyone who has observed the way in which rumors spread has a good idea of how easily oral tradition can be corrupted. It is apparent that something more than oral retelling is needed.

While revelation is the communication of divine truth from God to humankind, inspiration relates more to the relaying of that truth from the first recipient(s) of it to other persons, whether then or later. Thus, revelation might be thought of as a vertical action, and inspiration as a horizontal matter. While revelation and inspiration are usually thought of together, it is possible to have one without the other. There are cases of inspiration without revelation. The Holy Spirit in some instances moved Scripture writers to record the words of unbelievers, words that certainly were not divinely revealed. Some pieces of information in Scripture were readily available to anyone who would make the inquiry. The genealogies, both in the Old Testament and New Testament (the listing of Jesus's lineage), may well be of this character. There also was revelation without inspiration: instances of revelation that went unrecorded because the Holy Spirit did not move anyone to write them down. John makes this very point in John 21:25, when he says that if everything that Jesus did were written down, "I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." The Spirit was apparently very selective in what he inspired the biblical authors to report.

The Fact of Inspiration

Throughout Scripture there is the claim or even the assumption of its divine origin, or of its equivalency with the actual speech of the Lord. This point is sometimes spurned on the grounds of its being circular. Any theology (or any other system of thought for that matter) faces a dilemma when dealing with its basic authority. Either it bases its starting point on itself, in which case it is guilty of circularity, or it bases itself on some foundation other than that on which it bases all its other articles, in which case it is guilty of inconsistency. Note, however, that we are guilty of circularity only if the testimony of Scripture is taken as settling the matter. But surely the Scripture writer's own claim should be taken into consideration as part of the process of formulating our hypothesis of the nature of Scripture. Other considerations will, of course, be consulted by way of evaluating the hypothesis. What we have here is somewhat like a court trial. The defendant is permitted to testify on his or her own behalf. This testimony is not taken as settling the matter, however; that is, after hearing the defendant's plea of "not guilty," the judge will not immediately rule, "I find the defendant not guilty." Additional testimony is called for and evaluated, in order to determine the credibility of the defendant's testimony. But his or her testimony is admitted.

There is one other consideration in answering the charge of circularity. In consulting the Bible to determine the authors' view of Scripture, one is not necessarily presupposing its inspiration. One may consult it merely as a historical document that informs us that its authors considered it the inspired Word of God. In this case one is not viewing the Bible as its own starting point. There is circularity only if one begins with the assumption of the inspiration of the Bible, and then uses that assumption as a guarantee of the truth of the Bible's claim to be inspired. It is permissible to use the Bible as a historical document and to allow it to plead its own case.

The Bible witnesses to its divine origin in several ways. One of these is the view of New Testament authors regarding the Scriptures of their day, which we would today term the Old Testament. Second Peter 1:20–21 is a cardinal instance: "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Here Peter is affirming that the prophecies of the Old Testament were not of human origin. The impetus that led to the writing was from the Holy Spirit.

A second reference is that of Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." In this passage Paul is exhorting Timothy to continue in the teachings he has received. Paul assumes Timothy is familiar with the "Holy Scriptures" (v. 15) and urges him to continue in them since they are divinely inspired (or more correctly, "God-spired" or "God-breathed"). The impression here is that they are divinely produced, just as God breathed the breath of life into the human (Gen. 2:7). They therefore carry value for building up the believer in order to be "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17).

Throughout Scripture there is the the assumption of its equivalency with the actual speech of the Lord.

When we turn to the early church's preaching, we find a similar understanding of the Old Testament. In Acts 1:16 Peter says, "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David" (my translation), and then proceeds to quote from Psalms 69:25 and 109:8 regarding the fate of Judas. Not only does Peter regard David's words as authoritative, but he actually affirms that God spoke by the mouth of David. David was God's "mouthpiece," so to speak. The same thought, that God spoke by the mouth of the prophets, is found in Acts 3:18, 21, and 4:25. The earliest preaching of the church, then, identifies "it is written in the Scripture" with "God has said it."

This fits well with the prophets' own testimony. Again and again they declare, "Thus says the LORD." Jeremiah says: "These are the words the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah" (30:4). Amos declares: "Hear this word, people of Israel, the word the LORD has spoken against you" (3:1). And David says: "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; / his word was on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). Statements like these, which appear repeatedly in the prophets, indicate that they were aware of being "carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

Finally, we note the Lord's own view of the Old Testament writings. In part, we may infer this from the way he related to the view of the Bible held

by his dialogical opponents, the Pharisees. He never hesitated to correct their misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the Bible, but he never challenged or corrected their view of the nature of the Scripture. He merely disagreed with their interpretations of the Bible, or the traditions they had added to the content of the Scriptures themselves. In his discussions and disputes with his opponents, he repeatedly quoted from the Scriptures. In his threefold temptation, he responded to Satan each time with a quotation from the Old Testament. He spoke of the authority and permanence of the Scripture: "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35); "until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18). Two objects were regarded as sacred in the Israel of Jesus's day: the temple and the Scriptures. Jesus did not hesitate to point out the transiency of the former, for not one stone would be left upon another (Matt. 24:2). There is, therefore, a striking contrast between his attitude toward the Scriptures and his attitude toward the temple.[1] Clearly, he regarded the Scriptures as inspired, authoritative, and indestructible.

Theories of Inspiration

We may conclude from the foregoing that the uniform testimony of the Scripture writers is that the Bible has originated from God and is his message to humanity. This is the fact of the Bible's inspiration; we must now ask what it means. A number of views have arisen regarding the nature of inspiration.

- 1. The *intuition* theory makes inspiration largely a high degree of insight. Inspiration is the functioning of a high gift, perhaps almost like an artistic ability, but nonetheless a natural endowment, a permanent possession. The Scripture writers were religious geniuses. Yet their inspiration was essentially no different from that of other great religious and philosophical thinkers such as Plato or Buddha. The Bible, then, is great religious literature reflecting the Hebrew people's spiritual experiences.[2]
- 2. The *illumination* theory maintains that there is an influence of the Holy Spirit on the authors of Scripture, but involving only a heightening of their normal powers, an increased sensitivity and perceptivity with regard to spiritual matters. It was not unlike the effect of stimulants students

sometimes take to heighten their awareness or amplify the mental processes. Thus, the work of inspiration is different only in degree, not in kind, from the Spirit's work with all believers. The result of this type of inspiration is an increased ability to discover truth.[3]

- 3. The *dynamic* theory emphasizes the combination of divine and human elements in the process of inspiration and of the writing of the Bible. The Spirit of God worked by directing the writer to the thoughts or concepts he should have and allowing the writer's own distinctive personality to come into play in the choice of words and expressions. Thus, the writer gave expression to the divinely directed thoughts in a way that was uniquely characteristic of that person.[4]
- 4. The *verbal* theory insists that the Holy Spirit's influence extends beyond the direction of thoughts to the selection of words used to convey the message. The work of the Holy Spirit is so intense that each word is the exact word God wants used at that point to express the message. Ordinarily, however, great care is taken to insist that this is not dictation. [5]
- 5. The *dictation* theory is the teaching that God actually dictated the Bible to the writers. Passages where the Spirit is depicted as telling the author precisely what to write are regarded as applying to the entire Bible. Different authors did not write in distinctive styles. Most adherents of the verbal view take great pains to dissociate themselves from the dictation theorists. There are, however, some who accept this designation of their view.[6]

The Extent of Inspiration

The question here is the extent of inspiration, or, to put it somewhat differently, of what is inspired. Is the whole of the Bible to be thus regarded, or only certain portions?

One easy solution would be to cite 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful." There is a problem, however, because of an ambiguity in the first part of this verse. The Greek text may be translated, "All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable," or "All God-breathed Scripture is also profitable." If the former rendering is adopted, the inspiration of all Scripture would be affirmed. If the latter is followed, the sentence would emphasize the profitability of all God-breathed Scripture.

From the context, however, one cannot really determine what Paul intended to convey. (What does appear from the context is that Paul had in mind a definite body of writings known to Timothy from his childhood. It is unlikely that Paul was attempting to make a distinction between inspired and uninspired Scripture within this body of writings.)

Can we find additional help on this issue in two other texts previously cited—2 Peter 1:19–21 and John 10:34–35? At first glance this seems not to succeed, since the former refers specifically to prophecy and the latter to the law. It appears from Luke 24:25–27, however, that "Moses and all the prophets" equals "all the Scriptures," and from Luke 24:44–45 that "the law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" equals "the Scriptures." In John 10:34, when Jesus refers to the law, he actually quotes from Psalm 82:6. And Peter refers to the "word of the prophets" (2 Pet. 1:19) and every "prophecy of Scripture" (v. 20) in such a way as to lead us to believe that the whole of the collection of writings commonly accepted in that day is in view. It appears that "law" and "prophecy" were often used to designate the whole Hebrew Scriptures.

Can this understanding of inspiration be extended to cover the books of the New Testament as well? This problem is not so easily solved. We do have some indications of belief that what these writers were doing was of the same nature as what the writers of the Old Testament had done. One explicit reference of one New Testament author to the writings of another is 2 Peter 3:16. Here Peter refers to Paul's writings and alludes to the difficulty of understanding some things in them, which, he says, "ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures." Thus Peter groups Paul's writings with other books, presumably familiar to the readers, that were regarded as Scripture. Moreover, John identified what he was writing with God's word: "We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood" (1 John 4:6). He makes his words the standard of measurement. Paul wrote that the gospel received by the Thessalonians had come by the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5), and had been accepted by them as what it really was, the word of God (2:13). It should be clear that these New Testament writers regarded the Scripture as being extended from the prophetic period to their own time.

The Intensiveness of Inspiration

How intensive was the inspiration? Was it only a general influence, perhaps involving the suggesting of concepts, or was it so thoroughgoing that even the choice of words reflects God's intention?

When we examine the New Testament writers' use of the Old Testament, an interesting feature appears. We sometimes find indication that they regarded every word, syllable, and punctuation mark as significant. At times their whole argument rests on a fine point in the text they are consulting. For example, in Matthew 22:32—Jesus's quotation of Exodus 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"—the point depends on the tense of the verb, which leads him to draw the conclusion, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." In verse 44, the point of the argument hangs on a possessive suffix, "The Lord said to *my* Lord." In this case Jesus expressly says that when David spoke these words, he was "speaking by the Spirit" (v. 43). Apparently David was led by the Spirit to use the particular forms he did, even to the point of a detail as minute as the possessive in "*my* Lord."

Jesus and the New Testament writers regarded every word, syllable, and punctuation mark of the Old Testament as significant.

One other argument regarding the intensiveness of inspiration is that New Testament writers attribute to God statements in the Old Testament that in the original form are not specifically ascribed to him. A notable example is Matthew 19:4–5, where Jesus asks, "Haven't you read . . . that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said . . . ?" He then proceeds to quote from Genesis 2:24. In the original, however, the statement is not attributed to God. It is just a comment on the event of the creation of woman from man. But the words of Genesis are cited by Jesus as being what God said; Jesus even puts these words in the form of a direct quotation. Evidently, in Jesus's mind anything the Old Testament asserted was what God said.

In addition to these specific references, we should note that Jesus often introduced his quotations of the Old Testament with the formula "It is written." He identified whatever the Bible said as having the force of God's own speech. It was authoritative. This, of course, does not speak specifically to the question of whether the inspiring work of the Holy Spirit extended to the choice of words, but it does indicate a thoroughgoing identification of the Old Testament writings with the word of God. One would conclude that the inspiration of the Scripture was so intense that it extended even to the choice of particular words.

A Model of Inspiration

When formulating a theory of inspiration, it is necessary to recognize the two basic methods that may be employed. The first method is a didactic approach that places its primary emphasis on what the biblical writers actually say about the Bible and the view of it that is revealed in the way they use it. This method is represented in the writings of Benjamin B. Warfield and the "Princeton school" of theology.[7] The second approach is to look at what the Bible is like, to analyze the various ways in which the writers report events, to compare parallel accounts. This characterizes the method of Dewey Beegle, who developed a theory of inspiration based primarily on the phenomena of Scripture.[8]

Can we maintain and integrate both kinds of material? We will give primary consideration to the didactic material. This means concluding that inspiration extends even to the choice of words (i.e., inspiration is verbal). We will determine the exact meaning of that choice of words, however, by examining the phenomena.

We are suggesting that what the Spirit may do is direct the thoughts of the Scripture writer. That direction, however, is quite precise. Consequently, within the vocabulary of the writer, one word will most aptly communicate the thought God is conveying (although that word in itself may be inadequate). By creating the thought and stimulating the understanding of the Scripture writer, the Spirit will lead him in effect to use one particular word rather than any other.

While God directs the writer to use particular words (precision) to express the idea, the idea itself may be quite general or quite specific. This

is what linguist Kenneth Pike has called "the dimension of magnification." [9] One cannot expect that the Bible will always display maximum magnification or a great deal of detail. It will, rather, express just that degree of detail or specificity that God intends, and, on that level of magnification, just that concept he intends. This accounts for the fact that sometimes Scripture is not so detailed as we might expect or desire. Indeed, there have been occasions when the Holy Spirit, to serve the purpose of a new situation, moved a Scripture writer to reexpress a concept on a more specific level than its original form.

Figure 1. Levels of Specificity

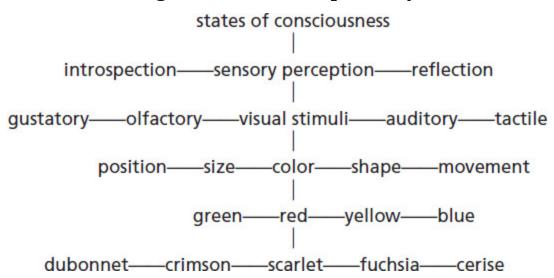


Figure 1 will help to illustrate what we have in mind. This figure depicts various levels of specificity or detail or magnification. The dimension of specificity involves vertical movement on the chart. Suppose the concept under consideration is the color red. This idea has a particular degree of specificity, no more and no less. It is neither more specific (e.g., scarlet) nor less specific (color). It occurs in a particular location on the chart—both vertically, on the generality-specificity axis, and horizontally, on its given level of specificity (i.e., red, versus yellow or green). In another instance one may have either more or less detail in a picture (a higher or lower degree of magnification, in Pike's terminology), and a sharper or fuzzier focus. At a less precise focus, of course, the detail will become blurry or even get lost. These two dimensions (detail and focus) should not be confused, however. If the idea is sufficiently precise, then only one word in

a given language, or in the vocabulary of a given writer, will adequately communicate and express the meaning.

It is our contention here that inspiration involved God's directing the thoughts of the writers, so that they were precisely the thoughts that he wished expressed. At times these thoughts were very specific; at other times they were more general. We have concluded that inspiration was verbal, extending even to the choice of words. It was not merely verbal, however, for at times thoughts may be more precise than the words available. Such, for example, was probably the case with John's vision on Patmos, which produced the book of Revelation.

At this point the objection is generally raised that inspiration extending to the choice of words necessarily becomes dictation. Answering this charge will force us to theorize regarding the process of inspiration. Here we must note that the Scripture writers, at least in every case where we know their identity, were not novices in the faith. They had known God, learned from him, and practiced the spiritual life for some time. God therefore had been at work in their lives for some time, preparing them through a wide variety of family, social, educational, and religious experiences for the task they were to perform. Paul suggests that he was chosen even before his birth (Gal. 1:15). Through all of life God was at work shaping and developing the individual author. So, for example, the experiences of the fisherman Peter and of the physician Luke were creating the kind of personality and worldview that would later be employed in the writing of Scripture. This means that we should bear in mind, in discussing the doctrine of the Trinity, that although the final work of inspiration was one in which the Holy Spirit played the primary role, there is a sense in which inspiration is a work of the entire Trinity. As we shall see in a later chapter, even those divine works attributed to one member of the Trinity are actually trinitarian activities, in which one member of the Trinity acts on behalf of the entire Godhead. [10]

It was possible, therefore, for a Scripture writer who had been given only a suggestion of a new direction, but who had known God for a long time, to "think the thoughts of God." To give a personal example: a secretary had been with a church for many years. At the beginning of my pastorate there, I dictated letters to her. After a year or so, I could tell her the general tenor of my thinking and she could write my letters, using my style. By the end of the third year, I could have simply handed her a letter I had received and told her to reply, since we had discussed so many issues connected with the

church that she actually knew my thinking on most of them. It is possible without dictation to know just what another person wants to say. Note, however, that this assumes a closeness of relationship and a long period of acquaintance. So a Scripture writer, given the circumstances we have described, could without dictation write God's message just as God wanted it recorded.

Inspiration is herein conceived of as applying to both the writer and the writing. In the primary sense, the writer is the object of the inspiration. As the writer pens the Scripture, however, the quality of inspiredness is communicated to the writing as well. It is inspired in a derived sense. [11] This is much like the definition of revelation as both the revealing and the revealed (see p. 47). We have observed that inspiration presupposes an extended period of God's working with the writer. This not only involves the preparation of the writer but also the preparation of the material for this use. While inspiration in the strict sense probably does not apply to the preservation and transmission of this material, the providence that guides this process should not be overlooked.

Because the Bible has been inspired, we can be confident of having divine instruction. The fact that we did not live when the revelatory events and teachings first came does not leave us spiritually or theologically deprived. We have a sure guide. And we are motivated to study it intensively, since its message is truly God's word to us.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- Why is inspiration so important to the authority of Scripture?
- In what ways does the Bible witness to its divine origins?
- What are the similarities and differences among the five theories of inspiration?
- How would you summarize the characteristics that should be included in an appropriate model of inspiration?
- How does your view of inspiration influence your personal reading of Scripture?

The Dependability of God's Word: *Inerrancy*

Chapter Objectives

After you have completed your study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Cite several different conceptions of inerrancy and comprehend the meaning of each perspective.
- 2. Appraise the value of inerrancy for developing a theology as it relates to the church.
- **3.** Seek to resolve the problems of the actual phenomena of Scripture as they relate to inerrancy.
- **4.** Designate principles and illustrations to define inerrancy.
- **5.** Characterize issues that have developed around inerrancy.

Chapter Summary

Inerrancy is the doctrine that the Bible is fully truthful in all of its teachings. Theologians have argued over the levels to which the Bible is inerrant. If the Bible is not inerrant, then our knowledge of God may be inaccurate and unreliable. Inerrancy is a corollary to the full inspiration of the Bible. While detailed scientific descriptions or mathematically exact statements are not possible, inerrancy means that the Bible, when judged by the usage of its time, teaches the truth without any affirmation of error.

Chapter Outline

Various Conceptions of Inerrancy

The Importance of Inerrancy

- Theological Importance
- Historical Importance
- Epistemological Importance

<u>Inerrancy and Phenomena</u>

Defining Inerrancy

Ancillary Issues

The inerrancy of Scripture is the doctrine that the Bible is fully truthful in all of its teachings. Since many evangelicals consider it an exceedingly important and even crucial issue, it requires careful examination. In a real sense, it is the completion of the doctrine of Scripture. For if God has given special revelation of himself and inspired servants of his to record it, we will want assurance that the Bible is indeed a dependable source of that revelation.

Various Conceptions of Inerrancy

The term "inerrancy" means different things to different people who contend over which position properly deserves to be called by that name. It is therefore important to summarize briefly some of the current positions on the matter of inerrancy.[1]

- 1. Absolute inerrancy holds that the Bible, which includes rather detailed treatment of matters both scientific and historical, is fully true. The impression is conveyed that the biblical writers intended to give a considerable amount of exact scientific and historical data. Thus apparent discrepancies can and must be explained. For example, the description of the molten sea in 2 Chronicles 4:2 indicates that its diameter was ten cubits while the circumference was thirty cubits. However, as we all know, the circumference of a circle is π (3.14159) times the diameter. If, as the biblical text says, the molten sea was circular, there is a discrepancy here, and an explanation must be given.[2]
- 2. *Full inerrancy* also holds that the Bible is completely true. While the Bible does not primarily aim to give scientific and historical data, such scientific and historical assertions as it does make are fully true. There is no essential difference between this position and absolute inerrancy in terms of their view of the religious/theological/spiritual message. The understanding of the scientific and historical references is quite different, however. Full inerrancy regards these references as phenomenal; that is, they are reported the way they appear to the human eye. They are not necessarily exact; rather, they are popular descriptions, often involving general references or approximations. Yet they are correct. What they teach is essentially correct in the way they teach it.[3]

3. *Limited inerrancy* also regards the Bible as inerrant and infallible in its salvific doctrinal references. A distinction is drawn, however, between nonempirical, revealed matters on the one hand and empirical, natural references on the other. The Bible's scientific and historical references reflect the understanding current at the time it was written. The Bible writers were subject to the limitations of their time. Revelation and inspiration did not raise the writers above ordinary knowledge. God did not reveal science or history to them. Consequently, the Bible may well contain what we would term errors in these areas. This, however, is of no great consequence, since the Bible does not purport to teach science and history. For the purposes for which the Bible was given, however, it is fully truthful and inerrant.[4]

The Importance of Inerrancy

Why should the church be concerned about inerrancy at all? Some suggest that inerrancy is an irrelevant, false, or distracting issue. For one thing, "inerrant" is a negative term. It would be far better to use a positive term to describe the Bible. Further, inerrancy is not a biblical concept. In the Bible, erring is a spiritual or moral matter rather than intellectual. Inerrancy distracts us from the proper issues of what the Bible is trying to tell us about our relationship to God. Finally, this issue is harmful to the church. It creates disunity among those who otherwise have a great deal in common. It makes a major issue out of what should be a minor matter at most. [5]

In view of these considerations, would it not be better to disregard the issue and "get on with the matters at hand"? In answer we note that there is a very practical concern at the root of much of the discussion about inerrancy. A student pastor of a small rural church summarized well the concern of his congregation when he said, "My people ask me, 'If the Bible says it, can I believe it?" Whether the Bible is fully truthful is important theologically, historically, and epistemologically.

Theological Importance

Jesus, Paul, and other major New Testament figures regarded and employed details of Scripture as authoritative. This argues for a view of the Bible as completely inspired by God, even to the selection of details within the text. If this is the case, certain implications follow. If God is omniscient, he must know all things. He cannot be ignorant of or in error on any matter. Further, if he is omnipotent, he is able to so affect the biblical author's writing that nothing erroneous enters into the final product. And being a truthful or veracious being, he will certainly desire to utilize these abilities in such a way that humans will not be misled by the Scriptures. Thus, our view of inspiration logically entails the inerrancy of the Bible. Inerrancy is a corollary of the doctrine of full inspiration. If, then, it should be shown that the Bible is not fully truthful, our view of inspiration would also be in jeopardy.

Historical Importance

The church has historically held to the inerrancy of the Bible. While there has not been a fully enunciated theory until modern times, nonetheless there was, down through the years of church history, a general belief in the complete dependability of the Bible. Whether it has meant by this precisely what contemporary inerrantists mean by the term "inerrancy" is not immediately apparent. Whatever the case, we do know that the general idea of inerrancy is not a recent development.

We should also note what have tended to be the implications for other areas of doctrine when biblical inerrancy is abandoned. There is evidence that where a theologian, a school, or a movement begins by regarding biblical inerrancy as a peripheral or optional matter and abandons this doctrine, it frequently then goes on to abandon or alter other doctrines that the church has ordinarily considered quite major, such as the deity of Christ or the Trinity. Since history is the laboratory in which theology tests its ideas, we must conclude that the departure from belief in complete trustworthiness of the Bible is a very serious step, not only in terms of what it does to this one doctrine but even more in terms of what happens to other doctrines as a result. [6]

While there has not been a fully enunciated theory of inerrancy until modern times, nonetheless there was, down through the years of church history, a general belief in the complete dependability of the Bible.

Epistemological Importance

The epistemological question is simply, how do we know? Since our basis for holding to the truth of any theological proposition is that the Bible teaches it, it is of utmost importance that the Bible be found truthful in all of its assertions. If we should conclude that certain propositions (historical or scientific) taught by the Bible are not true, the implications for theological propositions are far-reaching. To the extent that evangelicals abandon the position that everything taught or affirmed by Scripture is true, other bases for doctrine will be sought. This might well be through the resurgence of a philosophy of religion, or what is more likely given the current "relational" orientation, through basing theology on behavioral sciences such as the psychology of religion. But whatever form such an alternative grounding takes, the list of tenets will probably shrink, for it is difficult to establish the Trinity or the virgin birth of Christ on either philosophical argument or the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

Inerrancy and Phenomena

Belief in the inerrancy of the Scriptures is based not on an examination of the nature of all the Bible but on the teaching of the biblical authors regarding its inspiration. That teaching tells us only that the Bible is fully truthful. It does not tell us exactly what the nature of its errorlessness is or in exactly what way the Bible teaches errorlessly. For that we must look at the actual phenomena of Scripture.

There are a number of types of problematic passages. For instance, the biblical account contains apparent discrepancies with references in secular history and with the claims of science. There are also contradictions between parallel passages in Scripture, such as in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles in the Old Testament, and in the Gospels in the New Testament. These contradictions include matters of chronology, numbers, and other details. There are even seeming ethical discrepancies at points. An idea of the various kinds of problems can be gained by comparing Mark 6:8 with Matthew 10:9–10 and Luke 9:3; Acts 7:6 with Exodus 12:40–41; 2 Samuel 10:18 with 1 Chronicles 19:18; 2 Samuel 24:1 with 1 Chronicles 21:1; and James 1:13 with 1 Samuel 18:10.

How are these problems to be dealt with? Several different approaches have been taken. Benjamin B. Warfield, among others, maintained that the doctrinal teaching of biblical inerrancy is in itself such a strong consideration that the phenomena can virtually be ignored. [7] Some theologians, such as Dewey Beegle, contend that the problematic phenomena require us to abandon belief in biblical inerrancy. [8] Yet others, such as Louis Gaussen, attempt to eliminate the troublesome phenomena by harmonizing all the differences; [9] some of their explanations seem to be rather artificial.

None of these approaches is fully satisfactory as a solution. Rather, we would be wisest to follow the way of moderate harmonization.[10] In such an approach, the problems are resolved where available information yields a plausible explanation. With respect to some of the problems, however, we simply lack sufficient information to understand completely. Yet we can continue to hold to inerrancy on the basis of the Bible's own claims, knowing that if we had all the data, the problems would vanish.

Defining Inerrancy

We may now state our understanding of inerrancy: the Bible, when correctly interpreted in light of the level to which culture and the means of communication had developed at the time it was written, and in view of the purposes for which it was given, is fully truthful in all that it affirms. This definition reflects the position earlier termed full inerrancy. We may elaborate and expound on this definition, noting some principles and illustrations that will help us to define inerrancy more specifically and remove some of the difficulties.

1. Inerrancy pertains to what is affirmed or asserted rather than what is merely reported. The Bible reports false statements made by ungodly persons. The presence of these statements in Scripture does not mean they are true; it only guarantees that they are correctly reported. The same judgment can be made about certain statements of godly men who were not speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Stephen, in his speech in Acts 7, may not have been inspired, although he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Thus, his chronological statement in verse 6 is not necessarily free from error. It appears that even Paul and Peter may on occasion have made

incorrect statements. When, however, something is taken by a biblical writer, from whatever source, and incorporated in his message as an affirmation, not merely a report, then it must be judged as truthful. This does not guarantee the canonicity of the book quoted. Nonbelievers, without special revelation or inspiration, may nonetheless be in possession of the truth. While everything within the Bible is truth, it is not necessary to hold that all truth is within the Bible. Thus, Jude's references to two noncanonical books (vv. 9, 14–15) do not necessarily create a problem, for one is not required thereby to believe either that Jude affirmed error or that *Enoch* and the *Assumption of Moses* are divinely inspired books that ought to be included in the canon of the Old Testament.

The question arises: Does inerrancy have any application to moods other than the indicative? The Bible contains questions, wishes, and commands as well as assertions. These, however, are not ordinarily susceptible to being judged either true or false. Thus inerrancy seems not to apply to them. However, in Scripture there are assertions or affirmations (expressed or implied) that someone asked such a question, expressed such a wish, or uttered such a command. While the statement "Love your enemies!" cannot be said to be either true or false, the assertion "Jesus said, 'Love your enemies!" is susceptible to being judged true or false. And as an assertion of Scripture, it is inerrant.

- 2. We must judge the truthfulness of Scripture in terms of its meaning in the cultural setting in which its statements were expressed. For example, we should not expect that the standards of exactness in quotation to which our age of the printing press and mass distribution is accustomed would have been present in the first century. We ought also to recognize that numbers were often used symbolically in ancient times, much more so than is true in our culture today. The names parents chose for their children also carried a special meaning; this is rarely true today. The word "son" has basically one meaning in our language and culture. In biblical times, however, it was broader in meaning, almost tantamount to "descendant." There is a wide diversity, then, between our culture and that of biblical times. When we speak of inerrancy, we mean that what the Bible affirms is fully true in terms of the culture of its time.
- 3. The Bible's assertions are fully true when judged in accordance with the purpose for which they were written. Here the exactness will vary according to the intended use of the material. Suppose a hypothetical case

in which the Bible reported a battle involving 9,476 men. What then would be a correct (or infallible) report? Would 10,000 be accurate? 9,000? 9,500? 9,480? 9,475? Or would only 9,476 be a correct report? The answer is that it depends on the purpose of the writing. If, on the one hand, the report is an official military document an officer is to submit to his superior, the number must be exact. That would be the only way to ascertain whether there were any deserters. If, on the other hand, the intent of the account was simply to give some idea of the size of the battle, then a round number like 10,000 is adequate, and in this setting correct. The same is true regarding the molten sea of 2 Chronicles 4:2. If the aim in giving the dimensions is to provide a plan from which an exact duplicate could be constructed, then it is important to know whether it is to be built with a diameter of ten cubits or a circumference of thirty cubits. But if the purpose is merely to communicate an idea of the size of the object, then the approximation given by the Chronicler is sufficient and may be judged fully true. We often find such approximations in the Bible.

The Bible's assertions are fully true when judged in accordance with the purpose for which they were written.

Giving approximations is a common practice in our own culture. Suppose that my actual gross income last year was \$80,154.78 (a purely hypothetical figure). And suppose you ask me what my gross income for last year was and I reply, "Eighty thousand dollars." Have I told the truth or not? That depends on the situation and setting. If you are a friend and the question is asked in an informal social discussion of the cost of living, I have told the truth. But if you are an Internal Revenue Service agent conducting an audit, then I have not told the truth.

That the purpose of writing must be considered when judging whether something is true applies not only to the use of numbers but also to such matters as the chronological order in historical narratives, which was occasionally modified in the Gospels. In some cases a change in words was necessary in order to communicate the same meaning to different persons. Thus Luke has "Glory in the highest" where Matthew and Mark have "Hosanna in the highest"; the former would make better sense to Luke's

gentile readership than would the latter. Even expansion and compression, which are used by preachers today without their being charged with unfaithfulness to the text, were practiced by biblical writers.

- 4. Reports of historical events and scientific matters are in phenomenal rather than technical language. That is, the writer reports how things appear to the eye. A commonly noted instance of this practice has to do with the matter of the sun rising. When the weatherman on the evening news says that the sun will rise the next morning at 6:37, he has, from a strictly technical standpoint, made an error, for it has been known since the time of Copernicus that the sun does not move—the earth does. Yet there is no problem with this popular expression. Indeed, even in scientific circles the term "sunrise" has become something of an idiom; though scientists regularly use the term, they do not take it literally. Similarly, biblical reports make no effort to be scientifically exact; they do not attempt to theorize over just what actually occurred when, for example, the walls of Jericho fell, or the Jordan River was stopped, or the axhead floated. The writer simply reported what was seen, how it appeared to the eye.
- 5. Difficulties in explaining the biblical text should not be prejudged as indications of error. It is better to wait for the remainder of the data to come in, with the confidence that if we had all the data, the problems could be resolved. In some cases, the data may never come in. It is encouraging, however, that the trend is toward the resolution of difficulties as more data come in. Some of the severe problems of a century ago, such as the unknown Sargon mentioned by Isaiah (20:1), have been satisfactorily explained, and without artificial contortions. And even the puzzle of the death of Judas seems now to have a workable and reasonable solution.

According to Matthew 27:5, Judas committed suicide by hanging himself; Acts 1:18, however, states that "falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out" (RSV). The specific Greek word in Acts that causes the difficulty regarding the death of Judas is *prēnēs*. For a long period of time it was understood to mean only "falling headlong." Twentieth-century investigations of ancient papyri, however, have revealed that this word has another meaning in Koiné Greek. It also means "swelling up."[11] It is now possible to hypothesize an end of Judas's life that seems to accommodate all the data. Having hanged himself, Judas was not discovered for some time. In such a situation the visceral organs begin to degenerate first, causing a swelling of the abdomen characteristic of

cadavers that have not been properly embalmed. And so, "swelling up [Judas] burst open in the middle and his bowels gushed out." While there is no way of knowing whether this is what actually took place, it seems to be a workable and adequate resolution of the difficulty. We must continue to work at resolving all such tensions in our understanding of the Bible.

Ancillary Issues

- 1. Is "inerrancy" a good term, or should it be avoided? Certain problems attach to it. One is that it tends to carry the implication of extreme specificity, which words like "correctness," "truthfulness," "trustworthiness," "dependability," and, to a lesser extent, "accuracy" do not connote. However, because the term "inerrancy" has become common, it probably is wise to use it. But it is not sufficient simply to use the term, since, as we have seen, different persons attach radically different meanings to it. William Hordern's statement is appropriate here as a warning: "To both the fundamentalist and the non-conservative, it often seems that the new conservative is trying to say, 'The Bible is inerrant, but of course this does not mean that it is without error.'"[12] We must carefully explain what we mean when we use the term so there is no misunderstanding.
- 2. We must also define what we mean by error. If this is not done, the meaning of inerrancy will be lost. If there is an "infinite coefficient of elasticity of language," so that the word "truthful" can simply be stretched a bit more, and a bit more, and a bit more, eventually it comes to include everything, and therefore nothing. We must be prepared, then, to indicate what would be considered an error. Statements in Scripture that plainly contradict the facts must be considered errors. If Jesus did not die on the cross, if he did not still the storm on the sea, if the walls of Jericho did not fall, if the people of Israel did not leave their bondage in Egypt and depart for the promised land, then the Bible is in error.
- 3. The doctrine of inerrancy applies in the strict sense only to the originals, but in a derivative sense to copies and translations, that is, to the extent that they reflect the original. This view is often ridiculed as a subterfuge, and it is pointed out that no one has seen the inerrant autographs. [13] Yet, as Carl Henry has pointed out, no one has seen the errant originals either. [14] We must reaffirm that the copies and the

translations are also the Word of God, to the degree that they preserve the original message. When we say they are the Word of God, we do not have in mind, of course, the original process of the inspiration of the biblical writer. Rather, they are the Word of God in a derivative sense that attaches to the product. So it was possible for Paul to write to Timothy that all Scripture is inspired, although undoubtedly the Scripture that he was referring to was a copy and probably also a translation (the Septuagint) as well.

In a world in which there are so many erroneous conceptions and so many opinions, the Bible is a sure source of guidance; for when correctly interpreted, it can be fully relied on in all that it teaches. It is a sure, dependable, and trustworthy authority.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What does it mean to say absolute, full, or limited inerrancy?
- What is the epistemological importance of inerrancy?
- Considering the discrepancies between parallel passages in Scripture, is there reason to discard inerrancy altogether?
- What are the three issues concerning inerrancy, and what is the author's response to them?
- In what ways does inerrancy affirm your confidence in the authority of Scripture?

The Power of God's Word: *Authority*

Chapter Objectives

After completing the study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Define the word "authority" and restate the definition of authority under the parameters of religion.
- 2. Identify the ways in which the meaning of Scripture is established through the divine origin and authorship of the Holy Spirit.
- **3.** Distinguish between the objective and subjective components of authority.
- **4.** Explain the relationship between the Bible and reason in reference to meaning.
- **5.** Compare the two types of authority concerning the Bible, both historical and normative.

Chapter Summary

As Creator and source of all truth, God has the right to command belief and obedience from all humans. Although in some cases God exercises authority directly, he normally uses other means, such as communicating his message to humans. This occurs in the Bible. The Holy Spirit illuminates and applies the teaching of the Bible to both the human understanding and the heart. All Scripture is historically authoritative; that is, it tells us correctly what occurred and what God expected from specific persons at particular times and places. Some of Scripture is also normatively authoritative. Those parts of Scripture, therefore, are to be applied and obeyed in the same fashion in which they were originally given.

Chapter Outline

Religious Authority

The Internal Working of the Holy Spirit

Objective and Subjective Components of Authority

The Bible and Reason

Historical and Normative Authoritativeness

Religious Authority

By authority we mean the right to command belief and/or action. This subject arouses considerable controversy in our society today. External authority is often refused recognition and obedience in favor of accepting one's own judgment as final. This takes an extreme form in some varieties of postmodernism, where every opinion is of equal value to every other, and suggesting that one is objectively more adequate than another is considered intolerant. There is even a strong antiestablishment mood in the area of religion, where individual judgment is often insisted on. For example, many Roman Catholics are questioning the traditional view of papal authority as being infallible.

In the area of religious authority, the crucial question becomes: Is there some person, institution, or document possessing the right to prescribe belief and action in religious matters? In the ultimate sense, if there is a supreme being higher than humans and anything else in the created order, such a person has the right to determine what we are to believe and how we are to live. This volume proposes that God is the ultimate authority in religious matters. He has the right, by virtue of both who he is and what he does, to establish the standard for belief and practice. With respect to major issues he does not ordinarily exercise authority in a direct fashion, however. Rather, he has delegated that authority by creating a book, the Bible. Because it conveys his message, the Bible carries the same weight God himself would command if he were speaking to us personally.

Because the Bible conveys God's message, it carries the same weight God himself would command if he were speaking to us personally.

The Internal Working of the Holy Spirit

Revelation is God's making his truth known to humankind. Inspiration guarantees that what the Bible says is just what God would say if he were to

speak directly. One other element is needed in this chain, however. For the Bible to function as if it is God speaking to us, the Bible reader needs to understand the meaning of the Scriptures and be convinced of their divine origin and authorship. This is accomplished by an internal working of the Holy Spirit, illumining the understanding of the hearer or reader of the Bible, bringing about comprehension of its meaning, and creating certainty of its truth and divine origin.

There are a number of reasons why the illumination or witness of the Holy Spirit is needed if the human is to understand the meaning of the Bible and be certain of its truth. First, there is the ontological difference between God and humanity. God is transcendent; he goes beyond our categories of understanding. He can never be fully grasped within our finite concepts or by our human vocabulary. He can be understood, but not comprehensively. These limitations are inherent in being human. They are a result not of the fall or of individual human sin but of the Creator-creature relationship.

The second reason the special working of the Holy Spirit is needed is that we require certainty with respect to divine matters. Because we are concerned here with matters of (spiritual and eternal) life and death, it is necessary to have more than mere probability. Our need for certainty is in direct proportion to the importance of what is at stake; in matters of eternal consequence, we need a certainty that human reasoning cannot provide. If one is deciding what automobile to purchase, or what kind of paint to apply to one's home, listing the advantages of each of the options will usually suffice. If, however, the question is whom or what to believe with respect to one's eternal destiny, the need to be certain is far greater.

A third reason for the internal working of the Holy Spirit is the limitations that result from human sinfulness individually and as a race. In Matthew 13:13–15 and Mark 8:18, Jesus speaks of those who hear but never understand and see but never perceive. Their condition is depicted in vivid images throughout the New Testament. Their hearts have grown dull, their ears are heavy of hearing, and they have closed their eyes (Matt. 13:15). They know God but do not honor him as God, and so they have become futile in their thinking and their senseless minds are darkened (Rom. 1:21). Romans 11:8 attributes their condition to God, who "gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear." Consequently, "their eyes [were] darkened" (v. 10). All of these references,

as well as numerous other allusions, argue for the need of some special work of the Spirit to enhance human perception and understanding.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14 Paul tells us that the natural person (one who neither perceives nor understands) has not received the gifts of the Spirit of God. In the original we find the word *dechomai*, which signifies not merely to "receive" something passively, but rather to "accept" something, to welcome it, whether a gift or an idea.[1] Natural persons do not accept the gifts of the Spirit because they find the wisdom of God foolish, and are unable to understand it because it must be spiritually discerned or investigated. The problem, then, is not merely that people in their natural state are unwilling to accept the gifts and wisdom of God, but that, without the help of the Holy Spirit, they are unable to understand them.

The context of 1 Corinthians 2:14 contains corroborating evidence that humans cannot understand without the Spirit's aid. In verse 11 we read that only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. Paul also indicates in 1:20–21 that the world cannot know God through its wisdom, for God has made foolish the wisdom of this world. Indeed, the wisdom of the world is folly to God (3:19). The gifts of the Spirit are imparted in words taught not by human wisdom but by the Spirit (2:13). From all of these considerations, it appears that Paul is not saying that unspiritual persons understand but do not accept. Rather, they do not accept, at least in part, because they do not understand.

But this condition is overcome when the Holy Spirit begins to work in us. Paul speaks of having the eyes of the heart enlightened—the verb form used here suggests that something has been done and remains in effect (Eph. 1:18). In 2 Corinthians 3, he speaks of the removal of the veil placed on the mind (v. 16) so that one may behold the glory of the Lord (v. 18). The New Testament refers to this enlightenment of humans in various other ways: circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:29), being filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding (Col. 1:9), the gift of understanding to know Jesus Christ (1 John 5:20), hearing the voice of the Son of God (John 10:3). What previously had seemed to be foolish (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:14) and a stumbling block (1 Cor. 1:23) now appears to the believer as the power of God (1 Cor. 1:18), as secret and hidden wisdom of God (1:24; 2:7), and as the mind of Christ (2:16).

What we have been describing here is a onetime work of the Spirit—regeneration. It introduces a categorical difference between the believer and

the unbeliever. There is also, however, a continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, a work particularly described and elaborated by Jesus in his message to his followers in John 14–16:

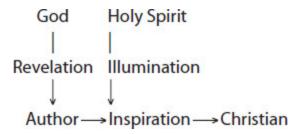
- 1. The Holy Spirit will teach believers all things and bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had taught them (14:26).
- 2. The Holy Spirit will witness to Jesus. The disciples will also be witnesses to Jesus, because they have been with him from the beginning (15:26–27).
- 3. The Holy Spirit will convict (*elenchō*) the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8). This particular word implies rebuking in such a way as to bring about conviction, as contrasted with *epitimaō*, which may suggest simply an undeserved (Matt. 16:22) or ineffectual (Luke 23:40) rebuke.[2]
- 4. The Holy Spirit will guide believers into all the truth. He will not speak on his own authority, but will speak whatever he hears (John 16:13). In the process he will also glorify Jesus (16:14).

Note in particular the designation of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth (14:17). John's account of what Jesus said refers to the Holy Spirit not as the true Spirit but as the Spirit of truth. This may represent nothing more than the literal translation of an Aramaic expression into Greek, but more likely signifies that the very nature of the Spirit is truth. He is the one who communicates truth. The world is not able to receive (*lambanō*, simple reception, as opposed to *dechomai*, acceptance) him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. Believers, however, know him, because he abides with them and will be in them.

The objective Word, the written Scripture, together with the subjective word, the inner illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit, constitutes the authority for the Christian.

Let us summarize the role of the Spirit as depicted in John 14–16. He guides into truth, calling to remembrance the words of Jesus, not speaking on his own, but speaking what he hears, bringing about conviction, witnessing to Christ. This work seems to be not so much a new ministry, or the addition of new truth not previously made known, but rather an action of the Holy Spirit in relationship to truth already revealed. Therefore, the Holy Spirit's ministry involves elucidating the truth, bringing belief and persuasion and conviction, but not new revelation.

Figure 2. The Pattern of Authority



Objective and Subjective Components of Authority

There is, then, as illustrated in figure 2, what Bernard Ramm has called a *pattern* of authority.[3] The objective Word, the written Scripture, together with the subjective word, the inner illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit, constitutes the authority for the Christian.

Scholastic orthodoxy of the seventeenth century virtually maintained that the authority is the Bible alone. In some cases this was also the position of twentieth-century American fundamentalism. Those who hold this position see an objective quality in the Bible that automatically brings one into contact with God.

Reading the Bible daily is thought to confer value in and of itself. The old adage "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" has a theological parallel: "a chapter a day keeps the devil away." A potential danger here is that the Bible may become almost a fetish.[4]

However, some groups regard the Holy Spirit as the chief authority for the Christian. Certain charismatic groups, for example, believe that special prophecy is occurring today. New messages from God are being given by the Holy Spirit. In most cases, these messages are regarded as explaining the true meaning of certain biblical passages. Thus, the contention is that while the Bible is authoritative, in practice its meaning would often not be found without special action by the Holy Spirit. [5]

Actually, it is the combination of these two factors that constitutes authority. Both are needed. The written Word, correctly interpreted, is the objective basis of authority. The inward illuminating and persuading work of the Holy Spirit is the subjective dimension. Together, the two yield a maturity that is necessary in the Christian life—a cool head and warm heart (not a cold heart and hot head). As one pastor put it in a rather crude fashion: "If you have the Bible without the Spirit, you will dry up. If you have the Spirit without the Bible, you will blow up. But if you have both the Bible and the Spirit together, you will grow up."

The Bible and Reason

At this point a question arises concerning the relationship between biblical authority and reason. Is there not some conflict here? Ostensibly the authority is the Bible, but various means of interpretation are brought to bear on the Bible to elicit its meaning. If reason is the means of interpretation, is not reason, rather than the Bible, the real authority, since it in effect comes to the Bible from a position of superiority?

Here a distinction must be drawn between legislative authority and judicial authority. In the US federal government, the houses of Congress produce legislation, but the judiciary (ultimately the Supreme Court) decides what the legislation means. They are separate branches of government, each with its own appropriate authority. Parallel structures are found in other democracies.

This seems to be a good way to think of the relationship between Scripture and reason. Scripture is our supreme legislative authority. It gives us the content of our belief and of our code of behavior and practice. Reason does not tell us the content of our belief. It does not discover truth. When we come to determine the message's meaning, however, and, at a later stage, assess its truth, we must utilize the power of reasoning. We must employ the best methods of interpretation, or hermeneutics. And then we must decide whether the Christian belief system is true by rationally examining and evaluating the evidence. This we term "apologetics." While

there is a dimension of the self-explanatory within Scripture, Scripture alone will not give us the meaning of Scripture. There is, therefore, no inconsistency in regarding Scripture as our supreme authority in the sense that it tells us what to do and believe, and employing various hermeneutical and exegetical methods to determine its meaning.

Historical and Normative Authoritativeness

One other distinction needs to be drawn and elaborated. It concerns the way in which the Bible is authoritative for us. The Bible is certainly authoritative in telling us what God's will was for certain individuals and groups within the biblical period. The question being considered here is: Is what was binding on those people also binding on us?

It is necessary to distinguish between two types of authority: historical and normative. The Bible informs us as to what God commanded the people in the biblical situation and what he expects of us. Insofar as the Bible teaches us what occurred and what the people were commanded in biblical times, it is historically authoritative. But is it also normatively authoritative? Are we bound to carry out the same actions as were expected of those people? Here one must be careful not to identify too quickly God's will for those people with his will for us. It will be necessary to distinguish the permanent essence of the message, and the temporary form of its expression. It is quite possible for something to be historically authoritative without being normatively authoritative.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- For what reasons is the Holy Spirit needed if we are to understand the Bible and be certain of its truth?
- What is the importance of 1 Corinthians 2:14 in relation to the Holy Spirit?
- How would you compare and contrast the objective and subjective components of authority?
- How are biblical hermeneutics and apologetics involved in the relationship between Scripture and reason?

Scripture?			

God

The Doctrine of God

Chapter Objectives

After completing your study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Outline the biblical basis for God's immanence and transcendence.
- 2. Identify at least five implications of the biblical view of immanence that affect our understanding and practice.
- **3.** Identify six implications from the biblical view of transcendence that affect our belief and practice.
- **4.** Distinguish between the attributes of God and the properties of the persons of the Trinity.
- **5.** Differentiate the attributes of God from the acts of God.
- **6.** Classify the attributes of God into his greatness and his moral qualities.

Chapter Summary

The Bible teaches that God is both immanent and transcendent. God is present and active within his creation, but superior to and independent of everything he has created. These biblical ideas must be kept in balance. The tendency to emphasize one or the other will lead to a faulty conception of God. Several methods have been employed to classify the attributes or qualities of God. We have chosen to follow the classification that differentiates between his greatness and goodness.

Chapter Outline

The Immanence and Transcendence of God

- Implications of Immanence
- Implications of Transcendence

The Nature of Attributes

Classifications of Attributes

The doctrine of God is the central point for much of the rest of theology. One's view of God might even be thought of as supplying the whole framework within which one's theology is constructed, life is lived, and ministry is conducted. Problems or difficulties on two levels make it evident that there is a need for a correct understanding of God. First is the popular or practical level. In his book *Your God Is Too Small*, J. B. Phillips points out some common distorted understandings of God. [1] Some people think of God as a kind of celestial police officer who looks for opportunities to pounce on erring and straying persons. A country song enunciates this view: "God's gonna get 'cha for that; God's gonna get 'cha for that. There's no place to run and hide, for he knows where you're at!" Insurance companies, with their references to "acts of God"—always catastrophic occurrences—seem to have a powerful, malevolent being in mind. The opposite view, that God is grandfatherly, is also prevalent. Here God is conceived of as an indulgent, kindly old gentleman who would never want to detract from humans' enjoyment of life. These and many other false conceptions of God need to be corrected if our spiritual lives are to have any real meaning and depth.

Problems on a more sophisticated level also point out the need for a correct view of God. The biblical understanding of God has often been problematic. In the early church, the doctrine of the Trinity created special tension and debate. While that particular topic has not totally ceased to present difficulty, other issues have become prominent in our day. One of these concerns God's relationship to the creation. Is he so separate and removed from the creation (transcendent) that he does not work through it, and hence nothing can be known of him from it? Or is he to be found within human society and the processes of nature (immanent)? These and other issues call for clear thinking and careful enunciation of the understanding of God.

Many errors have been made in attempts to understand God, some of them opposite in nature. One is an excessive analysis, in which God is submitted to a virtual autopsy. The attributes of God are laid out and classified in a fashion similar to the approach taken in an anatomy textbook. [2] It is also possible to make the study of God an excessively speculative matter; in that case the speculative conclusion itself, instead of a closer relationship with him, becomes the end. This should not be so. Rather, the

study of God's nature should be seen as a means to a more accurate understanding of him and hence a closer personal relationship with him.

The Immanence and Transcendence of God

An important pair of concepts that we must make certain we preserve is the doctrine of God's immanence within his creation and the doctrine of his transcendence of it. Both truths are taught in Scripture. Jeremiah 23:24, for example, stresses God's presence throughout the whole of the universe.

```
"Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?" declares the LORD.

"Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.
```

In this very context, however, both immanence and transcendence appear together.

```
"Am I only a God nearby,"

declares the LORD,

"and not a God far away?" (v. 23)
```

Paul tells the philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens, "He is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring'" (Acts 17:27–28).

In Isaiah 55:8–9, however, we read that God's thoughts transcend ours:

```
"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,"

declares the LORD.

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."
```

In 6:1–5 the Lord is depicted as "high and exalted, seated on a throne." The seraphim call out, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty," an indication of

his transcendence, and add, "the whole earth is full of his glory," a reference to his immanence.

The meaning of immanence is that God is present and active within his creation, and within the human race, even in those of its members who do not believe in or obey him. His influence is everywhere. He is at work in and through natural processes. The meaning of transcendence is that God is not merely a quality of nature or of humanity; he is not simply the highest human being. He is not limited to our ability to understand him. His holiness and goodness go far beyond, infinitely beyond ours, and this is true of his knowledge and power as well.

His holiness and goodness go far beyond, infinitely beyond ours, and this is true of his knowledge and power as well.

It is important to keep these two doctrines together, but it is not always easy to do so, for there are problems in knowing how to view them. The traditional way to think about God's transcendence has been spatial in nature: God is in heaven, high above the world. This is the picture found in the Bible, but we now realize that "up" and "down" do not really apply to a spirit, who is not located at some specific place within the universe. Further, with our understanding of the earth as a sphere, "up" and "down" are not meaningful terms. Are there other images that can be used to accurately convey the truth of God's transcendence and immanence?

I find helpful the concept of different levels or realms of reality. For example, several realities can coexist within the same space and yet be independent in such a way that they cannot be accessed from one another. Indeed, several different instances of the same general type of reality can nonetheless be separated from one another in certain ways. We are told by physicists that more than one universe might occupy the same space. Another illustration is the phenomenon of sound. There are many different sounds present (immanent) that we do not hear. The reason is that these sounds are carried by a much higher-frequency carrier wave, so that the unaided human ear cannot detect them. If, however, we have a radio receiver that can "separate" the audio frequency wave from the radio frequency carrier wave, these sounds become audible. In a similar fashion,

many visual images are present but unseen unless we have a television receiver. God is present and active within his creation, yet he is also transcendent to it, for he is a totally different type of being. He is divine.

We have noted the importance of maintaining both emphases. Immanence signifies that God does much of his work through natural means. He is not restricted to miracles. He even uses ordinary, unbelieving humans such as Cyrus, whom he described as his "shepherd," his "anointed" (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). He uses technology and human skill and learning. Yet it is important to bear in mind the truth that God is transcendent. He is infinitely more than any natural or human event. If we emphasize immanence too much, we may identify everything that happens as God's will and working, as did the German Christians who in the 1930s regarded Adolf Hitler's policies as God's working in the world. We must bear in mind that there is a separation between God's holiness and much of what happens in the world. If we emphasize transcendence too much, however, we may expect God to work miracles at all times, while he may purpose instead to work through our effort. We may tend to mistreat the creation, forgetting that he himself is present and active there. We may depreciate the value of what non-Christians do, or their possession of some degree of sensitivity to the message of the gospel, forgetting that God is at work in and in touch with them.

Implications of Immanence

Divine immanence of the limited degree taught in Scripture carries several implications.

- 1. God is not limited to working directly to accomplish his purposes. While it is obviously a work of God when his people pray and a miraculous healing occurs, it is also God's work when through the application of medical knowledge and skill a physician is successful in preventing illness or bringing a patient back to health. Medicine is part of God's general revelation, and the work of the doctor is a channel of God's activity.
- 2. God may use persons and organizations that are not avowedly Christian. In biblical times, God did not limit himself to working through the covenant nation of Israel or through the church. He even used Assyria, a pagan nation, to chasten Israel. He is able to use secular or nominally Christian organizations. Even non-Christians do some genuinely good and commendable things.

- 3. We should have an appreciation for all God has created. The world is God's, and he is present and active within it. While nature is given to humans to be used to satisfy their legitimate needs, they ought not exploit it for their own pleasure or out of greed. The doctrine of divine immanence therefore has ecological application. It also has implications regarding our attitudes to fellow humans. God is genuinely present within everyone (although not in the special sense in which he indwells Christians). Therefore, people are not to be despised or treated disrespectfully.
- 4. We can learn something about God from his creation. All that is has been brought into being by God and, further, is actively indwelt by him. We may therefore detect clues about what God is like by observing the behavior of the created universe. For example, a definite pattern of logic seems to apply within the creation. There is an orderliness, a regularity, about it. Those who believe that God is sporadic, arbitrary, or whimsical by nature and that his actions are characterized by paradox and even contradiction either have not taken a close look at the behavior of the world or have assumed that God is in no sense operating there.
- 5. God's immanence means that there are points at which the gospel can make contact with the unbeliever. If God is to some extent present and active within the whole of the created world, he is present and active within humans who have not made a personal commitment of their lives to him. Thus, there are points at which they will be sensitive to the truth of the gospel message, places where they are in touch with God's working. Evangelism aims to find those points and direct the message of the gospel to them.

<u>Implications of Transcendence</u>

The doctrine of transcendence has several implications that will affect our other beliefs and practices.

- 1. There is something higher than human beings. Goodness, truth, and value are not determined by the shifting flux of this world and human opinion. There is something that gives us value from above.
- 2. God can never be completely captured in human concepts. This means that all of our doctrinal ideas, helpful and basically correct though they may be, cannot fully exhaust God's nature. He is not limited to our understanding of him.

- 3. Our salvation is not our achievement. We are not able to raise ourselves to God's level by fulfilling his standards for us. Even if we were able to do so, it still would not be our accomplishment. The very fact that we know what he expects of us is a matter of his self-revelation, not our discovery. Even apart from the additional problem of sin, then, fellowship with God would be strictly a matter of his gift to us.
- 4. There will always be a difference between God and humans. The gap between us is not merely a moral and spiritual disparity that originated with the fall. It is metaphysical, stemming from creation. Even when redeemed and glorified, we will still be renewed human beings. We will never become God.
- 5. Reverence is appropriate in our relationship with God. Some worship, rightfully stressing the joy and confidence that the believer has in relationship to a loving heavenly Father, goes beyond that point to an excessive familiarity, treating him as an equal, or even worse, as a servant. If we have grasped the fact of the divine transcendence, however, this will not happen. While there is room and need for enthusiasm of expression, and perhaps even exuberance, it should never lead to a loss of respect. Our prayers will also be characterized by reverence. Rather than making demands, we will pray as Jesus did, "Not my will, but yours be done."
- 6. We will look for genuinely transcendent working by God. Thus we will not expect that only those things that can be accomplished by natural means will come to pass. While we will use every available technique of modern learning to accomplish God's ends, we will never cease to be dependent on his working. We will not neglect prayer for his guidance or special intervention.

As with God's immanence, so also with transcendence we must guard against excessive emphasis. We will not look for God merely in the religious or devotional; we will also look for him in the "secular" aspects of life. We will not look for miracles exclusively, but we will not disregard them either. Some attributes, such as holiness, eternity, and omnipotence, are expressive of the transcendent character of God. Others, such as omnipresence, accentuate his immanence. If all these aspects of God's nature are given the emphasis and attention the Bible assigns to them, a fully rounded understanding of God will result. While God is never fully within our grasp since he goes far beyond our ideas and forms, he is always available to us when we turn to him.

The Nature of Attributes

If we are to understand the relationship of God to the creation, it is important to understand his nature. When we speak of the attributes of God, we are referring to those qualities of God that constitute what he is, the very characteristics of his nature. We are not referring here to his acts, such as creating, guiding, and preserving, nor to his corresponding roles of Creator, Guide, Preserver.

The attributes are qualities of the entire Godhead. They should not be confused with *properties*, which, technically speaking, are the distinctive characteristics of the various persons of the Trinity. Properties are functions (general), activities (more specific), or acts (most specific) of the individual members of the Godhead.

The attributes are permanent and intrinsic qualities, which cannot be gained or lost. Thus holiness is not in this sense an attribute (a permanent, inseparable characteristic) of Adam, but it is of God. God's attributes are essential and inherent dimensions of his very nature. Although our understanding of God is undoubtedly filtered through our own mental framework, his attributes are not our conceptions projected onto him. They are objective characteristics of his nature.

The attributes are inseparable from God's being or essence. Some earlier theologies thought of the attributes as somehow adhering to or at least in some way distinguishable from the underlying substance or being or essence.[3] In many cases, this idea was based on the Aristotelian conception of substance and attribute. Some other theologies have gone to the opposite extreme, virtually denying that God has an essence. Here the attributes are pictured as a sort of collection of qualities, as fragmentary parts or segments of God.[4] It is better to conceive of God's attributes as his nature, not a collection of separate parts or an addition to his essence. Thus, God is his love, holiness, and power. These are simply different ways of viewing the unified being, God. God is richly complex, and these conceptions are merely attempts to grasp different objective aspects or facets of his being.

When we speak of the incomprehensibility of God, then, we do not mean that there is an unknown being or essence beyond or behind his attributes. Rather, we mean that we do not know his qualities or his nature completely and exhaustively. We know God only as he has revealed himself. While his self-revelation is undoubtedly consistent with and accurate to his full nature, it is not an exhaustive revelation. Further, we do not totally understand or know comprehensively that which he has revealed to us of himself. Thus there is, and always will be, an element of mystery regarding God.

Classifications of Attributes

In attempts to better understand God, various systems of classifying his attributes have been devised. With some modifications, the classification adopted for this study is that of natural and moral attributes. The moral attributes are those that in the human context would relate to the concept of rightness (as opposed to wrongness). Holiness, love, mercy, and faithfulness are examples. Natural attributes are the nonmoral superlatives of God, such as his knowledge and power. [5] Instead of natural and moral, however, we will speak of attributes of *greatness* and attributes of *goodness*. We turn first, in the following chapter, to the qualities of greatness, which include spirituality, life, personality, infinity, and constancy.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What are some problems and distortions that evidence the need for a correct understanding of God?
- What difficulties arise when we overemphasize either immanence or transcendence?
- How do we confuse God's attributes with God's acts? Give some examples.
- What is the relationship between God's essence and his attributes?
- In what ways would your relationship with God be different if God were only transcendent, or only immanent?

The Greatness of God

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. List the attributes of God's greatness—spirituality, personality, life, infinity, and constancy—and express the essence of each.
- 2. Explain the ways in which God is infinite.
- **3.** Foster confidence in the almighty God.

Chapter Summary

Certain attributes of God express his greatness. We will concentrate in this chapter on God as being personal, all-powerful, eternal, spirit, present everywhere within his creation, and unchanging in his perfection.

Chapter Outline

Spirituality

<u>Life</u>

Personality

Infinity

- Space
- Time
- Knowledge
- Power

Constancy

Spirituality

Among the most basic of God's attributes of greatness is the fact that he is spirit; that is, he is not composed of matter and does not possess a physical nature. This is most clearly stated by Jesus in John 4:24, "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (NIV 1984). It is also implied in various references to his invisibility (John 1:18; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15–16).

One consequence of God's spirituality is that he does not have the limitations involved with a physical body. For one thing, he is not limited to a particular geographical or spatial location. This is implicit in Jesus's statement, "A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (John 4:21). Consider also Paul's statement in Acts 17:24: "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands." Furthermore, he is not destructible, as is material nature.

Of course, numerous passages suggest that God has physical features such as hands or feet. It seems most helpful to treat these as anthropomorphisms, attempts to express the truth about God through human analogies. There are also cases where God appears in physical form, particularly in the Old Testament in theophanies, or temporary selfmanifestations of God. It seems best to take the clear statements about God's spirituality and invisibility at face value and interpret the anthropomorphisms and theophanies in light of them. Indeed, Jesus himself clearly indicated that a spirit does not have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39).

In biblical times, the doctrine of God's spirituality was a counter to the practice of idolatry and nature worship. God, being spirit, could not be represented by any physical object or likeness. That he is not restricted by geographical location also countered the idea that God could be contained and controlled. In our day, Mormons maintain that both God the Son and the Father have a physical body, although the Holy Spirit does not. Mormonism contends that an immaterial body cannot exist.[1] This is clearly contradicted by the Bible's teaching on the spirituality of God.

God is characterized by life. This is affirmed in Scripture in several different ways. It is found in the assertion that he *is*. His very name "I AM" (Exod. 3:14) indicates that he is a living God. Scripture does not argue for his existence. It simply affirms it or, more often, merely assumes it. Hebrews 11:6 says that "anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Thus existence is considered a most basic aspect of his nature.

The living God is frequently contrasted with the other gods, inanimate objects of metal or stone. Jeremiah 10:10 refers to him as the true God, the living God, who controls nature, whereas "these gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens" (v. 11). First Thessalonians 1:9 draws a similar contrast between the idols from which the Thessalonians had turned and the "living and true God."

God's life is different from that of every other living being. While all other beings have their life in God, he does not derive his life from any external source. He is never depicted as having been brought into being. John 5:26 says that he has life in himself. The adjective "eternal" is frequently applied to him, implying that there never was a time when he did not exist. Further, we are told that "in the beginning," before anything else came to be, God was already in existence (Gen. 1:1). Thus, he could not have derived his existence from anything else. It is preferable to refer to God as the uncaused one rather than self-caused. His very nature is to exist. It is not necessary for him to will his own existence. For God not to exist would be logically contradictory.

Moreover, God's continued existence does not depend on anything outside of himself. All other beings, insofar as they are alive, need something—nourishment, warmth, protection—to sustain that life. God, however, has no such need. Paul denies that God needs anything or is served by human hands (Acts 17:25).

While God is independent in the sense of not needing anything else for his existence, this is not to say that he is aloof, indifferent, or unconcerned. God relates to us, but by his choice, not because he is compelled by some need. He has acted and continues to act out of $agap\bar{e}$, unselfish love, rather than out of need.

A proper understanding of this aspect of God's nature should free us from the idea that God needs us. God has chosen to use us to accomplish his purposes, and in that sense he now needs us. He could, however, have chosen to bypass us. It is to our gain that he permits us to know and serve him, and it is our loss if we reject that opportunity.

Personality

In addition to being spiritual and alive, God is personal. He is an individual being, with self-consciousness and will, capable of feeling, choosing, and having a reciprocal relationship with other personal and social beings.

Scripture indicates God's personality in several ways. One is that God has a name he assigns to himself and by which he reveals himself. In biblical times names were not mere labels to distinguish one person from another. In our impersonal society, names are seldom chosen for their meaning; rather, parents choose a name because they happen to like it, or it is currently popular. The Hebrew approach was quite different, however. A name was chosen very carefully, and with attention to its significance. [2] When Moses wonders how he should respond when the Israelites will ask the name of the God who has sent him, God identifies himself as "I AM" or "I WILL BE" (Yahweh, Jehovah, the Lord—Exod. 3:14). By this he demonstrates that he is not an abstract, unknowable being, or a nameless force. This name is not used merely to refer to God or describe him but also to address him. Genesis 4:26 indicates that humans began to call on the name of the Lord. Psalm 20 speaks of boasting in the name of the Lord (v. 7) and calling on him (v. 9). The name is to be spoken and treated respectfully, according to Exodus 20:7.

A further indication of God's personal nature is his activity. He is depicted in the Bible as knowing and communing with human persons. In the earliest picture of his relationship with humankind (Gen. 3), God comes to and talks with Adam and Eve apparently as a regular practice. Although this representation of God is undoubtedly anthropomorphic, it nonetheless teaches that he is a person who relates to persons as such. He has all the capacities associated with personality: knowing, feeling, willing, acting.

Several implications follow. Because God is a person, our relationship with him has a dimension of warmth and understanding. God is not a

machine or a computer that automatically supplies the needs of people. He is a knowing, loving, good Father.

God is unlimited and illimitable in terms of space, time, knowledge, and power.

Further, our relationship with God is not merely a one-way street. He can be approached. He can be spoken to, and he in turn speaks. God does not simply receive and accept what we offer. He is a living, reciprocating being. He is not merely one of whom we hear but also one whom we meet and know. Accordingly, God is to be treated as a being, not an object or force to be used or manipulated.

God is an end in himself, not a means to an end. He is of value to us for what he is in himself, not merely for what he *does*. The rationale for the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3), is given in the preceding verse: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt." We misread the passage if we interpret it as meaning that the Israelites were to put God first because of what he had done—that out of gratitude they were to make him their only God. Rather, what he had done was the proof of what he is; it is because of what he is to be loved and served, not only supremely but exclusively.

Infinity

God is infinite. This means not only that God is unlimited but also that he is illimitable. In this respect, God is unlike anything we experience. Even those things that common sense once told us are infinite or boundless now seen to have limits. Energy at an earlier time seemed inexhaustible. We have in recent years become aware that our usual sources of energy have rather sharp limitations, and we are approaching those limits considerably more rapidly than we imagined. The infinity of God, however, speaks of a limitless being.

Space

The infinity of God may be thought of in several respects. We think first in terms of space—what have traditionally been referred to as immensity and omnipresence. God is not subject to limitations of space. By this we do not mean merely the limitation of being in a particular place—that if an object is in one place it cannot be in another. Rather, it is improper to think of God as present in space at all. All finite objects have a location. They are somewhere. This necessarily prevents their being somewhere else. With God, however, the question of whereness or location is not applicable. God is the one who brought space (and time) into being. He was before there was space. He cannot be localized at a particular point. Consider here Paul's statement that God does not dwell in human-made shrines, because he is the Lord of heaven and earth; he made the world and everything in it (Acts 17:24–25).

Another aspect of God's infinity in terms of space is that there is no place where he cannot be found. We are here facing the tension between the immanence of God (he is everywhere) and the transcendence (he is not anywhere). The point here is that nowhere within the creation is God inaccessible. Jeremiah quotes God as saying, "Am I only a God nearby, . . . and not a God far away?" (Jer. 23:23). The implication seems to be that being a God at hand does not preclude his being far off as well. He fills the whole heaven and earth (v. 24). Thus, we cannot hide "in secret places" where we cannot be seen. The psalmist found that he could not flee from the presence of God—wherever the psalmist went, God would be there (Ps. 139:7–12). Jesus carried this concept a step further. In giving the Great Commission, he commanded his disciples to go as witnesses everywhere, even to the end of the earth, and he would be with them to the end of the age (Matt. 28:19–20; Acts 1:8). Thus, he in effect indicated that he is not limited either by space or by time.

Time

God is also infinite in relation to time. He was before time began and will have no end. The question "How old is God?" is simply inappropriate. He is no older now than a year ago, for infinity plus one is no more than infinity.

God is the one who always is. He was, he is, he will be. Psalm 90:1–2 says:

throughout all generations.

Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Jude 25 says: "To the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!" A similar thought is found in Ephesians 3:21. The use of expressions such as "the first and the last" and the "Alpha and Omega" serve to convey the same idea (Isa. 44:6; Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13).

There have been sharp philosophical disputes over whether God is temporal (infinitely extended within time, or everlasting) or atemporal (outside of time, or eternal). One of the standard criticisms of the atemporal position by the temporalists is that a God outside time would have no succession of moments or events within his nature, and thus would not know what was going on at that point in earthly time, because he would not know what time it was on earth. This argument, of course, assumes that God must be either within time or outside it. Science may, however, currently offer us some insight into the problem.

Albert Einstein insisted that, instead of viewing reality as three dimensions of space plus time, it should be viewed as a four-dimensional space-time universe, in which time and space are conjointly relative.[3] If this is the case, then God's relationship to time, at least as we experience it, should be understood as parallel to his relationship to space. Since God is not simply infinitely far away within space, but in a totally different dimension of reality, so he would be understood as "outside" (admittedly a spatial metaphor) time. It would appear that the parallelism calls for us to see God as nontemporal ontologically, but influentially present within time.

God is aware of what is happening, has happened, and will happen at each point in time. Yet at any given point within time he is also conscious of the distinction between what is now occurring, what has been, and what will be.[4]

Knowledge

God's infinity may also be considered with respect to objects of knowledge. His understanding is immeasurable (Ps. 147:5). Jesus said that not one sparrow can fall to the ground without the Father's will (Matt.

10:29), and that even the hairs of the disciples' heads are all numbered (v. 30). We are all completely transparent before God (Heb. 4:13). He sees and knows us totally. And he knows every genuine possibility, even when they seem limitless in number.

One aspect of divine knowledge that has been debated extensively is his foreknowledge. That God knows the future, as well as the past and present, is taught in Scripture in at least two ways. One is the direct claims to knowing the future, a feature that Jehovah declares distinguishes him from other claimed deities (Isa. 44:8). This theme is repeated several times in Isaiah 42–48. Further, this foreknowledge is demonstrated repeatedly by the prophecies that were given and came to pass. Over against this are passages in which God seems to discover something he did not know ("Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son" [Gen. 22:12]) or passages in which he changes his mind ("The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain" [Gen. 6:6 NIV 1984]). These are probably best understood as depictions of God as being like a human (anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms), rather than literal descriptions.[5]

A further factor, in light of this knowledge, is God's wisdom. By this is meant that God acts in light of all facts and correct values. Knowing all things, God knows what is good. In Romans 11:33 Paul eloquently assesses God's knowledge and wisdom:

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

The psalmist describes God's works as having all been made in wisdom (Ps. 104:24).

God has access to all information. So his judgments are made wisely. He never has to revise his estimation of something because of additional information. He sees all things in their proper perspective; thus he does not give anything a higher or lower value than what it ought to have. One can therefore pray confidently, knowing that God will not grant something that is not good.

Power

Finally, God's infinity may also be considered in relationship to what is traditionally referred to as the omnipotence of God. By this we mean that God is able to do all things that are proper objects of his power. This is taught in Scripture in several ways. There is evidence of God's unlimited power in one of his names, 'el shaddai. When God appears to Abraham to reaffirm his covenant, he identifies himself by saying, "I am God Almighty" (Gen. 17:1). We also see God's omnipotence in his overcoming apparently insurmountable problems. The promise in Jeremiah 32:15 that fields will once again be bought and sold in Judah seems incredible in view of the impending fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. Jeremiah's faith, however, is strong: "Ah Sovereign LORD! . . . Nothing is too hard for you" (v. 17). And after speaking of how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, Jesus responds to his disciples' question as to who can then be saved: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

This power of God is manifested in several different ways. References to the power of God over nature are common, especially in the Psalms, often with an accompanying statement about God's having created the whole universe. God's power is also evident in his control of the course of history. Paul says of God, "he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands" for all peoples (Acts 17:26). Perhaps most amazing in many ways is God's power in human life and personality. The real measure of divine power is not the ability of God to create or to lift a large stone. In many ways, changing human personality, turning sinners to salvation, is far more difficult.

There are, however, certain qualifications of this all-powerful character of God. He cannot arbitrarily do anything whatsoever that we may conceive of. He can do only those things that are proper objects of his power. Thus, he cannot do the logically absurd or contradictory. He cannot make square circles or triangles with four corners. He cannot undo what happened in the past, although he may wipe out its effects or even the memory of it. He cannot act contrary to his nature—he cannot be cruel or unconcerned. He cannot fail to do what he has promised. In reference to God's having made a promise and having confirmed it with an oath, the writer to the Hebrews says: "God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we . . . may be greatly encouraged" (Heb. 6:18). All of these "inabilities," however, are not weaknesses, but strengths. The

inability to do evil or to lie or to fail is a mark of positive strength rather than of failure.

Another aspect of the power of God is that he is free. While God is bound to keep his promises, he was not initially under any compulsion to make those promises. On the contrary, Scripture, and Paul in particular, frequently attributes his decisions and actions to the "good pleasure of his will." God's decisions and actions are not determined by consideration of any factors outside himself. They are simply a matter of his own free choice.

Constancy

In several places in Scripture, God is described as unchanging. In Psalm 102, the psalmist contrasts God's nature with the heavens and the earth.

```
They will perish, but you remain; . . . and they will be discarded.

But you remain the same, and your years will never end. (vv. 26–27)
```

God himself says that although his people have turned aside from his statutes, "I the LORD do not change" (Mal. 3:6). James says that God "does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17).

This divine constancy involves several aspects. There is first no quantitative change. God cannot increase in anything, because he is already perfection; neither can he decrease, for if he were to, he would cease to be God. There also is no qualitative change. God's nature does not undergo modification. Therefore, God does not change his mind, plans, or actions, for these rest on his nature, which remains unchanged no matter what occurs. Indeed, in Numbers 23:19 the argument is that since God is not human, his actions must be unalterable. Further, God's intentions as well as his plans are always consistent, simply because his will does not change. Thus, God is ever faithful to his covenant with Abraham, for example.

What, then, are we to make of those passages where God seems to change his mind, or to repent over what he has done? These passages can be explained in several ways.

- 1. Some of them are to be understood as anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms. They are simply descriptions of God's actions and feelings in human terms, and from a human perspective. Included here are representations of God as experiencing pain or regret.
- 2. What may seem to be changes of mind may actually be new stages in the working out of God's plan. An example of this is the offering of salvation to the gentiles. While a part of God's original plan, it represented a rather sharp break with what had preceded.
- 3. Some apparent changes of mind are changes of orientation resulting from humans' move into a different relationship with God. God did not change when Adam sinned; rather, humanity had moved into God's disfavor. This also works in reverse. Take the case of Nineveh. God in effect says, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed, *unless they repent*." Nineveh repented and was spared. It was humans who had changed, not God's plan.

Some interpretations of the doctrine of divine constancy, expressed as immutability, have actually drawn heavily on the Greek idea of immobility and sterility. This makes God inactive. The biblical view, however, is not that God is static but stable. He is active and dynamic, but in a way that is stable and consistent with his nature. What we are dealing with here is the dependability of God. He will be the same tomorrow as he is today. He will act as he has promised. He will fulfill his commitments. The believer can rely on that (Lam. 3:22–23; 1 John 1:9).

God is a great God. The realization of this fact stirred biblical writers such as the psalmists. And this realization stirs believers today, causing them to join with the songwriter in proclaiming:

O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made, I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed! Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee: How great Thou art! How great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee: How great Thou art! How great Thou art! [6]

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What are the attributes of God's greatness, and how would you describe them?
- Why is God's infinity in terms of space a tension between God's immanence and transcendence?
- What are the qualifications of the all-powerful character of God, and why are they significant?
- What does it mean when we say God is free?
- What is most reassuring to you about God's infinite knowledge?

The Goodness of God

Chapter Objectives

At the conclusion of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Recall and describe each of the attributes of God that make up his moral purity, integrity, and love.
- 2. Understand the relationship between the moral qualities of God and the harmony that exists among these qualities.
- **3.** Accurately assess the relationship between God's love and justice and show how both attributes are in harmony with each other.
- **4.** Foster understanding that will lead to increased trust, love, and commitment toward a benevolent and loving God.

Chapter Summary

The goodness of God may be discovered in all of his relationships with his creatures. It is most effectively demonstrated in his moral attributes of purity and integrity, and in the entire complex of characteristics that are identified as his love. Sometimes these attributes are viewed as conflicting with each other, as in the case of justice and love. When correctly viewed, however, this is not the case.

Chapter Outline

Moral Qualities

- Moral Purity
 - » Holiness
 - » Righteousness
 - » Justice
- Integrity
 - » Genuineness

- » Veracity
- » Faithfulness
- Love
 - » Benevolence
 - » Grace
 - » Mercy
 - » Persistence

God's Love and Justice—A Point of Tension?

Moral Qualities

If the qualities of greatness described in the preceding chapter were God's only attributes, he might conceivably be an immoral or amoral being, exercising his power and knowledge in a capricious or even cruel fashion. But because he is good as well as great, he can be trusted and loved. In this chapter we will consider his moral qualities, that is, the characteristics of God as a moral being. For convenient study, we will classify his basic moral attributes as purity, integrity, and love.

Moral Purity

By moral purity we are referring to God's absolute freedom from anything wicked or evil. His moral purity includes the dimensions of holiness, righteousness, and justice.

HOLINESS

There are two basic aspects to God's holiness. The first is his uniqueness. He is totally separate from all of creation. This is what Louis Berkhof called the "majesty-holiness" of God.[1] The uniqueness of God is affirmed in Exodus 15:11.

Who among the gods is like you, LORD?
Who is like you—
majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

Isaiah saw the Lord "high and exalted, sitting on a throne." The foundations of the thresholds shook, and the house was filled with smoke. The seraphim cried out, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty" (Isa. 6:1–4). The Hebrew word for "holy" (*qadosh*) means "marked off" or "withdrawn from common, ordinary use." The verb from which it is derived suggests "to cut off" or "to separate." Whereas in the religions of the peoples around Israel the adjective "holy" was freely applied to objects, actions, and personnel

involved in worship, in Israel's covenant the people themselves are also to be holy. Not only is God personally free from any moral wickedness or evil but he is also unable to tolerate its presence. He is, as it were, allergic to sin and evil. Isaiah, on seeing God, becomes very much aware of his own impurity. He despairs, "Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty" (Isa. 6:5). Similarly, Peter, on the occasion of the miraculous catch of fish, realizing who and what Jesus is, says, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8). When one measures one's holiness, not against the standard of oneself or of other humans, but against God, the need for a complete change of moral and spiritual condition becomes apparent.

Because God is good as well as great, he can be trusted and loved.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

The second dimension of God's moral purity is his righteousness. This is, as it were, God's holiness applied to his relationships to other beings. The righteousness of God means, first of all, that the law of God, being a true expression of his nature, is as perfect as he is. Psalm 19:7–9 puts it this way:

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

In other words, God commands only what is right, and what will therefore have a positive effect on the believer who obeys.

The righteousness of God also means that his actions are in accord with the law he himself has established. He is the expression in action of what he requires of others. For example, Abraham says to Jehovah, "Far be it from thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25 RSV). Because God is righteous, measuring up to the standard of his law, we can trust him. He is honest in his dealings.

A question that has been a topic of debate throughout the history of Christian thought is: What makes certain actions right and others wrong? In medieval times one school of thought, the realists, maintained that God chooses the right because it is right.[2] What he calls good could not have been designated otherwise, for there is an intrinsic good in kindness and an inherent evil in cruelty. Another school of thought, the nominalists, asserted that it is God's choice that makes an action right. He could have chosen otherwise; if he had done so, the good would be quite different from what it is.[3] A more correct position falls between realism and nominalism. The right is not something arbitrary, so that cruelty and murder would have been good if God had so declared. In making decisions, God does follow an objective standard of right and wrong, a standard that is part of the very structure of reality. But that standard to which God adheres is not external to God—it is his own nature.

JUSTICE

Not only does God himself act in conformity with his law, but he also administers his kingdom in accordance with it. That is, he requires that others conform to the law. The righteousness described in the preceding section is God's personal or individual righteousness. His justice is his official righteousness, his requirement that other moral agents adhere to the standards as well. God is, in other words, like a judge who as a private individual adheres to the law of society and in his official capacity administers that same law, applying it to others.

Scripture makes clear that sin has definite consequences, which must eventually come to pass, whether sooner or later. In Genesis 2:17, we read God's warning to Adam and Eve: "You must not eat from the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." Similar warnings recur throughout Scripture, including Paul's statement that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). God will eventually punish sin, for sin intrinsically deserves to be punished.

God's justice means that he administers his law fairly, not showing favoritism or partiality. Only a person's acts, not his or her station in life, are considered in the assignment of consequences or rewards. So God condemned those judges in biblical times who, while charged to serve as his representatives, accepted bribes to alter their judgments (e.g., 1 Sam. 8:3; Amos 5:12). The reason for their condemnation was that God himself, being just, expected the same sort of behavior from those who were to administer his law.

As was the case regarding holiness, God expects his followers to emulate his righteousness and justice. We are to adopt as our standard his law and precepts. We are to treat others fairly and justly (Amos 5:15, 24; James 2:9), because that is what God himself does.

Integrity

The cluster of attributes we are here classifying as integrity relates to the matter of truth. There are three dimensions of truthfulness: genuineness—being true; veracity—telling the truth; and faithfulness—proving true. Although we think of truthfulness primarily as telling the truth, genuineness is the most basic dimension of truthfulness. The other two derive from it.

GENUINENESS

God's genuineness means that he is a real God. In contrast to the many false or spurious gods the Israelites encountered, their Lord is the "true" God. In Jeremiah 10 the prophet describes with considerable satire the objects some people worship. They construct idols with their own hands, and then proceed to worship them, although these objects cannot speak or walk (v. 5). Of the Lord, however, it is said:

But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. (v. 10)

In John 17:3, Jesus addresses the Father as the only true God. There are similar references in 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 John 5:20; and Revelation 3:7;

6:10.

God is real; he is not fabricated or constructed, as are all the other claimants to deity. God is what he appears to be. This is a large part of his truthfulness. The vice president for public affairs at a Christian college used to say, "Public relations is nine-tenths being what you say you are, and one-tenth modestly saying it." God does not simply seem to embody the qualities of greatness and goodness that we are examining. He actually *is* those attributes.

VERACITY

Divine veracity means that God represents things as they really are. Samuel says to Saul, "He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a human being, that he should change his mind" (1 Sam. 15:29). Paul speaks of the God "who does not lie" (Titus 1:2). And in Hebrews 6:18 we read that when God added his oath to his promise, there were "two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie." Note that these passages affirm more than that God does not and will not lie. God *cannot* lie, for lying is contrary to his very nature.

God has appealed to his people to be honest in all situations, both in what they formally assert and in what they imply. Thus, for example, the Israelites were to have only one set of weights in their bag, not one for buying and another for selling (Deut. 25:13–15). God's people are to be thoroughly honest in the presentation of the gospel message as well. While some might rationalize that the significance of the end justifies use of the means of misrepresentation, Paul makes clear that "we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2). A God of truth is best served by presentation of the truth.

FAITHFULNESS

If God's genuineness is a matter of his being true and veracity is his telling of the truth, then his faithfulness means that he proves true. God keeps all his promises. As Balaam says to Balak,

God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind.

Does he speak and then not act?

Does he promise and not fulfill? (Num. 23:19)

Paul is more concise: "The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). Similar descriptions of God as faithful are to be found in 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:18–22; 2 Timothy 2:13; and 1 Peter 4:19.

God's faithfulness is demonstrated repeatedly throughout the pages of Scripture. His promise to Abraham of a son comes when Abraham and Sarah are seventy-five and sixty-five years of age, respectively. Sarah is already past the age of childbearing and has proved to be barren. Yet God proves himself faithful—the son whom God has promised is born (Isaac).

As is the case with his other moral attributes, the Lord expects believers to emulate his truthfulness. God's people are not to give their word thoughtlessly. And when they do give their word, they are to remain faithful to it (Eccles. 5:4–5). They must keep not only the promises made to God (Pss. 61:5, 8; 66:13) but those made to their fellow humans as well (Josh. 9:16–21).

God is true, he tells the truth, and he proves true.

Love

When we think in terms of God's moral attributes, perhaps what first comes to mind is the cluster of attributes we are here classifying as love. Many regard it as the basic attribute, the very nature or definition of God. [4] There is some scriptural basis for this. For example, in 1 John 4 we read:

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (v. 8)

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. (v. 16)

In general, God's love may be thought of as his eternal giving or sharing of himself. As such, love has always been present among the members of the Trinity even before there were any created beings. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit comes "so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me" (John 14:31). The triunity of God means that there has been an eternal exercise of God's love. The basic

dimensions of God's love to us are benevolence, grace, mercy, and persistence.

BENEVOLENCE

By benevolence we mean God's concern for the welfare of those whom he loves. He unselfishly seeks our ultimate welfare. Of numerous biblical references, John 3:16 is probably the best known. Statements of God's benevolence are not restricted to the New Testament. For example, in Deuteronomy 7:7–8 we read, "The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand."

God's love is an unselfish interest in us for our sake. It is *agapē*, not *erōs*. In John 15 Jesus draws a contrast between a master-servant (or employer-employee) relationship and a friend-to-friend relationship. It is the latter type of relationship that is to characterize the believer and the Savior. He is concerned with our good for our own sake, not for what he can get from us. God does not need us. He can accomplish what he wishes without us, although he has chosen to work through us.

This self-giving, unselfish quality of the divine love is seen in what God has done. God's love in sending his Son to die for us was not motivated by our prior love for him. The apostle John says, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10). The whole of Romans 5:6–10 elaborates on the same theme. Note especially verse 8 ("But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us") and verse 10 ("While we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son"). This divine love not only took the initiative in creating the basis of salvation by sending Jesus Christ but also continuously seeks us out. Jesus's three parables in Luke 15 emphasize this strongly.

God's benevolence, the actual caring and providing for those he loves, is seen in numerous ways. God even cares for and provides for the subhuman creation. Jesus taught that the Father feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:26, 28; see also Ps. 145:16). The principle that God is benevolent in his provision and protection is extended to his human children as well (Matt. 6:25, 30–33). While we may tend to take these

promises somewhat exclusively to ourselves as believers, the Bible indicates that God is benevolent to the whole human race. He "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:45). God inherently not only feels in a particular positive way toward the objects of his love but also acts for their welfare. Love is an active matter.

Some have raised the question of whether love should even be considered an attribute of God. Perhaps it is rather a definition of God, since John writes, "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). If this is the case, then everything said about God should be interpreted in terms of love. We should note, however, that love is not the only quality that is expressed grammatically in this seemingly equivalent fashion. For example, Jesus says to the Samaritan woman, "God is spirit" (John 4:24), and John says that "God is light" (1 John 1:5). It appears that this should be understood as an attribution of a quality, rather than a definition. Thus, this should be understood as a statement that God is loving, rather than an equation of God with love.

GRACE

Grace is another attribute that is part of the manifold of God's love. By this we mean that God deals with his people not on the basis of their merit or worthiness, what they deserve, but simply according to their need; in other words, he deals with them on the basis of his goodness and generosity. This grace is to be distinguished from the benevolence (unselfishness) that we just described. Benevolence is simply the idea that God seeks not his own good but rather that of others. It would be possible for God to love unselfishly, with a concern for others, but still to insist that this love be deserved, thus requiring each person to do something or offer something that would earn the favors received or to be received. Grace, however, means that God supplies us with undeserved favors. He requires nothing from us.

Although, of course, God's graciousness is prominent in the New Testament, some have suggested that the Old Testament picture of God is quite different. Yet numerous passages in the Old Testament speak of the graciousness of God. In Exodus 34:6, for example, God says of himself: "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." Passages in the New Testament explicitly relate salvation to the extravagant gift of God's grace. For

example, Paul says in Ephesians 2:8–9: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (cf. Titus 2:11; 3:4–7). Salvation is indeed the gift of God. Sometimes the justice of God is impugned on the grounds that some receive this grace of God and others do not. That any are saved at all is, however, the amazing thing. If God gave to all what they deserve, none would be saved.

MERCY

God's mercy is his tenderhearted, loving compassion for his people. It is his tenderness of heart toward the needy. If grace contemplates humans as sinful, guilty, and condemned, mercy sees them as miserable and needy. The psalmist said:

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him. (Ps. 103:13)

Similar ideas are found in Deuteronomy 5:10; Psalm 57:10; and Psalm 86:5. The attribute of mercy is seen in the compassion Jesus felt when people suffering from physical ailments came to him (Mark 1:41). Their spiritual condition also moved him (Matt. 9:36). Sometimes both kinds of needs are involved. Thus, in describing the same incident, Matthew speaks of Jesus's having compassion and healing the sick (Matt. 14:14), while Mark speaks of his having compassion and teaching many things (Mark 6:34). Matthew elsewhere combines the two ideas. When Jesus saw the crowds were helpless, like sheep without a shepherd, he had compassion on them. So he went about "teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness" (Matt. 9:35).

Persistence

A final dimension of the love of God is persistence. We read of God's persistence in Psalm 86:15; Romans 2:4; 9:22; 1 Peter 3:20; and 2 Peter 3:15. In all these verses God is pictured as withholding judgment and continuing to offer salvation and grace over long periods of time.

God's long-suffering was particularly apparent with the Israelites, as an outflow of his faithfulness to them. The people of Israel repeatedly rebelled

against Jehovah, desiring to return to Egypt, rejecting Moses's leadership, setting up idols for worship, falling into the practices of the people about them, and intermarrying with them. There must have been times when the Lord could have been inclined to abandon his people. A large-scale destruction of Israel on the fashion of the flood would have been most appropriate, yet the Lord did not cut Israel off.

But God's patience was not limited to his dealings with Israel. Peter even suggests that the flood was delayed as long as it was in order to provide opportunity of salvation to those who ultimately were destroyed (see 1 Pet. 3:20). In speaking of the future day of great destruction, Peter also suggests that the second coming is delayed because of God's forbearance. He does not wish "anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

On one occasion Peter came to Jesus (on behalf of the disciples, no doubt) and asked how often he should forgive a brother who sinned against him: as many as seven times? Jesus's reply to Peter, which is best rendered "seventy-seven times," indicates the persistent, relentless nature of the love that is to characterize a follower of the Lord (Matt. 18:21–22). Jesus himself demonstrated such persistent love with Peter. When Peter denied Jesus not once but three times, Jesus forgave him, just as he had with so many of his other shortcomings. As a matter of fact, the angel at the tomb instructed the three women to go tell the disciples *and Peter* that Jesus was going to Galilee, where they would see him (Mark 16:7). God's faithfulness and forbearance were also manifested in his not casting off other believers who had sinned and failed him: Moses, David, Solomon, and many more.

God's Love and Justice—A Point of Tension?

We have looked at many characteristics of God, without exhausting them by any means. But what of the interrelationships among them? Presumably, God is a unified, integrated being whose personality is a harmonious whole. There should be, then, no tension among any of these attributes. But is this really so?

The one point of potential tension usually singled out is the relationship between God's love and his justice. On one hand, God's justice seems so severe, requiring the death of those who sin. This is a fierce, harsh God. On the other hand, God is merciful, gracious, forgiving, long-suffering. Are not these two sets of traits in conflict with one another? Is there, then, internal tension in God's nature?[5]

If we begin with the assumptions that God is an integrated being and the divine attributes are harmonious, we will define the attributes in light of one another. Thus, justice is loving justice, and love is love that is just. The idea that they conflict may have resulted from defining these attributes in isolation from one another. While the conception of love apart from justice, for example, may be derived from outside sources, it is not a biblical teaching. What we are saying is that love is not fully understood unless it includes justice. Otherwise, it is mere sentimentality.

Actually, love and justice have worked together in God's dealing with the human race. God's justice requires that there be payment of the penalty for sin. God's love, however, desires that humans be restored to fellowship with him. The offer of Jesus Christ as the atonement for sin means that both the justice and the love of God have been maintained. And there really is no tension between the two. There is tension only if one's view of love requires that God forgive sin without any payment being made. But that is to think of God as different from what he really is. Moreover, the offer of Christ as atonement shows a greater love on God's part than would simply indulgently releasing people from the consequences of sin.

To fulfill his just administration of the law, God's love was so great that he gave his Son for us. Love and justice are not two separate attributes competing with one another. God is both righteous and loving, and has himself given what he demands.[6]

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What are the moral attributes of God, and why are they necessary to an adequate understanding of his true nature?
- What is the importance of the holiness of God, and why is it so difficult for humans to understand this aspect of God's nature?
- How does our understanding of Jesus help us especially to understand the love of God?
- Some have contended that there is tension between God's justice and his love. How would you respond to such a charge?

What have you learned from the study of God's goodness about your own moral responsibilities?					

God's Three-in-Oneness: The Trinity

Chapter Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Understand and explain the biblical teaching on the Trinity in three aspects: the oneness of God, the deity of three, and three-in-oneness.
- 2. List and explain the historical constructions of the Trinity, such as the "economic" view, dynamic monarchianism, modalistic monarchianism, and the orthodox view.
- **3.** Explain the debate among evangelicals between those who hold to a gradational view of authority within the Trinity, and those who affirm equivalent authority.
- **4.** Describe the essential elements of the doctrine of the Trinity and explain why they are so vital to the Christian faith.
- **5.** Articulate the various analogies used to describe or clarify the doctrine of the Trinity.

Chapter Summary

The Bible does not explicitly teach the trinitarian view of God, but the teachings that God is one and that three persons are God clearly imply this view. Numerous attempts have been made to understand this doctrine, some of which have led to distortions of this profound truth. While we may never fully comprehend this difficult doctrine, there are analogies that can help us to understand it more fully.

Chapter Outline

The Biblical Teaching

- The Oneness of God
- The Deity of Three
- Three-in-Oneness

Historical Constructions

• The "Economic" View of the Trinity

- Dynamic Monarchianism
- Modalistic Monarchianism
- The Orthodox Formulation

Relative Authority of the Three Persons

Essential Elements of a Doctrine of the Trinity

The Search for Analogies

In the doctrine of the Trinity, we encounter one of the truly distinctive doctrines of Christianity. Among the religions of the world, the Christian faith is unique in making the claim that God is one and yet there are three who are God. Although it seems on the surface to be a self-contradictory doctrine and is not overtly or explicitly stated in Scripture, nevertheless, devout minds have been led to it as they have sought to do justice to the witness of Scripture.

The doctrine of the Trinity is crucial for Christianity. It is concerned with who God is, what he is like, how he works, and how he is to be approached. Moreover, the question of the deity of Jesus Christ, which has historically been a point of great tension, is very much wrapped up with one's understanding of the Trinity.

The position we take on the Trinity will also answer several questions of a practical nature. Whom are we to worship—Father only, Son, Holy Spirit, or the Triune God? To whom should we pray? Is the work of each to be considered in isolation from the work of the others, or may we think of the atoning death of Jesus as somehow the work of the Father as well? Should the Son be thought of as the Father's equal in essence, or should he be relegated to a somewhat lesser status?

The Christian faith is unique in making the claim that God is one and yet there are three who are God.

We will begin our study of the Trinity by examining the biblical basis of the doctrine since this is fundamental to all else we do here. Then we will examine various early attempts to deal with the biblical data, including the orthodox formulation. Finally, we will note the essential elements of the doctrine and search for analogies that may help us to understand it somewhat better.

The Biblical Teaching

There are three separate but interrelated types of evidence: evidence for the unity of God—that God is one; evidence that there are three persons who

are God; and finally, indications or at least intimations of the three-inoneness.

The Oneness of God

The religion of the ancient Hebrews was a rigorously monotheistic faith, as indeed the Jewish religion is to this day. The unity of God was revealed to Israel at several different times and in various ways. The Ten Commandments, for example, begin with the statement, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me [or besides me]" (Exod. 20:2–3).

The prohibition of idolatry, the Second Commandment (Exod. 20:4), also rests on the uniqueness of Jehovah. He will not tolerate any worship of humanly constructed objects, for he alone is God. The rejection of polytheism runs throughout the Old Testament. God repeatedly demonstrates his superiority to other claimants to deity.

A clearer indication of the oneness of God is the Shema of Deuteronomy 6, the great truths of which the people of Israel were commanded to absorb themselves and to inculcate in their children. They were to meditate on these teachings ("These commandments . . . are to be on your hearts," v. 6). They were to talk about them—at home and on the road, when lying down and when arising (v. 7). They were to use visual aids to call attention to them—wearing them on their hands and foreheads, and writing them on the doorframes of their houses and on their gates (vv. 8–9). One of these great truths is an indicative, a declarative statement: "The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (v. 4). The second great truth God wanted Israel to learn and teach is a command based on his uniqueness: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (v. 5). Because he is one, there was to be no division of Israel's commitment.

God's oneness is taught not only in the Old Testament; James 2:19 also commends belief in one God, though noting its insufficiency for justification. Paul writes as he discusses the eating of meat that had been offered to idols: "We know that an 'idol is nothing at all in the world' and that 'there is no God but one,' . . . the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live" (1 Cor. 8:4, 6). Here Paul, like the Mosaic law, excludes idolatry on the grounds that there is only one God.

The Deity of Three

All this evidence, if taken by itself, would no doubt lead us to a basically monotheistic belief. What, then, moved the church beyond this evidence? It was the additional biblical witness to the effect that three persons are God. The deity of the first, the Father, is scarcely in dispute. In addition to the references in 1 Corinthians 8:4, 6, and 1 Timothy 2:5–6, we may note the cases where Jesus refers to the Father as God. In Matthew 6:26, for example, he indicates that "your heavenly Father feeds [the birds of the air]." In a parallel statement that follows shortly thereafter, he indicates that "God clothes the grass of the field" (v. 30). It is apparent that, for Jesus, "God" and "your heavenly Father" are interchangeable expressions. And in numerous other references to God, Jesus obviously has the Father in mind (e.g., Matt. 19:23–26; 27:46; Mark 12:17, 24–27).

Somewhat more problematic is the status of Jesus as deity, yet Scripture also identifies him as God. A key reference to the deity of Christ Jesus is found in Philippians 2. In verses 5–11, Paul has taken what was probably a hymn of the early church and used it as the basis of an appeal to his readers to practice humility. He speaks of Christ Jesus,

who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. (v. 6 NIV 1984)

The word here translated "form" is *morphē*. This term in classical Greek as well as in biblical Greek means "the set of characteristics that constitutes a thing; what it is." It denotes the genuine nature of a thing.

Another significant passage is Hebrews 1. The author, whose identity is unknown to us, is writing to a group of Hebrew Christians. He (or she) makes several statements that strongly imply the full deity of the Son. In the opening verses as the writer argues that the Son is superior to the angels, he notes that God has spoken through the Son, appointed him heir of all things, and made the universe through him (v. 2). The author then in verse 3 describes the Son as the "radiance of God's glory" and the "exact representation of his being." While it could perhaps be maintained that this affirms only that God revealed himself through the Son, rather than that the Son *is God*, the context suggests otherwise. In addition to identifying himself as the Father of the one whom he here calls Son (v. 5), God is quoted in verse 8 (from Ps. 45:6) as addressing the Son as "God" and in

verse 10 as "Lord" (from Ps. 102:25). The writer concludes by noting that God said to the Son, "Sit at my right hand" (v. 13, from Ps. 110:1). It is significant that the Scripture writer addresses Hebrew Christians, who certainly would be steeped in monotheism, in ways that undeniably affirm the deity of Jesus and his equality with the Father.

A final consideration is Jesus's own self-consciousness. We should note that Jesus never directly asserted his deity. He never said simply, "I am God." Yet several threads of evidence suggest that this is indeed how he understood himself. He claimed to possess what properly belongs only to God. He spoke of the angels of God (Luke 12:8–9; 15:10) as his angels (Matt. 13:41). He regarded the kingdom of God (Matt. 12:28; 19:14, 24; 21:31, 43) and the elect of God (Mark 13:20) as his own. Further, he claimed to forgive sins (Mark 2:8–10). The Jews recognized that only God can forgive sins, and they consequently accused Jesus of blasphemy. He also claimed the power to judge the world (Matt. 25:31–33) and to reign over it (Matt. 24:30; Mark 14:62).

There also are biblical references that identify the Holy Spirit as God. Here we may note passages where references to the Holy Spirit occur interchangeably with references to God. One example is Acts 5:3–4. Ananias and Sapphira hold back a portion of the proceeds from the sale of their property, misrepresenting what they lay at the apostles' feet as the entirety. Here, lying to the Holy Spirit (v. 3) is equated with lying to God (v. 4). The Holy Spirit is also described as having the qualities and performing the works of God. The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8–11) and regenerates or gives new life (John 3:8). In 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, we read that it is the Spirit who conveys gifts to the church and who exercises sovereignty over who receives those gifts. In addition, he receives the honor and glory reserved for God. Blasphemy against him is an extremely serious offense (Mark 3:29).

In 1 Corinthians 3:16–17, Paul reminds believers that they are God's temple and that his Spirit dwells within them. In chapter 6, he says that their bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit within them (vv. 19–20). "God" and "Holy Spirit" seem to be interchangeable expressions. Also in several places the Holy Spirit is put on an equal footing with God. One is the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19; a second is the Pauline benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14; finally, in 1 Peter 1:2, Peter addresses his readers as

"chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood."

Three-in-Oneness

On the surface, these two lines of evidence—God's oneness and threeness—seem contradictory. As the church began to reflect on doctrinal issues, it concluded that God must be understood as three-in-one or, in other words, triune. At this point we must ask whether this doctrine is explicitly taught in the Bible, is suggested by the Scripture, or is merely an inference drawn from other teachings of the Bible.

One text that has traditionally been appealed to as documenting the triunity is 1 John 5:7, that is, as it is found in earlier versions such as the King James: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." Here is, apparently, a clear and succinct statement of the three-in-oneness. Unfortunately, however, the textual basis is so weak that some recent translations (e.g., NIV) include this statement only in an italicized footnote (for v. 8), and others omit it altogether (e.g., RSV). If there is a biblical basis for the three-in-oneness, it must be sought elsewhere.

The plural form of the noun for the God of Israel, 'elohim, is sometimes regarded as an intimation of a trinitarian view. This is a generic name used to refer to other gods as well. When used with reference to Israel's God, it is generally, but not always, found in the plural. Some would argue that here is a hint of the plural nature of God.

There are other plural forms as well. In Genesis 1:26, God says, "Let us make mankind in our image." Here the plural appears both in the verb "let us make" and in the possessive suffix "our." When Isaiah was called, he heard the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" (Isa. 6:8). What is significant, from the standpoint of logical analysis, is the shift from singular to plural. Genesis 1:26 actually says, "Then God said [singular], 'Let us make [plural] mankind in our [plural] image.'" God is quoted as using a plural verb with reference to himself. Similarly, Isaiah 6:8 reads: "Whom shall I send [singular], and who will go for us [plural]?"

The teaching regarding the image of God in humankind has also been viewed as an intimation of the Trinity. Genesis 1:27 reads:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (NIV 1984)

Some would argue that what we have here is a parallelism not merely in the first two, but in all three lines. Thus, "male and female he created them" is equivalent to "So God created man in his own image" and to "in the image of God he created him." On this basis, the image of God in man (generic) is to be found in the fact that man has been created male and female (i.e., plural).[1] This means that the image of God must consist in a unity in plurality, a characteristic of both the ectype and the archetype. According to Genesis 2:24, man and woman are to become one ('ehad); a union of two separate entities is entailed. It is significant that the same word is used of God in the Shema: "The LORD our God, the LORD is one ['ehad]" (Deut. 6:4). It seems that something is being affirmed here about the nature of God—he is an organism, that is, a unity of distinct parts.

In several places in Scripture, the three persons are linked together in unity and apparent equality. One of these is the baptismal formula as prescribed in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19–20): baptizing in (or into) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Note that "name" is singular although three persons are included. Yet another direct linking of the three names in unity and apparent equality is the Pauline benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14—"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." The Fourth Gospel contains the strongest evidence of a coequal Trinity. The threefold formula appears again and again: 1:33–34; 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13–15; 20:21–22 (cf. 1 John 4:2, 13–14). The interdynamics among the three persons come through repeatedly. [2] The Son is sent by the Father (14:24) and comes forth from him (16:28). The Spirit is given by the Father (14:16), is sent from the Father (14:26), and proceeds from the Father (15:26). Yet the Son is closely involved in the coming of the Spirit: he prays for his coming (14:16); the Father sends the Spirit in the Son's name (14:26); the Son will send the Spirit from the Father (15:26); the Son must go away so that he can send the Spirit (16:7). The Spirit's ministry is understood as a continuation and elaboration of that of the Son. He will bring to remembrance what the Son has said (14:26); he will bear witness to the Son (15:26); he will declare what he hears from the Son, thus glorifying the Son (16:13–14).

The prologue of the Gospel also contains material rich in significance for the doctrine of the Trinity. John says in the first verse of the book: "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." Here is an indication of the divinity of the Word. Here also we find the idea that the Son is distinct from the Father, yet there is fellowship between them, for the preposition *pros* ("with") does not connote merely physical proximity to the Father but an intimacy of fellowship as well.

This Gospel stresses the closeness and unity between the Father and the Son in other ways. Jesus says, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30), and "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9). He prays that his disciples may be one as he and the Father are one (17:21).

Our conclusion from the data we have just examined is this: Although the doctrine of the Trinity is not expressly asserted, Scripture, particularly the New Testament, contains so many suggestions of the deity and unity of the three persons that we can understand why the church formulated the doctrine, and conclude that they were right in so doing.

Historical Constructions

During the first two centuries AD there was relatively little conscious attempt to wrestle with the theological and philosophical issues of what we now term the doctrine of the Trinity. Such thinkers as Justin and Tatian stressed the unity of essence between the Word and the Father and used the imagery of the impossibility of separating light from its source, the sun. In this way they illustrated that, while the Word and the Father are distinct, they are not divisible or separable. [3]

The "Economic" View of the Trinity

Hippolytus and Tertullian made little attempt to explore the eternal relations among the three; rather, they concentrated on the ways in which the Triad was manifested in creation and redemption. This is sometimes referred to as the "economic" Trinity (how God appears in revelation), versus the "immanent" Trinity (how he is in himself). While creation and redemption showed the Son and the Spirit to be other than the Father, they

were also regarded as inseparably one with him in his eternal being. Like the mental functions of a human being, God's reason, that is, the Word, was regarded as being immanently and indivisibly with him.

By way of a quick evaluation, we note that there is something of a vagueness about this view of the Trinity. Any effort to come up with a more exact understanding of just what it means will prove disappointing.

Dynamic Monarchianism

In the late second and third centuries, two attempts were made to formulate a precise definition of the relationship between Christ and God. Both views have been referred to as monarchianism (literally, "sole sovereignty"), since they stress the uniqueness and unity of God, but only the latter claimed the designation for itself.

Dynamic monarchianism maintained that God was dynamically present in the life of the man Jesus. There was a working or force of God on or in or through the man Jesus, but there was no real substantive presence of God within him. The originator of dynamic monarchianism, Theodotus, asserted that prior to baptism Jesus was an ordinary, although completely virtuous man. At Jesus's baptism, the Spirit, or Christ, descended on him, and from that time on he performed miraculous works of God. Dynamic monarchianism was never a widespread popular phenomenon.[4]

Modalistic Monarchianism

By contrast, modalistic monarchianism was a more influential teaching. Whereas dynamic monarchianism seemed to deny the doctrine of the Trinity, modalism appeared to affirm it. Both varieties of monarchianism desired to preserve the doctrine of the unity of God. Modalism, however, was also strongly committed to the full deity of Jesus. Since the term "Father" was generally regarded as signifying the Godhead itself, any suggestion that the Word or Son was somehow other than the Father appeared to the modalists to be a case of bitheism, belief in two gods.

The essential idea of this school of thought is that there is one Godhead that may be variously designated as Father, Son, or Spirit. The terms do not stand for real distinctions, but are merely names that are appropriate and applicable at different times. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are identical—they are successive revelations of the same person. The modalistic solution

to the paradox of threeness and oneness was, then, not three persons, but one person with three different names, roles, or activities. [5]

Modalistic monarchianism was a genuinely unique, original, and creative conception, and in some ways a brilliant breakthrough. Both the unity of the Godhead and the deity of all three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are preserved. Yet the church in assessing this theology deemed it lacking in some significant respects. In particular, the fact that the three occasionally appear simultaneously on the stage of biblical revelation proved to be a major stumbling block to this view. The baptismal scene, where the Father speaks to the Son, and the Spirit descends on the Son, is an example, together with all those passages where Jesus speaks of the coming of the Spirit, or speaks of or to the Father.

The Orthodox Formulation

The orthodox doctrine of the Trinity was enunciated in a series of debates and councils that were in large part prompted by the controversies sparked by such movements as monarchianism and Arianism. The Council of Constantinople (381) formulated a definitive statement in which the church made explicit the beliefs previously held implicitly. The view that prevailed was basically that of Athanasius (293–373), as elaborated and refined by the Cappadocian theologians: Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa.

The formula that expresses the position of Constantinople is "one *ousia* [substance] in three *hypostases* [persons]." The emphasis often seems to be more on the latter part of the formula, that is, on the separate existence of the three persons, rather than on the one indivisible Godhead. The one Godhead exists simultaneously in three modes of being or hypostases. The Godhead exists "undivided in divided persons." There is an "identity of nature" in the three hypostases.

The Cappadocians attempted to expound the concepts of common substance and multiple separate persons by the analogy of a universal and its particulars—the individual persons of the Trinity are related to the divine substance in the same fashion as individual humans are related to the universal human (or humanity). Each of the individual hypostases is the *ousia* of the Godhead distinguished by the characteristics or properties peculiar to him, just as individual humans have unique characteristics that distinguish them from other individual humans. These respective properties

of the divine persons are, according to Basil, paternity, sonship, and sanctifying power or sanctification. [6]

It is clear that the orthodox formula protects the doctrine of the Trinity against the danger of modalism. Has it done so, however, at the expense of falling into the opposite error—tritheism? On the surface, the danger seems considerable, but two points were made to safeguard the doctrine of the Trinity against tritheism.

First, it was noted that if we can find a single activity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that is in no way different in any of the three persons, we must conclude that there is but one identical substance involved. And such unity was found in the divine activity of revelation. Revelation originates in the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is completed in the Spirit. It is not three actions, but one action in which all three are involved.

Second, there was an insistence on the concreteness and indivisibility of the divine substance. Much of the criticism of the Cappadocian doctrine of the Trinity focused on the analogy of a universal manifesting itself in particulars. To avoid the conclusion that there is a multiplicity of Gods within the Godhead just as there is a multiplicity of humans within humanity, Gregory of Nyssa suggested that, strictly speaking, we ought not to talk about a multiplicity of humans, but a multiplicity of the one universal human being. Thus the Cappadocians continued to emphasize that, while the three members of the Trinity can be distinguished numerically as persons, they are indistinguishable in their essence or substance. They are distinguishable as persons, but one and inseparable in their being.

It should be reiterated here that *ousia* is not an abstract but a concrete reality. Further, this divine essence is simple and indivisible. Following the Aristotelian doctrine that only what is material is quantitatively divisible, the Cappadocians at times virtually denied that the category of number can be applied to the Godhead at all. God is simple and incomposite. Thus, while each of the persons is one, they cannot be added together to make three entities.

Relative Authority of the Three Persons

One issue that has received considerable debate among evangelicals in the early twenty-first century is the relative authority of the three persons of the Trinity. One position, which I refer to as *gradational authority*, contends that in essence or being, in what they *are*, the three persons are completely equal. However, proponents of this view maintain that the Father is the supreme member of the Trinity, and that the Son and the Holy Spirit are eternally and inherently subordinate to him. They differ in the roles they play, and these roles are in turn based on differences of relationship among the three. With respect to authority, there are degrees, and this differentiation is eternal and inherent in the Trinity.

Support for the gradationist position includes a number of Scriptures that suggest the Father is the one who exercises choice, such as predestination (Rom. 8:29); the Father sent the Son to the earth (John 3:16; 8:29); the Father sits on the throne and the Son is at his right hand (Matt. 26:64; Acts 2:33). This authority and subordination not only was present in eternity past but will also continue into eternity to come (1 Cor. 15:24–28). The very names "Father" and "Son" indicate a differentiation of status, in which, just as in human relationships, the Father commands and the Son obeys. [7] Gradationists also believe that the history of theology offers extensive support for the idea that this structure of command and obedience is present within the Trinity. Finally, although not identified as such by the gradationists, important philosophical principles require it. Without this differentiation of roles and thus of authority, there would be no basis of differentiating the persons from one another, and the very Trinity would collapse into simply person A, person A, and person A.[8] Some gradationists also contend that a correct understanding of these relationships implies a certain way of praying: to the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Spirit. [9]

The other view, that of *equivalent authority*, argues that functional subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Holy Spirit to both Father and Son, was only temporary, for the purpose of accomplishing the special tasks the Son took on during his earthly ministry, and that the Spirit fulfills in relationship to salvation. Texts like Philippians 2:5–11 and Hebrews 5:8 assert that in becoming incarnate, Jesus gave up his equality with the Father and became obedient, or learned obedience. They also challenge the significance of the terms "Father" and "Son," contending that Sonship was used in Scripture to denote likeness, not subordination, and note that these

are not the only names used of the persons of the Trinity, and that the order in which they are listed is not invariable. Like the gradationists, the equivalentists claim that the history of the church supports their view of equal authority of the three.[10] Beyond that, they maintain that the gradationists' distinction between function and being cannot be maintained: if one is always and necessarily authoritative over the other, then the difference must extend from function to being.[11]

It is also interesting to observe that many of the functions of the Father that the gradationists consider an indication of his superiority are also attributed to the Son and in some cases to the Holy Spirit as well. The Son chooses persons to salvation (Matt. 11:27; John 5:21) as well as service (John 6:70), and the Spirit chooses to whom to give which gifts (1 Cor. 12:11). Both the Father (John 14:16, 26) and the Son (John 15:26; 16:7) send the Holy Spirit. The believer is indwelt by the Spirit (John 14:27), the Son (2 Cor. 13:5), and possibly even the Father (John 14:23; 1 Cor. 3:16). Both the Son and the Father give life (John 5:21), as does the Spirit (John 6:63).

One practical problem is prayer. The reality is that there are prayers in the New Testament directed to the Son (Acts 7:59–60; 2 Cor. 12:8–9; Rev. 22:20). These appear to be genuine prayers, and God did not disapprove of them in any way. If prayer to the Father alone is indeed implied by the gradationist view, then, by implication, the legitimacy of these prayers implies the falsehood of the gradationist view. While some gradationists do not so restrict prayer, they may be inconsistent, because if the Son came the first time in obedience to the Father's exclusive will, then it seems inconsistent to pray to the Son to come a second time.

More serious is the philosophical problem of the distinction between equal essence and unequal roles. If the Father's authority over the Son and Spirit and the Son's and Spirit's subordination to the Father is a part of the very structure of the Trinity, so that it could not be otherwise, then this superiority and subordination are not contingent but necessary characteristics of each of the persons. That means they are not accidental but essential qualities, and the essence of the Son is different from and inferior to that of the Father. In other words, invariable and inevitable differences in authority imply ontological, as well as functional, subordination.

Thus the position advocated by both Augustine[12] and Calvin[13] seems the most helpful: the actions of any one of the persons of the Trinity are actually actions in which all three persons participate. This would mean that the will of the Father that the Son came to do was actually the will of the three persons, and that the Son participated in the decision that he should be the one to come.

In addition to the biblical and historical considerations, enough difficulties attend the gradational view to render it less adequate than the equivalent-authority view. It seems best, therefore, to maintain the eternal equal authority of the three persons.[14]

Essential Elements of a Doctrine of the Trinity

It is important to pause here to note the salient elements that must be included in any doctrine of the Trinity.

- 1. The unity of God is basic. God is one, not several. The unity of God may be compared to the unity of husband and wife, but we must keep in mind that we are dealing with one God, not a joining of separate entities.
- 2. The deity of each of the three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, must be affirmed. Each is qualitatively the same. The Son is divine in the same way and to the same extent as is the Father, and this is true of the Holy Spirit as well.
- 3. God is not three in the same respect as he is one. Although the orthodox interpretation of the Trinity seems contradictory (God is one and yet three), the contradiction is not real, but only apparent. A contradiction exists if something is *a* and not *a* at the same time and in the same respect. Orthodoxy insists that God is three persons at every moment of time, but that the way in which God is three is in some respect different from the way in which he is one.
- 4. The Trinity is eternal. There have always been three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and all of them have always been divine. None of them came into being at some point in time, or at some point became divine. The Triune God is and will be what he always has been.
- 5. The function of one member of the Trinity may for a time be subordinate to one or both of the other members, but that does not mean he is in any way inferior in essence. Each of the three persons of the Trinity

has had, for a period of time, a particular function unique to himself. This is to be understood as a temporary role for the purpose of accomplishing a given end, not a change in his status or essence. In human experience, there is functional subordination as well. Several equals in a business or enterprise may choose one of their number to serve as the captain of a task force or the chairperson of a committee for a given time, but without any change in rank. In like fashion, the Son did not become less than the Father during his earthly incarnation, but he did subordinate himself functionally to the Father's will. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is now subordinated to the ministry of the Son (see John 14–16) as well as to the will of the Father, but this does not imply that he is less than they are.

6. The Trinity is incomprehensible. We cannot fully understand its mystery. When someday we see God, we shall see him as he is, and understand him better than we do now. Yet even then we will not totally comprehend him.

The Search for Analogies

The problem in constructing a statement of the doctrine of the Trinity is not merely to understand the terminology. That is in itself hard enough; for example, it is difficult to know what "person" means in this context. More difficult yet is to understand the interrelationships among the members of the Trinity. The human mind seeks analogies that will help in this effort.

We will someday understand God better than we do now, yet even then we will not totally comprehend him.

On a popular level, analogies drawn from physical nature have often been utilized. A widely used analogy, for example, is the egg: it consists of yolk, white, and shell, all of which together form one whole egg. Another favorite analogy is water. It can be found in solid, liquid, and vaporous forms. One pastor, in instructing young catechumens, attempted to clarify the threeness yet oneness by posing the question, "Is (or are) trousers singular or plural?" His answer was that trousers is singular at the top, and they are plural at the bottom.

Most analogies drawn from the physical realm tend to be either tritheistic or modalistic in their implications. The analogies involving the egg and the trousers seem to suggest that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are separate parts of the divine nature. The analogy involving the various forms of water has modalistic overtones, since ice, liquid water, and steam are modes of existence. A given quantity of water does not simultaneously exist in all three states.

One of the most creative minds in the history of Christian theology was Augustine. In *De Trinitate*, Augustine argues that since the human is made in the image of the Triune God, it is therefore reasonable to expect to find, through an analysis of human nature, a reflection, however faint, of God's triunity. With this in mind, let us examine two analogies drawn from the realm of human experience.

The first analogy is drawn from the realm of individual human psychology. As a self-conscious person, I may engage in internal dialogue with myself. I may take different positions and even engage in a debate with myself. Furthermore, I am a complex human person with multiple roles and responsibilities in dynamic interplay with one another. As I consider what I should do in a given situation, the husband, the father, the theologian, and the US citizen that together constitute me may mutually inform one another.

One problem with this analogy is that in human experience it is most clearly seen in situations where there is tension or competition, rather than harmony, between the individual's various positions and roles. But in God, by contrast, there are always perfect harmony, communication, and love.

The other analogy is from the sphere of interpersonal human relations. Take the case of identical twins. In one sense, they are of the same essence, for their genetic makeup is identical. An organ transplant from one to the other can be accomplished with relative ease, for the recipient's body will not reject the donor's organ as foreign. Identical twins often have similar interests and tastes. Although they have different spouses and different employers, a close bond unites them. And yet they are not the same person. They are two, not one.

These two analogies emphasize different aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity. The former puts major stress on the oneness. The latter illustrates more clearly the threeness. The doctrine of the Trinity is a crucial ingredient

of our faith. Each of the three persons is to be worshiped, as is the Triune God. And, keeping in mind their distinctive work, it is appropriate to direct prayers of thanks and of petition to each of the members of the Trinity, as well as to all of them collectively. Furthermore, the perfect love and unity within the Godhead model for us the oneness and affection that should characterize relationships within the body of Christ.

It appears that Tertullian was right in affirming that the doctrine of the Trinity must be divinely revealed, not humanly constructed. It is so absurd from a human standpoint that no one would have invented it. We do not hold the doctrine of the Trinity because it is self-evident or logically cogent. We hold it because God has revealed that this is what he is like. As someone has said of this doctrine: Try to explain it, and you'll lose your mind, but try to deny it, and you'll lose your soul.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What is the biblical evidence for the deity of three?
- How may the various historical views of the Trinity be disputed?
- What are the essential elements of the doctrine of the Trinity? How do they help our understanding and deepen our faith?
- What do analogies contribute to our understanding?
- What does a study of the interaction among members of the Triune God teach us about how we ought to relate to each other?

God's Plan

Chapter Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Recognize the key terminology in God's plan and how to define these terms.
- 2. Explain the biblical teaching about God's plan from both the Old and New Testaments.
- **3.** Identify and describe some general characteristics of God's plan.
- **4.** Develop a logical priority for God's plan or human action by examining the historical views of Calvinism and Arminianism.
- **5.** Describe a moderately Calvinistic model of God's plan and tell why it is more biblically based than an Arminian view.
- **6.** Inspire in others confidence in God's work in history and its effect on all those who believe in Christ.

Chapter Summary

God has a definite plan for history. There are at least nine conclusions that may be drawn from the biblical references to God's plan. Calvinism and Arminianism pose different solutions to the problem of whether God's plan or human action is logically prior. From our analysis, we conclude that a moderately Calvinist position is the most biblically based. Finally, there are a variety of views of history, but the biblical view posits that God is guiding history to his goal and that we can have assurance that if we align ourselves with his purpose, we will be moving to an assured outcome of history.

Chapter Outline

Key Definitions

The Biblical Teaching

- The Old Testament Teaching
- The New Testament Teaching

The Nature of the Divine Plan

Logical Priority: God's Plan or Human Action?

A Moderately Calvinistic Model

- The Unconditional Nature of God's Plan
- The Meaning of Human Freedom
- God's Will and Human Freedom
- God's Wish and God's Will
- God's Will and the Need for Human Action

Various Understandings of History

Where is history going, and why? What, if anything, is causing the pattern of history to develop as it is? These questions confront us as thinking persons and crucially affect our way of life. Christianity's answer is that God has a plan that includes everything that occurs, and that he is now at work carrying out that plan.

Key Definitions

We may define the plan of God (which is often referred to as his decrees) as his eternal decision rendering certain all things that will come to pass. An analogy, although necessarily insufficient, may help us to understand this concept. The plan of God is like the architect's plans, first drawn mentally and then on paper according to an intention and design, and only afterward executed in an actual structure.

It is necessary at this point to clarify certain terminology. Many theologians use the terms "predestinate" and "foreordain" virtually synonymously. For our purposes, however, we shall use them somewhat differently. "Predestinate" carries a somewhat narrower connotation than does "foreordain." Since it literally suggests the destiny of someone or something, it is best used of God's plan as it relates in particular to the eternal condition of moral agents. We will use the term "foreordain" in a broader sense, to refer to God's decisions with respect to any matters within the realm of cosmic history. "Predestination" will be reserved for the matter of eternal salvation or condemnation. Within predestination, "election" will be used of God's positive choice of individuals, nations, or groups to eternal life and fellowship with him, while "reprobation" will refer to negative predestination or God's choice of some to suffer eternal damnation or lostness. Thus foreordination is here used with a broader range of meaning than predestination.

God is now at work carrying out his plan, which is from all eternity and includes everything that occurs.

The Old Testament Teaching

In the Old Testament presentation, God's planning and ordaining work is very much tied up with the covenant the Lord made with his people. As we read about all God did in choosing and taking personal care of his people, two truths about him stand out. On the one hand, God is supremely powerful, the creator and sustainer of all that is. On the other hand, God is loving, caring, and personal. He is not mere abstract power but is a loving person. [1]

For the Old Testament writers, it was virtually inconceivable that anything could happen independently of God's will and working. As evidence of this, consider that common impersonal expressions like "it rained" are not found in the Old Testament. For the Hebrews, rain did not simply happen; God sent the rain. They saw him as the all-powerful determiner of everything that occurs. God himself comments, for example, concerning the destruction wreaked by the king of Assyria.

Have you not heard?
Long ago I ordained it.
In days of old I planned it;
now I have brought it to pass,
that you have turned fortified cities
into piles of stone. (Isa. 37:26)

Even something as seemingly trivial as the building of reservoirs is described as having been planned long before (Isa. 22:11). Furthermore, there is in God's plan a concern for the welfare of the nation of Israel, and of every one of God's children (Pss. 27:10–11; 37; 65:3; 91; 121; 139:16; Dan. 12:1; Jon. 4:11).

The Old Testament also enunciates belief that God will most assuredly bring to actual occurrence everything in his plan. In Isaiah 14:27 we read:

For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?[2]

Particularly in the Wisdom literature and the Prophets, the idea of an all-inclusive divine purpose is most prominent.[3]

The LORD works out everything to its proper end—even the wicked for a day of disaster. (Prov. 16:4)[4]

We humans, like Job, may not always understand as God works out his purpose in our lives.

"Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?" Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. (Job 42:3)

Thus in the view of the Old Testament believer, God had created the world, and he was directing history, which was the unfolding of a plan prepared in eternity and related to his intention of fellowship with his people.

The New Testament Teaching

God's plan and purpose are also prominent in the New Testament. Jesus affirmed that God had planned not only the large, complex events, such as the fall and destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 21:20–22), but details as well, such as the apostasy of and betraval by Judas, and the faithfulness of the remaining disciples (Matt. 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22; John 17:12; 18:9). The fulfillment of God's plan and Old Testament prophecy is a prominent theme in the writing of Matthew (1:22; 2:15, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:56) and of John (12:38; 19:24, 28, 36). While critics may object that some of these prophecies were fulfilled by people who knew about them and may have had a vested interest in seeing them fulfilled (e.g., Jesus fulfilled Ps. 69:21 by saying, "I am thirsty" [John 19:28]), it is notable that other prophecies were fulfilled by persons who had no desire to fulfill them and probably had no knowledge of them, such as the Roman soldiers casting lots for Jesus's garment and not breaking any of his bones. [5] Even where there was no specific prophecy to be fulfilled, Jesus conveyed a sense of necessity concerning future events. For example, he said to his disciples:

When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. . . .

The apostles also emphasized the divine purpose. Peter said in his speech at Pentecost, "This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross" (Acts 2:23). The book of Revelation, written by the apostle John, gives us a particularly striking example of belief in the efficacy of the divine plan.

It is in Paul's writings that the divine plan, according to which everything comes to pass, is made most explicit (1 Cor. 12:18; 15:38; Col. 1:19). The very fortunes of nations are determined by him (Acts 17:26). This includes God's redemptive work (Gal. 3:8; 4:4–5), the choice of individuals and nations (Rom. 9–11), and Paul's selection even before his birth (Gal. 1:15). The image of the potter and the clay, used in a specific and somewhat narrow reference (Rom. 9:20–23), expresses Paul's whole philosophy of history. He regards "everything" that happens as part of God's intention for his children (Eph. 1:11–12), so that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28), his purpose being that we might be "conformed to the image of his Son" (v. 29).

The Nature of the Divine Plan

We now need to draw together from these numerous and varied biblical references some general characteristics of God's plan, enabling us to understand more completely what we can expect from God.

1. God's plan is from all eternity. The psalmist spoke of God's having planned all our days before there were any of them (Ps. 139:16). Paul in Ephesians indicates that God "chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world" (1:4). These decisions are not made as history unfolds and events occur. God manifests his purpose within history (2 Tim. 1:10), but they have always been God's plan, from all eternity, from before the beginning of time (see also Isa. 22:11).

Being eternal, God's plan does not have any chronological sequence. There is no before and after within eternity. There is, of course, a logical sequence (e.g., the decision to let Jesus die on the cross logically follows the decision to send him to earth), and there is a temporal sequence in the enacting of the events that have been decreed; but there is no temporal sequence to God's willing. It is one coherent, simultaneous decision.

2. God's plan and the decisions contained therein are free on God's part. This is implied in expressions like "the good pleasure of his will." It is also implicit in the fact that no one has advised him (for that matter, there is no one who *could* advise him). Isaiah 40:13–14 says:

Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor?
Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way?
Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?

Paul quotes this very passage as he concludes his great statement on the sovereignty and inscrutability of God's workings (Rom. 11:34).

Not only do God's decisions not stem from any sort of external determination, but they are not a matter of internal compulsion either. That is to say, although God's decisions and actions are quite consistent with his nature, they are not constrained by his nature. He had to act in a loving and holy fashion in whatever he did, but he was not required to create. He freely chose to create for reasons not known to us.

3. In the ultimate sense, the purpose of God's plan is his glory. Paul indicates that God chose us in Christ and destined us "in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace" (Eph. 1:5–6). What God does, he does for his own name's sake (Isa. 48:11; Ezek. 20:9). Jesus said that his followers were to let their lights so shine that fellow humans would see their good works and glorify their Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16; cf. John 15:8).

This is not to say there are no secondary motivations behind God's plan and resultant actions. He has provided the means of salvation in order to fulfill his love for humans and his concern for their welfare. This, however, is not an ultimate end, but only a means to the greater end, God's own glory.

4. The plan of God is all-inclusive. This is implicit in the great variety of items mentioned in the Bible as parts of God's plan. Beyond that, however,

are explicit statements of the extent of God's plan. Paul speaks of God as the one who "works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Eph. 1:11). The psalmist says that "all things serve you" (Ps. 119:91). While all ends are part of God's plan, all means are as well. No division of sacred and secular areas of life exists from God's standpoint. No areas fall outside the purview of his concern and decision.

5. God's plan is efficacious. What he has purposed from eternity will surely come to pass. The Lord says:

"Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will happen.". . . For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back? (Isa. 14:24, 27)

He will not change his mind, nor will he discover previously unknown considerations that will cause him to alter his intentions.

- 6. God's plan relates to his actions rather than his nature, his decisions regarding what he shall do, not to his personal attributes. God does not decide to be loving and powerful, for example. He is loving and powerful simply by virtue of being God.[6]
- 7. God's plan relates primarily to what God himself does in terms of creating, preserving, directing, and redeeming. It also involves human willing and acting, but only secondarily, that is, as means to the ends he purposes, or as results of actions that he takes. Note that God's role here is to decide that certain things will take place in our lives, not to lay down commands to act in a certain way. The plan of God does not force humans to act in particular ways, but renders it certain that they will *freely* act in those ways.
- 8. Thus while God's plan relates primarily to what he does, the actions of humans are also included. Jesus noted, for example, that the responses of individuals to his message were a result of the Father's decision (John 6:37, 44; cf. 17:2, 6, 9). Luke says in Acts 13:48 that "all who were appointed for eternal life believed."

The plan of God does not force humans to act in particular ways, but renders it certain that they will

freely act in those ways.

On the one hand, God's plan includes what we ordinarily call good acts. On the other hand, the evil actions of humans, contrary to God's law and moral intentions, are also seen in Scripture as part of God's plan, foreordained by him. The betrayal, conviction, and crucifixion of Jesus are prominent instances of this (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:27–28).

9. God's plan is unchangeable in terms of its specifics. God does not change his mind or alter his decisions regarding specific determinations. This may seem strange in light of the seeming alteration of his intentions with regard to Nineveh (Jonah), and his apparent repentance for having made humankind (Gen. 6:6). The statement in Genesis 6, however, should be regarded as an anthropomorphism or anthropopathism, and Jonah's announcement of impending destruction should be viewed as a warning used to effect God's actual plan for Nineveh. We must keep in mind here that constancy is one of the attributes of God's greatness.

Logical Priority: God's Plan or Human Action?

We must now consider whether God's plan or human action is logically prior. While Calvinists and Arminians agree that human actions are included in God's plan, they disagree as to which is cause and which is result. Do people do what they do because God has decided that this is exactly how they are going to act, or does God first foresee what they will do and then on that basis make his decision regarding what is going to happen?

1. Calvinists, on the one hand, believe that God's plan is logically prior and that human decisions and actions are a consequence. With respect to the particular matter of the acceptance or rejection of salvation, God in his plan has chosen that some shall believe and thus receive the offer of eternal life. He foreknows what will happen because he has decided what is to happen. This is true with respect to all other human decisions and actions as well. God is not dependent on what humans decide. It is not the case, then, that God determines that what humans will do will come to pass, nor does he choose to eternal life those whom he foresees will believe. Rather, God's

decision has rendered it certain that every individual will act in a particular way.[7]

2. Arminians, on the other hand, place a stronger emphasis on human freedom. God allows and expects humans to exercise the will they have been given. If this were not so, we would not find the biblical invitations to choose God, the "whosoever will" passages, such as "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). The very offering of such invitations implies that the hearer can either accept or reject them. This, however, seems inconsistent with the position that God's decisions have rendered the future certain. If they had, there would be no point in issuing invitations to humans, for God's decisions as to what would happen would come to pass regardless of what they do. Arminians therefore look for some other way to regard the decisions of God.

The key lies in understanding the role of God's foreknowledge in the formation and execution of the divine plan. In Romans 8:29 Paul says, "For those God foreknew he also predestined." From this verse the Arminian draws the conclusion that God's choice or determination of each individual's destiny is a result of foreknowledge. Thus, those whom God foreknew would believe are those he decided would be saved. A similar statement can be made of all human actions, and of all other aspects of life for that matter. God knows what all of us are going to do. He therefore wills what he foresees will happen.[8] So one might say that in the Arminian view, this aspect of God's plan is conditional upon human decision; in the Calvinistic view, God's plan is unconditional.

A Moderately Calvinistic Model

The Unconditional Nature of God's Plan

Despite difficulties in relating divine sovereignty to human freedom, we nonetheless come to the conclusion on biblical grounds that the plan of God is unconditional rather than conditional on human choice. There simply is nothing in the Bible to suggest that God chooses humans because of what they are going to do on their own. The Arminian concept of foreknowledge (*prognōsis*), appealing though it is, is not borne out by Scripture. The word means more than simply having advance knowledge or precognition of what is to come. It appears to have in its background the Hebrew concept of

yada', which often meant more than simple awareness. It suggested a kind of intimate knowledge—it was even used of sexual intercourse.[9] When Paul says that God foreknew the people of Israel, he is not referring merely to an advance knowledge that God had. Indeed, it is clear that God's choice of Israel was not on the basis of advance knowledge of a favorable response on Israel's part. Had God anticipated such a response, he would certainly have been wrong. Note that in Romans 11:2 Paul says, "God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew," and that a discussion of the faithlessness of Israel follows. Certainly in this passage foreknowledge must mean something more than advance knowledge. In Acts 2:23, foreknowledge is linked with the will of God. Moreover, in 1 Peter 1 we read that the elect are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God (v. 2) and that Christ was foreknown from before the foundation of the world (v. 20). To suggest that foreknowledge here means nothing more than previous knowledge or acquaintance is to virtually deprive these verses of any real meaning. We must conclude that foreknowledge as used in Romans 8:29 carries with it the idea of favorable disposition or selection as well as advance knowledge.

Furthermore, there are passages where the unconditional nature of God's selecting plan is made quite explicit. This is seen in Paul's statement regarding the choice of Jacob over Esau: "Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she [Rebecca] was told, 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written: 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated'" (Rom. 9:11–13). Paul seems to be taking great pains to emphasize the unmerited or unconditional nature of God's choice of Jacob. Later in the same chapter Paul comments, "Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden" (v. 18). The import of the subsequent image of the potter and the clay is very difficult to escape (vv. 20–24). Similarly, Jesus tells his disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (John 15:16 RSV). Because of these and similar considerations, we must conclude that the plan of God is unconditional rather than conditional on foreseen human actions.

The Meaning of Human Freedom

At this point we must raise the question of whether God can create genuinely free beings and yet render certain all things that are to come to pass, including the free decisions and actions of those beings. One means of alleviating the tension is the distinction between rendering something certain and rendering it necessary. The former is a matter of God's decision that something *will* happen; the latter is a matter of his decreeing that it *must* occur. In the former case, the human being will not act in a way contrary to the course of action God has chosen; in the latter case, the human being cannot act in a way contrary to what God has chosen. That is, God renders it certain that a person who could act (or could have acted) differently does in fact act in a particular way (the way that God wills).[10]

What does it mean to say that I am free? It means that I am not under constraint. Thus, I am free to do whatever I please to do. But am I free with respect to what pleases me and what does not? To put it differently, I may choose one action over another because it holds more appeal for me. But I may not be fully in control of the appeal each of those actions holds for me. That is quite a different matter. I make all my decisions, but those decisions are in large measure influenced by certain characteristics of mine that I am not capable of altering by my own choice. If, for example, I am offered for dinner a choice between liver and *any* other entree, I am guite free to take the liver but I do not desire to do so. I have no conscious control over my dislike of liver. That is a given that goes with my being the person I am. In that respect my freedom is limited. I do not know whether my genes or environmental conditioning has caused my dislike of liver, but it is apparent that I cannot by mere force of will alter this characteristic of mine. Am I free to do as I wish? Yes, most certainly. Am I free to wish as I wish, however? That is a rather different question.

There are, then, limitations on who I am and what I desire and will. I certainly did not choose the genes I have; I did not select my parents or the exact geographical location and cultural setting of my birth. My freedom, therefore, is within these limitations. And here arises the question: Who set up these factors? The theistic answer is, God did.

I am free to choose among various options. But my choice will be influenced by who I am. Therefore, my freedom must be understood as my ability to choose among options in light of who I am. And who I am is a result of God's decision and activity. God is in control of all the circumstances that bear on my situation in life. He may bring to bear (or permit to be brought to bear) factors that will make a particular option appealing, even powerfully appealing, to me. Through all the factors that

have come into my experience in time past, he has influenced the type of person I now am. Indeed, he has affected what has come to pass by willing that it was I who was brought into being.

Whenever a child is conceived, there are an infinite number of possibilities. A countless variety of genetic combinations may emerge out of the union of sperm and ovum. We do not know why a particular combination actually results. But now, for the sake of argument, let us consider the possibility of a hypothetical individual whose genetic combination differs infinitesimally from my own. He is identical to me in every respect; in every situation of life he responds as I do. In a crucial situation, however, he would respond to a particular stimulus in a different way than I do. The world that God chooses to bring into being is one in which it is I, not my counterpart, who exists.

God's Will and Human Freedom

Is God's having rendered human decisions and actions certain compatible with human freedom? How we respond depends on our understanding of freedom. According to the position we are espousing, the answer to the question "Could the individual have chosen differently?" is yes, while the answer to the question "But would she have?" is no. In our understanding, for human freedom to exist, only the first question need be answered in the affirmative. But others would argue that human freedom exists only if both questions can be answered in the affirmative, that is, if the individual not only could have chosen differently but could also have desired to choose differently. In this view freedom means spontaneity, or even random choice. We would point out to them that when it comes to human decisions and actions, nothing is completely spontaneous or random. There is a measure of predictability with respect to human behavior; the better we know an individual, the better we can anticipate his or her responses. For example, a good friend or relative might say, "I knew you were going to say that." We conclude that if freedom means random choice, human freedom is a practical impossibility. But if freedom means ability to choose between options, human freedom exists and is compatible with God's having rendered our decisions and actions certain.

Added to this is the idea of God's work in a noncoercive fashion to bring about our decision. He does not compel us by force, that is, external compulsion. Nor does he compel us by threats and manipulation, that is,

internal compulsion. Rather, he makes the choice so appealing to us that we choose it, rather than an alternative. John Feinberg uses an illustration of a student in his class, whom he, as the instructor, decides should leave the room, perhaps because he is disturbing the class. The instructor, if he is strong enough, could pick up the student, carry him outside the door, deposit him there, then lock the door. That would be external compulsion. Alternatively, he could threaten the student, perhaps even using a firearm to threaten his life. That would be internal compulsion. The third option would be to reason with the student, pointing out to him certain advantages to his leaving the room and the disadvantages of his remaining. This would be the student's own decision. [11]

This third idea comes the closest to the model of divine sovereignty that we are advocating. Sometimes one hears the caricature of Calvinism (which occasionally is deserved) that God drags people kicking and screaming into his kingdom, with them objecting all the while. There are times, to be sure, when God compels persons to obey him. Most of the time, however, the picture is more like God making his will so persuasive and attractive that persons willingly and even joyfully accept it and carry it out.

It should be noted that if certainty of outcome is inconsistent with freedom, divine foreknowledge, as the Arminian understands that term, presents as much difficulty for human freedom as does divine foreordination. For if God knows what I will do, it must be certain that I am going to do it. If it were not certain, God could not know it; he might be mistaken (I might act differently from what he expects). But if what I will do is certain, then surely I will do it, whether or not I know what I will do. It will happen! But am I then free? In the view of those whose definition of freedom entails the implication that it cannot be certain that a particular event will occur, presumably I am not free. In their view, divine foreknowledge is just as incompatible with human freedom as is divine foreordination.

It might seem that the divine choice we have argued for is the same as the Arminian idea of foreknowledge. There is a significant difference, however. In the Arminian understanding, there is a foreknowledge of actual existing entities. God simply chooses to confirm, as it were, what he foresees real individuals will decide and do. In our scheme, however, God has a foreknowledge of possibilities. God foresees what possible beings will do if placed in a particular situation with all the influences that will be present at

that point in time and space.[12] On this basis he chooses which of the possible individuals will become actualities and which circumstances and influences will be present. He foreknows what these individuals will freely do, for he in effect made that decision by choosing to bring them into existence.

God's Wish and God's Will

Our position that God has rendered certain everything that occurs raises another question: Is there not a contradiction at certain points between what God commands and says he desires and what he actually wills? For example, sin is universally prohibited, yet apparently God wills for it to occur. Certainly murder is prohibited in Scripture, and yet the death of Jesus by execution was apparently willed by God (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23). Further, we are told that God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9), yet apparently he does not actually will for all to be saved, since not everyone is. How are we to reconcile these seemingly contradictory considerations?

We must distinguish between two different senses of God's will, which we will refer to as God's "wish" (will₁) and God's "will" (will₂). The former is God's general intention, the values with which he is pleased. The latter is God's specific intention in a given situation, what he decides will actually occur. There are times, many of them, when God wills to permit, and thus to have occur, what he really does not wish. This is the case with sin. God does not desire sin to occur. There are occasions, however, when he simply says, in effect, "So be it," allowing a human to choose freely a sinful course of action.

It is not unlike the way parents sometimes treat their children. A mother may wish for her son to avoid a particular type of behavior, and may tell him so. Yet there are situations in which she may, unobserved by her son, see him about to engage in the forbidden action, yet choose not to intervene to prevent it. Here is a case in which the parent's wish is clearly that the child not engage in certain behavior, yet her will is that he do what he has willed to do. By choosing not to intervene to prevent the act, the mother is actually willing that it take place. Perhaps this is the way we should understand Joseph's treatment at the hands of his brothers. It did not please God; it was not consistent with what he is like. God did, however, will to permit it; he did not intervene to prevent it. And interestingly enough, God

used their action to produce the very thing it was intended to prevent—Joseph's ascendancy.

God's Will and the Need for Human Action

Another issue that must be examined concerns whether our view of God's all-encompassing plan removes incentives for activity on our part. If God has already rendered certain what is to occur, is there any point in our seeking to accomplish his will? Does what we do really make any difference in what happens? This issue relates particularly to evangelism. If God has already chosen (elected) who will be saved and who will not, what difference does it make whether we (or anyone else for that matter) seek to propagate the gospel? Nothing can change the fact that the elect will be saved and the nonelect will not.

Two points should be made by way of response. One is that if God has rendered certain the end, his plan also includes the means to that end. His plan may well include that our witness is the means by which an elect person will come to saving faith. The other consideration is that we do not know in detail what God's plan is. So we must proceed on the basis of what God has revealed of his wish. Accordingly, we must witness. This may mean that some of our time is spent on someone who will not ultimately enter the kingdom of heaven. But that does not mean that our time has been wasted. It may well have been the means to fulfilling another part of God's plan. And, ultimately, faithfulness, not success, is God's measure of our service.

Various Understandings of History

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, Christianity's doctrine of the divine plan responds specifically to the questions of where history is going and what is moving it. Some understandings of the movement of history are quite negative. This is particularly true of cyclical views, which do not see history as progressing, but as simply repeating the same pattern, albeit in somewhat different fashion. Eastern religions, particularly Hinduism with its emphasis on reincarnation, tend to be of this type. One goes through cycles of death and rebirth, with the status of one's life in each new incarnation largely determined by one's conduct in the previous life.

Salvation, if one may term it that, consists in Nirvana, escape from the repeated process.

Doomsday philosophies abound in our time. It is believed that history will soon come to a disastrous end as a result of either an economic collapse, an ecological crisis involving massive pollution of the environment, or an outbreak of nuclear warfare. [13] The human race is doomed because it has failed to manage the world wisely.

Another prominent twentieth-century pessimistic philosophy was existentialism. The idea of the absurdity of the world, of the paradoxical and the ironic in reality, of the blind randomness of much that occurs, leads to despair. Lacking any discernible pattern in the events of history, one must create one's own meaning by a conscious act of free will.

There have also been a number of quite optimistic views, especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Darwinism was extended from the biological realm to other areas, particularly to society. In the thought of Herbert Spencer, it became an all-inclusive philosophy entailing the growth, progress, and development of the whole of reality. Although this view proved rather unrealistic, it had considerable influence in its time. In more recent years, utopianisms employing the methods of the behavioral sciences have sought to restructure society or at least individual lives. [14]

Until recently, the most militant philosophy of history on a global scale has been dialectical materialism, the philosophy on which communism is based. Adapting Georg Hegel's philosophy, Karl Marx replaced its idealistic metaphysic with a materialistic view. The forces of material reality are impelling history to its end. Through a series of steps, the economic order is being changed. Each stage of the process is characterized by a conflict between two antithetical groups or movements. The prevailing means of production is changing from feudalism to capitalism to a final socialistic stage where there will be no private ownership. In the classless society, the dialectic that has moved history through the rhythmical process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis will cease, and all evil will wither away. Because this trust is in an impersonal force, many people under communism found it neither personally satisfying nor societally effective.

Finally, there is the Christian doctrine of the divine plan, which affirms that an all-wise, all-powerful, good God has from all eternity planned what is to occur and that history is carrying out his intention. There is a definite goal toward which history is progressing. History, then, is not moved

merely by chance happenings, impersonal atoms, or blind fate. The force behind it is, rather, a loving God with whom we can have a personal relationship. We may look forward with assurance, then, toward the attainment of the telos of the universe. And we may align our lives with the assured outcome of history.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What do the terms "foreordain" and "predestinate" mean?
- What can be learned from Old and New Testament teachings about the plan of God?
- What are the general characteristics of God's plan?
- What does human freedom mean in the moderately Calvinistic model?
- If God has already chosen people, why do you think you need to participate in proclaiming the gospel?

God's Originating Work: Creation

Chapter Objectives

After you have completed your study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Understand reasons for studying the doctrine of creation.
- 2. Identify and define the elements of the biblical teaching on creation.
- **3.** Discuss the theological meaning of the doctrine of creation.
- **4.** Understand and explain the relationship between the doctrine of creation and science.
- **5.** Identify and describe the implications of the doctrine of creation.

Chapter Summary

God created all things without the use of preexisting materials. There are at least four elements of the biblical teaching from which we may deduce at least nine theological conclusions. Several theories have been proposed to harmonize the age of creation and development within creation. The most plausible position holds that God's acts of creation involved long periods of time through what is often called progressive creation. The Christian can have confidence in the greatness of God in his creation of the universe and all that is within it.

Chapter Outline

Reasons for Studying the Doctrine of Creation

Elements of the Biblical Teaching on Creation

- Creation out of Nothing
- Its All-Inclusive Nature
- The Work of the Triune God
- Its Purpose: God's Glory

The Theological Meaning of the Doctrine

The Creation Doctrine and Its Relation to Science

- Science and the Bible
- The Age and Development of the Earth
- Intelligent Design

<u>Implications of the Doctrine of Creation</u>

The plan of God may be thought of as being like the architect's plans and drawings for a building that is to be constructed. But the plan was not merely a scheme in the mind of God. It has been translated into reality by God's actions. In our discussion of the work of God, we will concentrate on those works that are attributed especially, although not exclusively, to the work of God the Father. The first of these is creation. By creation we mean the work of God in bringing into being, without the use of any preexisting materials, everything that is.

Reasons for Studying the Doctrine of Creation

There are several reasons for giving careful study to the doctrine of creation.

- 1. First, the Bible places great significance on it. The very first statement of the Bible is "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Creation is likewise one of the first assertions in the Gospel of John, the most theologically oriented of the New Testament Gospels (John 1:1–3). God's creative work plays a prominent role in the biblical presentation of God.
- 2. The doctrine of creation has been a significant part of the church's faith, a highly important aspect of its teaching and preaching. The first article of the Apostles' Creed says, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." Although this particular element (i.e., the phrase dealing with creation) was not in the earliest form of the creed, but added somewhat later, it is nonetheless significant that in a formulation as brief as the Apostles' Creed, creation was rather early thought important enough to be included.
- 3. Our understanding of the doctrine of creation is important because of its effect on our understanding of other doctrines. Humans were created by God as separate beings, rather than emanating from him. Since the whole of nature was created by God and pronounced good by him, there is no inherent evil in being material as well as spiritual. These various facets of the doctrine of creation tell us a great deal about the human status. Moreover, since the universe is God's doing rather than a mere chance happening, we are able to discern something about the nature and the will

of God from an examination of creation. Alter the doctrine of creation at any point, and you have also altered these other aspects of Christian doctrine.

- 4. The doctrine of creation helps to differentiate Christianity from other religions and worldviews. While some might think that at root there are similarities between Christianity and Hinduism, for example, a close examination reveals that the Christian doctrine of God and creation is quite different from Hinduism's Brahma-Atman teaching.
- 5. The study of the doctrine of creation is one point of potential dialogue between Christianity and natural science. At times the dialogue has been quite furious. The great evolution debate of the early twentieth century makes it clear that while theology and science run in parallel courses most of the time, not intersecting in a common topic, the issue of the origin of the world is one point where they do encounter one another. It is important to understand just what the Christian and biblical position is on this subject, and what is at stake.
- 6. There sometimes have been sharp disagreements within Christian circles. In the modernist-fundamentalist controversy of the early twentieth century, the struggle was on a large scale—evolution versus creation. Today, by contrast, there seem to be internal disputes within evangelicalism between the theory of progressive creationism and the view that the earth is only a few thousand years old. A careful look must be taken at precisely what the Bible does teach on this subject.

Elements of the Biblical Teaching on Creation

Creation out of Nothing

We begin our examination of the doctrine of creation by noting that it is creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), or without the use of preexisting materials. This does not mean that all of God's creative work was direct and immediate, occurring at the very beginning of time. There has also been mediate or derivative creation, God's subsequent work of developing and fashioning what he had originally brought into existence. We are here affirming that the whole of what now exists was begun by God's act of bringing it into existence—he did not fashion and adapt something that already existed independently of him.

The whole of what now exists was begun by God's act of bringing it into existence—he did not fashion and adapt something that already existed independently of him.

Although the language in the Old Testament is not conclusive, the idea of *ex nihilo* creation can be found in a number of New Testament passages where the aim is not primarily to make a statement about the nature of creation. In particular, there are numerous references to the beginning of the world or the beginning of creation:

```
"from [since, before] the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8)
```

Regarding these several expressions Werner Foerster says, "These phrases show that creation involves the beginning of the existence of the world, so that there is no pre-existent matter."[1]

In the New Testament we find several more explicit expressions of the idea of creating out of nothing. God calls things into being by his word. Paul says that God "calls into being things that were not" (Rom. 4:17). God said, "Let light shine out of darkness" (2 Cor. 4:6). This suggests the effect occurred without the use of any antecedent material cause. God created the world by his word "so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Heb. 11:3).

[&]quot;from the beginning" (Matt. 19:4, 8; John 8:44; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 1:1; 2:13–14; 3:8)

[&]quot;from the beginning of the world" (Matt. 24:21)

[&]quot;from the beginning of creation" (Mark 10:6 RSV; 2 Pet. 3:4 RSV)

[&]quot;from the beginning of creation which God created" (Mark 13:19 RSV)

[&]quot;since the creation of the world" (Rom. 1:20)

[&]quot;Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning" (Heb. 1:10 RSV)

[&]quot;the beginning of God's creation" (Rev. 3:14 RSV)

From these biblical references we can draw several conclusions. For one, God has the power simply to will situations to be, and they immediately come to pass as he has willed. Second, creation is an act of his will, not coerced by any force or consideration outside himself. Further, God does not involve himself, his own being, in the process. Creation is not a part of him or an emanation from his reality.

Its All-Inclusive Nature

God did not create merely a certain part of reality, with the remainder attributable to some other origin; he has made all of reality. In the opening statement of Genesis ("In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"), the expression "the heavens and the earth" is not intended to designate those items alone. It is an idiom referring to everything that is. The whole universe came into being through this act of God. John 1:3 makes the same point most emphatically and explicitly in both positive and negative terms: "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." Here is an affirmation of the creaturehood of all that is and a rejection of the notion that something might have been made by someone or something other than God.

The Work of the Triune God

Creation is the work of the Triune God. A large number of the Old Testament references to the creative act attribute it simply to God, rather than to the Father, Son, or Spirit, for the distinctions of the Trinity had not yet been fully revealed (e.g., Gen. 1:1; Ps. 96:5; Isa. 37:16; 44:24; 45:12; Jer. 10:11–12). In the New Testament, however, we find differentiation. First Corinthians 8:6, which appears in a passage where Paul discusses the propriety of eating food that had been offered to idols, is particularly instructive. In contrasting God with idols, Paul says, "Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." Paul is including both the Father and the Son in the act of creation and yet also distinguishing them from one another. The Father apparently has the more prominent part; he is the source from whom all things come. The Son is the means or the agent of the existence of all things. There is a similar affirmation in John 1:3 and Hebrews 1:10. There are also references that seem to indicate the Spirit of God was active in

creating as well—Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; 33:4; Psalm 104:30; and Isaiah 40:12–13. In some of these cases, however, it is difficult to determine whether the reference is to the Holy Spirit or to God's working by means of his breath, since the Hebrew word *ruah* can be used for either.

There may seem to be a conflict between attributing creation to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and maintaining that each member of the Trinity has his own distinctive work. Yet this is not a problem, unless we think that there is but one form of causation. When a house is built, who actually builds it? In one sense, it is the architect who designs it and creates the plans from which it is constructed. In another sense, it is the contractor who actually carries out the plan, yet it is the construction workers who in fact build the house. But certainly the owners, although they may not drive a single nail, are also in a sense the ones who build the house, since they sign the legal papers authorizing its construction and will make the monthly mortgage payments. Each one, in a unique way, is the cause of the house. A similar statement can be made about creation. It appears from Scripture that it was the Father who brought the created universe into existence. But it was the Spirit and the Son who fashioned it, who carried out the details of the design. Although the creation is from the Father, it is through the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Its Purpose: God's Glory

While God did not *have* to create, he did so for good and sufficient reasons, and the creation fulfills that purpose. In particular, the creation glorifies God by carrying out his will. Both the inanimate (Ps. 19:1) and the animate creatures glorify him. In the story of Jonah, we see this in rather vivid fashion. Everyone and everything (except Jonah initially) obeys God's will and plan: the storm, the pebbles (lots), the sailors, the great fish, the Ninevites, the east wind, the gourd, and the worm. Each part of creation is capable of fulfilling God's purposes for it, but each obeys in a different way. The inanimate creation does so mechanically, obeying natural laws that govern the physical world. The animate creation does so instinctively, responding to impulses within. Only humans and angels are capable of obeying God consciously and willingly and thus glorifying God most fully.

The Theological Meaning of the Doctrine

We turn now to examine the theological meaning of the doctrine of creation. What really is being affirmed by this teaching? And, perhaps just as important for our purposes, what is being rejected or contradicted?

- 1. The doctrine of creation is first and rather obviously a statement that there is no ultimate reality other than God. There is no room for dualism, according to which there are two ultimate principles. In one form of dualism there is the Lord, the Creator, the Maker, and there is what the Creator utilizes, or what he works on, the material he employs in creating. But this is not what the Christian doctrine affirms. God did not work with something already in existence. He brought into existence the very raw material he employed. If this were not the case, God would not really be infinite.
- 2. The original act of divine creation is unique. It is unlike human "creative" acts, which involve fashioning, using the materials at hand. In producing works of art, the artist must work within the limitations of the medium employed—for example, the reflective characteristics of oil paint. Moreover, even the concepts the artist expresses depend on previous experience. The work will be either an expression of an idea directly experienced or a combination of elements previously experienced into some new whole; a genuinely novel idea, totally new and fresh, is very rare, indeed. God, however, is not bound by anything external to himself. His only limitations are those of his own nature and the choices he has made.
- 3. The doctrine of creation also means that nothing made is intrinsically evil. Everything has come from God, and the creation narrative says five times that he saw that it was good (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Then, when he completed his creation of the human, we are told that God saw everything he had made, and it was very good (v. 31). There was nothing evil within God's original creation.

In any type of dualism, by contrast, there tends to be a moral distinction between the higher and the lower principles or elements. [2] Since the higher realm is divine and the lower is not, the former is thought of as more real than the other. Eventually this metaphysical difference tends to be regarded as a moral difference as well—the higher is good and the lower is evil. If, however, the whole of reality owes its existence to God, and if what God made was "good" throughout, we cannot think of matter as inherently evil. [3]

- 4. The doctrine of creation also thrusts a responsibility on the human race. Humans cannot justify their evil behavior by blaming the evil realm of the material, for it is not inherently evil. Human sin must be an exercise of human freedom. Nor can we blame society. Human society was also part of what God made, and it was very good. To regard society as the cause of sin is therefore an inaccurate and misleading ploy.
- 5. The doctrine of creation also guards against depreciating the incarnation of Christ. If, on the one hand, the material world were somehow inherently evil, it would be very difficult to accept the fact that the second person of the Trinity took on human form, including a physical body. On the other hand, a correct understanding of the doctrine of creation—what God made was good—enables us to affirm the full meaning of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, his taking of full human nature on himself.
- 6. The doctrine of creation also restrains us from asceticism. Believing that the physical nature is evil has led some, including Christians, to shun the human body and any type of physical satisfaction. Spirit, being more divine, is the proper realm of the good and the godly. Thus, meditation is pursued, and an austere diet and abstinence from sex are regarded as conditions of spirituality. But the doctrine of creation affirms that since God has made all that is and has made it good, it is redeemable. Salvation and spirituality are to be found not by fleeing from or avoiding the material realm but by sanctifying it.
- 7. If all of creation has been made by God, there are a connection and an affinity among its various parts. I am a sibling to all other humans, for the same God created us and watches over us. Since inanimate material also comes from God, I am, at base, one with nature, for we are members of the same family.
- 8. While the doctrine of creation excludes any dualism, it also excludes the type of monism that regards the world as an outflow or emanation from God's nature, a part of him separated from his essence as it were. There is a tendency to regard this emanation as still divine; hence the end result of this view is usually pantheism. "Creation" is a change of status rather than a beginning of being. Christianity's doctrine of creation out of nothing rejects all of this. The individual elements of the world are genuine creatures dependent on God their Creator.
- 9. Further, the doctrine of creation points out the inherent limitations of creaturehood. No creature or combination of creatures can ever be equated

with God, and never will be God. Thus there is no basis whatsoever for idolatry—for worshiping nature or for revering humans. God has a unique status, so that he alone is to be worshiped (Exod. 20:2–3).

We sometimes think of the great metaphysical gap in the universe as a quantitative gap falling between the human race and the rest of the creation. In reality, however, the greater metaphysical gap, both quantitative and qualitative, falls between God on one side and all else on the other.[4] He is to be the object of worship, praise, and obedience. All other existents are to be subjects who offer these acts of submission to him.

The Creation Doctrine and Its Relation to Science

Science and the Bible

For many years, theology was the "queen of the sciences." It was the foremost source of authority in the West, and the teachings of the Bible and the church were the standard against which claims to truth were measured. In the modern period, however, the rise of science produced friction between theology and science. Christians who believed fully that the Bible is inspired and authoritative, and that God created the world and gave it order and meaning, had a natural desire to see theology and science interrelate, since both derive from God and point to him. Instead, open and violent conflict at times erupted. In the early stages, theology's quarrel was primarily with natural science; later on the behavioral sciences presented the major problem.

In recent years the controversy has taken on added intensity, with court cases to decide the teaching of evolution and creationism. The conflict has led many people to one extreme or the other. Some, thinking there is an irreconcilable conflict between the scientific evidence for evolution and the biblical teaching regarding creation, have abandoned faith in Christianity. Others have virtually abandoned trust in the scientific method, believing that it rests on false assumptions. In many cases, however, they continue to use the modern technology that science has helped to develop.

The greater metaphysical gap falls between God on one side and all else on the other.

A related area of disagreement is the nature of the Bible. Some believe that the Bible has a great deal to say about such scientific matters as the origin of the universe, life, and the human race, and says it in fairly technical fashion. Others, asserting that the Bible is not a science textbook, treat it as quite irrelevant to any scientific matters, maintaining that its message is purely religious. Both conceptions are wrong. On the one hand, the Bible must be understood in light of its purpose: to make it possible for humans to be savingly related to God. It was not given to satisfy our curiosity, or to supply us with information that might be obtained by study of God's creation, his general revelation to us. Scripture describes matters of nature, not in the technical language scientists use, but in the language of ordinary conversation that reflects how the world appears to the eye. On the other hand, the fact that a book is not a formal text on a particular subject (few books are) does not mean that it says nothing bearing on that subject. In reality, the Bible makes assertions or affirmations about nature and God's relationship to it that have implications for science. Its religious affirmations are in some cases so tied up with statements about nature that they cannot be separated. We must take seriously both of God's books: the book of his Word and the book of his works.

The Age and Development of the Earth

Apart from the issues relating specifically to the origin and nature of human beings, two problems have caused concern over the years: the age of the earth and development within the creation. The conflict regarding the age of the earth pits the understanding that the Bible teaches that God created everything about six thousand years ago (4004 BC was the exact calculation produced by Archbishop James Ussher) against the indications of geology that the earth is several billion years old. Attempted resolutions have usually taken the form of adjusting either the scientific or the biblical indications of age, or in some cases both.

On the one hand, those who maintain that the earth is relatively young frequently challenge the validity of the scientific methods of dating, especially those involving radioactive materials. Some of them argue that at the time of the flood the earth was subjected to unusual geological forces that so altered it that it appears much older than it actually is. One ingenious theory holds that God created the world six thousand years ago, but made it

as if it were already billions of years old. On the other hand, those who believe the earth is billions of years old point out that the genealogies in the Bible were never intended to be used to calculate the beginning of time. Furthermore, the Hebrew word translated "day" in Genesis 1 can have several meanings, including a long period of time. Some hold that the "days" are not time periods at all but simply figures of speech. The most satisfactory approach appears to me to be that God created in a series of acts that involved long periods, and that took place an indefinite time ago. This does full justice to both the scientific and the biblical data.

The other major issue regarding creation and science is the question of development. Evolutionists hold that life originated through a set of chance factors, and that through a process known as natural selection all the species that now exist derived from one simple organism. Fiat creationists insist that God directly created at the beginning every species that would ever be, and that there has been no evolution. Theistic evolutionists hold that God created the first organism and placed within his universe the process by which life then developed in accordance with scientific laws, perhaps aided at some points by God's intervention (e.g., the changing of a higher primate into the first human).

We must note the significant evidence for the arising of new species through natural development: the resemblance between some different forms and the existence of some transitional forms; the restriction of certain species to isolated areas (e.g., Australia); the existence of vestigial organs (e.g., the coccyx in humans). The biblical record, however, as understood from the perspective on inspiration and authority that we have espoused in this book, seems to teach that God created in a series of acts. The best combination of these considerations is found in what is sometimes called progressive creationism. This notes that the Hebrew word translated "kind(s)" in Genesis 1 cannot be made more specific than that. It is simply a word for subdivisions, and thus does not require the interpretation that God directly created every species. According to this view, God would create the first member of a group of creatures (say, the first horse); over a long period of time, other closely related forms evolved from them. Then God created other kinds, quite different in nature, so that birds did not evolve from fish, for example. This fits well both the biblical data and the scientific data, for, significantly, there are systematic deficiencies in the fossil record. So one can take seriously both science and theology.

Sometimes Christians are intimidated by the theory of evolution, forgetting that it is simply a theory, although one built on many data. But when science goes beyond describing the facts and offering explanations of specific occurrences to give an overall explanation of the universe, it is going beyond its competence. It has then become philosophy, and specifically cosmology, that intellectual integrity requires should not be presented without pointing out that there are other explanatory theories. Among the alternatives, of course, is the view that there is a higher being who has brought into existence all that is.

Intelligent Design

In the late twentieth century a new and quite vigorous challenge to naturalistic evolution began to develop. The first voice and the organizing force of this new movement, known as intelligent design, was law professor Philip Johnson of the University of California, Berkeley. As an authority on law and argument, Johnson approached the case generally advanced for Darwinism as he would a legal argument. He found the case to be wanting in several respects. It should be noted that his argument was not about empirical data, but about the inferences drawn from that data. [5]

Perhaps the leading spokesperson to emerge has been William Dembski, who holds PhDs both in mathematics and philosophy. His largest contribution to the discussion is in terms of application of statistical evaluation to the evolutionary argument. Basically his contention is that the possibility of the complexity of nature as we find it having arisen purely by chance is very low. [6] Rather, the state of development of the universe, and of certain elements of it in particular, displays the sort of characteristics that would ordinarily lead us to recognize the presence of some intelligent activity. Michael Behe developed the idea of irreducible complexity. Whereas standard evolutionary theory has argued for a series of small changes, Behe argues that what we have is a very complex system, in which any part, if not present, would make the functioning of the whole impossible. [7]

The reaction from the majority in the field of biology has been that this is not proper science but rather, religion masquerading as science. It does not exhibit the characteristics of a science. [8] Intelligent design scholars, however, insist that this is not the doctrine of creation. Although many of them are evangelical Christians, they contend that they are not arguing for a

creator. They are simply trying to point out the inadequacy of the Darwinian theory. Dembski also contends that what he is advancing is not simply a variation of the standard design *argument*; it should rather be referred to as a design *inference*. What emerges from the discussion is not a conclusion of a definite designer, but rather the presence of intelligence per se.[9]

It appears that this is, at least in part, a dispute over the philosophy of science and the logic of scientific method. The Christian doctrine of creation does not depend on the establishment of intelligent design. The type of argument offered by proponents of intelligent design does indeed support and render more probable the position of creation, but the presence of intelligence does not require the Christian God. However, should this theory prove inadequate, the doctrine of creation is not thereby undercut.

Implications of the Doctrine of Creation

What are the implications of belief in creation? The doctrine has a significant impact on how we view and treat life and the world.

- 1. Everything that is has value. God made it because he was pleased to do so, and it was good in his sight. Each part has its place, which is just what God intended for it to have. God loves all of his creation, not just certain parts of it. Thus we should also have concern for all of it, to preserve and guard and develop what God has made.
- 2. God's creative activity includes not only the initial creative activity but also his later indirect workings. Creation does not preclude development within the world; it includes it. Thus God's plan involves and utilizes the best of human skill and knowledge in the genetic refinement of the creation. Such endeavors are our partnership with God in the ongoing work of creation. Yet, of course, we must be mindful that the materials and truth we employ in those endeavors come from God.
- 3. There is justification for scientifically investigating the creation. Science assumes that there is within the creation some sort of order or pattern it can discover. If the universe were random and, consequently, all the facts scientists gathered about it were merely a haphazard collection, no real understanding of nature would be possible. But by affirming that everything has been made in accordance with a logical pattern, the doctrine of creation substantiates science's assumption. It is significant that

historically science developed earliest and most rapidly in European culture, where there was a belief in a single God who had created according to a rational plan, rather than in some other culture where there was a belief in several gods who engage in conflicting activities.[10] Knowing that there is an intelligent pattern to the universe, the Christian is motivated to seek it.

4. Nothing other than God is self-sufficient or eternal. Everything else, every object and every being, derives its existence from him. It exists to do his will. Although we will highly respect the creation, since it has been made by him, we will always maintain a clear distinction between God and it.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What are the elements of a biblical understanding of creation?
- What is the theological meaning of the doctrine of creation?
- How does the doctrine of creation relate to modern science?
- What attempts have been made to reconcile the apparent age of the earth with the biblical material, and what do they suggest?
- Which of the reasons given for studying the doctrine of creation is most important for you? Are there other reasons that you would add to the list?

God's Continuing Work: Providence

Chapter Objectives

After you have completed a study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Recognize that one part of God's providence is maintaining his creation through preservation.
- 2. Understand that another part of providence is God's governing activity.
- **3.** Recognize that prayer has a role in evoking an appropriate human response to providence.
- **4.** Understand that miracles, or works that are specially supernatural, are an important aspect of providence.

Chapter Summary

The providence of God as preservation means that God maintains the creation he brought into existence. Providence as government means that God is actively engaged in achieving his purposes in his creation and that sin cannot thwart those purposes. While prayer does not change God, it brings the Christian in line with God's purposes, thus enabling God to accomplish those purposes. God does choose on occasion to counteract the natural law to fulfill his purposes; this occurs in a miracle. For the believer, God is ever present and active in caring for him or her.

Chapter Outline

Providence as Preservation

- Biblical Teaching on Preservation
- The Theological Dimensions of Preservation

Providence as Government

- The Extent of God's Governing Activity
- Providence: General or Specific?
- The Relationship between God's Governing Activity and Sin
- The Major Features and Implications of God's Governing Activity

Providence and Prayer
Providence and Miracles

While creation is God's originating work with respect to the universe, providence is his continuing relationship to it. By providence, we mean the continuing action of God by which he preserves in existence the creation he has brought into being and guides it to his intended purposes for it. In terms of the daily dynamics of our lives, therefore, providence has in many ways more actual pertinence than does the doctrine of creation. The word derives from the Latin *providere*, which literally means "to foresee." But more than merely knowing about the future is involved. The word also carries the connotation of acting prudently or making preparation for the future.

Providence is in certain ways central to the conduct of the Christian life. It means that we are able to live in the assurance that God is present and active in our lives. We are in his care and can therefore face the future confidently, knowing that things are not happening merely by chance. We can pray, knowing that God hears and acts on our prayers. We can face danger, knowing that he is not unaware and uninvolved.

Providence may be thought of as having two aspects. One aspect is God's work of preserving his creation in existence, maintaining and sustaining it; this is generally called preservation or sustenance. The other is God's activity in guiding and directing the course of events to fulfill his purposes; this is termed government or providence proper. Preservation and government should not be thought of as separate acts of God, but as distinguishable aspects of his unitary work.

Providence as Preservation

Preservation is God's maintaining his creation in existence. It involves God's protection of his creation against harm and destruction, and his provision for the needs of the elements or members of the creation.

Biblical Teaching on Preservation

Numerous biblical passages speak of God's preserving the creation as a whole. In Nehemiah 9:6 Ezra says, "You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you." After a statement about the role of

Christ in creation, Paul links him to the continuation of the creation as well: "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17).

The Scripture writers see God's preserving hand everywhere. In particular, the psalmists' hymns of praise (e.g., Ps. 104) emphasize God's preserving work throughout nature. The import of such passages is to deny that any part of the creation is self-sufficient. God's presence is particularly evident in the preservation of Israel as a nation. For example, the hand of God was present in providing for the needs of his people at the time of the great famine. God had brought Joseph to Egypt to make provision for feeding the people in the time of shortage. The sparing of the people in the time of Moses is particularly noteworthy. The children of Israel were enabled to pass through the Red Sea on dry land, while the pursuing Egyptians were engulfed in the waters and drowned. In their wanderings through the wilderness, the people of God's chosen nation received miraculous provision and were given victories in battle, sometimes against great odds, as they sought to take the land promised to them.

In the book of Daniel, God's work of preservation is again very striking. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are condemned to be burned, but emerge unharmed from the furnace, while those who cast them in are destroyed by the heat. Because he prays to his God, Daniel is thrown into a den of lions, but he also emerges unharmed.

Jesus has also given clear teaching regarding the Father's work of preservation. The disciples were concerned about the necessities of life—what they would eat and what they would wear. After teaching that God provides for the lesser members of his creation, Jesus's argument moves to humans: they are of more value than birds (Matt. 6:26) and flowers (v. 30). It therefore is not necessary for humans to be anxious about food and clothing, for if they seek God's kingdom and righteousness, all these things will be added to them (vv. 31–33). This is a reference to God's provision. A similar teaching occurs in Matthew 10:28–32.

The Theological Dimensions of Preservation

An important emphasis, in both Jesus's and Paul's teaching, is the inseparability of God's children from his love and keeping. In John 10, Jesus draws a contrast between his sheep and the unbelievers. His sheep recognize and respond to his voice. They shall never perish. No one shall snatch them out of his hand; no one is able to snatch them out of the

Father's hand (vv. 27–30). Paul strikes a similar note when he asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:35). He summarizes by saying, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vv. 38–39).

One salient dimension of God's preservation is that the believer is not spared from danger or trial, but is preserved within it. There is no promise that persecution and suffering will not come, but rather that they will not prevail over us. Paul wrote that God will supply all our needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19). Writing those words from prison, Paul indicated that he had learned to be content in any state in which he found himself (v. 11). He had learned the secret of facing either plenty and abundance or hunger and want (v. 12); he could do all things through the Lord who strengthened him (v. 13).

God's children cannot be separated from his love and keeping; though not spared from trial or danger, they are preserved within it.

The biblical teaching regarding the divine work of preservation excludes two opposite ideas. One is the deistic idea that God has simply made the world, established its patterns of action so that whatever would be needed by each member of the creation would be automatically provided, and then allowed the world to go on its way. [1] Given this model, the creation will remain unless God acts to terminate it. In the biblical model, however, creation would cease to be, apart from God's continued willing it to persist. An image to help us correctly understand God's work of preservation can be drawn from the world of power tools. We can start a manual electric drill by engaging the switch and then activating a locking device that will keep the drill running until definite action is taken to release the lock. This is like the deistic view of God's work of preservation. However, there are other tools, such as power saws, that do not have built-in locking devices. Such tools require continuous application of pressure to the switch, like the "dead man's switch" in a railroad locomotive. Such machines can serve as metaphors of the biblical view of preservation.

One other idea of preservation or sustenance should be avoided. This is the idea that God is like a celestial repairman: The creation has been established and ordinarily functions as God intends. At times, however, it is necessary for God to intervene to make an adjustment before something goes amiss, or perhaps to make a repair after something has gone wrong. In this view, God is not needed when all goes well; he merely observes, approvingly. However, the Bible pictures a much more active involvement by God on a continuing basis.[2] God is immanently at work in his creation, constantly willing it to remain.

The biblical writers who understood the divine work of preservation had a definite sense of confidence. For example, Psalm 91 describes the Lord as our refuge and fortress. The psalmist had learned the lesson that Jesus later taught his disciples—not to fear the one who can destroy the body but cannot touch the soul (Matt. 10:28). This is not a belief that death cannot touch the believer, for death comes to all (Heb. 9:27). Rather, it is the confidence that physical death is not the most significant factor because not even it can separate us from God's love. While the doctrine of God's work of preservation is no justification for foolhardiness or imprudence, it is a guard against terror or even anxiety.

God's work of preservation also means that we can have confidence in the regularity of the created world, and can plan and carry out our lives accordingly. We take this fact for granted, yet it is essential to any sort of rational functioning in the world. The Christian's belief is not in a material or impersonal ground of reality, but an intelligent, good, and purposeful being who continues to will the existence of his creation, so that ordinarily no unexpected events occur.

Providence as Government

The Extent of God's Governing Activity

By the government of God we mean his activity in the universe so that all its events fulfill his plan for it. As such, God's governing activity of course broadly includes the matter that we have referred to as preservation. Here, however, the emphasis is more fully on the purposive directing of the whole of reality and the course of history to God's intended ends. It is the actual execution, within time, of his plan devised in eternity.

This governing activity of God extends over a large variety of areas. God is described as controlling nature. Particularly dramatic evidence of God's power over nature can be seen in the case of Elijah, who told Ahab that it would not rain except by the word of God, and it did not rain for three and a half years, and who prayed at Mount Carmel for God to send down lightning from heaven, and it was done (1 Kings 17–18). Jesus's power over nature was part of what caused the disciples to recognize that he was God (Mark 4:39–41). (For similar expressions of the Lord's governance of the forces of nature, see Job 9:5–9; 37; Pss. 104:14; 147:8–15; Matt. 6:25–30.)

Scripture tells us that God guides and directs the animal creation. In Psalm 104:21–29, the beasts, from the young lions to the teeming sea creatures, are depicted as carrying out his will and depending on him for their provisions. Incapable of conscious choice, animals instinctively obey God's command.

Further, God's government involves human history and the destiny of the nations. A particularly vivid expression of this is found in Daniel 2:21:

He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others.

And there is a dramatic illustration regarding Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:24–25. (For similar expressions of God's direction of human history, see Job 12:23; Pss. 47:7–8; 66:7; Isa. 10:5–12.)

The Lord is also sovereign in the circumstances of the lives of individual persons. Hannah, inspired by the miraculous answer to her prayer for a son (Samuel), expresses her praise.

The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. (1 Sam. 2:6–7)

Paul asserts that even before he was born God had set him apart for his task (Gal. 1:15–16). David found comfort in the fact that God was sovereign in his life.

```
But I trust in you, LORD; I say, "You are my God."
```

My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. (Ps. 31:14–15)

The Lord's sovereignty includes what are thought of as the accidental occurrences of life. Proverbs 16:33 says,

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

When the early believers sought someone to replace Judas within the circle of the apostles, they in effect nominated two, and then prayed that God would show them which of the two, Barsabbas or Matthias, was his choice. They then cast lots; when the lot fell on Matthias, they enrolled him with the eleven apostles (Acts 1:23–26).

God's governing activity is to be thought of in the widest possible setting. The psalmist says,

The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. (Ps. 103:19)

The psalmist then proceeds in verses 20–22 to call on all the angels, all the hosts of the Lord, the ministers who do his will, all his works, in all the places of his dominion, to bless him. The free actions of humans are also part of God's governmental working. When Ezra refurbishes the temple, King Artaxerxes of Persia provides resources out of his nation's funds. Ezra comments: "Praise be to the Lord, the God of our ancestors, who has put it into the king's heart to bring honor to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem in this way" (Ezra 7:27). Even the sinful actions of humans are part of God's providential working. Probably the most notable instance of this is the crucifixion of Jesus, which Peter attributes to both God and sinful men: "This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross" (Acts 2:23).

Providence: General or Specific?

One issue that has been discussed throughout the history of the church is whether God's providence is general or specific. The general-providence

view holds that God has general goals that he intends and actually attains, but that with respect to the specific details, he permits considerable variance, allowing for human choices. The specific-providence view is that God ultimately decides even the details of his plan and assures that they eventuate as he intends.

There are various forms of each of these. Among general-providence proponents are traditional Arminians, who hold that, although God has exhaustive foreknowledge, humans have free will, by which they mean libertarian or noncompatibilist freedom. They emphasize that God could have created a world in which all the details were determined, but instead chose to limit himself, one major illustration of which is found in the incarnation. They see numerous biblical passages that teach human freedom and responsibility as evidences that humans determine many of the details of what happens.[3] Some hold that God is indeed sovereign over everything, and that humans have libertarian free will, but regard the relationship between these two factors as ultimately paradoxical. Finally, more extreme Arminians, such as open theists, regard God as a risk taker. Although he may have a plan for how he will bring things to pass, not knowing future actions of free moral agents means he often has to change his plans in light of unforeseen developments.

General-sovereignty theologians make much of biblical texts that depict people making choices or being faced with choices. The situation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is one of these, and the calls to sinners to accept Jesus Christ constitute another major group. These theologians also note the occasions on which God's intention seems to be frustrated by human actions.

Those who hold to specific sovereignty, or, as it is sometimes called, "meticulous providence," contend that the Scriptures teach God's sovereignty over all that occurs. Since Scripture is not sufficiently clear in its teaching about human freedom to determine whether it is compatibilistic or noncompatibilistic, we need to make that choice by which view fits better with other teachings of Scripture. Some texts speak impressively of God's complete sovereignty. One of the most powerful is Ephesians 1:11: "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will." Some texts indicate that even seemingly minute matters are subject to his will: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will

fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:29–31). The psalmist wrote:

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Ps. 139:16)

The general-sovereignty model has difficulty dealing with such passages. In some cases they are simply ignored. [4] John Sanders, who espouses open theism, does not even mention Ephesians 1:11. In other cases, the explanation is quite strained. [5] So Sanders psychologizes Joseph's statement to his brothers in Genesis 45, [6] and regards Jesus's prediction that Peter would deny him three times as a case of God's manipulating circumstances to teach Peter a lesson. [7] These are indications that the exegesis may be influenced by other, extrabiblical considerations. The narrative passages are given priority over the didactic, a questionable hermeneutical tactic. The specific-sovereignty theologians appeal less to these narrative passages and more to didactic passages that seem to teach that God brings about all things.

In my judgment, the specific-sovereignty argument is overall the stronger. The specific-sovereignty model seems to be able to deal with a wider scope of biblical teaching with less distortion than the other. Since the view of compatibilistic freedom is a viable option, then the specific-sovereignty model is tenable and preferable. It is also helpful to bear in mind the distinction made earlier between God's wish and his will.

The Relationship between God's Governing Activity and Sin

At this point we must address the difficult problem of the relationship between God's working and sinful human acts. It is necessary to distinguish between God's normal working in relation to human actions and his working in relation to sinful acts. The Bible makes quite clear that God is not the cause of sin (James 1:14). But if sinful actions are not caused by God, what do we mean when we say that they are within his governing activity? God can and does relate to sin in several ways: he can (1) prevent it; (2) permit it; (3) direct it; or (4) limit it. [8] Note that in each case God is not the cause of human sin, but acts in relationship to it.

1. God can prevent sin. At times he deters or precludes people from performing certain sinful acts. David prayed that God would keep him from sin.

Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (Ps. 19:13)

2. God does not always prevent sin. At times he simply wills to permit it. Although it is not what he would wish to happen, he acquiesces in it. By not preventing the sin we determine to do, God renders it *certain* that we will indeed commit it, but he does not cause us to sin or render it *necessary* that we act in this fashion. This is probably put most clearly by the Lord in Psalm 81:12–13.

So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.

If my people would only listen to me, if Israel would only follow my ways.

- 3. God can also direct sin. That is, while permitting some sins to occur, God nonetheless directs them in such a way that good comes out of them. Peter saw that God had used the crucifixion of Jesus for good: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2:36; see also Rom. 11:13–15, 25). God is like a martial arts expert who redirects the evil efforts of sinful humans and Satan in such a way that they become the very means of doing good.
- 4. Finally, God can limit sin. There are times when he does not prevent evil deeds but nonetheless restrains the extent or effect of what evil humans and the devil and his demons can do. A prime example is the case of Job. God permitted Satan to act but limited what he could do: "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger" (Job 1:12). "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life" (2:6).

The Major Features and Implications of God's Governing Activity

We need now to summarize the major features and the implications of the doctrine of divine government.

- 1. God's governing activity is universal. It extends to all matters, that which is obviously good and even that which seemingly is not good. Paul wrote, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).
- 2. God's providence does not extend merely to his own people. While there is a special concern for the believer, God does not withhold his goodness entirely from the rest of humankind. Jesus said this quite openly in Matthew 5:45: "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." This goes contrary to an opinion held by some Christians, an opinion expressed humorously a few years ago in a comic strip titled "The Reverend." One day the Reverend, attired in his clerical garb, is leaving on vacation. His neighbor offers to water his lawn while he is gone. "Thank you for your thoughtfulness," replies the Reverend, "but I've made other arrangements." In the last panel, rain is pouring down on the Reverend's lawn but not on the adjacent yards. That, says Jesus, is *not* how God ordinarily works. Both the unbeliever and the believer benefit from the Father's goodness. My father was a Christian; the man whose farm was next to ours was a non-Christian who worked seven days a week. But when it rained, it usually rained on both farms alike.
- 3. God is good in his government. He works for the good, sometimes directly bringing it about, sometimes countering or deflecting the efforts of evil individuals toward good. That God is good in his government should produce in the believer a confidence in the ultimate outcome of the events of life. Not only is God in control, but he is also directing matters according to the goodness and graciousness of his character.
- 4. God is personally concerned about those who are his. He cares about the one lost sheep (Luke 15:3–7). This personal dimension of God's government speaks significantly to the contemporary situation. With growing automation and computerization has also come increased depersonalization. We are only cogs in the machinery, faceless robots, numbers on file, digital records on computer disks, or entries on tape. The doctrine of God's providence assures us that his personal relationship to us is important. He knows each of us, and each one matters to him.
- 5. Our activity and God's activity are not mutually exclusive. We have no basis for laxity, indifference, or resignation in the face of the fact that God

is at work accomplishing his goals. As we have seen, his providence includes human actions. Sometimes humans are conscious that their actions are fulfilling divine intention, as when Jesus said that he must do the Father's will (e.g., Matt. 26:42). At other times there is an unwitting carrying out of God's plan. Little did Caesar Augustus know when he made his decree (Luke 2:1) that the census he was ordering would make possible the fulfillment of the prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but he helped fulfill it nonetheless.

There should be no loss of belief in the providence of God simply because there is now less need for spectacular divine intervention. We know what makes a person ill (at least in many cases), and medical science can prevent or cure the illness. Prayers for healing sometimes seem inappropriate (except in critical or hopeless cases). God's providence appears to be a foreign concept.[9] Yet we have seen that providence includes God's immanent working; thus, he is providentially at work as much in the cure wrought by the physician as in a miraculous healing.

We have a tendency to feel that if God does something, it must be through obviously supernatural means. When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, the floodwaters reached the campus of New Orleans Baptist Seminary. As the seminary security forces were preparing to evacuate the campus, potential looters were lined up, waiting their opportunity to perpetrate potentially greater damage to the campus than what the forces of nature had inflicted. At that point, a National Guard unit arrived and requested permission to bivouac on the campus, which was granted. The result was that the school sustained no vandalism damage. Is this not just as much God's preserving providence as if bands of angels had been dispatched to guard the campus?

Not only is God in control, but he is also directing matters according to the goodness and graciousness of his character.

This should not be interpreted to mean that God does not perform miracles today. With the growth of third-world Christianity, it is becoming apparent that where medicine and other forms of technology are not yet as available as in the developed world, supernatural works of God are more widespread.

- 6. God is sovereign in his government. This means that he alone determines his plan and knows the significance of each of his actions. It is not necessary for us to know where he is leading. We need to be careful, then, to avoid dictating to God what he should do to give us direction. Sometimes the Christian is tempted to tell God, "If you want me to do a, then show me by doing x." It would be far better, Gideon's fleece (Judg. 6:36–40) notwithstanding, if we simply allow God to illumine us—if he so wishes and to the extent he wishes—as to the significance of his working. To suppose that we should be able to understand the significance of all of God's leading may lead to superstition rather than piety.
- 7. We need to be careful as to what we identify as God's providence. The most notable instance of a too-ready identification of historical events with God's will is probably the "German Christians" who in 1934 endorsed the action of Adolf Hitler as God's working in history. The words of their statement are sobering to us who now read them: "We are full of thanks to God that He, as Lord of history, has given us Adolf Hitler our leader and savior from our difficult lot. We acknowledge that we, with body and soul, are bound and dedicated to the German state and to its Führer. This bondage and duty contains for us, as evangelical Christians, its deepest and most holy significance in its obedience to the command of God."[10] From our perspective, the folly of such statements seems obvious. But are we perhaps making some pronouncements today that will be seen as similarly mistaken by those who come a few decades after us? While we need not necessarily go so far as did Karl Barth in rejecting a natural theology based on the developments of history, in his condemnation of the German Christians' action there is a word of caution that is instructive to us.

Providence and Prayer

One problem that has concerned thoughtful Christians when considering the nature of providence is the role of prayer. The dilemma stems from the question of what prayer really accomplishes. On the one hand, if prayer has any effect on what happens, then it seems that God's plan was not fixed in the first place. Providence in some sense depends on or is altered by

whether and how much someone prays. On the other hand, if God's plan is established and he will do what he is going to do, then does it matter whether we pray?

We should note that this is simply one particular form of the larger issue of the relationship between human effort and divine providence. We need to note two facts: (1) Scripture teaches that God's plan is definite and fixed—it is not subject to revision; and (2) we are commanded to pray and taught that prayer has value (James 5:16). But how do these two facts relate to each other?

It appears from Scripture that in many cases God works in a sort of partnership with humans. God does not act if humans do not play their part. Thus, on the one hand, when Jesus ministered in his hometown of Nazareth, he did not perform any major miracles. All he did was to heal a few sick people. That Jesus "was amazed at their lack of faith" (Mark 6:6) suggests that the people of Nazareth simply did not bring their needy ones to him for healing. It is clear that in many cases the act of faith was necessary for God to act—and such faith was lacking in Nazareth. On the other hand, when Jesus walked on the water (Matt. 14:22–33), Peter asked to be bidden to go to Jesus on the water and was enabled to do so. Presumably Jesus could have enabled all the disciples to walk on the water that day, but only Peter did because only he asked. The centurion bringing his request for the healing of a servant (Matt. 8:5–13) and the woman with the hemorrhage (Matt. 9:20–22), clinging to Jesus's garment, are examples of faith that, demonstrated in petition, resulted in God's working. When God wills the end (in these cases, healing), he also wills the means (which includes a request to be healed, which in turn presupposes faith). Thus, prayer does not change what he has purposed to do. It is the means by which he accomplishes his end. It is vital, then, that a prayer be uttered, for without it the desired result will not come to pass.

This means that prayer is more than self-stimulation. It is not a method of creating a positive mental attitude in ourselves so that we are able to do what we have asked to have done. Rather, prayer is in large part a matter of creating in ourselves a right attitude with respect to God's will. Jesus taught his disciples—and us—to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done," before "Give us today our daily bread." Prayer is not so much getting God to do our will as it is demonstrating that we are as concerned as God is that his will be done. Moreover, Jesus taught us persistence in prayer (Luke

11:9–10—note that the grammatical forms used in the original Greek suggest continuous action: keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking). It takes little faith, commitment, and effort to pray once about something and then cease. Persistent prayer makes it apparent that our petition is important to us, as it is to God.

We do not always receive what we ask for. Jesus asked three times for the removal of the cup (death by crucifixion); Paul prayed three times for the removal of his thorn in the flesh. In each case, something more needful was granted (e.g., 2 Cor. 12:9–10). Believers can pray confidently, knowing that our wise and good God will give us not necessarily what we ask for, but what is best. For as the psalmist put it,

No good thing does he [the LORD] withhold from those whose walk is blameless. (Ps. 84:11)

Providence and Miracles

What we have been examining thus far are matters of ordinary or normal providence. While they are supernatural in origin, they are relatively common and hence not too conspicuous or spectacular. We must, however, look at one additional species of providence—miracles, those striking or unusual workings by God that are clearly supernatural. These are special supernatural works of God's providence that are not explicable on the basis of the usual patterns of nature.

One important issue regarding miracles involves their relationship to the laws of nature. To some, miracles have been not an aid to faith but an obstacle, since they are so contrary to the usual patterns of occurrence as to appear very unlikely or even incredible. Thus, the question of how these events are to be thought of in relationship to natural law is of great importance. There have been three classic views of the relationship between miracles and natural laws.

The first conception is that miracles are actually the manifestations of little known or virtually unknown natural laws. If we fully knew and understood nature, we could understand and even predict these events. Whenever the rare circumstances that produce a miracle reappear in that particular combination, the miracle will reoccur. [11] Certain biblical

instances seem to fit this pattern; for example, the miraculous catch of fish in Luke 5. According to this view, Christ did not create fish for the occasion, nor did he somehow drive them from their places in the lake to where the net was to be let down. Rather, unusual conditions were present so that the fish had gathered in a place where they would not ordinarily be expected to be. Thus, Jesus's miracle was not so much a matter of omnipotence as of omniscience. The miracle came in his knowing where the fish would be. Some of Jesus's healings could well have been psychosomatic healings or even cases of powerful suggestion removing hysterical symptoms. Jesus simply utilized his extraordinary knowledge of psychosomatics to accomplish these healings.

Much about this view is appealing, particularly since some of the biblical miracles fit this scheme quite well; it may well be that some of them were of this nature. There are certain problems with adopting this view as an all-inclusive explanation, however. Some miracles are very difficult to explain in terms of this view. For example, was the instance of the man born blind (John 9) a case of psychosomatic congenital blindness? Now of course none of us knows what laws there may be that we do not know. But it is reasonable to assume that we should have at least some hint of what those unknown laws might be. The very vagueness of the theory is at the same time its strength and its weakness. To say, without further argument, that there are laws of nature that we do not know can never be either confirmed or refuted.

A second conception is that miracles break the laws of nature. In the case of the axhead that floated, for example (2 Kings 6:6), this theory suggests that for a brief period of time, in that cubic foot or so of water, the law of gravity was suspended. In effect, God turned off the law of gravity until the axhead was retrieved, or he changed the density of the axhead or of the water. This view of miracles has the virtue of seeming considerably more supernatural than the preceding one. But certain drawbacks attach to it. For one thing, such suspending or breaking of the laws of nature usually introduces complications requiring a whole series of compensating miracles. In the story of Joshua's long day (Josh. 10:12–14), for example, numerous adjustments would have to be made, of which there is no hint in the narrative, if God actually stopped the revolution of the earth on its axis. While this is certainly possible for an almighty God, there is no indication of it in the astronomical data. [12] There are two other problems, one

psychological and one theological. Psychologically, the apparent disorderliness introduced into nature by the view that miracles are violations of natural law unnecessarily predisposes scientists to be prejudiced against them. As a matter of fact, there are those who categorically reject miracles strictly on the basis of this definition.[13] And, theologically, this view seems to make God work against himself, thus introducing a form of self-contradiction.

A third conception is the idea that when miracles occur, natural forces are countered by supernatural force. In this view, the laws of nature are not suspended. They continue to operate, but supernatural force is introduced, negating the effect of the natural law.[14] In the case of the axhead, for instance, the law of gravity continued to function in the vicinity of the axhead, but the unseen hand of God was underneath it, bearing it up, just as if a human hand were lifting it. This view has the advantage of regarding miracles as being genuinely supernatural or extranatural, but without being antinatural, as the second view makes them to be. To be sure, in the case of the fish, it may have been the conditions in the water that caused the fish to be there, but those conditions would not have been present if God had not influenced such factors as the water flow and temperature. And at times there may have been acts of creation as well, as in the case of the feeding of the five thousand.

At this point we should mention the purposes of miracles. There are at least three. The most important is to glorify God. This means that when miracles occur today, we should credit God, who is the source of the miracle, not the human agent, who is the channel. In biblical times, a second purpose of miracles was to establish the supernatural basis of the revelation, which often accompanied them. That the Greek word *sēmeia* ("signs") frequently occurs in the New Testament as a term for miracles underscores this dimension. We note too that miracles often came at times of especially intensive revelation. This can be seen in our Lord's ministry (e.g., Luke 5:24–26, where he reveals his authority to forgive sins). Finally, miracles occur to meet human needs. Our Lord is frequently pictured as moved with compassion for the needy and hurting people who came to him (e.g., Matt. 14:14). He healed them to relieve the suffering caused by such maladies as blindness, leprosy, and hemorrhaging. He never performed miracles for the selfish purpose of putting on a display.

We have seen that the doctrine of providence is not an abstract conception. It is the believer's conviction that he or she is in the hands of a good, wise, and powerful God who will accomplish his purposes in the world.

Be not dismayed whate'er betide,

God will take care of you;

Beneath His wings of love abide,

God will take care of you.

Through days of toil when heart doth fail,

God will take care of you;

When dangers fierce your path assail,

God will take care of you.

No matter what may be the test,

God will take care of you;

Lean, weary one, upon His breast,

God will take care of you.

God will take care of you, through every day, o'er all the way;

He will take care of you,

God will take care of you.

(Civilla Durfee Martin, "God Will Take Care of You," 1904)

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What two aspects of providence are important to Christian understanding, and how are they presented in Scripture?
- What is the extent of God's governing activity?
- What are the ways in which God relates to sin?
- How are miracles related to the providence of God?
- In what ways do you take into consideration God's providence when you pray?

Evil and God's World: A Special Problem

Chapter Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Define and understand the nature of the problem of evil.
- 2. Explain the theological themes that bear on this problem and that contribute to alleviating it.
- **3.** Strengthen the faith of the believer and enable him or her to respond to critics of the Christian faith.

Chapter Summary

Probably the most difficult intellectual challenge to the Christian faith is the problem of evil in the world. If God is all-powerful and all-loving, how can evil be present in the world? Although the problem will never be fully resolved in this earthly life, there are biblical teachings that help to alleviate it.

Chapter Outline

The Nature of the Problem

Types of Solutions

Themes for Dealing with the Problem of Evil

- Evil as a Necessary Accompaniment of the Creation of Humanity
- A Reevaluation of What Constitutes Good and Evil
- Evil in General as the Result of Sin in General
- Specific Evil as the Result of Specific Sins
- God as the Victim of Evil
- The Life Hereafter

The Nature of the Problem

We have spoken of the nature of God's providence and have noted that it is universal: God is in control of all that occurs. He has a plan for the entire universe and all of time, and is at work bringing about that good plan. But a shadow falls across this comforting doctrine: the problem of evil.

The problem may be stated in a simple or a more complex fashion. David Hume put it succinctly when he wrote of God: "Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing: whence then is evil?"[1] The existence of evil can also be seen as presenting a problem for the mealtime prayer that many children have been taught to pray: "God is great, God is good. Let us thank him for our food." For if God is great, then he is able to prevent evil from occurring. If God is good, he will not wish for evil to occur. But evil is evident in our midst. The problem of evil, then, may be thought of as a conflict involving three concepts: God's power, God's goodness, and the presence of evil in the world. The evil that precipitates this dilemma is of two general types. The first type, natural evil, does not involve human willing and acting but is merely an aspect of nature that seems to work against human welfare. There are destructive forces of nature: hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, and the suffering and loss of human lives caused by diseases such as cancer, cystic fibrosis, and multiple sclerosis. The other type of evil, termed moral evil, can be traced to the choice and action of free moral agents. Here we find war, crime, cruelty, class struggles, discrimination, slavery, and injustices too numerous to mention. While moral evils can to some extent be removed from our consideration here by blaming them on humans' exercise of their own free will, natural evils cannot be dismissed.

The problem of evil takes differing forms. In general, the religious form of the problem of evil occurs when some particular aspect of one's experience calls into question the greatness or goodness of God, and hence threatens the relationship between the believer and God. The theological form of the problem is concerned with evil in general. It is not a question of how a specific, concrete situation can exist in light of God's being what and who he is, but of how any such problem could possibly exist. It is important

to note these distinctions, for the person for whom some specific evil is presenting a religious difficulty may need pastoral care rather than help in working out intellectual problems.[2] Similarly, to treat one's genuine intellectual struggle as merely a matter of feelings will not be very helpful. Failure to recognize the religious form of the problem of evil will appear insensitive; failure to deal with the theological form will appear intellectually insulting. Particularly where the two are found together, it is important to recognize and distinguish the respective components.

Types of Solutions

There have been many different types of theodicies, that is, attempts to show that God is not responsible for evil. For the most part (our analysis here is somewhat oversimplified), these attempted solutions endeavor to reduce the tension by modifying one or more of the three elements that in combination have caused the dilemma: God's greatness, God's goodness, and the presence of evil.

One way of solving the tension of the problem we have been describing is to abandon the idea of God's omnipotence. This approach, which is called finitism, is often found in dualisms such as Zoroastrianism or Manichaeism. These dualisms propose that there are two ultimate principles in the universe: God and the power of evil. God is attempting to overcome evil, and would if he could, but he is simply unable to do so.

A second way of lessening the tensions of the problem is to modify the idea of God's goodness. While few if any who call themselves Christian would deny the goodness of God, some, at least by implication, suggest that the goodness must be understood in a sense somewhat different from what is usually meant. One who falls into this category is Gordon H. Clark.

A staunch Calvinist, Clark does not hesitate to use the term "determinism" to describe God's causing of all things, including human acts. In describing the relationship of God to certain evil actions of human beings, he even states, "I wish very frankly and pointedly to assert that if a man gets drunk and shoots his family, it was the will of God that he should do it."[3] Because God is the sole ultimate cause of everything, and whatever God causes is good, Clark concludes that it is good and right that God (ultimately) causes such evil acts as a drunken man's shooting his

family, although God does not sin and is not responsible for this sinful act. But in this solution to the problem of evil the term "goodness" has undergone such transformation as to be quite different from what is usually meant by the goodness of God.

A third proposed solution to the problem of evil rejects the reality of evil, rendering unnecessary any account of how it can coexist with an omnipotent and good God. We find this viewpoint in various forms of pantheism. The philosophy of Benedict Spinoza, for example, maintains that there is just one substance and all distinguishable things are modes or attributes of that substance. Everything is deterministically caused; God brings everything into being in the highest perfection. [4] A more popularly held but considerably less sophisticated version of this solution to the problem of evil is to be found in Christian Science, which affirms that evil in general, and particularly disease, is an illusion; it has no reality. [5]

Themes for Dealing with the Problem of Evil

A total solution to the problem of evil is beyond human ability. So what we will do here is present several themes that in combination will help us to deal with the problem. These themes will be consistent with the basic tenets of the theology espoused in this writing. This theology can be characterized as a mild Calvinism that gives primary place to God's sovereignty, while seeking to relate it in a positive way to human freedom and individuality. This theology is a dualism in which the second element is contingent on or derived from the first. That is, there are realities distinct from God that have a genuine and good existence of their own, but ultimately received their existence from him by creation (not emanation). This theology also affirms the sin and fall of the human race and the consequent sinfulness of each human; the reality of evil and of personal demonic beings headed by the devil; the incarnation of the second person of the Triune God, who became a sacrificial atonement for human sins; and an eternal life beyond death. It is in the context of this theological structure that the following themes are presented as helps in dealing with the problem of evil.

Though a total solution to the problem of evil is beyond human ability, evil may be a necessary accompaniment of God's good plan to make people fully human.

Evil as a Necessary Accompaniment of the Creation of Humanity

There are some things God cannot do. God cannot be cruel, for cruelty is contrary to his nature. He cannot lie. He cannot break his promise. There are some other things that God cannot do without certain inevitable results. For example, God cannot make a circle, a true circle, without all points on the circumference being equidistant from the center. Similarly, God cannot make a human without certain accompanying features.

Humans would not be genuinely human without free will. Whether humans are free in the sense assumed by Arminians or free in a sense not inconsistent with God's having rendered certain what is to happen, God's having made humans as he purposed means that they have certain capacities (e.g., the capacities to desire and to act) that they could not fully exercise if there were no possibility of evil. For God to prevent evil, he would have had to make humanity other than it is. Genuine humanity requires the ability to desire to have and do some things contrary to God's intentions. The possibility of evil was a necessary accompaniment of God's good plan to make people fully human.

Another dimension of this theme is that for God to make the physical world as it is required certain concomitants. Apparently, for humans to have a genuine moral choice with the possibility of genuine punishment for disobedience meant that they could die. Further, the sustenance of life required conditions that could lead to death instead. So, for example, the same water we need for life can in other circumstances cause death by drowning.

At this point someone might raise the question, "If God could not create the world without the accompanying possibility of evil, why did he create at all, or why did he not create the world without human beings?" In a sense, we cannot answer that question since we are not God, but it is appropriate to note here that it was evidently better in terms of what God ultimately intends, that he create rather than not create. And it was better to create beings capable of fellowship with and obedience to him, even in the face of

temptations to do otherwise. This was evidently a greater good than to introduce "humans" into a totally antiseptic environment from which even the logical possibility of desiring anything contrary to God's will would have been excluded.

A Reevaluation of What Constitutes Good and Evil

Some of what we think of as good and evil may not actually be that. We are inclined to identify good with whatever is pleasant to us at the present and evil with what is personally unpleasant, uncomfortable, or disturbing. Yet the Bible seems to depict things somewhat differently.

First, we must consider the divine dimension. Good is not to be defined in terms of what brings personal pleasure to humans in a direct fashion. Good is to be defined in relationship to the will and being of God. Good is what glorifies him, fulfills his will, conforms to his nature. The promise of Romans 8:28 is sometimes quoted rather glibly by Christians: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." But what is this good? Paul gives us the answer in verse 29: "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." This then is the good: not personal wealth or health, but being conformed to the image of God's Son, not our short-range comfort, but our long-range welfare.

Second, we must consider the dimension of time or duration. Some experienced evils are actually very disturbing on a short-term basis, but in the long term work a much larger good. The pain of the dentist's drill and the suffering of postsurgical recovery may seem like quite severe evils, but they are actually rather small in light of the long-range effects that flow from them. Scripture encourages us to evaluate our temporary suffering in the light of eternity. Paul says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18; see also 2 Cor. 4:17; Heb. 12:2; 1 Pet. 1:6–7). A problem is often magnified by its proximity to us now, so that it becomes disproportionate to other pertinent matters. A good question to ask regarding any apparent evil is: How important will this seem to me a year from now? Five years? A million years?

Third, there is the question of the extent of the evil. We tend to be very individualistic in our assessment of good and evil. But this is a large and

complex world, and God has many persons to care for. The Saturday rainfall that spoils a family picnic or a round of golf may seem like an evil to me but may be a much greater good to the farmers whose parched fields surround the golf course or park, and ultimately to a much larger number of people who depend on the farmers' crops, the price of which will be affected by the abundance or scarcity of supply.

Part of what we are saying here is that what appears to be evil may actually in some cases be the means to a greater good. Though we may not understand them, God's plans and actions are always good and lead invariably to good consequences. It is not the case that God's plans and actions are made good by their consequences. Rather, what makes God's plans and actions good is the fact that he has willed them.

Evil in General as the Result of Sin in General

A cardinal doctrine of the theology being developed in this book is the fact of racial sin. This does not mean the sin of race against race, but rather that the entire human race has sinned and is now sinful. In its head, Adam, the entire human race violated God's will and fell from the state of innocence in which God had created it. Consequently, all of us begin life with a natural tendency to sin. The Bible tells us that with the fall, the first sin, a radical change took place in the universe. Death came upon humankind (Gen. 2:17; 3:2–3, 19). God pronounced a curse on humankind, which is represented by certain specifics: anguish in childbearing (3:16), the husband's domination over the wife (v. 16), toilsome labor (v. 17), thorns and thistles (v. 18)—probably merely a sample of the actual effects on the creation. Paul in Romans 8 says that the whole creation has been affected by human sin and is now in bondage to decay (vv. 19–23). It waits for its redemption from this bondage. Thus, it appears likely that a whole host of natural evils may also have resulted from the sin of humans.

More serious and more obvious, however, is the contribution of the fall to moral evil, that is, evil that is related to human willing and acting. Certainly much of the pain and unhappiness of human beings is a result of structural evil within society. For example, power may reside in the hands of a few who use it to exploit others. Selfishness on a collective scale may keep a particular social class or racial group in painful or destitute conditions.

An important question that cannot be ignored is how sin could have happened in the first place. Part of the answer is that for humans to be genuinely free, there has to be an option. The choice is to obey or disobey God. In the case of Adam and Eve, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolized that choice (Gen. 2:17). When they disobeyed God, their relationship to him was distorted and sin became a reality. Humans have been greatly affected by sin: their attitudes, values, and relationships have changed.

God, then, did not create sin. He merely provided the options necessary for human freedom, options that could result in sin. It is humans who sinned, not God.

Specific Evil as the Result of Specific Sins

Some specific evils are the result of specific sins or at least imprudences. Some of the evil occurrences in life are caused by the sinful actions of others. Murder, child abuse, theft, and rape are evils resulting from the exercise of sinful choices by sinful individuals. In some cases, the victim is innocent of the evil that occurs but in other cases contributes to or provokes the evil action.

In a fair number of cases, we bring evil on ourselves by our own sinful or unwise actions. We must be very careful in the application of this principle. Job's friends tended to attribute his misfortunes solely to his sins (e.g., Job 22). But Jesus indicated that tragedy is not always the result of a specific sin. When his disciples asked concerning a man who had been born blind, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus replied, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him" (John 9:2–3 RSV). Jesus was not denying that the man and his parents had sinned; rather, he was refuting the idea that the blindness was the result of a specific sin. It is unwise to attribute misfortunes automatically to one's own sin.

But having given this warning, we need to note that there are instances of sin bringing unfortunate results on the individual sinner. A case in point is David, whose sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah resulted in the death of David and Bathsheba's child as well as conflict in David's own household. This perhaps should be thought of more in terms of the effects of certain acts than in terms of punishment from God. We do not know what was involved, but it may well be that certain conditions pertaining at the time of the act of adultery resulted in a genetic defect in the child. And David's sense of guilt may have led to indulgence with his own children,

which in turn led to their sins. Much of the evil recounted in Scripture comes upon people as a result of their own sin, or that of someone close to them.

Paul said, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life" (Gal. 6:7–8). While Paul was probably thinking primarily of the eternal dimension of sin's consequences, the context (the earlier part of chap. 6) seems to indicate that he had temporal effects in mind as well. Violating the law against adultery (Exod. 20:14) may result in the destruction of relationships of trust, not only with the spouse, but with the children as well. Habitual drinking may well destroy one's health with cirrhosis of the liver. God is not attacking the drinker; rather, the drinker's actions have brought about the disease. This is not to say, however, that God may not use the natural results of sin to chasten people.

God as the Victim of Evil

That God took sin and its evil effects on himself is a unique contribution by Christian doctrine to the solution of the problem of evil. [6] It is remarkable that, while knowing that he himself would become the major victim of the evil resulting from sin, God allowed sin to occur anyway. The Bible tells us that God was grieved by human sinfulness (Gen. 6:6). While there is certainly anthropomorphism here, there nonetheless is indication that human sin is painful or hurtful to God. But even more to the point is the fact of the incarnation. The Triune God knew that the Second Person would come to earth and be subject to numerous evils: hunger, fatigue, betrayal, ridicule, rejection, suffering, and death. He did this in order to negate sin and thus its evil effects. God is a fellow sufferer with us of the evil in this world, and consequently is able to deliver us from evil. What a measure of love this is! Anyone who would impugn the goodness of God for allowing sin and consequently evil must measure that charge against the teaching of Scripture that God himself became the victim of evil so that he and we might be victors over evil.

<u>The Life Hereafter</u>

There is no question that in this life there are rather clear instances of injustice and innocent suffering. If this life were all that there is, then surely

the problem of evil would be unresolvable. But Christianity's doctrine of the life hereafter teaches that there will be a great time of judgment—every sin will be recognized and the godly will also be revealed. Punishment for evil will be justly administered, and the final dimension of eternal life will be granted to all who have responded to God's loving offer. Thus the complaint of the psalmist regarding how the evil prosper and the righteous suffer will be satisfied in light of the life hereafter.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What are three solutions to the problem of evil?
- How does human freedom affect the problem of evil?
- How would you define the terms "good" and "evil"?
- How do general and specific sins affect evil?
- If God is at work bringing about a good plan, why do you think good things seem to happen to bad people?

God's Special Agents: Angels

Chapter Objectives

After you have completed the study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Identify and understand good angels and their unique characteristics.
- 2. Identify and understand evil angels through their characteristics and deeds.
- **3.** Create a trust in, but not excessive fascination with, God's angels.
- **4.** Create a healthy respect for, but neither a fear of nor a fascination with, evil angels.
- **5.** Discover the role of the doctrine of angels in carrying out God's plan.
- **6.** Understand the limitations and the ultimate destiny of Satan and his servants.

Chapter Summary

There are superhuman (but not divine) beings who work within human history. Some of these, who remained faithful to God, carry out his work. Others, who fell from their created state of holiness, live to oppose God and his children. God's care and concern for his creation is evident in the ministrations of good angels. By contrast, Satan and his minions seek to thwart the purposes of God. But God has limited their powers.

Chapter Outline

Good Angels

- Terminology
- Their Origin, Nature, and Status
- Their Capacities and Powers
- Their Activities

Evil Angels

- The Origin of Demons
- The Chief of the Demons

- Activities of Demons
- Demon Possession

The Role of the Doctrine of Angels

When we come to the discussion of angels, we are entering into a subject that in some ways is the most unusual and puzzling of all theology. Karl Barth, who has given the most extensive treatment of the subject in any recent theology textbook, described the topic of angels as the "most remarkable and difficult of all."[1] It is, therefore, a topic that it is tempting to omit or neglect. Yet the teaching of Scripture is that God has created these spiritual beings and has chosen to carry out many of his acts through them. Therefore, if we are to be faithful students of the Bible, we have no choice but to speak of them.

By angels we mean those spiritual beings that God created higher than humankind, some of whom have remained obedient to God and carry out his will, and others of whom disobeyed, lost their holy condition, and now oppose and hinder his work.

One reason for the difficulty of the subject is that while there are abundant references to angels in the Bible, they are not treated in themselves. When they are mentioned, it is always in order to inform us further about God, what he does, and how he does it.

Good Angels

<u>Terminology</u>

The primary Hebrew term for angel is *malak*; the corresponding Greek word is *angelos*. In each case, the basic meaning is "messenger," whether human or angelic. When used of angels, the terms emphasize their messagebearing role. Other Old Testament terms for angels are "holy ones" (Ps. 89:5, 7) and "watchers" (Dan. 4:13, 17, 23). Collectively, they are referred to as "the council" (Ps. 89:7), "the assembly" (Ps. 89:5), and "host" or "hosts," as in the very common expression "LORD [or LORD God] of hosts," found more than sixty times in the book of Isaiah alone. New Testament expressions believed to refer to angels are "heavenly host" (Luke 2:13), "spirits" (Heb. 1:14), and in varying combinations, "principalities," "powers," "thrones," "dominions," and "authorities" (see especially Col. 1:16; also Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 6:12; Col. 2:15). The term "archangel" appears in two passages, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and Jude 9. In the latter, Michael is named as an archangel.

Their Origin, Nature, and Status

Scripture does not explicitly state that angels were created, nor are they mentioned in the creation account (Gen. 1–2). That they were created is, however, clearly implied in Psalm 148:2, 5.

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his heavenly hosts. . . . Let them praise the name of the LORD, for at his command they were created.

Jews and Christians have long believed and taught that angels are immaterial or spiritual beings. Here, as with the matter of their creation, explicit evidence is not abundant. Indeed, one might conclude that angels and spirits are being distinguished from one another in Acts 23:8–9, although angels may be part of the genus of spirits. The clearest statement regarding the spiritual nature of angels is found in Hebrews 1:14, where the writer, obviously referring to angels (see vv. 5, 13), says, "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" It seems safe to conclude that angels are spiritual beings; they do not have physical or material bodies. Physical manifestations recorded in Scripture must be regarded as appearances assumed for the occasion (angelophanies).

There have at times been tendencies to exalt angels unduly, giving them worship and reverence due only to the Deity. The most extended passage on angels, Hebrews 1:5–2:9, however, makes a particular point of establishing that Christ is superior to the angels. Although he was made for a brief time a little lower than the angels, he is in every way superior to them. And while they in turn are superior to human beings in many of their abilities and qualities, angels are part of the class of created and thus finite beings, although we do not know precisely when they were created.

There are large numbers of angels. Scripture has various ways of indicating their numbers: "myriads" (Deut. 33:2); "tens of thousands / and thousands of thousands" (Ps. 68:17); "twelve legions" (36,000 to 72,000—the size of the Roman legion varied between 3,000 and 6,000; Matt. 26:53); "thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly" (Heb. 12:22); "thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand" (Rev. 5:11). While there is no reason to take any of these figures as exact

numbers, particularly in view of the symbolic significance of the numbers used (12 and 1,000), it is clear that the angels are a very large group.

Their Capacities and Powers

The angels are represented as personal beings. They can be interacted with. They have intelligence and will (2 Sam. 14:20; Rev. 22:9). They are moral creatures, some being characterized as holy (Matt. 25:31; Mark 8:38; Luke 1:26; Acts 10:22; Rev. 14:10), while others, who have fallen away, are described as lying and sinning (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8–10).

In Matthew 24:36 Jesus implies that angels have superhuman knowledge, but at the same time expressly asserts that this knowledge has limits: "About that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Just as the angels possess great knowledge but not omniscience, so they also have great and superhuman power, but not omnipotence. This great power is derived from God, and the angels remain dependent on his favorable will to exercise it. They are restricted to acting within the limits of his permission. This is true even of Satan, whose ability to afflict Job was circumscribed by the will of the Lord (Job 1:12; 2:6). God's angels act only to carry out God's commands, not independently. Only God does the miraculous (Ps. 72:18). As creatures, angels are subject to all the limitations of creaturehood.

Their Activities

- 1. Angels continually praise and glorify God (Job 38:7; Pss. 103:20; 148:2; Rev. 5:11–12; 7:11; 8:1–4). While this activity usually takes place in God's presence, on at least one occasion it took place on earth—at the birth of Jesus the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:13–14).
- 2. Angels reveal and communicate God's message to humans. This activity is most in keeping with the root meaning of the word "angel." Angels were particularly involved as mediators of the law (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2). Although they are not mentioned in Exodus 19, Deuteronomy 33:2 says, "The LORD . . . came with myriads of holy ones." This obscure passage may be an allusion to the mediation of angels. While they are not said to have performed a similar function with respect to the new covenant, the New Testament frequently depicts them as conveyers of messages from God. Gabriel appeared to Zechariah (Luke 1:13–20) and to

The good angels praise God continually, communicate his message to us, minister to us, execute judgment on his enemies, and will participate in the second coming.

- 3. Angels minister to believers. This includes protecting believers from harm. In the early church it was an angel who delivered the apostles (Acts 5:19) and later Peter (Acts 12:6–11) from prison. The psalmists experienced the angels' care (Pss. 34:7; 91:11). Angels' major ministry is to spiritual needs, however. They take a great interest in the spiritual welfare of believers, rejoicing at their conversion (Luke 15:10) and serving them in their needs (Heb. 1:14). Angels are spectators of our lives (1 Cor. 4:9; 1 Tim. 5:21), and are present within the church (1 Cor. 11:10). At the death of believers, they convey them to the place of blessedness (Luke 16:22).
- 4. Angels execute judgment on the enemies of God. The angel of the Lord brought death to 185,000 Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35), and to the children of Israel until the Lord told him to stay his hand at Jerusalem (2 Sam. 24:16). It was an angel of the Lord who killed Herod (Acts 12:23). The book of Revelation is full of prophecies regarding the judgment to be administered by angels (8:6–9:21; 16:1–17; 19:11–14).
- 5. The angels will be involved in the second coming. They will accompany the Lord at his return (Matt. 25:31), just as they were present at other significant events of Jesus's life, including his birth, temptation, and resurrection. They will separate the wheat from the weeds (Matt. 13:39–42). Christ will send forth his angels with a loud trumpet call to gather the elect from the four winds (Matt. 24:31; see also 1 Thess. 4:16–17).

What of the concept of guardian angels, the idea that each person or at least each believer has a specific angel assigned to care for and accompany him or her in this life? This idea was part of popular Jewish belief at the time of Christ and has carried over in some Christian thinking.[2] Two biblical texts are cited as evidence of guardian angels. Upon calling a child and placing him in the midst of the disciples, Jesus said: "See that you do

not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven" (Matt. 18:10). When the maid Rhoda told the others in the house that Peter was at the gate, they said, "It must be his angel!" (Acts 12:15). These verses seem to indicate that angels are specially assigned to individuals.

Elsewhere in the Bible, however, we read that not just one, but many angels accompany, protect, and provide for believers. Elisha is surrounded by many horses and chariots of fire (2 Kings 6:17); Jesus could have called twelve legions of angels (Matt. 26:53); several angels carry Lazarus's soul to Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). Moreover, Jesus's reference to the angels of the little ones specifies that they are in the presence of the Father. This suggests that they are angels who worship in God's presence rather than angels who care for individual humans in this world. The reply to Rhoda reflects the Jewish tradition that a guardian angel resembles the persons to whom he is assigned. But a report indicating that certain disciples believed in guardian angels does not invest the belief with authority. Some Christians still had mistaken or confused beliefs on various subjects. In the absence of definite didactic material, we must conclude that there is insufficient evidence for the concept of guardian angels.

Evil Angels

The Origin of Demons

The Bible has little to say about how evil angels came to have their current moral character, and even less about their origin. We may learn something about their origin from what is said about their moral character. Two closely related passages inform us regarding the fall of the evil angels. Second Peter 2:4 says that "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment." Jude 6 says that "the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day." The beings described in these two verses are clearly identified as angels who sinned and came under judgment. They must, like all the other angels, be created beings.

A problem presented by these verses is that the evil angels are said to have been cast into nether gloom to be kept until the judgment. This has led some to theorize that there are two classes of fallen angels: those who are imprisoned, and those who are free to carry on their evil in the world. Another possibility is that these two verses describe the condition of all demons. That the latter is correct is suggested by the remainder of 2 Peter 2. In verse 9 Peter says that "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment." This language is almost identical to that used in verse 4. Note that the remainder of the chapter (vv. 10–22) is a description of the continued sinful activity of these people who are being kept under punishment. We conclude that, similarly, though cast into nether gloom, the fallen angels have sufficient freedom to carry on their evil activities.

Demons, then, are angels created by God and therefore were originally good; but they sinned and thus became evil. Just when this rebellion took place we do not know, but it must have occurred between the time when God completed the creation and pronounced it all "very good," and the temptation and fall of the humans (Gen. 3).

The Chief of the Demons

The devil is the name given in Scripture to the chief of these fallen angels. He is also known as Satan, which means to be or act as an adversary.[3] The most common Greek word for him is *diabolos* ("devil, adversary, accuser"). Several other terms are used of him less frequently: tempter (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), Beelzebul (Matt. 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 19), enemy (Matt. 13:39), evil one (Matt. 13:19, 38; 1 John 2:13; 3:12; 5:18), Belial (2 Cor. 6:15), adversary (1 Pet. 5:8), deceiver (Rev. 12:9), great dragon (Rev. 12:3), father of lies (John 8:44), murderer (John 8:44), sinner (1 John 3:8). All of these convey something of the character and activity of the devil.

The devil is, as his name indicates, engaged in opposing God and the work of Christ. He does this especially by tempting humans. This is shown in the temptation of Jesus, the parable of the weeds (Matt. 13:24–30), and the sin of Judas (Luke 22:3).[4]

One of Satan's primary means is deception. Paul tells us that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, and that his servants disguise themselves as servants of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:14–15). His use of

deception is also mentioned in Revelation 12:9 and 20:8, 10. He has "blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). He opposes and hinders (1 Thess. 2:18) Christians in their service, even using physical ailments to that end (so, probably, 2 Cor. 12:7).

For all of his power, Satan is limited, as indicated in the case of Job. He can be successfully resisted, and will flee (James 4:7; see also Eph. 4:27). He can be put to flight, however, not by our strength, but only by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26; 1 Cor. 3:16).

Activities of Demons

As Satan's subjects, demons carry out his work in the world. It may therefore be assumed that they engage in all the forms of temptation and deception he employs. They inflict disease: dumbness (Mark 9:17), deafness and dumbness (Mark 9:25), blindness and deafness (Matt. 12:22), convulsions (Mark 1:26; 9:20; Luke 9:39), and paralysis or lameness (Acts 8:7). Most particularly, they oppose the spiritual progress of God's people (Eph. 6:12).

Demon Possession

Incidents of demon possession are given prominent attention in the biblical accounts. The technical expression is to "have a demon" or to "be demonized." Sometimes we find expressions like "evil spirits" (Acts 8:7; 19:12).

The manifestations of demon possession are varied. We have already noted some of the physical ailments demons inflict. The person possessed may have unusual strength (Mark 5:2–4), may act in bizarre ways such as wearing no clothes and living among the tombs rather than in a house (Luke 8:27), or may engage in self-destructive behavior (Matt. 17:15; Mark 5:5). There evidently are degrees of affliction, since Jesus spoke of the evil spirit who "goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself" (Matt. 12:45). The common element in all of these cases is that the person involved is being destroyed, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually. It appears that the demons were able to speak, presumably using the vocal equipment of the person possessed (e.g., Matt. 8:29, 31). Demons can also apparently inhabit animals (see the parallel accounts of the incident involving the swine: Matt. 8; Mark 5; Luke 8).

It is noteworthy that the biblical writers did not attribute all illness to demon possession. Luke reports that Jesus distinguished between two types of healing: "I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow" (Luke 13:32). Nor was epilepsy mistaken for demon possession. We read in Matthew 17:15–18 that Jesus cast out a demon from an epileptic, but in Matthew 4:24 epileptics (as well as paralytics) are distinguished from demoniacs. In the case of numerous healings, no mention is made of demons. In Matthew, for example, exorcism is not mentioned in the case of the healing of the centurion's servant (8:5–13), or the woman with the hemorrhage of twelve years' duration (9:19–20).

Jesus cast out demons without pronouncing an elaborate formula. He merely commanded them to come out (Mark 1:25; 9:25). He attributed the exorcism to the Spirit of God (Matt. 12:28) or the finger of God (Luke 11:20). Jesus invested his disciples with the authority to cast out demons (Matt. 10:1). But the disciples needed faith if they were to be successful (Matt. 17:19–20). Prayer is also mentioned as a requirement for exorcism (Mark 9:29). Sometimes faith on the part of a third party was a requirement (Mark 9:23–24; cf. 6:5–6). At times demons were expelled from someone who had expressed no wish to be healed.

There is no reason to believe that demon possessions are restricted to the past. There are cases, especially but not exclusively in less-developed cultures, that seem explainable only on this basis. The Christian should be alert to the possibility of demon possession occurring today. At the same time, one should not too quickly attribute aberrant physical and psychical phenomena to demon possession. Even as Jesus and the biblical writers distinguished cases of possession from other ailments, so should we, testing the spirits.

In recent years there has been a flare-up of interest in the phenomenon of demon possession. As a consequence, some Christians may come to regard this as the primary manifestation of the forces of evil. Rather, Satan, the great deceiver, may be encouraging interest in demon possession in hopes that Christians will become careless about other, more subtle forms of influence by the powers of evil.

The Role of the Doctrine of Angels

Obscure and strange though this belief in good and evil angels may seem to some, it has a significant role to play in the life of the Christian. Several benefits may be drawn from our study of this topic:

- 1. It is a comfort and an encouragement to us to realize that powerful and numerous unseen agents are available to help us in our need. The eye of faith will do for the believer what the vision of the angels did for Elisha's servant (2 Kings 6:17).
- 2. The angels' praise of and service to God give us an example of how we are to conduct ourselves now and what our activity will be in the life beyond in God's presence.
- 3. It sobers us to realize that even angels who were close to God succumbed to temptation and fell. This is a reminder to us to "be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor. 10:12).
- 4. Knowledge about evil angels serves to alert us to the danger and the subtlety of temptation that can be expected to come from satanic forces, and gives us insight into some of the devil's ways of working. We need to be on guard against two extremes. We should not take him too lightly lest we disregard the dangers. Nor, however, should we have too strong an interest in him.
- 5. We receive confidence from the realization that powerful though Satan and his accomplices are, there are definite limits on what they can do. We can, therefore, by the grace of God, resist him successfully. And we can know that his ultimate defeat is certain, for Satan and his angels will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone forever (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

Questions for Review and Reflection

- Why is it necessary to study angels and include them in the study of theology?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of angels in the plan of God?
- How would you compare and contrast good and evil angels?
- What limits are placed on Satan and his emissaries?
- In what ways does the role of good angels in your life inspire confidence in God?

Humanity

Introduction to the Doctrine of Humanity

Chapter Objectives

At the close of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Identify and understand three contemporary images of humanity.
- 2. Compare and contrast these three images of humanity with the Christian doctrine of humanity.
- **3.** Recognize and evaluate the differences between the evolutionary account of human origin and direct human creation by God.
- **4.** Explain the theological meaning of human creation and its importance to a Christian worldview.

Chapter Summary

The Christian view of humanity holds that a human being is a creature of God, made in the image of God. This contrasts with three contemporary views of humanity. Direct human creation by God provides a more satisfactory explanation for human origin than the evolutionary account. Furthermore, progressive creationism is the best interpretation of both the biblical and scientific data. Finally, seven conclusions are reached about the theological meaning of creation.

Chapter Outline

Images of Humankind

- A Machine
- An Animal
- A Pawn of the Universe

The Christian View of Humanity

The Biblical Account of Human Creation

- Direct Human Creation in Scripture
- Direct Human Creation and Science

The Theological Meaning of Human Creation

Images of Humankind

The doctrine of humanity is a particularly opportune one for us to study and utilize in our dialogue with the non-Christian world. It is an area in which contemporary culture is perpetually asking questions to which the Christian message can offer answers. Because so many different disciplines deal with human nature, there are many different images of humankind. It will be helpful to us, in developing our Christian theological conception, to be aware of at least three of the more prevalent ones.

A Machine

One of these perspectives has to do with what the human is able to do. The employer, for example, is interested in the human's strength and energy, the skills or capabilities possessed. On this basis, the employer "rents" the employee for a certain number of hours a day. That humans are sometimes regarded as machines is particularly evident when automation results in a worker's being displaced from a job. A robot, being more accurate and consistent, often performs the work better; moreover, it requires less attention, does not demand pay increases, and does not lose time because of illness.

The chief concern of those who have this conception of humans will be to satisfy those needs of the person (the machine) that will keep it functioning effectively. The health of the worker is of interest not because of possible personal distress but in terms of working efficiency. If the work can be done better by a machine, or by the introduction of more advanced techniques, there will be no hesitation to adopt such measures, for the work is the primary goal and concern. In addition, the worker is paid the minimum necessary to get the task accomplished.[1]

In this approach, persons are basically regarded as things, as means to ends rather than as ends in themselves. They are of value as long as they are useful. They may be moved around like chess pieces, as some large corporations do with their management personnel, manipulating them if necessary in order to accomplish the intended ends.

<u>An Animal</u>

Another view sees the human primarily as a member of the animal kingdom and derived from some of its higher forms. Humans have come into being through the same sort of process as have all other animals, and will have a similar end. There is no qualitative difference between humans and the other animals. The only difference is one of degree.

This view of humanity is perhaps most fully developed in behavioristic psychology. Here human motivation is understood primarily in terms of biological drives. Knowledge of humans is gained not through introspection but by experimentation on animals. [2]

Human behavior can be affected by processes similar to those used on animals. Just as Pavlov's dog learned to salivate when a bell was rung, humans can also be conditioned to react in certain ways. Positive reinforcement (reward) and, less desirably, negative reinforcement (punishment) are the means of control and training.

A Pawn of the Universe

Among certain existentialists particularly, but also in a broader segment of society, we find the idea that humans are at the mercy of forces in the world that control their destiny but have no real concern for them. These are seen as blind forces, forces of chance in many cases. Sometimes they are personal forces, but even then they are forces over which humans have influence, such as political superpowers. This is basically a pessimistic view that pictures people as being crushed by a world that is either hostile or at best indifferent to their welfare and needs. The result is a sense of helplessness, of futility.

Albert Camus captured this general idea in his reworking of the classical myth of Sisyphus. Sisyphus had died and gone to the netherworld. He had, however, been sent back to earth. When recalled to the netherworld, he refused to return, for he thoroughly enjoyed the pleasures of life. As punishment he was brought back and sentenced to push a large rock to the top of a hill. When he got it there, however, it rolled back down. He trudged his way to the bottom of the hill and again pushed the rock to the top only to have it roll back down. He was doomed to repeat this process endlessly. For all his efforts there was no permanent result.[3] Whether immersed in fearful thoughts about death, the forthcoming natural extinction of the planet, or nuclear destruction, or merely in the struggle against those who control political and economic power, all those who hold that a human is

basically a pawn at the mercy of the universe are gripped by a similar sense of helplessness and resignation.

The Christian View of Humanity

By contrast, the Christian view of humanity is that a human is a creature of God, made in the image of God. This means, first, that humanity is to be understood as having originated not through a chance process of evolution, but through a conscious, purposeful act by an intelligent, infinite person. The reason for human existence lies in the intention of the Supreme Being. Second, the image of God is intrinsic and indispensable to humanity. Whatever sets humans apart from the rest of creation, they alone are capable of having a conscious personal relationship with the Creator and of responding to him.

The human also has an eternal dimension. The finite point of beginning in time was creation by an eternal God, who gave humans an eternal future. Thus, when we ask what is the good for the human, we must not answer only in terms of temporal welfare or physical comfort. Another (and in many senses more important) dimension must be fulfilled. Yet the human, to be sure, as a part of the physical creation and the animal kingdom, has the same needs as do the other members of those groups. Our physical welfare is important. Since it is of concern to God, it should be of concern to us as well.

We cannot discover our real meaning by regarding ourselves and our own happiness as the highest of all values, nor can we find happiness, fulfillment, or satisfaction by seeking it directly. Our value has been conferred on us by a higher source, and we are fulfilled only when serving and loving that higher being.

Many of the questions being asked directly or implicitly by contemporary culture are answered by the Christian view of humanity. In addition, this view gives the individual a sense of identity. The image of a human as a machine, for example, leads to the feeling that we are insignificant cogs, unnoticed and unimportant. The Bible, however, indicates that everyone is valuable and is known to God: every hair of our head is numbered (Matt. 10:28–31). Moreover, the Christian view accounts for the full range of human phenomena more completely and with less distortion than does any

other view. And this view more than any other approach to life enables us to function in ways that are deeply satisfying in the long run.

The Biblical Account of Human Creation

When we speak of humanity's origin, we are referring to something more than merely its beginning, for "beginning" refers simply to the fact of coming into being. Theology, however, does not ask merely how humans came to be on the face of the earth, but why, or what purpose lies behind their presence here. The biblical picture is that an all-wise, all-powerful, and good God created the human race to love and serve him and to enjoy a relationship with him.

Genesis contains two accounts of God's creation of humans. The first, in 1:26–27, simply records (1) God's decision to make humans in his own image and likeness, and (2) God's action implementing this decision. Nothing is said about the materials or method used. The first account places more emphasis on the purpose or reason for the creation of humans; namely, they were to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over the earth (v. 28). The second account, Genesis 2:7, is quite different: "the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Here the emphasis seems to be on the way God created.

Direct Human Creation in Scripture

The biblical picture of the creation of the human race by God certainly appears to conflict sharply with the evolutionary account of humans' having come into existence through the work of natural forces. In fact, the disputes that have taken place between the church and science over evolution have centered mostly on the origin of the human race. Perhaps the most pertinent issue here is the extent to which we view the creation of humans as direct. Did God directly create the entirety of Adam's makeup, both physical and psychological, or did he simply take an existing higher primate and modify it, conferring on it the image of God, so that it became a living human being? This issue separates theistic evolution (in which God created the first organism and then worked within the process of evolution, occasionally intervening, however, to modify what was emerging [e.g., infusing the

human soul into a previously existent physical form]) from both fiat creationism (in which God created every species in a brief period of time) and progressive creationism (in which God directly created each of the various "kinds," including humans; these separate creations constituted a series of steps over a long period of time).

A major factor in determining our answer to the question of whether all of human nature was a *de novo* ("new") creation or whether some of it was derived from the process of evolution is the hermeneutical approach that we take to the opening chapters of Genesis. One approach is to maintain that the passage does not say anything specific that would bear on scientific questions about the origin of the human. This seems unduly extreme and unwarranted. A more reasonable approach is to ask what type of literary material we are dealing with in the first three chapters of Genesis.

It certainly appears that in Genesis 1–3 not every object is to be understood as merely that object. For example, the tree of which Adam and Eve are forbidden to eat is not merely a tree, but "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The serpent appears to have been not merely a speaking serpent, but the evil one himself. Is it not therefore quite possible that the "dust" used to form Adam (Gen. 2:7) was something more than physical particles of earth? Could it represent or symbolize the inanimate building blocks from which organic matter and hence life came? Or could it, as theistic evolutionists sometimes suggest, represent a prehuman life form?

One question that must be faced is whether the symbolism is consistent. The word "dust" occurs not only in Genesis 2:7 but also in 3:19.

For dust you are and to dust you will return.

If we understand it in 2:7 to represent an already existing creature, we are faced with two choices: either the meaning of the term must be different in 3:19 (and in 3:14 as well), or we have the rather ludicrous situation that upon death one first reverts to an animal. It should be noted that in those severe degenerative cases where a person becomes virtually subhuman, the change occurs prior to actual death. It would be better, then, to let the (clearer) reference to dust in 3:19 interpret the (less clear) reference to dust in 2:7.

A second problem for the theistic evolutionist is the expression "and the man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7). The words translated "living being" are also used to describe the other creatures God had made earlier (1:20, 21, 24). This seems to indicate that Adam became a living being at the point of God's special activity in 2:7, which contradicts the theistic evolutionary view that he was already a living being (though of a different sort) prior to this time. In light of such considerations, we conclude that the biblical data favor the view that humans were directly created in their entirety by God.

Direct Human Creation and Science

What of the scientific data, however? How do they fit with progressive creationism? Do they preclude direct creation? We note that evolutionists have long been seeking the missing link between humans and the highest primate. Nothing has been found that can be clearly identified as such; indeed, it is unlikely that such a linkage could ever be proved. Progressive creationism, then, would seem to be the best interpretation of both the biblical and the scientific data.

One frequently raised question is: Where does Adam fit on the fossil record? A Christian anthropologist used to answer this question semifacetiously, "If you will tell me just exactly what Adam looked like, I will tell you." This points to the fact that we are given very little detail about the physical characteristics of Adam. It also underscores the fact that physical appearance is not the major criterion of humanity. So to answer the question, we must first ask what defines humanity, not theologically, but anthropologically.

Among the suggestions as to the distinguishing mark of humanity are tool-making, burial of the dead, and the use of complex symbolism or, more specifically, language. Tool-making of an elementary fashion, however, has been found among chimpanzees. James Murk argues that burial of the dead presupposes only fear of the unknown, which in turn presupposes only imagination, not moral sense. [4] The third suggestion, the use of language, seems to have the fewest difficulties. This would correlate Adam (and thus the beginning of humanity) with a great outburst of culture about thirty thousand to forty thousand years ago, the time of Cro-Magnon man. There

are some difficulties with this date, however, especially in view of Neolithic elements (e.g., agriculture) found in Genesis 4. Since the Neolithic period began about ten thousand to eight thousand years ago, we have the problem of a gap of twenty thousand years between generations. Several possible solutions for this problem have been proposed. However, this is an area in which there are insufficient data to make any categorical statements; it will require much additional study.

The Theological Meaning of Human Creation

Now that we have briefly looked at the doctrine of human creation, we must determine its theological meaning. Several points need special attention and interpretation.

1. That humans are created means that they have no independent existence. They came into being because God willed that they should exist and acted to bring them into being and preserve them. This should cause us to ask the reason for our existence. Why did God put us here, and what are we to do in light of that purpose? Since we would not be alive but for God, everything we have and are derives from him. So stewardship does not mean giving God a part of what is ours, some of our time or some of our money. All of life has been entrusted to us for our use, but it still belongs to God and must be used to serve and glorify him.

This also helps to establish human identity. If who we are is at least partly a function of where we have come from, the key to our identity will be found in the fact that God created us. We are not merely the offspring of human parents; neither are we the result of chance factors at work in the world. We are here as a result of an intelligent being's conscious intention and plan, and our identity is at least partially a matter of fulfilling that divine plan.

2. Humans are part of the creation. As different as they are from God's other created beings, they are not so sharply distinguished from the rest of them as to have no relationship with them. We are part of the sequence of creation, as are the other beings. The origin of humans on one of the days of creation links us far more closely with all the other created beings than with the God who did the creating. This means that there should be harmony between us and the rest of the creatures.

When taken seriously, our kinship with the rest of creation has a definite impact. The word "ecology" derives from the Greek *oikos*, which means "house," thus pointing to the idea that there is one great household. What the human does to one part of it affects other parts as well, a truth that is becoming clearer as we find pollution harming human lives and the destruction of certain natural predators leaving pests a relatively unhampered opportunity.

By virtue of our origin, we have a kinship with the rest of God's creation, and in particular with the entire human race.

- 3. The human, however, has a unique place in the creation. Despite our created status, there is an element that makes us distinct from the rest of the creatures. On the one hand, all creatures are said to be made "according to their kind." The human, on the other hand, is described as made in the image and likeness of God. Humans are placed over the rest of the creation, to have dominion over it. This means that humans are not fulfilled when all of their animal needs have been satisfied. The transcendent element designated by the unique way in which the human is described and thus distinguished from the various other creatures must be kept in mind.
- 4. There is a kinship among humans. The doctrine of creation and of the descent of the entire human race from one original pair means that we are all related to one another. The negative side of our common descent is that in the natural state, all persons are rebellious children of the heavenly Father and thus are estranged from him and from one another. We are all like the prodigal son. But if the truth of the unity of humanity is fully understood and acted on, it should produce a concern and empathy for other people. We will rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15), even if they are not fellow Christians.
- 5. There are definite limitations on humanity. As creatures, humans have the limitations that go with being finite. Our finiteness means that our knowledge will always be incomplete and subject to error. This should impart a certain sense of humility to all our judgments, as we realize that we might be wrong, no matter how impressive our fund of facts may seem. Finiteness also pertains to our lives. Humanity is not inherently immortal.

And, as presently constituted, we must face death (Heb. 9:27). Even in the human race's original state, any possibility of living forever depended on God. Only God is inherently eternal; all else dies.

Finiteness means that there are practical limitations to all of our accomplishments. While humanity has made great progress in physical feats, the progress is not unlimited. A human may now execute a high jump of eight feet, but it is unlikely that anyone will, within our atmosphere, ever jump a thousand feet without the aid of artificial propulsion. Other areas of accomplishment, whether intellectual, physical, or whatever, have similar practical limitations on them.

6. Limitation is not inherently bad. There is a tendency to bemoan the fact of human finiteness. Some, indeed, maintain that this is the cause of human sin. If we were not limited, we would always know what is right, and would do it. But the Bible indicates that having made the human with the limitations that go with creaturehood, God looked at the creation and pronounced it "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Finiteness may well lead to sin if we fail to accept our limitation and live accordingly. But the mere fact of our limitation does not inevitably produce sin. Rather, improper responses to that limitation either constitute or result in sin.

Some feel that human sinfulness is a carryover from earlier stages of our evolution but is gradually being left behind. As our knowledge and ability increase, we will become less sinful. That, however, does not prove true. In actual practice, increases in sophistication seem instead to give humans opportunity for more ingenious means of sinning. One might think that the tremendous growth in computer technology, for example, would result in solutions to many basic human problems and thus in a more righteous human being. While such technology is indeed often used for beneficial purposes, human greed has also led to new and ingenious forms of theft both of money and information, and other forms of exploitation by the use of the computer. Reduction of our limitations, then, does not inevitably lead to better human beings. Human limitations are not evil in themselves.

7. Humanity is, nonetheless, something wonderful. Although humans are creatures, we are the highest among them, the only ones made in the image of God. We are not simply a chance production of a blind mechanism, or a by-product or scraps thrown off in the process of making something better, but an expressly designed product of God.

Sometimes Christians have felt it necessary to minimize human ability and accomplishments in order to give greater glory to God. To be sure, we must put human achievements in their proper context relative to God. But it is not necessary to protect God against competition from his highest creature. Human greatness can glorify God the more.

Humans are great, but what makes them great is that God has created them. The name *Stradivari* speaks of quality in a violin; its maker was the best. Even as we admire the instrument, we are admiring all the more the giftedness of the maker. The human has been made by the best and wisest of all beings, God. A God who could make such a wondrous creature is a great God indeed.

Know that the LORD is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving

and his courts with praise;

give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;

his faithfulness continues through all generations. (Ps. 100:3–5)

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What are three contemporary images of humanity?
- How have these images of humanity affected society's perspective on human nature?
- What issues separate an evolutionary account of human origin from a view that affirms direct human creation by God?
- What are the seven conclusions about the meaning of human creation?
- How do these conclusions help you to better understand yourself as a creature of God?

The Image of God in the Human

Chapter Objectives

After you have studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Identify and explain the relevant Scripture passages concerning the image of God in the human.
- 2. Distinguish among three differing views of the image of God and evaluate each.
- **3.** Identify six inferences that are drawn from the biblical view of the image of God.
- **4.** Identify six specific implications that result from imaging God.

Chapter Summary

The image of God in humanity is critical to our understanding of what makes us human. The substantive, relational, and functional views of the image of God are not completely satisfying explanations. We must reach our conclusions about the image of God by making inferences from the biblical data. The implications of the image of God should inspire us and set the parameters for our view of all humanity.

Chapter Outline

The Relevant Scripture Passages

Views of the Image

- The Substantive View
- The Relational View
- The Functional View

Evaluation of the Views

Conclusions regarding the Nature of the Image

Implications of the Doctrine

As important as our answer to the question "Where did humans come from?" is to understanding human identity, it does not tell us all we need to know about what God brought into being when he created humanity.

If we investigate the Bible's depiction of humanity, we find that people today are actually in an abnormal condition. The real human is not what we now find in human society, but the being that came from the hand of God, unspoiled by sin and the fall. In a very real sense, the only true humans were Adam and Eve before the fall, and Jesus. All the others are twisted, distorted, corrupted samples of humanity. It therefore is necessary to look at the original human state and at Christ if we would correctly assess what it means to be human.

A key expression is that God made the human in God's own image and likeness. This distinguished people from all the other creatures, for only of humans is this expression used. While there has been a great amount of discussion on the subject, the concept is critical because the image of God is what makes humans human.[1]

In this chapter we will examine the salient biblical passages. Then we will look at some representative interpretations of the expression "the image of God" in an attempt to draw the biblical passages together into a construct. Finally, we will seek to formulate an understanding that is faithful to the full biblical witness, and to spell out the contemporary significance of the concept.

The Relevant Scripture Passages

Several biblical passages speak of the image of God. The best known is probably Genesis 1:26–27.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

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

Verse 26 is God's statement of intention; it includes the terms *tselem* and *demut*, translated, respectively, "image" and "likeness." The former term is repeated twice in verse 27. In Genesis 5:1 we have a recapitulation of what God had done: "When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God." The writer adds in verse 2: "He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them 'mankind." The term used here is *demut*. In Genesis 9:6 murder is prohibited on the grounds that humankind was created in God's image.

Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.

While the passage does not explicitly say that humans still bore the image of God, it is clear that what God had earlier done still has some bearing or effect, even at this postfall point. Two New Testament passages mention the image of God in connection with the creation of the human. In 1 Corinthians 11:7 Paul says, "A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man." Paul does not say that woman is the image of God but merely points out that she is the glory of man as man is the glory of God. And in James 3:9, on the grounds that humans are made in the likeness of God, the author condemns use of the tongue to curse humans: "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness." There is also something of a suggestion of the image of God in Acts 17:28, although the term is not actually used: "'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring."

In addition, several passages in the New Testament refer to believers becoming the image of God through the process of salvation. Romans 8:29 notes that they are being conformed to the image of the Son: "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we read, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with

ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (see also Eph. 4:23–24; Col. 3:10).

Views of the Image

What then is the image of God? Formulating a definition will involve both interpreting individual references and integrating the several overt statements as well as the various allusions in Scripture. There are three general ways of viewing the nature of the image. Some consider the image to consist of certain characteristics within the very nature of the human, either physical or psychological/spiritual. This view we will call the *substantive* view of the image. Others regard the image not as something inherently or intrinsically present in humans, but as the experiencing of a relationship between the human and God, or between two or more humans. This is the *relational* view. Finally, some consider the image to be not something that a human is or experiences but something that a human does. This is the *functional* view.

The image of God distinguishes humans from all other creatures; it is what makes us human.

The Substantive View

The substantive view has been dominant during most of the history of Christian theology. The common element in the several varieties of this view is that the image is identified as some definite characteristic or quality within the makeup of the human. Some have considered the image of God to be an aspect of our physical or bodily makeup. Although this form of the view has never been widespread, it has persisted even to this day. It may be based on a literal reading of the Hebrew word *tselem*, which in its most concrete sense means "statue" or "form."[2] Given this reading, Genesis 1:26 would actually mean something like, "Let us make humans who look like us." The Mormons are probably the most prominent current advocates of the position that the image of God is physical.

More common substantive views of the image of God isolate it in terms of some psychological or spiritual quality in human nature, especially reason. Indeed, the human species is classified biologically as *Homo sapiens*, the thinking being.

It is not surprising that theologians should single out reason as the most significant aspect of human nature, for theologians are the segment of the church charged with intellectualizing or reflecting on their faith. Note, however, that in doing so, not only have they isolated one aspect of human nature for consideration, but they have also concentrated their attention on only one facet of God's nature. This may result in a misapprehension. To be sure, omniscience and wisdom constitute a significant dimension of the nature of God, but they are by no means the very essence of divinity.

Although substantive views differ widely in their conceptions of the nature of the image of God, they agree in one particular: the location of the image. It is located within humans as a resident quality or capacity.

The Relational View

Many modern theologians do not conceive of the image of God as something resident within human nature. Indeed, they do not ordinarily ask what the human is or what sort of nature a human may have. Rather, they think of the image of God as the experiencing of a relationship. Humans can be said to be in the image or to display the image when standing in a particular relationship, which, indeed, *is* the image.

In the twentieth century, neo-orthodox theology shifted the focus quite strongly to a more dynamic understanding of the image. Although Karl Barth and Emil Brunner differed on some points, sometimes very emphatically, they came to hold certain elements in common.

- 1. The image of God and human nature are best understood through a study of the person of Jesus, not of human nature per se.
- 2. We obtain our understanding of the image from the divine revelation.
- 3. The image of God is not to be understood in terms of any structural qualities within humans; it is not something a human is or possesses. Rather, the image is a matter of one's relationship to God; it is something a human experiences. Thus, it is dynamic rather than static.

- 4. The relationship of a human to God, which constitutes the image of God, is paralleled by the relationship between humans. Barth makes much more of the male-female relationship; Brunner tends to emphasize the larger circle of human relationships, that is, society.
- 5. The image of God is universal; it is found in all humans at all times and places. Therefore, it is present in sinful human beings. There is always a relationship, either positive or negative.
- 6. No conclusion can or need be drawn as to what there might be in a person's nature that would constitute ability to have such a relationship. Brunner and Barth never ask what if anything is required structurally for the image of God to be present in a human.

Thus, for Brunner and Barth the image of God is not an entity we possess so much as the experience present when a relationship is active.

In recent years, the influence of postmodernism has resulted in an even stronger stress on the social dimension, the relationship of human to human more than the relationship of human to God. In postmodernism the self tends to be dissolved, just as do real essences or independently existing truth. Beyond that, postmodernism's emphasis on community means that humans are fully human only when in social relationship. Thus, from a postmodern Christian perspective, it is humans collectively that are the image of God, rather than individuals, in the eschatological dimension as well as the ongoing present reality.[3]

The Functional View

A third type of view of the image has had quite a long history and has recently increased in popularity. This is the idea that the image is not something present in the makeup of the human or the experiencing of relationship with God or fellow humans, but the image consists in something one does. It is a human function, the most frequently mentioned being the exercise of dominion over the creation.

In Genesis 1:26, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness," is followed immediately by "so that they may rule over the fish in the sea . . ." A close connection between these two concepts is found not only in this verse, where God expresses his intention to create, but also in verses 27–28, where we read that God did in fact create humans in the image of God and issue to them a command to have dominion. [4] Some regard the

juxtaposition of these two concepts as more than coincidental. The exercise of dominion is considered to be the content of the image of God.

A second passage containing a close connection between the image of God in humankind and the exercise of dominion is Psalm 8:5–6.

You made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.

You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.

"Commentators generally are satisfied that Psalm 8 is largely dependent on Genesis 1."[5] One of their proofs is the catalog of creatures in Psalm 8:7—8: beasts of the field, birds of the air, and fish of the sea.[6] The conclusion is then drawn that verse 5 is equivalent to the statements in Genesis 1 that humanity was created in God's image.

An extensive interpretation of the image of God as humanity's exercise of dominion is Leonard Verduin's *Somewhat Less Than God*, which makes the point quite strongly: "Again the idea of dominion-having stands out as the central feature. That man is a creature meant for dominion-having and that as such he is in the image of his Maker—this is the burden of the creation account given in the book of Genesis, the Book of Origins. It is the central point the writer of this account wanted to make."[7]

This perspective has given rise to a strong emphasis on what is sometimes called in Reformed circles "the cultural mandate." Just as Jesus sent his apostles forth into the world and commissioned them to make disciples of all persons, so God sent his highest creatures, humans, out into creation and commissioned them to rule over it. This commission implies that humans are to make full use of their ability to learn about the whole creation; for by coming to understand the creation, humans will be able to predict and control its actions. These activities are not optional but are part of the responsibility that goes with being God's highest creature.

Evaluation of the Views

We now need to evaluate the three general views of the image of God. We will begin with the less traditional views, the conceptions of the image as

relationship and as function.

The relational view has correctly seized on the truth that the human alone, of all the creatures, knows and is consciously related to God. The portrayals of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden suggest that they customarily communed together with God. It is significant that both in the Old Testament law (the Ten Commandments in Exod. 20) and in Jesus's statement of the two great commandments (Matt. 22:36–40; Mark 12:28–31; Luke 10:26–27), the thrust of God's will for humans concerns relationship to God and to other humans.

There are certain problems, however, with the view that the image of God is totally a relational matter. One of them is the universality of the image. In what sense can it be said that those who are living in total indifference to God, or even in hostile rebellion against him, are (or are in) the image of God? Another problem surfaces when we ask what it is about humans that enables them to have this relationship no other creature is able to have. Certainly there are some prerequisite factors if relationship is to occur.

We must conclude that Barth and Brunner were led astray by their wholeheartedly antisubstantialist presuppositions, which stemmed from existentialism. This leads to the position that human uniqueness must be formal rather than substantive. But the exact basis of the human's formal constitution as a being capable of relationship is never delineated.

When we turn to the functional view, we again see an insightful seizing on one of the major elements in the biblical picture of the image of God, namely, that God's act of creating the human is immediately followed by the command to have dominion. There certainly is, at the least, a very close connection between the image and the exercise of dominion. There is also, to be sure, a parallel between Genesis 1 and Psalm 8 (i.e., in the description of the domain over which humans are to have dominion). Yet there are difficulties with this view as well.

One difficulty concerns the connection between Psalm 8 and Genesis 1. The terms "image" and "likeness" do not appear in Psalm 8. If the psalm is indeed dependent on Genesis 1, where we do find specific reference to the image, and if exercising dominion over the creatures mentioned in verses 7–8 of the psalm does indeed constitute the image of God, then one would expect in this passage as well some specific reference to the image, although this is, of course, an argument from silence.

Further, Genesis 1 contains no clear equation of the image of God with the exercise of dominion. On the contrary, there are some indications that they are distinguishable. God is said to create the human in his own image; then God gives the command to have dominion. In other words, the human is spoken of as being in God's image before being ordered to practice dominion. In verse 26 the use of two hortative expressions—"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness," and "let them rule"—seems to distinguish the two concepts. Walther Eichrodt points out that a blessing is given when the human is created, but that a second blessing is necessary before dominion over the creatures can be exercised.[8] It appears, then, that the functional view may have taken a consequence of the image and equated it with the image itself.

We must now look carefully at the substantive or structural view. It is significant that the text of Scripture itself never identifies what qualities within the human might be the image. The criticism that, in misguided attempts to identify such qualities, a number of advocates of the structural view have actually suggested nonbiblical concepts (e.g., the ancient Greek notion of reason) is justified.[9] Further, the structural view often is narrowed to one aspect of human nature and, particularly, to the intellectual dimension. This in turn implies that the image of God varies with different humans. The more intellectual a person is, the greater the extent to which the image of God is present. And then there is the additional problem of determining just what happened when Adam and Eve fell into sinfulness. It does not seem to be the case that the fall affected intelligence or reason in general. Moreover, some unbelievers are more intelligent and perceptive than are some highly sanctified Christians.

Conclusions regarding the Nature of the Image

Having noted difficulties with each of the general views, we must now attempt to form some conclusions as to just what the image of God is. The existence of a wide diversity of interpretations suggests that there are no direct statements in Scripture to resolve the issue. Our conclusions, then, must be reasonable inferences drawn from what little the Bible does say on the subject.

- 1. The image of God is universal within the human race. The first and universal man, Adam, not merely a portion of the human race, was made in the image of God.
- 2. The image of God has not been lost as a result of sin or specifically the fall. If this is the case, the image of God is not something accidental or external to human nature. It is something inseparably connected with humanity.
- 3. There is no indication that the image is present in one person to a greater degree than in another. Superior natural endowments, such as high intelligence, are not evidence of the presence or degree of the image.
- 4. The image is not correlated with any variable. For example, there is no direct statement that correlates the image with development of relationships or makes it dependent on the exercise of dominion. The statements in Genesis 1 simply say that God resolved to make the human in his own image and then did so. This seems to antedate any human activity.
- 5. In light of the foregoing considerations, the image should be thought of as primarily substantive or structural. The image is something in the very nature of humans, in the way in which they were made. It refers to something a human *is* rather than something a human *has* or *does*. By contrast, the focus of the relational and functional views is actually on consequences or applications of the image rather than on the image itself. Although very closely linked to the image of God, experiencing relationships and exercising dominion are not in themselves that image. Yet having said that, we must reckon with the fact that the person most fully bears the image of God when that image is active, not merely static. [10]

The image of God involves the powers of personality that make humans, like God, beings capable of interacting with other persons, of thinking and reflecting, and of willing freely.

6. The image refers to the elements in the human makeup that enable the fulfillment of human destiny. The image involves the powers of personality that make humans, like God, beings capable of interacting with other persons, of thinking and reflecting, and of willing freely.

God's creation was for definite purposes. The human was intended to know, love, and obey God, and live in harmony with other humans, as the story of Cain and Abel indicates. The human was certainly placed here on earth to exercise dominion over the rest of creation. But these relationships and this function presuppose something else. Humans are most fully human when they are active in these relationships and performing this function, fulfilling their telos, God's purpose for them. But these are the consequences or the applications of the image. The image itself is that set of qualities required for these relationships and this function to take place.

Beyond this matter of what the image of God consists of, we must ask why the human is made in God's image. What is God's intention for them within life? Here the other views of the image are of special help to us, for they concentrate on consequences or manifestations of the image. Jesus's character and actions will be a particularly helpful guide in this matter, since he was the perfect example of what human nature is intended to be:

- 1. Jesus had perfect fellowship with the Father. While on earth he communed with and frequently spoke to the Father. Their fellowship is most clearly seen in the high-priestly prayer in John 17. Jesus spoke of how he and the Father are one (vv. 21–22). He had glorified and would glorify the Father (vv. 1, 4), and the Father had glorified and would glorify him (vv. 1, 5, 22, 24).
- 2. Jesus obeyed the Father's will perfectly. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Indeed, throughout his ministry his own will was subordinate (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38).
- 3. Jesus always displayed a strong love for humans. Note, for example, his concern for the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 9:36; 10:6), his compassion for the sick (Mark 1:41) and the sorrowing (Luke 7:13), and his patience with and forgiveness of those who failed (e.g., Peter).

God intends that a similar sense of fellowship, obedience, and love characterize humans' relationship to God, and that humans be bound together with one another in love. We are completely human only when manifesting these characteristics.

Implications of the Doctrine

The implications of humanity being made in the image of God include the following:

- 1. We belong to God. Although the expression "image of God" does not appear, it is crucial to a full understanding of Mark 12:13–17.[11] The issue was whether to pay taxes to Caesar. When brought a coin, Jesus asked whose image appeared on it. The Pharisees and Herodians correctly answered, "Caesar's." Jesus responded, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." What are "the things that are God's"? Presumably, whatever bears the image of God. Jesus then was saying, "Give your money to Caesar; it has his image on it, and thus it belongs to him. But give yourselves to God. You bear his image, and you belong to him." Commitment, devotion, love, loyalty, service to God—all of these are proper responses for those who bear the image of God.
- 2. We should pattern ourselves after Jesus, the complete revelation of the image of God. He is the full image of God and the one person whose humanity was never spoiled by sinning (Heb. 4:15).
- 3. We experience full humanity only when we are properly related to God. No matter how cultured and genteel, no one is fully human unless a redeemed disciple of God. There is room, then, in our theology for humanism, that is, a Christian and biblical humanism that is concerned to bring others into proper relationship with God. The New Testament makes clear that God will restore the damaged image, and perhaps even build on and go beyond it (2 Cor. 3:18).
- 4. Learning and work are good. The exercise of dominion is a consequence of the image of God. Humanity is to gain an understanding and control of the creation as well as to exercise dominion over our own personalities and abilities. Note that the exercise of dominion was part of God's original intention for humanity; it preceded the fall. Work, then, is not a curse but part of God's good plan.
- 5. The human is valuable. The sacredness of human life is an extremely important principle in God's scheme of things. Even after the fall, murder was prohibited; the reason given was that humans, though sinners, are still made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6).
- 6. The image is universal in humankind. It was to Adam, human, that the image was given. Whether one regards him as the first human or as a representative or symbolic being, "Adam" was the whole human race and

"Eve" was the mother of all living (Gen. 3:20). Both Genesis 1:27 and 5:1–2 make it clear that the image was borne by both male and female.

The universality of the image means that there is a dignity to being human. Each individual is something beautiful, even though a distortion of what God originally intended humankind to be. The universality of the image also means that all persons have points of sensitivity to spiritual things. Although at times these points may be deeply buried and difficult to identify, everyone possesses the potential for fellowship with God and will be incomplete unless this fellowship is realized.

Because all are in the image of God, nothing should be done that would encroach on another's legitimate exercise of dominion. Freedom must not be taken from a human who has not forfeited this right by abusing it (the latter would include murderers, thieves, etc.). This means, most obviously, that slavery is improper. Beyond that, however, it means that depriving someone of freedom through illegal means, manipulation, or intimidation is improper. Everyone has a right to exercise dominion, a right that ends only at the point of encroaching on another's right to exercise dominion.

One other issue that has far-reaching implications, particularly for ethics, concerns the status of the unborn or, more specifically, of the fetus still in the mother's uterus. Is the fetus to be regarded as a person, or merely as a mass of tissue within the mother's body? If the former, abortion is indeed the taking of a human life and has serious moral consequences. If the latter, abortion is simply a surgical procedure involving the removal of an unwanted growth like a cyst or a tumor.

While no passage of Scripture demonstrates conclusively that the fetus is a human in God's sight, nevertheless, various texts (e.g., Ps. 139:13–15; Luke 1:41–44; Heb. 7:9–10), when taken as a whole, do give us enough evidence to render that conclusion very likely. And when dealing with an issue as momentous as the possible destruction of a human life, prudence dictates that a conservative course be followed. If one is driving and sees what may be either a pile of rags or a child lying in the street, one will assume it is a human. And a conscientious Christian will treat a fetus as human, since it is highly likely that God regards a fetus as a person capable of (at least potentially capable of) that fellowship with God for which humanity was created.

Every human is God's creature made in God's own image. God endowed each of us with the powers of personality that make it possible for us to

worship and serve him. When we are using those powers to those ends, we are most fully what God intended us to be, and then are most completely human.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What observations can be made from scriptural passages relevant to an understanding of the image of God?
- How do the substantive, relational, and functional views of the image of God differ? What problems exist with each view?
- What inferences may be drawn from the biblical material concerning the image of God?
- What conclusions regarding the nature of the image of God can be drawn from the biblical material, and how do these conclusions help us to better understand our true humanity?
- Which of the implications of the doctrine is most meaningful to you? Why?

The Constitutional Nature of the Human

Chapter Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. List and restate the basic views of the human constitution as trichotomist, dichotomist, and monist.
- 2. Relate biblical considerations to each of these three basic views of the human constitution.
- **3.** Compare and contrast an alternative model that is based on conditional unity.
- **4.** Understand and apply the implications of conditional unity.

Chapter Summary

There are three traditional views of the human constitution: trichotomism, dichotomism, and monism. A careful discussion of the biblical considerations would lead one to reject the three traditional views. In place of these, an alternative model provides for a conditional unity of the person, which has five implications.

Chapter Outline

Basic Views of the Human Constitution

- Trichotomism
- Dichotomism
- Monism

Biblical Considerations

An Alternative Model: Conditional Unity

Implications of Conditional Unity

When we ask what the human is, we are asking several different questions. One, which we have already addressed, is the question of origin. We are also asking about the human function or purpose. That might lead us to the question of the human's ultimate destiny. The human makeup is yet another issue raised by the question of what humans are. Are they unitary wholes, or are they made up of two or more components? And if they are made up of multiple components, what are they?

Basic Views of the Human Constitution

Trichotomism

One popular view in conservative Protestant circles has been termed "trichotomism." A human is composed of three elements. The first element is the physical body, something humans have in common with animals and plants. The difference is one of degree, as humans have a more complex physical structure. The second part of the human is the soul. This is the psychological element, the basis of reason, emotion, social interrelatedness, and the like. Animals are thought to have a rudimentary soul. Possession of a soul is what distinguishes humans and animals from plants. What really distinguishes the human from the animals is not a more complex and advanced soul but a third element—namely, a spirit. This religious element enables the human to perceive spiritual matters and respond to spiritual stimuli. It is the seat of the spiritual qualities of the individual, whereas personality traits reside in the soul. [1]

The major foundation of trichotomism is certain Scripture passages that either enumerate three components of human nature or distinguish between the soul and the spirit. A primary text is 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (see also Heb. 4:12). Beyond that, a threefold division seems to be implied in 1 Corinthians 2:14–3:4, where Paul classifies humans as "of the flesh" (*sarkikos*), "unspiritual" (*psychikos*—literally, "of the soul"), or "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*). These terms seem to refer to different functions or orientations, if not to different components, of humans.

Trichotomism became particularly popular among the Alexandrian fathers of the early centuries of the church, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa. It fell into a certain amount of disrepute after Apollinarius made use of it in constructing his Christology, which the church determined to be heretical. Although some of the Eastern fathers continued to hold it, it suffered a general decline in popularity until it was revived in the nineteenth century by English and German theologians.[2]

Dichotomism

Probably the most widely held view throughout most of the history of Christian thought has been the view that the human is composed of two elements, a material aspect (the body) and an immaterial component (the soul or spirit). Dichotomism was commonly held from the earliest period of Christian thought. Following the Council of Constantinople in 381, however, it grew in popularity to the point where it was virtually the universal belief of the church.

Recent forms of dichotomism maintain that the Old Testament presents a unitary view of human nature. In the New Testament, however, this unitary view is replaced by a dualism: the human is composed of body and soul. The body is the physical part of humans, the part that dies. The soul is the immaterial part of humans, the part that survives death. It is this immortal nature that sets humans apart from all other creatures. [3]

Many of the arguments for dichotomism are, in essence, arguments against the trichotomist conception. The dichotomist objects to trichotomism on the grounds that if one follows the principle that each of the separate references in verses like 1 Thessalonians 5:23 represents a distinct entity, difficulties arise with some other texts. For example, in Luke 10:27 Jesus says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind." Here we have not three but four entities, and these four hardly match the three in 1 Thessalonians. Indeed, only one of them is the same, namely, the soul. Further, "spirit" as well as "soul" is used of the animal creation. For example, Ecclesiastes 3:21 refers to the spirit of the beast. The terms "spirit" and "soul" often seem to be used interchangeably. Note, for example, Luke 1:46–47, which is probably an example of parallelism.

Here the two terms seem virtually equivalent. There are many other instances. The basic components of human nature are designated as body and soul in Matthew 6:25 and 10:28, but as body and spirit in Ecclesiastes 12:7 and 1 Corinthians 5:3, 5. Death is described as giving up the soul (Gen. 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21; Acts 15:26) and as giving up the spirit (Ps. 31:5; Luke 23:46). At times the word "soul" is used in such a way as to be synonymous with one's self or life: "What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" (Matt. 16:26). There are references to being troubled in spirit (Gen. 41:8; John 13:21) and to being troubled of soul (Ps. 42:6; John 12:27).

Although liberal theologians quite clearly distinguished the soul and the body as virtually two different substances, and some of them, notably Harry Emerson Fosdick, substituted immortality of the soul for the traditional doctrine of resurrection of the body, conservatives have not taken the dualistic view this far. While believing that the soul is capable of surviving death, living on in a disembodied state, they also look forward to a future resurrection. It is not resurrection of the body versus survival of the soul.[4] Rather, it is both of them as separate stages in a human's future.

Monism

The points of agreement between the trichotomist and the dichotomist views exceed their differences. They both agree that the human is complex or compound, made up of separable parts. In contrast, monism insists that humans are to be thought of not as in any sense composed of parts or separate entities but rather as a radical unity. In the monistic understanding, the Bible does not view a human as body, soul, and spirit, but simply as a self. The terms sometimes used to distinguish parts of a human are actually to be taken as basically synonymous.

According to monism, to be human is to be or have a body. The idea that a human can somehow exist apart from a body is unthinkable. Consequently, there is no possibility of postdeath disembodied existence. Not only, then, is there no possibility of a future life apart from bodily resurrection, but any sort of intermediate state between death and resurrection is ruled out as well.

Monism, which arose in part as a reaction against the liberal idea of immortality of the soul, was popular in neo-orthodoxy and in the biblical-theology movement. The approach was largely through a word-study method. One prominent example is *The Body*, John A. T. Robinson's study in Pauline theology. This volume draws on H. Wheeler Robinson's discussion of the Old Testament terminology for humans and human nature. The expression "body and soul" is not to be understood as drawing a distinction between the two, or dividing humans into components. Rather, it should be considered an exhaustive description of human personality. In the Old Testament conception, a human is a psychophysical unity, flesh animated by soul. As a now classic sentence of H. Wheeler Robinson has it, "The Hebrew idea of personality is an animated body, and not an incarnated soul." Given this unitary view of a human, Hebrew has no explicit word for the body: "it never needed one so long as the body was the man." [7]

To summarize the modern monistic argument: The biblical data picture a human as a unitary being. Hebrew thought knows no distinction within human personality. Body and soul are not contrasting terms but interchangeable synonyms.

Biblical Considerations

We must now evaluate monism in light of the whole of the biblical data. It appears that the absolute monistic view of humankind has overlooked or obscured some of the significant data.

Certain passages seem to indicate an intermediate state between death and resurrection, a state in which the individual lives on in conscious personal existence. One of these passages is Jesus's statement to the thief on the cross, "Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Another is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). Some have thought that this is not a parable but the record of an actual event, since it would be unique among parables in naming one of the characters in the story. We are told that a rich man and a poor man died. The rich man went to Hades, where he was in great torment in the flames, while the poor man, Lazarus, was taken to Abraham's bosom. Both were in a conscious state. A third consideration pointing to an intermediate state is Paul's reference to being away from the body and at home with the Lord

(2 Cor. 5:8). The apostle expresses a dread of this state of nakedness (vv. 3–4), desiring rather to be reclothed (v. 4). Finally, there are some references in Scripture where the distinction between body and soul is difficult to dismiss. A prominent instance is Jesus's statement in Matthew 10:28: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

From the foregoing considerations, it appears that the biblical teaching on the nature of the human does not rule out the possibility of some type of compound character, or at least some sort of divisibility, within the human makeup.

An Alternative Model: Conditional Unity

We must now attempt to draw together some conclusions and form a workable model.[8] We have noted that in the Old Testament, the human is regarded as a unity. Body-soul terminology appears in the New Testament, but it cannot be precisely correlated with the idea of embodied and disembodied existence. While body and soul are sometimes contrasted (as in Jesus's statement in Matt. 10:28), they are not always so clearly distinguished. Furthermore, the pictures of humans in Scripture seem to regard them for the most part as unitary beings. Seldom is a spiritual nature addressed independently of or apart from the body.

Having said this, however, we must also recall those passages that point to an immaterial aspect of the human that is separable from their material existence. Scripture indicates that there is an intermediate state involving personal conscious existence between death and resurrection. This concept of an intermediate state is not inconsistent with the doctrine of resurrection, for the intermediate (i.e., immaterial or disembodied) state is clearly incomplete or abnormal (2 Cor. 5:2–4). In the coming resurrection (1 Cor. 15) the person will receive a new or perfected body.

The full range of the biblical data can best be accommodated by the view that we will term "conditional unity." According to this view, the normal state of a human is as an embodied unitary being. It is significant that Scripture nowhere urges us to flee or escape from the body, as if it were somehow inherently evil. This monistic condition can, however, be broken down, and at death it is, so that the immaterial aspect of the human lives on

even as the material decomposes. At the resurrection, however, there will be a return to a bodily condition. The person will assume a body that has some points of continuity with the old body, but is also a new or reconstituted or spiritual body. The solution to the variety of data in the biblical witness is not, then, the immortality of the soul *or* the resurrection of the body. In keeping with what has been the orthodox tradition in the church, it is *both/and*.

What sort of analogy can we employ to help us understand this complex of ideas? One that is sometimes used is the chemical compound as contrasted with a mixture of elements. In a mixture, the atoms of each element retain their distinctive characteristics because they retain their separate identities. If the nature of a human were a mixture, then the spiritual and physical qualities would somehow be distinguishable, and the person could act as either a spiritual or a physical being. In a compound, however, the atoms of all the elements involved enter into new combinations to form molecules. These molecules have characteristics or qualities that are unlike those of any of the elements of which they are composed. In the case of simple table salt (the compound sodium chloride), for example, one cannot detect the qualities of either sodium or chlorine. It is possible, however, to break up the compound, whereupon one again has the original elements with their distinctive characteristics. These characteristics would include the toxic nature of chlorine, whereas the compound product is nonpoisonous.

Since we are unitary beings, our spiritual condition cannot be dealt with independently of our physical and psychological condition, and vice versa.

We might think of a human as a unitary compound of a material and an immaterial element. The spiritual and the physical elements are not always distinguishable, for the human is a unitary subject; there is no conflict between the material and immaterial nature. The unity is dissolvable, however; dissolution takes place at death. At the resurrection a compound will again be formed, with the soul (if we choose to call it that) once more becoming inseparably attached to a body.

Implications of Conditional Unity

What are the implications of contingent monism, that is, the view that human nature is a conditional unity?

- 1. Humans are to be treated as unities. Their spiritual condition cannot be dealt with independently of their physical and psychological condition, and vice versa. Psychosomatic medicine is proper. So also is psychosomatic ministry (or should it be termed pneumopsychosomatic ministry?). The Christian who desires to be spiritually healthy will give attention to such matters as diet, rest, and exercise. Any attempt to deal with people's spiritual condition apart from their physical condition and mental and emotional state will be only partially successful, as will any attempt to deal with human emotions apart from people's relationship to God.
- 2. A human is a complex being, whose nature is not reducible to a single principle.
- 3. The different aspects of human nature are all to be attended to and respected. There is to be no depreciating of the body, emotions, or intellect. The gospel is an appeal to the whole person. It is significant that Jesus in his incarnation became fully human, for he came to redeem the whole of what we are.
- 4. Religious development or maturity does not consist in subjugating one part of human nature to another. No part of human nature is evil per se. Total depravity means that sin infects all of what a human is, not merely the body or mind or emotions. Thus, the Christian does not aim at bringing the body (which many erroneously regard as the only evil part of human nature) under the control of the soul. Similarly, sanctification is not to be thought of as involving only one part of human nature, for no one part is the exclusive seat of good or of righteousness. God is at work renewing the whole of what we are. Consequently, asceticism, in the sense of denying one's natural bodily needs simply for its own sake, is not to be practiced.
- 5. Human nature is not inconsistent with the scriptural teaching of a personal conscious existence between death and resurrection, as we shall see in our treatment of eschatology.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What traditional concepts have been held about the human constitution?
- What biblical support or opposition do you find for each of the traditional views of the human constitution?
- How does conditional unity affect our view of human nature?
- What implications come from accepting the conditional-unity position of the human constitution?
- How does viewing a human as a unity affect your moral obligation to that person?

The Nature and Source of Sin

Chapter Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Explain why it is difficult to discuss sin in contemporary society.
- 2. Identify and describe five biblical perspectives on the nature of sin.
- **3.** Identify several conceptions of the source of sin.
- **4.** Relate and express the biblical teaching about the source of sin.

Chapter Summary

Analysis of the biblical data provides the best understanding of the nature, source, and consequences of sin. Sin is any action or thought that is in opposition to God. Simply stated, sin is failing to let God be God and placing something or someone in God's rightful place of supremacy.

Chapter Outline

The Difficulty of Discussing Sin

Biblical Perspectives on the Nature of Sin

The Source of Sin

- Various Conceptions
- The Biblical Teaching

The Difficulty of Discussing Sin

As important as the doctrine of sin is, it is not an easy topic to discuss in our day, for several reasons. One is that sin, like death, is an unpleasant subject. We do not like to think of ourselves as bad or evil persons. Yet the doctrine of sin teaches us that this is what we are by nature. Our society emphasizes having a positive mental attitude. This emphasis has almost become a new type of legalism, the major prohibition of which is "You shall not speak anything negative."[1]

Another reason that sin is difficult to discuss is that to many people it is a foreign concept. With the problems of society blamed on an unwholesome environment rather than on sinful humans, a sense of objective guilt has become relatively uncommon in certain circles. Guilt is understood as an irrational feeling that one ought not have. Without a transcendent, theistic reference point, there is no one other than oneself and other humans to whom one is responsible or accountable. Thus, if our actions harm no humans, there is no reason to feel guilt.[2]

Further, many people are unable to grasp the concept of *sin* as an inner force, an inherent condition, a controlling power. People today think more in terms of *sins*, that is, individual wrong acts. Sins are something external and concrete logically separable from the person. On this basis, one who has not done anything wrong (generally conceived of as an external act) is considered good.

Biblical Perspectives on the Nature of Sin

Although many people today are ignorant of or uncomfortable with the topic of sin, it is imperative that we discuss this doctrine. The Bible presents a number of perspectives on the nature of sin:

1. Sin is an inward inclination. Sin is not merely wrong acts but sinfulness as well. It is an inherent inner disposition inclining us to wrong acts. Here motives are virtually as important as actions. So Jesus condemned anger and lust as vehemently as he did murder and adultery (Matt. 5:21–22, 27–28). It is not simply that we are sinners because we sin;

- we sin because we are sinners. We offer, then, this definition of sin: Sin is any lack of conformity, active or passive, to the moral law of God. This may be a matter of act, of thought, or of inner disposition or state. Sin is failure to live up to what God expects of us in act, thought, and being.
- 2. Sin is rebelliousness and disobedience. The Bible assumes that all persons are in contact with the truth of God. Paul notes that this includes even the gentiles, who, though they do not have God's special revelation, have the law of God written on their hearts (Rom. 2:14–15). Failure to believe the message, particularly when openly and specially presented, is disobedience or rebellion against God. A prime example is the sin of Adam and Eve. Though they were permitted to eat of any tree in the Garden of Eden, God commanded them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16–17). Adam and Eve rejected God's prerogative to say what was right and wrong for them. They rebelled against God's authority, and thus disobeyed him.

Sin is any lack of conformity, active or passive, to the moral law of God. This may be a matter of act, of thought, or of inner disposition or state.

- 3. Sin entails spiritual disability. It alters our inner condition, our character. In sinning we become twisted or distorted, as it were. The image of God in which we were created is disturbed. In Romans 1, Paul describes this process. Having refused to acknowledge God, sinners became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened (v. 21). God gave them over to a base mind (v. 28), actually an unqualified or disqualified mind. When left to itself, the human mind is not adequate to properly inform and direct our conduct.[3] The results of this spiritual disability are the sins listed in verses 29–31. Only through a renewal of the mind by God can the individual be restored to an undistorted, spiritually healthy condition (Rom. 12:2).
- 4. Sin is incomplete fulfillment of God's standards. A common idea running throughout the biblical characterizations of sin is that the sinner has failed to fulfill God's law. There are various ways we fail to meet his standard of righteousness. We may simply fall short of the norm that is set, or not do at all what God commands and expects. Saul failed to follow

through on God's command to destroy the Amalekites and all they possessed. Because Saul spared King Agag and the best livestock, God rejected Saul as king of Israel (1 Sam. 15:23). Sometimes we may do the right thing but for the wrong reason, thus fulfilling the letter of the law but not its spirit. In Matthew 6, Jesus condemns good acts done primarily out of a desire to obtain the approval of other people rather than to please God (vv. 2, 5, 16).

5. Sin is displacement of God. Placing something else, anything else, in the supreme place that belongs to God is sin. Choosing any finite object over God is wrong, no matter how selfless such an act might seem. This contention is supported by major texts in both the Old and New Testaments. The Ten Commandments begin with the command to give God his proper place. "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3) is the first prohibition in the law. Similarly, Jesus affirmed that the first and great commandment is: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30 RSV). Proper recognition of God is primary. Idolatry in any form, not pride, is the essence of sin.

The Source of Sin

Various Conceptions

We have mentioned several biblical perspectives on sin. Now we need to ask about the source of sin, the cause of or occasion leading to sin. This is vital because the cure for sin will necessarily involve identifying and negating the cause.

Frederick Tennant held that the source of sin is one's animal nature. Sin is simply the persistence of normal instincts and patterns of behavior from our animal ancestry into the period when humans acquired moral consciousness. [4] In this case, the cure cannot be a simple reversal to an earlier innocent stage. Rather, it will be a matter of completely freeing ourselves from those older instincts, or of learning to control and direct them properly. This conception of the cure for sin embraces the optimistic belief that the evolutionary process is carrying the human race in the right direction.

In Reinhold Niebuhr's view, the source of sin is the anxiety caused by human finiteness, the attempt to overcome through one's own efforts the tension between one's limitations and one's aspirations.[5] The cure will involve accepting one's limitations and placing one's confidence in God. But this cure is a matter of altering one's attitude, not of real conversion.

Paul Tillich relates sin to human existential estrangement from the ground of all being (Tillich's definition of God), from other beings, and from oneself, a condition that seems to be virtually a natural accompaniment of creaturehood. [6] Here too the fundamental cure is a matter of changing one's attitude, not of real conversion. The solution entails becoming increasingly aware that one is part of being, or that one participates in the ground of being. The result will be the cancellation of one's alienation from the ground of being, other beings, and self.

According to liberation theology, the source of sin is economic struggle. [7] The solution is to eliminate oppression and inequities in possessions and power. Rather than evangelism of individuals, liberation theologians pursue economic and political action aimed at altering the structure of society as the means to eliminate sin.

Harrison Sacket Elliott viewed individualistic competitiveness as the source of sin. Since sin is learned through education and social conditioning, it must be eliminated the same way.[8] The antidote is education that stresses noncompetitive endeavor toward common goals.

The Biblical Teaching

From the evangelical perspective, the problem lies in the fact that humans since the fall are sinful by nature and live in a world in which powerful forces seek to induce them to sin. It is important to note first that sin is not caused by God. James very quickly disposes of this idea, which would probably be quite appealing to some: "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone" (James 1:13). Nor is any encouragement given for the idea that sin inevitably results from the very structure of reality. Rather, responsibility for sin is placed squarely on the shoulders of humans themselves: "each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:14–15).

Humans have certain desires. These, at root, are legitimate. In many cases their satisfaction is indispensable to the survival of the individual or the race. For example, hunger is the desire for food. Without the satisfaction of this desire or drive, we would starve to death. Similarly, the sexual drive seeks gratification. Were it to go unsatisfied, there would be no human reproduction and hence no preservation of the human race. We may assert that these drives were given by God and that there are situations in which their satisfaction is not only permissible but also perhaps even mandatory.

We note, further, human capability. Humans are able to choose among alternatives, including options that are not immediately present. They alone of all the creatures are capable of transcending their location in time and space. Through memory they can relive the past and accept or repudiate it. Through anticipation they can construct scenarios regarding the future and choose among them. They can envision themselves occupying a different position in society, or married to a different partner. Thus, we may desire not only what is actually available but also what is not proper or legitimate. This capability greatly expands the possibilities of sinful action and/or thoughts.[9]

A number of natural desires, while good in and of themselves, are potential areas for temptation and sin:[10]

- 1. The desire to enjoy things. God has implanted certain needs in each of us. Not only is the satisfaction of those needs essential but it can also bring enjoyment. For example, the need for food and drink must be satisfied because life is impossible without them. At the same time food and drink may also be legitimately desired as a source of enjoyment. When food and drink are pursued, however, merely for the pleasure of consumption, and in excess of what is needed, the sin of gluttony is being committed. The sex drive, while not necessary for the preservation of the life of the individual, is essential for sustaining and continuing the human race. We may legitimately desire satisfaction of this drive because it is essential and also because it brings pleasure. When, however, the drive is gratified in ways that transcend natural and proper limitations (i.e., when it is satisfied outside marriage), it becomes the basis of sin. Any improper satisfaction of a natural desire is an instance of "the lust of the flesh" (1 John 2:16).
- 2. *The desire to obtain things*. There is a role in God's economy for the obtainment of possessions. This is implicit in the command to have dominion over the world (Gen. 1:28) and in the stewardship parables (e.g.,

Matt. 25:14–30). Further, material possessions are regarded as legitimate incentives to encourage industriousness. When, however, the desire to acquire worldly goods becomes so compelling that it is satisfied at any cost, even by exploiting or stealing from others, then it has degenerated into "the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16).

3. *The desire to do things*. The stewardship parables also depict the desire to achieve as both natural and appropriate. It is part of what God expects of humanity. When, however, this urge transgresses proper limitations and is pursued at the expense of other humans, it has degenerated into "the pride of life" (1 John 2:16).

There are proper ways to satisfy each of these desires, and there are also divinely imposed limits. Failure to accept these desires as they have been constituted by God, and therefore failure to submit to divine control, is sin. In such cases, the desires are not seen in the context of their divine origin and as means to the end of pleasing God but as ends in themselves.

Note that in Jesus's temptation, Satan appealed to legitimate desires. The desires that Satan urged Jesus to fulfill were not wrong per se. Rather, the suggested time and manner of fulfillment constituted the evil. Jesus had fasted for forty days and nights and consequently was hungry. This was a natural need that had to be satisfied if his life was to be preserved. It was right for Jesus to be fed, but not through some miraculous provision and probably not before the completion of his trial. It was proper for Jesus to desire to come down safely from the pinnacle of the temple, but not to require a miraculous display of power by the Father. It was right for Jesus to lay claim to all the kingdoms of the earth, for they are his. He had created them (John 1:3) and even now sustains them (Col. 1:17). But it was not right to seek to establish this claim by worshiping the chief of the forces of evil.

Oftentimes temptation involves inducement from without. This was true in the case of Jesus. In the case of Adam and Eve, the serpent did not directly suggest that they eat of the forbidden tree. Rather, he raised the question of whether the fruit of all the trees was off limits to them. Then he asserted, "You will not certainly die . . . [but] will be like God" (Gen. 3:4–5). While the desire to eat of the tree or to be like God may have been present naturally, there was also an external inducement of satanic origin. In some cases another human entices one to overstep the divinely imposed bounds around behavior. In the final analysis, however, sin is the choice of

the person who commits it. The desire to do what is done may be present naturally, and there may be external inducement as well. But the individual is ultimately responsible. Adam and Eve chose to act on impulse and suggestion; Jesus chose not to.

In addition to natural desire and temptation, there must, of course, be an opportunity for sin as well. Initially Adam could not have been tempted to infidelity to his wife, nor could Eve have been jealous of other women. For those of us who live after the fall and are not Jesus, there is a further complicating factor: something known as "the flesh" strongly influences what we do. Paul speaks of it in numerous passages, for example, Romans 7:18: "I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." In Galatians 5:16–24 he speaks vividly of the opposition between the flesh and the Spirit, and of the works of the flesh, which constitute a whole catalog of evils. By "flesh" Paul does not mean the physical nature of the human being. Rather, the term designates the self-centered life, denial or rejection of God, something that has become part of human nature—a tendency or bias toward sin and away from doing God's will. Accordingly, we are now less able to choose the right than Adam and Eve originally were. It is even conceivable that natural human desires, good in themselves, may have undergone alteration.

What does the biblical teaching on the source of sin tell us about the cure? The cure for sin will come through a supernaturally produced alteration of one's human nature and also through divine help in countering the power of temptation. It is individual conversion and regeneration that will alter the person and bring him or her into a relationship with God that will make successful Christian living possible.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- Why is it difficult for people in contemporary culture to even discuss the concept of sin?
- Sin has been described as a failure to let God be God. Do you agree with that description? Give some examples to support your answer.
- How does the concept of an animal nature as the source of sin affect our view of humanity?
- What is the relationship between natural desires and sin?

How is you examples.	· life affected by sin? H	low does personal	sin affect the lives	s of others? Give

The Results of Sin

Chapter Objectives

After completing your study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Outline the consequences of sin concerning humanity's relationship with God.
- 2. Express the seriousness of sin.
- **3.** Identify and explain the specific effects of sin on the sinner.
- **4.** Describe the effects of sin on human relationships.

Chapter Summary

Sin has very serious consequences when it comes to the relationship between the sinner and God. These results include divine disfavor, guilt, punishment, and death. Sin also has consequences that affect the individual sinner, including enslavement, flight from reality, denial of sin, self-deceit, insensitivity, self-centeredness, and restlessness. These effects on the sinner have social implications in competition, inability to empathize, rejection of authority, and inability to love.

Chapter Outline

Results Affecting the Relationship with God

- Divine Disfavor
- Guilt
- Punishment
- Death
 - » Physical Death
 - » Spiritual Death
 - » Eternal Death

Effects on the Sinner

• Enslavement

- Flight from Reality
- Denial of Sin
- Self-Deceit
- Insensitivity
- Self-Centeredness
- Restlessness

Effects on the Relationship to Other Humans

- Competition
- Inability to Empathize
- Rejection of Authority
- Inability to Love

One emphasis that runs through the Old and New Testaments is that sin is a very serious matter with far-reaching and long-lasting consequences. In the next chapter we will look at the corporate effects of sin, that is, the impact of Adam's sin on the whole of his posterity. In this chapter, however, we are concerned with the individual effects of one's sin as they are illustrated in Scripture (particularly in the account of Adam and Eve) and found in our own experience.

The impact of sin has several dimensions. There are effects on the sinner's relationships with God and fellow humans, as well as oneself. Some of the results of sin might be termed "natural consequences"; that is, they follow from the sin in virtually an automatic cause-and-effect sequence. Others are specifically ordained and directed by God as a penalty for sin.

Results Affecting the Relationship with God

Sin produced an immediate transformation in Adam and Eve's relationship with God. They had evidently been on close and friendly terms with God. They trusted and obeyed him, and on the basis of Genesis 3:8 it can be concluded that they had customarily had fellowship with God. Now, because they had violated God's trust and command, they had placed themselves on the wrong side of God and had in effect become his enemies. It was not God who had changed or moved, but Adam and Eve.

Divine Disfavor

It is notable how the Bible characterizes God's relationship to sin and the sinner. In two instances in the Old Testament, God is said to hate sinful Israel. In Hosea 9:15 God says:

Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal,

I hated them there.

Because of their sinful deeds.

I will drive them out of my house.

I will no longer love them;

all their leaders are rebellious.

This is a very strong expression. A similar sentiment is expressed in Jeremiah 12:8. On two other occasions God is said to hate the wicked (Pss. 5:5; 11:5). Much more frequent, however, are passages in which he is said to hate wickedness (e.g., Prov. 6:16–17; Zech. 8:17). The hate is not one-sided on God's part, however, for the wicked are described as those who hate God (Exod. 20:5; Deut. 7:10) and, more commonly, as those who hate the righteous (Pss. 18:40; 69:4; Prov. 29:10). In those few passages where God is said to hate the wicked, it is apparent that they initiated the change in the relationship.

That God looks with favor on some and with disfavor or anger on others, and that he is sometimes described as loving the Israelites and at other times as hating them, are not signs of change, inconsistency, or fickleness in God. Rather, it is part of his holy nature to be categorically opposed to sinful actions. When we engage in such actions, we have moved into the sphere of God's disfavor. The Old Testament frequently describes those who sin and violate God's law as enemies of God. Yet only rarely does the Bible speak of God as their enemy (Exod. 23:22; Isa. 63:10; Lam. 2:4–5). Charles Ryder Smith comments: "In the Old Testament, 'enmity,' like hatred, is rare with God, but common with man."[1] By rebelling against God, it is humans, not God, who break the relationship.

By sinning, we have placed ourselves on the wrong side of God and have in effect become his enemies.

In the New Testament there is a particular focus on the enmity and hatred of unbelievers and the world toward God and his people. To sin is to make oneself an enemy of God. In Romans 8:7 and Colossians 1:21 Paul describes the mind that is set on the flesh as being "hostile to God" or alienated from God. In James 4:4 we read that "friendship with the world means enmity against God." God, however, is not the enemy of anyone; he loves all and hates none. He loved enough to send his Son to die for us while we were yet sinners and at enmity with him (Rom. 5:8–10). He epitomizes what he commands. He loves his enemies.

Although God is not the enemy of sinners, nor does he hate them, it is also quite clear that God is angered by sin. Scripture does not merely refer to God's present reaction to sin but also suggests certain divine actions to

come. In John 3:36, for example, Jesus says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them." Romans 1:18 teaches that "the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness." Romans 2:5 speaks of "storing up wrath" for the day of judgment. God's wrath is a very real and present matter but will not be fully revealed, or manifested in action, until some later point.

From the foregoing it is evident that God looks with disfavor on sin, indeed, that sin occasions anger or wrath or displeasure in him. Two additional comments should be made, however. The first is that anger is not something that God chooses to feel. His disapproval of sin is not an arbitrary matter, for his very nature is one of holiness; it automatically rejects sin. The second comment is that we must avoid thinking of God's anger as being excessively emotional. It is not as if he is seething with anger, his temper virtually surging out of control. He is capable of exercising patience and long-suffering, and does so. Nor is God to be thought of as somehow frustrated by our sin. Disappointment is perhaps a more accurate way of characterizing his reaction.

Guilt

Our relationship with God is also affected by guilt. This word needs some careful explication, for in today's world the usual meaning of the term is guilt feelings, or the subjective aspect of guilt. These feelings are often thought of as irrational, and indeed they sometimes are. That is, a person may have done nothing objectively wrong but nonetheless may have these feelings. What we are referring to here, however, is the state of having violated God's intention and thus being liable to punishment. To clarify what we mean by "guilt," it will be helpful to comment briefly on two words that may occur in one's definition of sin, namely, "bad" and "wrong." On the one hand, we may define sin as that which is intrinsically bad rather than good. It is impure, repulsive, hated by God simply because it is the opposite of the good. There is a problem here, however. The statement that sin is bad may be understood only in aesthetic terms—sin is ugly, twisted, spoiled action that comes short of God's perfect standard.

On the other hand, we may define sin as involving not merely the bad but the wrong as well. In the former case, sin might be likened to a foul disease that healthy people shrink from in fear. But in the latter case, we are thinking of sin not merely as a lack of wholeness or of perfection but also as moral wrong, as a deliberate violation of God's commands, and thus deserving of punishment.

This distinction can be illustrated by thinking of an automobile that is hard to maneuver and inefficient, gets poor gas mileage, or is badly damaged and an eyesore. Such an automobile might be a trial of patience for its owner, but as long as the headlights, turn signals, and other safety features function properly, the exhaust emissions are within the prescribed limits of the law, and it is properly licensed and insured, there is nothing illegal about the vehicle. If, however, the automobile is emitting an excessive amount of contaminants into the environment, or some safety feature is malfunctioning, the law is being broken and a penalty would be deservedly imposed. Now, when we speak of guilt we mean that the sinner, like the automobile that does not meet legal safety regulations, has violated the law and is, accordingly, deserving of punishment.

At this point we must look into the precise nature of the disruption that sin and guilt produce in the relationship between God and human. God is the almighty, eternal one, the only independent, noncontingent reality. Everything that is has derived its existence from him. And the human, the highest of all creatures, has the gifts of life and personhood only because of God's goodness and graciousness. As the master, God has placed humans in charge of the creation and commanded them to rule over it (Gen. 1:28). As the almighty and completely holy one, God has asked our worship and obedience in response to his gifts. But we have failed to do God's bidding. Entrusted with the wealth of the creation, we have used it for our own purposes, like embezzlers. In addition, like citizens who treat contemptuously a monarch or a high elected official, a hero or a person of great accomplishment, we have failed to treat with respect the highest of all beings. Further, we are ungrateful for all God has done for us and given to us (Rom. 1:21). And, finally, we have spurned God's offer of friendship and love, and, in the most extreme case, the salvation accomplished through the death of God's own Son. These offenses are magnified by who God is: he is the almighty Creator, infinitely above us. Whenever the creature deprives the Creator of what is rightfully his, the balance is upset, for God is not being honored and obeyed. Were such disruption to go uncorrected, God

would virtually cease to be God. Therefore, sin and the sinner deserve and even need to be punished.

Punishment

Liability to God's punishment, then, is another result of our sin. It is important for us to ascertain the basic nature and intent of God's punishment of the sinner. Is it remedial, intended to correct the sinner? Is it deterrent, pointing out the consequences to which sin leads and hence warning others against wrongdoing? Or is it retributive, designed simply to give sinners what they deserve?

There is today a rather widespread feeling of opposition to the idea that God's punishment of the sinner is retributive. Retribution is regarded as primitive, cruel, a mark of hostility and vindictiveness, which is singularly inappropriate in a God of love who is a Father to his earthly children.[2] Yet despite this feeling, which may reflect a permissive society's conception of a loving father, there is definitely a dimension of divine retribution in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament. Certainly the death penalty, being terminal, was not intended to be rehabilitative. And while it also had a deterrent effect, the direct connection between what had been done to the victim and what was to be done to the offender is clear. This is seen particularly in a passage like Genesis 9:6:

Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.

The idea of retribution is also seen quite clearly in the Hebrew term *naqam*. This word, which (including its derivatives) appears about eighty times in the Old Testament, is frequently rendered "avenge," "revenge," and "take vengeance." While the terms "vengeance" and "revenge" are appropriate translations in designating Israel's actions against its neighbors, there is something inappropriate about applying them to God's actions.[3] "Vengeance" or "revenge" carries the idea of retaliation, of gaining satisfaction (psychologically) to compensate for what was done, rather than the idea of obtaining and administering justice. God's concern, however, is

in maintaining justice. Thus, in connection with God's punishment of sinners, "retribution" is a better translation than "vengeance."

There are numerous references, particularly in the Major Prophets, to the retributive dimension of God's punishment of sinners. Examples are to be found in Isaiah 1:24; 61:2; 63:4; Jeremiah 46:10; and Ezekiel 25:14. In Psalm 94:1 God is spoken of as the "God who avenges." In these cases, as in most instances in the Old Testament, the punishment envisioned is to take place within historical time rather than in some future state. The idea of retribution is also found in numerous narrative passages. For example, the flood (Gen. 6) was not sent to deter anyone from sin, for the only survivors, Noah and his family, were already righteous people. And it certainly could not have been sent for any corrective or rehabilitative reason, since the wicked were all destroyed.

Although less frequently than in the Old Testament, the idea of retributive justice is also found in the New Testament. Here the reference is more to future rather than temporal judgment. Paraphrases of Deuteronomy 32:35 are found in both Romans 12:19 and Hebrews 10:30: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay."

We should not overlook punishment's two other dimensions or functions. The stoning of Achan and his family (Josh. 7) was partly retribution for what he had done, but it was also a means of dissuading others from a similar course of conduct. For this reason punishment was frequently administered publicly.

There is also the disciplinary effect of punishment. Punishment was administered to convince sinners of the error of their ways and to turn them from it. Psalm 107:10–16 indicates that the Lord had punished the Israelites for their sins and they had consequently turned from their wrongdoing, at least temporarily. The writer to the Hebrews tells us, "the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as a son" (Heb. 12:6). In the Old Testament there is even a bit of the idea of purification from sin through punishment. This is at least hinted at in Isaiah 10:20–21. God will use Assyria to punish his people; as a result of this experience a remnant of Israel will learn to lean on the Lord.

A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God.

One of sin's obvious results is death. This truth is first pointed out in God's statement forbidding Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: "for when you eat from it you will certainly die" (Gen. 2:17). It is also found in clear didactic form in Romans 6:23: "the wages of sin is death." Paul's point is that, like wages, death is a fitting return, a just recompense for what we have done. This death that we have deserved has several aspects: (1) physical death, (2) spiritual death, and (3) eternal death.

PHYSICAL DEATH

The mortality of all humans is both an obvious fact and a truth taught by Scripture. Hebrews 9:27 says, "people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." Paul in Romans 5:12 attributes death to the original sin of Adam. Yet while death entered the world through Adam's sin, it spread to all humans because all sinned.

This raises the question of whether humans were created mortal or immortal. Would they have died if they had not sinned? Calvinists, on the one hand, have basically taken the negative position, arguing that physical death entered with the curse (Gen. 3:19).[4] The Pelagian view, on the other hand, is that humans were created mortal. The principle of death and decay is a part of the whole of creation.[5] Pelagians point out that if the Calvinist view is correct, then it was the serpent who was right and Jehovah was wrong in saying, "for when you eat of it you will surely die," for Adam and Eve were not struck dead immediately upon committing their sin.[6] Physical death, in the Pelagian view, is a natural accompaniment of being human. The biblical references to death as a consequence of sin are understood as references to spiritual death, separation from God, rather than physical death.

"The wages of sin is death"—physical, spiritual, and eternal.

The problem is not as simple as it might at first appear. The assumption that mortality began with the fall, and that Romans 5:12 and similar New Testament references to death are to be understood as references to physical death, may not be warranted. An obstacle to the idea that physical mortality

is a result of sin is the case of Jesus. Not only did he not sin himself (Heb. 4:15), but he was also not tainted by the corrupted nature of Adam. Yet he died. How could mortality have affected someone who, spiritually, stood where Adam and Eve did before the fall? This is an enigma. Is it possible somehow to slip between the horns of the dilemma created by this conflicting data?

First, we must observe that physical death is linked to the fall in some clear way. Genesis 3:19 would seem to be not a statement of what is the case and has been the case from creation, but a pronouncement of a new situation.

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.

Further, it seems difficult to separate the ideas of physical death and spiritual death in Paul's writings, particularly in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul's theme is that physical death has been defeated through Christ's resurrection. Humans still die, but death's finality has been removed. Paul attributes to sin the power that physical death possesses in the absence of resurrection. But with Christ's overcoming of physical death, sin itself (and thus spiritual death) is defeated (vv. 55–56). Apart from Christ's resurrection from physical death, we would remain in our sins; that is, we would remain spiritually dead (v. 17). Louis Berkhof appears to be correct when he says, "The Bible does not know the distinction, so common among us, between a physical, a spiritual, and an eternal death; it has a synthetic view of death and regards it as separation from God."[7]

However, there are the considerations that Adam and Eve died spiritually but not physically the moment or the day they sinned, and that even the sinless Jesus was capable of dying. How is all of this to be untangled?

I would suggest the concept of conditional immortality as the state of Adam before the fall. He was not inherently able to live forever, but he need not have died.[8] Given the right conditions, he could have lived on forever. This may be the meaning of God's words when he decided to expel Adam

and Eve from Eden and from the presence of the tree of life: "He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever" (Gen. 3:22). The impression is given that Adam and Eve, even after the fall, could have lived forever if they had eaten the fruit of the tree of life. What happened at the time of their expulsion from Eden was that the humans, who formerly could have either lived forever or died, were now separated from those conditions that made eternal life possible, and thus it became inevitable that they would die. Previously they *could* die; now they *would* die. This also means that Jesus was born with a body that was subject to death. He had to eat to live; had he failed to eat he would have starved to death.

We should note that there were other changes as a result of sin. In Eden, the humans had bodies that presumably could become diseased; after the fall there were diseases for them to contract. The curse, involving the coming of death to humankind, also included a whole host of ills that would lead to death. Paul tells us that someday this set of conditions will be removed, and the whole creation delivered from this "bondage to decay" (Rom. 8:18–23).

To sum up: The potential of death was within the creation from the beginning, but so was the potential of eternal life. Sin, in the case of Adam and each of us, means that death is no longer merely potential but actual.

SPIRITUAL DEATH

Spiritual death is both connected with physical death and distinguished from it. It is the separation of the entire person from God. God, as a perfectly holy being, cannot look upon sin or tolerate its presence. Thus, sin is a barrier to the relationship between God and humans, bringing them under God's judgment and condemnation.

In addition to this objective aspect of spiritual death, there is also a subjective aspect. The Bible frequently states that people apart from Christ are dead in trespasses and sins. This means, at least in part, that sensibility to spiritual matters and the ability to act and respond spiritually, to do good things, are absent or severely impaired. The newness of life that is now ours through Christ's resurrection and symbolized in baptism (Rom. 6:4), while not precluding physical death, means that sin no longer dominates us. We possess a new spiritual sensitivity and vitality.

ETERNAL DEATH

Eternal death is in a very real sense the extension and finalization of spiritual death. If one comes to physical death still spiritually dead, separated from God, that condition becomes permanent. As eternal life is both qualitatively different from our present life and unending, so eternal death is separation from God that is both qualitatively different from physical death and everlasting.

At the last judgment, the persons who appear before God's judgment seat will be divided into two groups. Those who are judged righteous will be sent into eternal life (Matt. 25:34–40, 46b). Those judged to be unrighteous will be sent into eternal punishment or eternal fire (vv. 41–46a). In Revelation 20 John writes of a "second death." The first death is physical death, from which the resurrection gives us deliverance, but not exemption. Although all will eventually die the first death, the important question is whether in each individual case the second death has been overcome. Those who participate in the first resurrection are spoken of as "blessed and holy." Over such the second death is said to have no power (v. 6). In the latter part of the chapter, death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire (vv. 13–14), into which the beast and the false prophet were earlier cast (19:20). This is spoken of as the second death (20:14). Anyone whose name is not found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. This is the permanent state of what the sinner chose in life.

We have examined the effects sin has on a human's relationship with God. The argument that certain actions are not wrong, provided they are performed by consenting adults and no one is harmed, disregards the fact that sin is primarily wrong against God and primarily affects the relationship between the sinner and God.

Effects on the Sinner

Enslavement

Sin also has varied and complex internal consequences for the person who commits it. One of these is its enslaving power. Sin becomes a habit or even an addiction. One sin leads to another sin. For example, after killing Abel, Cain felt constrained to lie when God asked him where his brother was.

What some people consider freedom to sin, freedom from the restrictions of obedience to the will of God, is actually the enslavement that sin produces. In some cases sin gains so much control and power over a person that he or she cannot escape it. Paul recalls that the Roman Christians "used to be slaves to sin" (Rom. 6:17). But sin's grip on the individual is loosed by the work of Christ: "through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2).

Flight from Reality

Sin also results in an unwillingness to face reality. The harsh dimensions of life, and especially the consequences of our sin, are not faced realistically —in particular, the stark fact of death (Heb. 9:27). A suppressed realization that death is the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23) may underlie many of our attempts to avoid thinking about it.

Denial of Sin

Accompanying our denial of death is a denial of sin, in various ways. It may be relabeled, so that it is not acknowledged as sin at all. It may be considered a matter of sickness, deprivation, ignorance, or perhaps social maladjustment at worst.

Another way of denying our sin is to admit the wrongness of our actions but to decline to take responsibility for them. We see this dynamic at work in the case of the very first sin. When confronted by the Lord's question, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" (Gen. 3:11), Adam responded by shifting the blame: "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it" (v. 12). Adam's immediate reaction was to deny personal responsibility—he had eaten only at Eve's inducement. Note that he even tried to shift the blame to God.

Attempting to shift responsibility from oneself is a common practice, for deep down there is often a sense of guilt that one desperately wants to eradicate. But trying to shift responsibility compounds the sin and makes repentance more unlikely. All the excuses and explanations we offer for our actions are signs of the depth of our sin.

Self-Deceit

Self-deceit is the underlying problem when we deny sin. Jeremiah wrote:

The heart is deceitful [slippery, crooked] above all things and beyond cure.

Who can understand it? (17:9)

The hypocrites of whom Jesus often spoke probably fooled themselves before they tried to fool others. He pointed to the ludicrous lengths to which self-deceit can go: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" (Matt. 7:3).

Insensitivity

Sin also produces insensitivity. As we continue to sin and to reject God's warnings and condemnations, we become less and less responsive to the promptings of conscience and the stirrings by the Word and the Spirit. In time even gross sins can be committed with no compunction. Perhaps the clearest example in Jesus's ministry is the Pharisees, who, having seen Jesus's miracles and heard his teaching, attributed what was the work of the Holy Spirit to Beelzebub, the prince of the demons (Matt. 12:24).

Self-Centeredness

An increasing self-centeredness also results from sin. In many ways sin is a turning in on oneself that is confirmed with practice. We call attention to ourselves, and to our good qualities and accomplishments, and minimize our shortcomings. We seek special favors and opportunities in life, wanting an extra little edge that no one else has. We display a certain special alertness to our own wants and needs, while we ignore those of others.

Restlessness

Finally, sin often produces restlessness. There is a certain insatiable character about sin. Complete satisfaction never occurs. Although some sinners may have a relative stability for a time, sin eventually loses its ability to satisfy. It is alleged that in answer to the question, "How much money does it take to satisfy a man?" John D. Rockefeller responded, "Just a little bit more."

Effects on the Relationship to Other Humans

Competition

Sin also has massive effects on relationships among humans. One of the most significant is the proliferation of competition. Since sin makes one increasingly self-centered and self-seeking, there will inevitably be conflict with others. We desire the same position, the same marriage partner, or the same piece of real estate that another has. Whenever someone wins, someone else loses. The most extreme and large-scale version of human competition is war, with its wholesale destruction of property and human lives. James is quite clear as to the major factors that lead to war: "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight" (James 4:1–2).

Inability to Empathize

Inability to empathize with others is a major consequence of sin. Being concerned about our personal desires, reputation, and opinions, we see only our own perspective. This is the opposite of what Paul commended to his readers: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:3–5).

<u>Rejection of Authority</u>

Rejection of authority is often a social ramification of sin. If we find security in our own possessions and accomplishments, then any outside authority is threatening. Since it restricts our doing what we want, it must be resisted or ignored. In the process, of course, many others' rights may be trampled.

Inability to Love

Finally, sin results in the inability to love. If our aim is self-satisfaction, people who stand in our way will represent competition and a threat to us, and we will thus not act for the ultimate welfare of others. And so suspicions, conflicts, bitterness, and even hatred issue from the self-

absorption or the pursuit of finite values that has supplanted God at the center of the sinner's life.

Sin is a serious matter; it has far-reaching effects—on our relationship to God, to ourselves, and to other humans. Accordingly, it will require a cure with similarly extensive effects.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- How do the Old and New Testaments compare in their understanding of sin and its effects?
- How is sin related to death?
- What effects of sin are evident in the sinner?
- What are the consequences of sin in relation to other humans?
- Assuming you were writing a sermon or lesson on sin, how would you impress on your audience the seriousness of sin?

The Magnitude of Sin

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Relate the Old and New Testament teaching on the extent of sin to a fuller understanding of sin.
- 2. Relate the Old and New Testament teaching on the intensiveness of sin to an expanded understanding of sin's pervasiveness.
- **3.** Identify and explain three traditional theories of original sin: Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Calvinism.
- **4.** Extrapolate biblically appropriate concepts from these theories and formulate a biblical and contemporary model of original sin.

Chapter Summary

It is evident from both the Old and New Testament descriptions of sin that sin is universal. Both Testaments further affirm the depth and breadth of sin in all humans. The concept of total depravity, if properly understood, is useful in explaining the condition of the sinner. Three historical views of original sin include Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Calvinism. A contemporary understanding of the magnitude of sin incorporates a biblical perspective and the best elements of these traditional views.

Chapter Outline

The Extent of Sin

- The Old Testament Teaching
- The New Testament Teaching

The Intensiveness of Sin

- The Old Testament Teaching
- The New Testament Teaching
- Sin and Total Depravity

Theories of Original Sin

- Pelagianism
- Arminianism
- Calvinism

Original Sin: A Biblical and Contemporary Model

Having seen something of the nature of sin, its source, and its effects, we must now ask regarding its magnitude. There are two facets to this question: (1) How extensive, how common is sin? (2) How intensive, how radical is it?

The Extent of Sin

To the question of who sins, the answer is apparent: sin is universal. Not merely a few isolated individuals or even a majority of the human race, but all humans, without exception, are sinners.

The Old Testament Teaching

The universality of sin is taught in several ways and places in Scripture. In the Old Testament we do not usually find general statements about all people at all times, but about all those living at the time being written about. In the time of Noah, the sin of the race was so great and so extensive that God resolved to destroy everything (with the exception of Noah, his family, and the animals taken on board the ark). The description is vivid: "The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time" (Gen. 6:5). God regretted having made humanity and resolved to blot out the entire human race, together with all other living things, for the corruption was worldwide.

Even after the flood has destroyed the wicked of the earth, God still characterizes "every inclination of the human heart [as being] evil from childhood" (Gen. 8:21). A categorical statement about human sinfulness is found in 1 Kings 8:46: "for there is no one who does not sin" (cf. Rom. 3:23). David makes a similar statement when he asks for mercy from God.

Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you. (Ps. 143:2)[1]

These statements of the universal sinfulness of the human race should be regarded as qualifying all the scriptural references to perfect or blameless persons (e.g., Ps. 37:37; Prov. 11:5). Even those who are specifically

described as perfect have shortcomings. David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). Yet his sins were grievous and occasioned the great penitential psalm (Ps. 51). Isaiah 53:6 takes pains to universalize its metaphorical description of sinners.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The New Testament Teaching

The New Testament is even clearer concerning the universality of human sin. The best-known passage is Romans 3, where Paul quotes and elaborates on Psalms 14 and 53, as well as 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; 36:1; and Isaiah 59:7–8. He asserts that "Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin" (Rom. 3:9), and then heaps up a number of descriptive quotations, beginning with,

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks God.
All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. (vv. 10–12)

None will be justified by works of the law (v. 20). The reason is clear: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (v. 23). Paul also makes it plain that he is talking not only about unbelievers, those outside the Christian faith, but about believers as well, including himself (Eph. 2:3). It is apparent that there are no exceptions to this universal rule.

Not only does the Bible frequently assert that all are sinners, but it also assumes it throughout. Note, for example, that the commands to repent relate to everyone. In his Mars Hill address Paul said, "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). In the New Testament each person, by virtue of being human, is regarded as a sinner in need of repentance and new birth. Sin is

universal. As Charles Ryder Smith puts it, "The universality of sin is taken as matter of fact. On examination, it will be found that every speech in Acts, even Stephen's, and every Epistle just assumes that men have all sinned. This is also the assumption of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. . . . Jesus deals with everyone on the assumption, 'Here is a sinner.'"[2]

An additional proof of the universality of sin is that all persons are subject to the penalty for sin: namely, death. Except for those alive when Christ returns, everyone will succumb to death. Romans 3:23 ("all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God") and 6:23 ("the wages of sin is death") are interconnected. The universality of the death spoken of in the latter is evidence of the universality of sin of which the former verse speaks. Between these two verses comes Romans 5:12: "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned." Here, too, sin is considered universal.

The Intensiveness of Sin

Having seen that the extent of sin is universal, we turn now to the issue of its intensiveness. How sinful is the sinner? How deep is our sin? Are we basically pure, with a positive inclination toward the good, or are we totally and absolutely corrupt? We must look carefully at the biblical data and then seek to interpret and integrate them.

The Old Testament Teaching

The Old Testament for the most part speaks of sins rather than of sinfulness, of sin as an act rather than as a state or disposition. Yet a distinction is drawn between sins on the basis of the motivation involved. The right of sanctuary for someone who killed a person was reserved for those who had killed accidentally rather than intentionally (Deut. 4:42). The motive was fully as important as the act itself. In addition, inward thoughts and intentions were condemned quite apart from external acts. An example is the sin of covetousness, an internal desire that is deliberately chosen. [3]

There is yet a further step in the Old Testament understanding of sin. Particularly in the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, sin is depicted as a spiritual sickness that afflicts the heart. Our heart is wrong and must be

changed, or even exchanged. We do not merely do evil; our very inclination is evil. Jeremiah says:

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.

Who can understand it? (17:9)

In the book of Ezekiel, God asserts that the hearts of the people need change: "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 11:19).

Psalm 51, the great penitential psalm, most fully expresses the idea of sinfulness or a sinful nature. Here we find a strong emphasis on the idea of sin as an inward condition or disposition, and the need of purging the inward person. David speaks of his having been sinful not just from birth but from conception (v. 5). He speaks of the Lord's desiring truth in the inward parts and of the need to be taught wisdom in the secret heart (v. 6). The psalmist prays to be washed and cleansed (v. 2), and asks God to create in him a clean heart and to put a new and right (or steadfast) spirit within him (v. 10). It is clear that the psalmist does not think of himself merely as one who commits sins but as a sinful person.

The New Testament Teaching

The New Testament is even clearer and more emphatic on these matters. Jesus spoke of the inward disposition as evil. It is insufficient not to commit murder; one who is angry with a brother is liable to judgment (Matt. 5:21–22). It is not enough to abstain from committing adultery. If a man lusts after a woman, he has in his heart already committed adultery with her (Matt. 5:27–28).

Paul's own self-testimony is also a powerful argument that it is the corruption of human nature that produces individual sins. He recalls that "when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death" (Rom. 7:5). He sees "another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me" (v. 23). In Paul's thinking, then, as in Jesus's, sins are the result of human nature. In every

human there is a strong inclination toward evil, an inclination with definite effects.

Sin and Total Depravity

The adjective "total" is often attached to the idea of depravity. Very early in the Bible we read, "The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time" (Gen. 6:5). But the expression "total depravity" must be carefully used, for it has sometimes been interpreted as conveying a false understanding of human nature. [4]

We do not mean by total depravity that the unregenerate person is totally insensitive in matters of conscience, of right and wrong. Paul's statement in Romans 2:15 says that the gentiles have the law written on their hearts, "their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them." Further, total depravity does not mean that the sinful person is as sinful as possible. There are genuinely altruistic unregenerate persons who show kindness, generosity, and love to others, who are good, devoted spouses and parents. Finally, the doctrine of total depravity does not mean that the sinner engages in every possible form of sin.

Total depravity means that sin affects every aspect of our person, that our good acts are not done entirely out of love for God, and that we are completely unable to extricate ourselves from this sinful condition.

What then do we mean, positively, by the idea of total depravity? First, sin is a matter of the entire person. [5] The seat of sin is not merely one aspect of the person, such as the body or the reason. Certainly several references make clear that the body is affected (e.g., Rom. 6:6, 12; 7:24; 8:10, 13). Other verses tell us that the mind or the reason is involved (e.g., Rom. 1:21; 2 Cor. 3:14–15; 4:4) and that the emotions also are involved (e.g., Rom. 1:26–27; Gal. 5:24; and 2 Tim. 3:2–4, where the ungodly are described as being lovers of self and pleasure rather than lovers of God).

Finally, the will is also affected. The unregenerate person does not have a truly free will but is a slave to sin (Rom. 6:17).

Further, total depravity means that even the unregenerate person's altruism always contains an element of improper motive. The good acts are not done entirely or even primarily out of perfect love for God. In each case there is another factor, whether the preference of one's own self-interest or of some other object less than God. The Pharisees, who so often debated with Jesus, did many good things (Matt. 23:23), but they had no real love for God. So he said to them:

You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

I do not accept glory from human beings, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. (John 5:39–42)

Finally, total depravity means that sinners are completely unable to extricate themselves from their sinful condition. [6] Apart from the good acts they do being tainted by less-than-perfect love for God, good and lawful actions cannot be maintained consistently. The sinner cannot alter his or her life by a process of determination, willpower, and reformation. Sin is inescapable. This fact is depicted in Scripture's frequent references to sinners as "spiritually dead" (Eph. 2:1–2, 5). This does not mean that sinners are absolutely insensitive and unresponsive to spiritual stimuli, but rather that they are unable to do what they ought. Unregenerate persons are incapable of genuinely good, redeeming works; whatever they do is dead or ineffective in relationship to God. Salvation by works is absolutely impossible (Eph. 2:8–9).

Anyone who has attempted to live a perfect life in his or her own strength has discovered what Paul is talking about here. Such endeavors eventually end in frustration at best. One seminary professor described his personal attempt. He listed thirty characteristics of the Christian life. Then he assigned each one to a different day of the month. On the first day, he worked very hard on the first attribute. With a great deal of concentration, he managed to live up to his goal the entire day. On the second day of the month, he shifted to the second area, and mastered it. Then he moved on to the other areas, successively mastering each in turn, until on the final day he perfectly realized the characteristic assigned to it. But just as he was reveling in the sense of victory, he looked back at the first day's goal to see

how he was doing. To his chagrin, he discovered that he had completely lost sight of the goal of the first day—and of the second, third, and fourth days. His experience is an empirical study of what the Bible teaches us: "there is no one who does good, not even one" (Pss. 14:3b; 53:3b; Rom. 3:12). The Bible also gives the reason for this: "everyone has turned away, all have become corrupt [depraved]" (Pss. 14:3a; 53:3a). We are totally unable to do genuinely meritorious works sufficient to qualify for God's favor.

Theories of Original Sin

All of us, apparently without exception, are sinners. By this we mean not merely that all of us sin but also that we all have a depraved or corrupted nature that so inclines us toward sin that it is virtually inevitable. How can this be? What is the basis of this amazing fact? Must not some common factor be at work in all of us? But what is this common factor that is often referred to as original sin?[7] Whence is it derived, and how is it transmitted or communicated?

We find the answer in Romans 5: "sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned" (v. 12). This thought is repeated in several different ways in the succeeding verses (vv. 15–19). Paul sees some sort of causal connection between what Adam did and the sinfulness of all people throughout all time. But just what is the nature of this influence exerted by Adam on all humans, and by what means does it operate?

A number of attempts have been made to understand and elucidate this Adamic influence. In the following pages we will examine and evaluate several of these efforts. We will then attempt to construct a model that does justice to the various dimensions of the biblical witness and is also intelligible within the contemporary context.

Pelagianism

The first view of the relationship between individual humans and the first sin of Adam is that of Pelagius. He is thought to have been a British monk who had moved to Rome to teach.[8] Pelagius was a moralist: his primary concern was for people to live good and decent lives. It seemed to him that an unduly negative view of human nature was having an unfortunate effect

on human behavior. Coupled with an emphasis on God's sovereignty, the estimation of human sinfulness seemed to remove all motivation to attempt to live a good life.[9]

To counteract these tendencies, Pelagius strongly emphasized the idea of free will. Unlike the other creatures, humans were created free of the controlling influences of the universe. Furthermore, humans today are free of any determining influence from the fall. Holding to a creationist view of the origin of the soul, Pelagius maintained that the soul, created by God specially for every person, is not tainted by any supposed corruption or guilt.[10] Adam's influence, if any, on his descendants is merely that of a bad example.

If Adam's sin has no direct effect on every human, there is no need for a special working of God's grace in the heart of each individual. Rather the grace of God is simply present everywhere and at every moment. [11] We can, by our own efforts, perfectly fulfill God's commands without sinning. [12] There is no natural inclination toward sin at the beginning of life; any later inclination in that direction comes only through the building up of bad habits. Salvation by works is thus quite possible, although that is something of a misnomer. Since we are not really sinful, guilty, and condemned, this process is not a matter of salvation from something that presently binds us. It is rather a preservation or maintenance of our right status and good standing. By our own accomplishment we keep from falling into a sinful condition.

Arminianism

A more moderate view is the Arminian. James Arminius was a Dutch Reformed pastor and theologian who considerably modified the theological position in which he had been trained. [13] According to Arminianism, we receive from Adam a corrupted nature. We begin life without righteousness. Thus, all humans are unable, without special divine help, to fulfill God's spiritual commands. This inability is physical and intellectual but not volitional.

Although some Arminians say that "guilt" is also part of original sin, they do not mean actual culpability but merely liability to punishment. For whatever culpability and condemnation may have accrued to us through Adam's sin have been removed through prevenient grace. Orton Wiley says, "Man is not now condemned for the depravity of his own nature, although

that depravity is of the essence of sin; its culpability, we maintain, was removed by the free gift of Christ." This prevenient grace is extended to everyone, and in effect neutralizes the corruption received from Adam. [14]

Calvinism

Calvinists have given more attention to the question of original sin than have most other schools of theology. In general terms, the Calvinist position on this matter is that there is a definite connection between Adam's sin and all persons of all times. In some way, his sin is not just the sin of an isolated individual but is also our sin. Because we participate in that sin, we all, from the beginning of life, perhaps even from the point of conception, receive a corrupted nature along with a consequent inherited tendency toward sin. Furthermore, all persons are guilty of Adam's sin. Death, the penalty for sin, has been transmitted from Adam to all humans; death is evidence of everyone's guilt. Thus, whereas in the Pelagian view God imputes neither a corrupted nature nor guilt to humanity, and in the Arminian view God imputes a corrupted nature but not guilt (in the sense of culpability), in the Calvinist scheme he imputes both a corrupted nature and guilt. The Calvinist position is based on a very serious and quite literal understanding of Paul's statements in Romans 5:12–19 that sin entered the world through Adam and death through that sin, and so death passed to all people because all sinned. Through one person's sin all became sinners.

A question arises concerning the nature of the connection or relationship between Adam and us, and thus also between Adam's first sin and our sinfulness. Numerous attempts have been made to answer this question. The two major approaches see the relationship in terms of federal headship and natural headship.

The approach that sees Adam's connection with us in terms of federal headship is generally related to the creationist view of the origin of the soul. This is the view that humans receive their physical nature by inheritance from their parents, but that the soul is specially created by God for each individual and united with the body at birth (or some other suitable moment). Thus, we were not present psychologically or spiritually in any of our ancestors, including Adam. Adam, however, was our representative. 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. Bound by the covenant

between God and Adam, we are treated as if we have actually and personally done what he as our representative did.

The other major approach sees Adam's connection with us in terms of a natural (or realistic) headship. This approach is related to the traducianist view of the origin of the soul, according to which we receive our souls by transmission from our parents, just as we do our physical natures. So we were present in germinal or seminal form in our ancestors; in a very real sense, we were there in Adam. His action was not merely that of one isolated individual but that of the entire human race. Thus, there is nothing unfair or improper about our receiving a corrupted nature and guilt from Adam, for we are receiving the just results of our sin. This is the view of Augustine. [15]

Original Sin: A Biblical and Contemporary Model

The key passage for constructing a biblical and contemporary model of original sin is Romans 5:12–19. Paul is arguing that death is the consequence of sin. Verse 12 is particularly determinative: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned." Whatever the exact meaning of these words is, Paul certainly is saying that death originated in the human race because of Adam's sin. He is also saying that death is universal and the cause of this is the universal sin of humankind. Later, however, he says that the cause of the death of all is the sin of the one man, Adam—"many died by the trespass of the one man" (v. 15); "by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man" (v. 17). The problem is how to relate the statements that the universality of death came through the sin of Adam to the statement that it came through the sin of all human beings.

It has been suggested that in the last clause of verse 12 Paul is speaking of the personal sin(s) of all. All of us sin individually and thereby incur through our own action the same personal guilt that Adam incurred through his action. The clause would then be rendered, "in this way death came to all, because each has sinned." In keeping with the principle of responsibility for one's personal actions and for them alone, the meaning would be that all

die because all are guilty, and all are guilty because each one has sinned on his or her own.

There are several problems with this interpretation. One is the word "sinned" in verse 12. Were this interpretation correct, the word would properly be "sin," the present tense, denoting something continually going on. Further, the sin referred to in "because all sinned" would be different from that referred to in "sin entered the world through one man," as well as from that referred to in verses 15 and 17. In addition, the latter two clauses would still need to be explained.

There is another way of understanding the final clause in verse 12, a way that avoids these problems and makes some sense out of verses 15 and 17. The Greek verb translated "sinned" is a simple aorist. This tense most commonly refers to a single past action. Had Paul intended to refer explicitly to a continued process of sin, the present and imperfect tenses were available to him. But he chose the aorist, and it should be taken at face value. Indeed, if we regard the sin of all humans and the sin of Adam as the same, the problems we have pointed to become considerably less complex. There is, then, no conflict between verse 12 and verses 15 and 17. Further, the potential problem presented by verse 14, where we read that "death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam," is resolved, for it is not imitation or repetition of Adam's sin, but participation in it, that counts.

The final clause in verse 12 tells us that we were involved in some way in Adam's sin; it was in some sense also our sin. But what is meant by this? On the one hand, it may be understood in terms of federal headship—Adam acted on behalf of all persons. There was a sort of contract between God and Adam as our representative, so that what Adam did binds us. On the other hand, our involvement in Adam's sin might better be understood in terms of natural headship. The position adopted in this volume is that the entirety of our human nature, both physical and spiritual, material and immaterial, has been received from our parents and more distant ancestors by way of descent from the first pair of humans. On that basis, we were actually present within Adam, so that we all sinned in his act. There is no injustice, then, to our condemnation and death as a result of original sin.

There is one additional problem here, however: the condition of infants and children. If the reasoning that precedes is correct, then all begin life with both the corrupted nature and the inherited guilt that are the

consequences of sin. Does this mean that, should these little ones die before making a conscious decision to "receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness" (v. 17), they are lost and condemned to eternal death?

While the status of infants and those who never reach moral competence is a difficult question, it appears that our Lord did not regard them as under condemnation. Indeed, he held them up as an example of the type of person who will inherit the kingdom of God (Matt. 18:3; 19:14). David had confidence that he would again see his child who had died (2 Sam. 12:23). On the basis of such considerations, it is difficult to maintain that children are to be thought of as sinful, condemned, and lost.

To summarize the major tenets of the doctrine as we have outlined it: We have argued that the Bible, particularly in the writings of Paul, maintains that because of Adam's sin all persons receive a corrupted nature and are guilty in God's sight as well. We have, further, espoused the Augustinian view (natural headship) of the imputation of original sin. We were all present in undifferentiated form in the person of Adam, who along with Eve was the entire human race. Thus, it was not merely Adam but humans who sinned. We were involved, although not personally, and are responsible for the sin. In addition, we have argued that the biblical teaching is that children are not under God's condemnation for this sin, at least not until attaining an age of responsibility in moral and spiritual matters. We must now ask whether the doctrine of original sin can be conceived of and expressed in a way that will somehow do justice to all of these factors.

We become responsible for and guilty of Adam's sin when we accept or approve of our own corrupt nature.

The parallelism Paul draws in Romans 5 between Adam and Christ in their relationship to us is impressive. A similar statement is found in 1 Corinthians 15:22: "As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." Paul asserts that in some parallel way, what each of them did has its influence on us (as Adam's sin leads to death, so Christ's act of righteousness leads to life). What is this parallel? If the condemnation and guilt of Adam are imputed to us without there being on our part any sort of

conscious choice of his act, the same would necessarily hold true of the imputation of Christ's righteousness and redeeming work. But does his death justify us simply by virtue of his identification with humanity through the incarnation and independently of whether we make a conscious and personal acceptance of his work? And do all humans have the grace of Christ imputed to them, just as all have Adam's sin imputed to them? The usual answer of evangelicals is no; there is abundant evidence that there are two classes of persons, the lost and the saved, and that only a decision to accept the work of Christ makes it effective in our lives. But if this is the case, then would not the imputation of guilt based on the action of Adam, albeit Adam as including us, require some sort of volitional choice as well? If there is no "unconscious faith," can there be "unconscious sin"? And what are we to say of infants who die? Despite having participated in that first sin, they are somehow accepted and saved. Although they have made no conscious choice of Christ's work (or of Adam's sin for that matter), the spiritual effects of the curse are negated in their case.

The current form of my understanding is as follows: We all were involved in Adam's sin, and thus receive both the corrupted nature that was his after the fall, and the guilt and condemnation that attach to his sin. With this matter of guilt, however, just as with the imputation of Christ's righteousness, there must be some conscious and voluntary decision on our part. Until this is the case, there is only a conditional imputation of guilt. Thus, there is no condemnation until one reaches the age of responsibility. If a child dies before becoming capable of making genuine moral decisions, the contingent imputation of Adamic sin does not become actual, and the child will experience the same type of future existence with the Lord as will those who have reached the age of moral responsibility and had their sins forgiven as a result of accepting the offer of salvation based on Christ's atoning death.

What is the nature of the voluntary decision that ends our childish innocence and constitutes a ratification of the first sin, the fall? One position on this question is that there is no final imputation of the first sin until we commit a sin of our own, thus ratifying Adam's sin. Unlike the Arminian view, this position holds that at the moment of our first sin we become guilty of both our own sin *and the original sin as well*. There is another position, however, that more fully preserves the parallelism between our accepting the work of Christ and the action of Adam, and at

the same time more clearly points out our responsibility for the first sin. We become responsible and guilty when we accept or approve of our corrupt nature. There is a time in the life of each one of us when we become aware of our own tendency toward sin. At that point we may abhor the sinful nature that has been there all the time. We would in that case repent of it and might even, if there is an awareness of the gospel, ask God for forgiveness and cleansing. At the very least there would be a rejection of our sinful makeup. But if we acquiesce in that sinful nature, we are in effect saying that it is good. By giving our tacit approval to the corruption, we are also approving or concurring in the action in the Garden of Eden so long ago. We become guilty of that sin without having committed any sin of our own. This view seems to fit best the various factors in the biblical presentation of the doctrine of original sin.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What similarities and differences do you perceive between the Old and New Testament teachings on the extensiveness of sin?
- What precisely is meant by total depravity?
- What is Pelagianism, and how would you argue against this position? How does this position reflect the point of view of many persons in contemporary culture?
- How would you compare and contrast Arminianism and Calvinism?
- How do you feel about being a sinner as a result of your involvement in Adam's sin? Does the model offered by the author ease some of the difficulties it raises?

The Person and Work of Christ

The Deity of Christ

Chapter Objectives

At the conclusion of this chapter, you should be able to achieve the following:

- 1. Demonstrate a full understanding of the deity of Jesus Christ and the importance it has for the Christian faith.
- 2. Identify and explain the biblical teaching regarding the deity of Christ.
- **3.** Recognize and describe Ebionism and Arianism, two views about Jesus Christ, and how they deviate from the historical and biblical understanding of his deity.
- **4.** Formulate implications concerning the deity of Christ for the purpose of developing a balanced Christology.

Chapter Summary

The deity of Christ sits at the pinnacle of controversy and belief concerning the Christian faith. Heretical views, such as those of the Ebionites and the Arians, have portrayed Christ as a unique human not possessing a divine nature. Relevant biblical passages clearly indicate that this is not the case. The deity of Christ has real value to the believer concerning knowledge of God, new life, personal relationship with God, and the ability to worship Christ for who he is.

Chapter Outline

The Biblical Teaching

- Jesus's Self-Consciousness
- The Gospel of John
- Hebrews
- Paul
- The Term "Lord"
- The Evidence of the Resurrection

Historical Departures from Belief in the Full Deity of Christ

- Ebionism
- Arianism

Functional Christology

<u>Implications of the Deity of Christ</u>

We have seen that humans were created to love, serve, and fellowship with God. We have also seen that they fail to fulfill this divine intention; in other words, all humans sin. Because God loved us, however, he chose to act through Christ to restore us to the intended condition and relationship. Thus, our understanding of the person and work of Christ grows directly out of the doctrines of humanity and of sin.

One of the most controversial and yet crucial topics of Christian theology is the deity of Christ. It lies at the heart of our faith; for our faith rests on Jesus's actually being God in human flesh, and not simply an extraordinary human, even the most unusual person who ever lived.

During the history of the church, different challenges to Jesus's deity have arisen, with Islam recently having become an aggressive challenger. Islam maintains that Jesus was one of the great prophets, that he did not die on the cross, someone else taking his place there, and was not raised from the dead. While the larger issue of the proper authority divides Islam and orthodox Christianity, it is important to understand clearly what the Bible teaches about Jesus.

The Biblical Teaching

As with other doctrines, our primary source is the witness of Scripture. Here we find a wide variety of material and emphases, but not a divergence of opinion. While it is not possible to investigate every reference that bears on this consideration, we may at least sample the data.

Jesus's Self-Consciousness

In looking at the biblical evidence for the deity of Christ, we begin with Jesus's own self-consciousness. What did Jesus think and believe about himself? Some have argued that Jesus did not himself make any claim to be God. His message was entirely about the Father, not about himself. We are therefore called to believe *with* Jesus, not *in* Jesus.[1] It is true that Jesus did not make an explicit and overt claim to deity. He did not say in so many words, "I am God." What we do find, however, are claims that would be inappropriate if made by someone who is less than God. For example, Jesus said that he would send "his angels" (Matt. 13:41); elsewhere they are

spoken of as "the angels of God" (Luke 12:8–9; 15:10). That reference is particularly significant, for he spoke not only of the angels but also of the kingdom as his.

More significant yet are the prerogatives Jesus claimed. In particular, his claim to forgive sins resulted in a charge of blasphemy against him. When the paralytic was lowered through the roof by his four friends, Jesus's initial comment was, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). The reaction of the scribes indicates the meaning they attached to his words: "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (v. 7). Robert Stein notes that their reaction shows that they interpreted Jesus's comment "as the exercising of a divine prerogative, the power to actually forgive sins."[2] Jesus claimed other prerogatives as well. In Matthew 25:31–46 he speaks of judging the world. He will sit on his glorious throne and divide the sheep from the goats. Certainly this is a power only God can exercise.

The authority Jesus claimed and exercised is also clearly seen with respect to the Sabbath. God had established the sacredness of the Sabbath (Exod. 20:8–11). Only God could abrogate or modify this regulation. Yet consider what happened when Jesus's disciples picked heads of grain on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees objected that the Sabbath regulations (at least their version of them) were being violated. Jesus responded by pointing out that David had violated one of the laws by eating of the bread reserved for the priests. Then, turning directly to the situation at hand, Jesus asserted: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27–28). He was clearly claiming the right to redefine the status of the Sabbath, a right that belongs only to someone virtually equal to God.

We see Jesus also claiming an unusual relationship with the Father, particularly in the sayings reported in John. For example, he claims to be one with the Father (John 10:30), and that to see and know him is to see and know the Father (John 14:7–9). There is a claim to preexistence in his statement in John 8:58, "'Very truly I tell you,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!'" Note that rather than saying, "I was," he says, "I am." Leon Morris suggests that there is an implied contrast here between "a mode of being which has a definite beginning" and "one which is eternal."[3] It is also quite possible that Jesus is alluding to the "I AM formula" by which the Lord identified himself in Exodus 3:14–15; for in

this case, as in Exodus, the "I am" is a formula denoting existence. While some of Jesus's statements may seem rather vague to us, there is no doubt as to how his opponents interpreted them. The Jews' immediate reaction to Jesus's claim that he existed before Abraham was to take up stones to throw at him (John 8:59). Certainly this is an indication that they thought him guilty of blasphemy, for stoning was the prescription for blasphemy (Lev. 24:16). If they attempted to stone him merely because they were angered by his unfavorable references to them, they would, in the eyes of the law, have been guilty of attempted murder.

In some respects, the clearest indication of Jesus's self-understanding is found in connection with his trial and condemnation. The charge, according to John's account, was that "he claimed to be the Son of God" (John 19:7). Matthew reports the high priest to have said at the trial, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:63). "'You have said so,' Jesus replied. 'But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (v. 64). This is as clear a declaration of his deity as one can find in the Gospels.

Not only did Jesus not dispute the charge that he claimed to be God, but he also accepted his disciples' attribution of deity to him. The clearest case of this is his response to Thomas's statement, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Here was an excellent opportunity to correct a misconception, if that is what it was, but Jesus did not do so.

There are additional indications of Jesus's self-estimation. One is the way he juxtaposes his own words with the Old Testament, the Scripture of his time. Time and again he says, "You have heard that it was said, . . . But I tell you . . ." (e.g., Matt. 5:21–22, 27–28). Here Jesus presumes to place his word on the same level as Old Testament Scripture. Jesus is claiming to have the power in himself to lay down teaching as authoritative as that given by the Old Testament prophets.

Jesus also, by implication, direct statement, and deed, claims power over life and death. In John 5:21 he asserts, "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it." Perhaps the most emphatic statement is found in his words to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die" (John 11:25).

Jesus specifically applied to himself expressions that conveyed his selfunderstanding. One of these is "Son of God." While the title is capable of various different meanings, Jesus "poured into it a new content to describe His own unique person and relationship to God."[4] It signified that Jesus had a relationship to the Father distinct from that of any other human. The Jews understood that Jesus was thereby claiming a unique sonship differing "not merely quantitatively but qualitatively, not merely in degree but in kind."[5] We read in John 5:2–18, for example, that they reacted with great hostility when, in defense of his having healed on the Sabbath, Jesus linked his work with that of the Father. As John explains, "For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (v. 18). From all of the foregoing, it seems difficult, except on the basis of a certain type of critical presupposition, to escape the conclusion that Jesus understood himself as equal with the Father and as possessing the right to do things that only God has the right to do.

Jesus understood himself as equal with the Father and as possessing the right to do things that only God has the right to do.

The Gospel of John

When we examine the whole of the New Testament, we find that what its writers say about Jesus is thoroughly consistent with his own self-understanding and claims about himself. The Gospel of John is, of course, noted for its references to Jesus's deity. The prologue particularly expresses this idea. John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He has both identified the Word as divine and distinguished the Word from God. He is not describing a simple monotheism or a modalistic monarchianism here. The remainder of the Gospel supports and amplifies the thrust of the prologue.

Hebrews

The book of Hebrews is also very emphatic regarding Jesus's divinity. In the opening chapter the author speaks of the Son as the radiance of the glory of God and the exact representation of his nature (Heb. 1:3). This Son, through whom God created the world (v. 2), also upholds (or carries) all things by his word of power (v. 3). In verse 8, which is a quotation of Psalm 45:6, the Son is addressed as "God." The argument here is that the Son is superior to angels (1:4–2:9), Moses (3:1–6), and the high priests (4:14–5:10). He is superior for he is not merely a human or an angel but something higher—namely, God.

Paul

Paul frequently witnesses to Jesus's deity. In Colossians 1:15–20 Paul writes that the Son is the image of the invisible God (v. 15); he is the one in whom and through whom and for whom all things hold together (v. 17). In verse 19 Paul brings this line of argument to a conclusion: "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him." In Colossians 2:9 he states a very similar idea: "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."

Paul also confirms some of the claims Jesus had made earlier. In the Old Testament judgment is ascribed to God. Although Paul on occasion refers to the judgment of God (e.g., Rom. 2:3), he also speaks of "Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead" (2 Tim. 4:1) and of "the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10).

Philippians 2:5–11, a passage discussed earlier (see pp. 109–10), is a clear assertion of the deity of Christ Jesus. It speaks of him as being or existing in the "form" ($morph\bar{e}$) of God (v. 6). In biblical and classical Greek this term refers to "the whole set of characteristics that makes something what it is." The whole passage, as Reginald Fuller maintains, presents a "threefold christological pattern": Jesus, being God, emptied himself, became human, and then was again exalted to the status of deity or of equality with the Father.[6]

The Term "Lord"

There is a more general type of argument for the deity of Christ. The New Testament writers ascribe the term *kyrios* ("Lord") to Jesus, particularly in his risen and ascended state. While the term can most certainly be used without any high christological connotations, several considerations argue that the term signifies divinity when it is applied to Jesus. First, in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament)

kyrios is the usual translation of the name *Jehovah* and of the reverential 'adonai which was ordinarily substituted for it. Further, several New Testament references to Jesus as "Lord" are quotations of Old Testament texts employing one of the Hebrew names for God (e.g., Acts 2:20–21 and Rom. 10:13 [cf. Joel 2:31–32]; 1 Pet. 3:15 [cf. Isa. 8:13]). These references make it clear that the apostles meant to give Jesus the title "Lord" in its highest sense. Finally, *kyrios* is used in the New Testament to designate both God the Father, the sovereign God (e.g., Matt. 1:20; 9:38; 11:25; Acts 17:24; Rev. 4:11), and Jesus (e.g., Luke 2:11; John 20:28; Acts 10:36; 1 Cor. 2:8; Phil. 2:11; James 2:1; Rev. 19:16). William Childs Robinson comments that when Jesus "is addressed as the exalted Lord, he is so identified with God that there is ambiguity in some passages as to whether the Father or the Son is meant (e.g., Acts 1:24; 2:47; 8:39; 9:31; 11:21; 13:10–12; 16:14; 20:19; 21:14; cf. 18:26; Rom. 14:11)."[7] For the Jews particularly, the term *kyrios* suggested that Christ was equal with the Father.

The Evidence of the Resurrection

To some, the approach we have been taking in our effort to demonstrate Jesus's deity may appear uncritical, using the Bible without taking into consideration the findings of the more radical methods of biblical investigation. There is, however, another way to establish Jesus's deity, a way that will not enmesh us in contesting critical issues point for point. We turn to the Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, especially as it is developed in his book *Jesus—God and Man.*[8] The trend in recent years, both among evangelical and nonevangelical scholars, has been to conclude on purely historical grounds the probability of Jesus's resurrection having occurred.[9] Pannenberg follows this same path but goes on to show how the fact of Jesus's resurrection argues for his deity. Pannenberg's argument can be understood only in light of his view of revelation and of history. To Pannenberg, the whole of history is revelatory. Thus, revelation can be said to have fully taken place only when history has run its course, because only then can we see where it has been going. One would therefore expect that history has no revelatory value for us now since we have only incomplete parts, like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The resurrection, however, because it is the end of history, having taken place proleptically, does give us revelation, even within time. [10]

Pannenberg holds that the resurrection must be understood from the viewpoint of the historical traditions of which it is a part. Whereas it has become commonplace to regard an event as a constant and its interpretation as a variable changing with time, he unites the two. The meaning of an event is the meaning attached to it by the persons into whose history it comes. Pannenberg points out that, to Jews of Jesus's time, his resurrection would have signified divinity. As evidence for Jesus's resurrection, Pannenberg points to the emergence of Christianity, which Paul traced back to the appearances of the resurrected Christ. If the emergence of Christianity can be understood "only if one examines it in the light of the eschatological hope for a resurrection from the dead, then that which is so designated is a historical event, even if we do not know anything more particular about it." [11]

Pannenberg agrees with Paul Althaus that the proclamation of the resurrection in Jerusalem so soon after Jesus's death is very significant. Within the earliest Christian community there must have been a reliable testimony to the empty tomb. Pannenberg also observes that in the Jewish polemic against the Christian message of Jesus's resurrection, there is no claim at all that Jesus's grave was not empty.[12] Therefore, we have adequate evidence to establish the historicity of the resurrection, which is proof in itself of Jesus's deity.[13]

Historical Departures from Belief in the Full Deity of Christ

As the church struggled to understand who and what Jesus is, and particularly how he is related to the Father, some deviant interpretations arose.

Ebionism

The Ebionites, a sect of heretical Jewish Christians, denied the real or ontological deity of Jesus. Jesus was, according to the Ebionites, an ordinary human possessing unusual but not superhuman or supernatural gifts of righteousness and wisdom. They rejected the virgin birth, maintaining that Jesus was born to Joseph and Mary in normal fashion. [14] At the baptism, the Christ descended on Jesus in the form of a dove. This was understood more as the presence of God's power and influence in the

man Jesus than as a personal, metaphysical reality. Near the end of Jesus's life, the Christ withdrew from him. Thus Jesus was primarily a human, albeit a human in whom, at least for a time, the power of God was present and active to an unusual degree.

The Ebionite view of Jesus had the virtue of resolving the tension between belief in the deity of Jesus and the monotheistic view of God but at a high price. Ebionism had to ignore or deny a large body of scriptural material: all of the references to the preexistence, the virgin birth, and the qualitatively unique status and function of Jesus. In the view of the church, this was far too great a concession.

Arianism

The teaching of an Alexandrian presbyter named Arius became the first major threat to the views implicitly held by the church regarding Jesus's deity. Although condemned by the church at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and at subsequent councils, Arianism lingers on to our day in various forms, most notably in the movement known as Jehovah's Witnesses.

A central conception in the Arian understanding of Jesus is the absolute uniqueness and transcendence of God.[15] God is the one source of all things, the only uncreated existent in the whole universe. He alone possesses the attributes of deity. Everything other than God has come into being through an act of creation by which he called it into existence out of nothing. The Father alone is uncreated and eternal. The Word is therefore a created being, although the first and highest of the beings. While the Word is a perfect creature, not really in the same class with the other creatures, he is not self-existent.

The Arians based their view on a rather extensive collection of biblical references.[16] These include texts that seem to imply that Christ is inferior to the Father (e.g., John 14:28, where Jesus says, "The Father is greater than I") and texts that attribute to the Son such imperfections as weakness, ignorance, and suffering (e.g., Mark 13:32: "About that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father"). Somewhat less extreme were the semi-Arians, who stressed the similarity rather than the dissimilarity between the Word and the Father. They were willing to say that the Word is similar in nature (or essence) to the Father (homoiousios), but not that he is of the same essence as the Father (homoousios).

There are two major responses to Arian theology. One is to note that the types of evidence appealed to earlier in this chapter in substantiating the deity of Christ are either ignored or inadequately treated by the Arians. The other is to take a closer look at the passages that have been appealed to in support of the Arian view. In general, it must be said that the Arians have misconstrued various biblical statements referring to the Son's subordination during his incarnation. Descriptions of his temporary functional subordination to the Father have been misinterpreted as statements about the Son's essence.

To know the love, the holiness, the power of God, we need only look at Christ.

Functional Christology

Not all modifications of the doctrine of the full deity of Jesus are found in the first centuries of the history of the church. One of the interesting christological developments of the late twentieth century was the rise of "functional Christology." By this is meant an emphasis on what Jesus did rather than on what he is. Basically, functional Christology claims to work on the basis of purely New Testament grounds rather than the more metaphysical or speculative categories of a later period of reflection, which are viewed as rooted in Greek thought. [17] However, because functional Christology overlooks some features of the biblical witness and distorts others, it is not an adequate Christology for today. It is questionable whether, as functional Christologists claim, the New Testament puts far more stress on Jesus's function or work than on his person or nature. Ontological concepts are implicit if not explicit in the New Testament. For any Christology to be fully adequate, it must address and integrate both ontological and functional matters.

Implications of the Deity of Christ

There are several significant implications of the doctrine of Christ's deity:

- 1. We can have real knowledge of God. Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Whereas the prophets came bearing a message from God, Jesus *was* God. If we would know what the love of God, the holiness of God, the power of God are like, we need only look at Christ.
- 2. Redemption is available to us. The death of Christ is sufficient for all sinners who have ever lived, for it was not merely a finite human, but an infinite God who died. He—the Life, the Giver and Sustainer of life, who did not have to die—died.
- 3. God and humanity have been reunited. It was not an angel or a human who came from God to the human race, but God himself crossed the chasm created by sin.
- 4. Worship of Christ is appropriate. He is not merely the highest of the creatures, but he is God in the same sense and to the same degree as the Father. He is as deserving of our praise, adoration, and obedience as is the Father.

One day everyone will recognize who and what Jesus is. Those who believe in the deity of Christ already recognize who he is and act accordingly:

Beautiful Savior!

Lord of the nations!

Son of God and Son of Man!

Glory and honor,

Praise, adoration.

Now and forevermore be Thine!

("Beautiful Savior," 1677)

Questions for Review and Reflection

- Why is the deity of Christ so important to the Christian faith? Use biblical references to support your answer.
- What did Jesus say that would support his divinity?
- What views have developed that diminish the deity of Christ, and are they still being taught today?

- What implications may be drawn concerning the deity of Christ?
- In what ways are these implications important to your Christian faith?

The Humanity of Christ

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Assess the importance of the doctrine of the humanity of Christ.
- 2. Probe the biblical material for physical, emotional, and intellectual evidence for the humanity of Christ.
- **3.** Understand the early church heresies of Docetism and Apollinarianism, which denied or limited the humanity of Christ.
- **4.** Identify and describe the biblical evidence for and theological significance of the virgin birth.
- **5.** Examine and affirm the sinlessness of Jesus.
- **6.** Assess six implications of the humanity of Jesus.

Chapter Summary

While the doctrine of the humanity of Christ is less controversial than the doctrine of his divinity, there have been several views that deny or diminish his humanity. The virgin birth, through which Jesus took on human form, is significant as evidence of the supernaturalness of Christ. The issue of the sinlessness of Jesus creates a special problem. Some maintain that Jesus could not have been human if he did not sin. This conclusion does not follow. Accepting the full humanity of Jesus leads to several implications.

Chapter Outline

The Importance of the Humanity of Christ

The Biblical Evidence

- Physical Human Nature
- Psychological Human Nature

Early Heresies regarding the Humanity of Jesus

- Docetism
- Apollinarianism

The Virgin Birth

- Biblical Evidence
- The Theological Significance

The Sinlessness of Jesus

<u>Implications of the Humanity of Jesus</u>

The topic of the humanity of Jesus Christ does not, in some ways, arouse quite the attention and controversy that his deity does. It seems on first glance to be something of a self-evident matter, for whatever Jesus was, he most surely must have been human. In the twentieth century Jesus's humanity did not receive the close and extensive attention paid to his deity, which was a major topic of dispute between fundamentalists and modernists. For what is not disputed tends not to be discussed, at least not in as much depth as are major controversies. Yet, historically, the topic of Jesus's humanity has played at least as important a role in theological dialogue as has his deity, particularly in the earliest years of the church. And in practical terms, it has in some ways posed a greater danger to orthodox theology.

The Importance of the Humanity of Christ

The importance of Jesus's humanity cannot be overestimated, for the issue in the incarnation pertains to our salvation. The human problem is the gap between us and God. The gap is, to be sure, ontological. God is far superior to humans, so much so that he cannot be known by unaided human reason. If he is to be known, God must take some initiative to make himself known to humanity. But the problem is not merely ontological; there also is a spiritual and moral gap between the two, a gap created by humans' sin. Humans cannot by their own moral effort counter sin in order to elevate themselves to the level of God. If there is to be fellowship between the two, they have to be united in some other way. This, it is traditionally understood, has been accomplished by the incarnation, in which deity and humanity were united in one person. If, however, Jesus was not really one of us, humanity has not been united with deity and we cannot be saved. The validity of the work accomplished in Christ's death, or at least its applicability to us as humans, depends on the reality of his humanity, just as its efficacy depends on the genuineness of his deity.

Furthermore, Jesus's intercessory ministry depends on his humanity. If he was truly one of us, experiencing all of the human temptations and trials, then he is able to understand and empathize with us in our struggles as humans. However, if he was not human, or only incompletely human, he

cannot really intercede as a priest must on behalf of those whom he represents.

The Biblical Evidence

Physical Human Nature

There is ample biblical evidence that Jesus was a fully human person, not lacking any of the essential elements of humanity that constitute each of us. First, he had a fully human body. He was born. He did not descend from heaven and suddenly appear on earth, but was conceived in the womb of a human mother and nourished prenatally like any other child. Although his conception was unique in not involving a male human, the process from that point on was apparently identical to what every human fetus experiences. Jesus also had a typical family tree, as is indicated by the genealogies in Matthew and Luke. He had ancestors and presumably received genes from them, just as every other human receives genes from his or her forebears.

Not only Jesus's birth but also his life indicate that he had a physical human nature. We are told that he grew "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). He grew physically, nourished by food and water. He did not have unlimited physical strength. Yet his body may have been more nearly perfect in some respects than ours, because there was in him none of the sin that affects health. Jesus had the same physiology and the same physical limitations as other humans. He experienced hunger (Matt. 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), and fatigue (John 4:6). Finally, Jesus suffered physically and died, just like everyone else. This is evident in the entire crucifixion story, but perhaps most clear in John 19:34, where we read that a spear was thrust into his side, and water and blood mingled came out, indicating that he had already died. Surely he had felt physical suffering (as genuinely as would you or I) when he was beaten, the crown of thorns was placed on his head, and the nails were driven through his hands (or wrists) and feet.

Further, we note that Jesus used of himself terminology denoting humanity. A clear statement is found in John 8:40, where Jesus says to the Jews, "You are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God." Others also use such language in reference to

Jesus. Paul, in his argument regarding original sin, compares Jesus and Adam and uses the expression "one man" of Jesus three times (Rom. 5:15, 17, 19). We find a similar thought and expression in 1 Corinthians 15:21, 47–49.

Scripture also refers to Christ's taking on flesh—that is, becoming human. John wrote, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). John was particularly emphatic on this matter in his first letter, one of the purposes of which was to combat a heresy that denied that Jesus had been genuinely human: "Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God" (1 John 4:2–3).

In addition to a physical nature, Jesus had the same sort of emotional and intellectual qualities found in other humans—he thought, reasoned, and experienced the full gamut of human feelings.

Jesus's contemporaries had a genuine physical perception of him, indicating that he had a physical body. John puts it vividly in 1 John 1:1: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life." John is here establishing the reality of the human nature of Jesus. He actually heard, saw, and touched Jesus. Touch was thought by the Greeks to be the most basic and most reliable of the senses, for it is a direct perception—no medium intervenes between the perceiver and the object perceived. Thus, when John speaks of what "our hands have touched," he is emphasizing just how thoroughly physical the manifestation of Jesus was.

<u>Psychological Human Nature</u>

If Jesus was a true human being physically, he was also fully and genuinely human psychologically. Scripture attributes to him the same sort of emotional and intellectual qualities found in other humans. He thought, reasoned, and felt the full gamut of human emotions. He loved, of course. One of his disciples is referred to as the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (John

13:23). Jesus had compassion or pity on those who were hungry, ill, or lost (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34). The Greek word used here to denote his reaction literally means "to be moved in one's internal or visceral organs." Jesus was stirred by human predicaments. He could be sorrowful and troubled, as he was just before his betrayal and crucifixion (Matt. 26:37). He also experienced joy (John 15:11; 17:13; Heb. 12:2). He could be angry, he grieved with people (Mark 3:5), and he was even indignant (Mark 10:14).

Some of these emotions, of course, do not in themselves prove that Jesus was human, for God certainly feels love and compassion, as we observed in our discussion of his nature, as well as anger and indignation toward sin. Some of Jesus's reactions, however, are uniquely human. For example, he shows astonishment in response to both positive and negative situations. He marvels at the faith of the centurion (Luke 7:9) and the unbelief of the residents of Nazareth (Mark 6:6). Instructive as well are the references to Jesus's being troubled. Here we see his peculiarly human reaction to a variety of situations, especially his sense of the death to which he had to go. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he was obviously in struggle and in stress, and apparently did not want to be left alone (Mark 14:32–42). On the cross, his outcry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34), was a very human expression of loneliness.

One of Jesus's most human reactions occurred at the death of Lazarus. Seeing Mary and her companions weeping, Jesus "was deeply moved in spirit and troubled" (John 11:33); he wept (v. 35); at the tomb he was "once more deeply moved" (v. 38). The description here is vivid, for to depict Jesus's groaning in the spirit, John chose a term that is used of horses snorting. Jesus possessed a human nature capable of feeling sorrow and remorse as deeply as we do.

When we turn to the subject of Jesus's intellectual qualities, we find that he had some rather remarkable knowledge. He knew the past, present, and future to a degree not available to ordinary human beings. For example, he knew the thoughts of both his friends (Luke 9:47) and his enemies (Luke 6:8). He knew that the Samaritan woman had had five husbands and was presently living with a man to whom she was not married (John 4:18). He knew that Lazarus was already dead (John 11:14).

Yet this knowledge was not without limits. Jesus frequently asked questions, and the impression given by the Gospels is that he asked because he did not know. Of course, some persons, particularly teachers, ask questions the answers to which they already know. But Jesus seemed to ask because he needed information he did not possess.[1] For example, he asked the father of the epileptic boy, "How long has he been like this?" (Mark 9:21). Apparently Jesus lacked this information necessary for the proper cure.

The biblical witness goes even further. In at least one case Jesus expressly declared that he did not know a particular matter. In discussing the second coming, he said, "About that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32). We must note also the "human religious life" of Jesus. While that may sound strange and perhaps even a bit blasphemous to some, it is nonetheless accurate. He attended worship in the synagogue, and did so on a regular or habitual basis (Luke 4:16). His prayer life was a clear indication of human dependence on the Father. Jesus prayed regularly. At times he prayed at great length and with great intensity, as in the Garden of Gethsemane. Before the important step of choosing his twelve disciples, Jesus prayed all night (Luke 6:12). Jesus felt himself dependent on the Father for guidance, for strength, and for preservation from evil.

It is apparent, then, that for the disciples and the authors of the New Testament books, there was no question about Jesus's humanity. The point was not really argued, for it was scarcely disputed (with the exception of the situation to which 1 John was addressed). Those closest to Jesus, who lived with him every day, regarded him as being as fully human as themselves. They were able to verify for themselves that he was human; and when, on one occasion after Jesus's resurrection, there was some question whether he might be a spirit, he invited them to ascertain the genuineness of his humanity for themselves: "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Luke 24:39). He did everything they did, except sin and pray for forgiveness. He ate with them, he bled, he slept, he cried. If Jesus was not human, then surely no one ever has been.

Early Heresies regarding the Humanity of Jesus

Early in the life of the church, however, there came several departures from the understanding of Jesus as fully human. We see such a denial of the reality of Jesus's humanity already in the situation John's first letter vigorously opposed. In addition to a specific group of Christians known as docetists, a basic denial of Jesus's humanity permeated many other movements within Christianity, including gnosticism and Marcionism.[2]

Docetism takes its name from the Greek verb *dokeō*, which means "to seem or appear." Its central thesis is that Jesus only seemed to be human. God could not really have become material, since all matter is evil, and he is perfectly pure and holy. The transcendent God could not possibly have united with such a corrupting influence. Being impassible and unchangeable, God could not have undergone the modifications in his nature that would necessarily have occurred with a genuine incarnation. He could not have exposed himself to the experiences of human life. Jesus's humanity, his physical nature, was simply an illusion, not a reality. Jesus was more like a ghost, an apparition, than a human being.[3]

This particular Christology resolved the tension in the idea that deity and humanity were united in one person. It did so by saying that while the deity was real and complete, the humanity was only appearance. But the church recognized that this solution had been achieved at too great a price: the loss of Jesus's humanity and thus of any real connection between him and us. It is difficult today to find pure instances of Docetism, although docetic tendencies occur in varied schemes of thought.

Apollinarianism

Apollinarius, a fourth-century bishop from Syria, was very concerned to maintain the unity of the Son, Jesus Christ. Now if Jesus had two complete natures, reasoned Apollinarius, he must have had a human *nous* ("soul, mind, reason") as well as a divine *nous*. Apollinarius thought this duality absurd. So he constructed a Christology based on an extremely narrow reading of John 1:14 ("the Word became flesh"; i.e., flesh was the only aspect of human nature involved).[4] According to Apollinarius, Jesus was a compound unity: part of the composite (some elements of Jesus) was human, the rest divine. What he (the Word) took was not the whole of humanity but only flesh—that is, the body. This flesh could not, however, be animated by itself. There had to be a "spark of life" animating it. This was the divine Logos; it took the place of the human soul. Thus Jesus was

human physically but not psychologically. He had a human body but not a human soul. His soul was divine. [5]

Therefore, Jesus, although human, was a bit different from other humans. Jesus did not have a human will. Consequently, he could not sin, for his person was fully controlled by his divine soul.[6] Loraine Boettner draws the analogy of a human mind implanted into the body of a lion: the resulting being is governed not by lion or animal psychology but by human psychology. That is a rough parallel to the Apollinarian view of the person of Jesus.[7]

Apollinarianism proved to be an ingenious but unacceptable solution to the problem. The dual nature of Jesus tended to become one nature in practice, the divine soul swallowing up the human. Consequently, the Apollinarian doctrine was condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 381.

The Virgin Birth

Next to the resurrection, the most debated and controversial event of Jesus's life is the virgin birth, the means through which Christ took on human form. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the virgin birth was at the forefront of debate between the fundamentalists and modernists. The fundamentalists insisted on the doctrine as an essential belief. The modernists either rejected it as unessential or untenable, or reinterpreted it in some nonliteral fashion. To the former it was a guarantee of the qualitative uniqueness and deity of Christ, while to the latter it seemed to shift attention from his spiritual reality to a biological issue.[8]

What we are speaking of here is really the "virgin conception." By this we mean that Jesus's conception in the womb of Mary was not the result of sexual relationship. Mary was a virgin at the time of Jesus's conception and continued so up to the point of his birth, for the Scripture indicates that Joseph did not have sexual intercourse with her until after the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:25). Mary became pregnant through a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon her, but that does not mean that Jesus was the result of copulation between God and Mary. It also does not mean that there was not a normal birth.

Biblical Evidence

The doctrine of the virgin birth is based on just two explicit biblical references—Matthew 1:18–25 and Luke 1:26–38. There are other passages in the New Testament that some have argued refer to or at least allude to or presuppose the virgin birth, and there is the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, which is cited by Matthew (1:23). But even when these passages are taken into consideration, the number of relevant references is quite few. That the Bible affirms the virgin birth not once but twice, however, is sufficient proof. Since we believe that the Bible is inspired and authoritative, Matthew 1 and Luke 1 convince us that the virgin birth is fact.

The Theological Significance

There are disagreements as to the importance of the virgin birth, even among those who insist that belief in the doctrine must be maintained. On one level, of course, the virgin birth is important simply because we are told that it occurred. Whether or not we can see a necessity for the virgin birth, if the Bible tells us that it happened, it is important to believe that it did; not to do so is a tacit repudiation of the authority of the Bible. But, we must ask, is not the virgin birth important in some more specific way?

Some have argued that the doctrine is indispensable to the incarnation. Without the virgin birth there would have been no union of God and man. [9] If Jesus had simply been the product of a normal sexual union of man and woman, he would have been only a human, not the God-man. But is this really true? Could he not have been God and man if he had had two human parents, or none? Just as Adam was created directly by God, so Jesus could also have been a direct special creation. And accordingly, it should have been possible for Jesus to have two human parents and to be fully the God-man nonetheless. What God did, however, was to supply, by a special creation, both the human component ordinarily contributed by the male (and thus we have the virgin birth) and, in addition, a divine factor (and thus we have the incarnation). The virgin birth requires only that a normal human was brought into existence without a human male parent. This could have occurred without an incarnation, and there could have been an incarnation without a virgin birth. The point here is that Jesus's being both divine and human did not depend on the virgin birth.

A second suggestion frequently made is that the virgin birth was indispensable to the sinlessness of Jesus.[10] If he had possessed both that

which the mother contributes and what the father ordinarily contributes, he would have had a depraved and hence sinful nature, like the rest of us. But this argument seems to suggest that we too would be sinless if we did not have a male parent. And this in turn would mean one of two things: either (1) the father, not the mother, is the source of depravity, a notion that in effect implies that women do not have a depraved nature (or if they do, they do not transmit it), or (2) depravity comes not from the nature of our parents but from the sexual act by which reproduction takes place. But there is nothing in the Scripture to support the latter alternative. The statement in Psalm 51:5—"Surely I was sinful at birth, / sinful from the time my mother conceived me"—simply means that the psalmist was sinful from the very beginning of life. It does not mean that the act of conception is sinful in and of itself.

We are left, then, with the former alternative, namely, that the transmission of sin is related to the father. But this has no scriptural grounding either. While some support might be found in Paul's statement that it was the sin of *Adam* (Rom. 5:12) that made all humans sinners, Paul also indicates that Eve, not Adam, "was the [one] who was deceived and became a sinner" (1 Tim. 2:14). There are no signs of greater sinfulness among men than among women.

The question arises: If the entire human race is tainted by original sin, would not Mary have contributed some of its consequences to Jesus? It has been argued that Jesus did have a depraved nature but that he committed no *actual* sin.[11] We would point out in reply that the angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). It seems likely that the influence of the Holy Spirit was so powerful and sanctifying in its effect that there was no conveyance of depravity or of guilt from Mary to Jesus. Without that special sanctifying influence, he would have possessed the same depraved nature all of us have. Now if the Holy Spirit prevented corruption from being passed from Mary to Jesus, could he not have prevented it from being passed on by Joseph as well? We conclude that Jesus's sinlessness was not dependent on the virginal conception.

A third suggestion is that while the virgin birth was not essential to the incarnation or the sinlessness of Christ, it has great value in terms of symbolizing the reality of the incarnation. [12] It is an evidential factor, in

much the same way the other miracles and particularly the resurrection function to certify the supernaturalness of Christ. On this basis, the virgin birth was not necessary ontologically; that is, the virgin birth was not necessary for Jesus to be God. It is, however, necessary epistemologically, that is, in order for us to know that he is God.

Support for this third suggestion lies in the fact that the virgin birth is not mentioned in the evangelistic sermons in the book of Acts. It may well be, then, that it is not one of the primary doctrines (i.e., indispensable to salvation). It is a subsidiary or supporting doctrine; it helps to create or sustain belief in the indispensable doctrines, or reinforces truths found in other doctrines.

- 1. The doctrine of the virgin birth is a reminder that our salvation is supernatural. John stated that those who believe and receive authority to become children of God are born "not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:13). The emphasis is that salvation does not come through human effort, nor is it a human accomplishment. So also the virgin birth points to the helplessness of humans to initiate even the first step in the process. Not only is humanity unable to secure its own salvation, but it could not even introduce the Savior into its society.
- 2. The virgin birth is also a reminder that God's salvation is fully a gift of grace. There was nothing particularly deserving about Mary. Certainly Mary manifested qualities that God could use, such as faith and dedication (Luke 1:38, 46–55). But she really had nothing special to offer, not even a husband. That someone who thus could not have a child on her own should be chosen to bear God's Son is a reminder that salvation is not a human accomplishment but a gift from God, and an undeserved one at that.
- 3. The virgin birth is evidence of the uniqueness of Jesus the Savior. Although there could have been an incarnation without a virgin birth, the miraculous nature of the birth (or at least the conception) serves to show that Jesus was, at the very least, a highly unusual human singled out by God in particular ways.
- 4. Here is another evidence of God's power and sovereignty over nature. On several occasions (e.g., the births of Isaac, Samuel, and John the Baptist), God had provided a child when the mother was barren or past the age of childbearing. Surely these were miraculous births. Even more amazing, however, was this birth. That God was able to work the seemingly

impossible in the matter of the virgin birth symbolizes his ability to accomplish the seemingly impossible task of granting a new birth to sinners. As Jesus himself said in regard to salvation: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

The Sinlessness of Jesus

One further important issue concerning Jesus's humanity is the question of whether he sinned or, indeed, whether he could have sinned. The Bible is quite clear that he did not sin. The writer to the Hebrews says that Jesus "has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin" (Heb. 4:15). Jesus is described as "a high priest [who] truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens" (7:26), and as "unblemished" (9:14). Peter, who of course knew Jesus well, declared him to be "the Holy One of God" (John 6:69), and taught that Jesus "committed no sin, / and no deceit was found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22). John said, "In him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). Paul also affirmed that Christ "had no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Jesus himself both explicitly and implicitly claimed to be righteous. He asked his hearers, "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?" (John 8:46); no one replied. He taught his disciples to confess their sins and ask for forgiveness, but there is no report of his ever confessing sin and asking forgiveness on his own behalf. Other than blasphemy, no charge of sin was brought against him; and of course, if he was God, then what he did (e.g., his declaring sins to be forgiven) was not blasphemy. While not absolute proof of Jesus's sinlessness, there are ample testimonies of his innocence of the charges for which he was crucified. Pilate's wife warned, "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man" (Matt. 27:19); the thief on the cross said, "This man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41); and even Judas said, "I have sinned . . . for I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4). We must conclude that the Bible uniformly witnesses to the sinlessness of Jesus. [13]

But could Jesus have sinned? Scripture tells us that God does no evil and cannot be tempted (James 1:13). Was it really possible, then, for Jesus, inasmuch as he is God, to sin? And if not, was his temptation genuine? Here we are encountering one of the great mysteries of the faith: Jesus's

two natures, which will be more closely examined in the next chapter. Nonetheless, it is fitting for us to point out here that while he could have sinned, it was certain that he would not.[14] There were genuine struggles and temptations, but the outcome was always certain.

Jesus is not only as human as we are; he is more human.

Does a person who does not succumb to temptation really feel it? Leon Morris argues that the person who resists knows the full force of temptation. Sinlessness points to a more intense rather than less intense temptation. "The man who yields to a particular temptation has not felt its full power. He has given in while the temptation has yet something in reserve. Only the man who does not yield to a temptation, who, as regards that particular temptation, is sinless, knows the full extent of that temptation."[15]

But the question remains: Is a person who does not sin truly human? If we say no, we are maintaining that sin is part of the essence of human nature. Such a view must be considered a serious heresy by anyone who believes that the human has been created by God, since God would then be the cause of sin, the creator of a nature that is essentially evil. Inasmuch as we hold that, on the contrary, sin is not part of the essence of human nature, instead of asking, "Is Jesus as human as we are?," we might better ask, "Are we as human as Jesus?" For the type of human nature that each of us possesses is not pure human nature. The true humanity created by God has in our case been corrupted and spoiled. There have been only three pure human beings: Adam and Eve (before the fall) and Jesus. All the rest of us are but broken, corrupted versions of humanity. Jesus is not only as human as we are; he is more human. Our humanity is not a standard by which we are to measure his. His humanity, true and unadulterated, is the standard by which we are to be measured.

Implications of the Humanity of Jesus

The doctrine of the full humanity of Jesus has great significance for Christian faith and theology.

- 1. The atoning death of Jesus can truly avail for us. It was not some outsider to the human race who died on the cross. He was one of us, and thus could truly offer a sacrifice on our behalf. Just like the Old Testament priest, Jesus was a human who offered a sacrifice on behalf of his fellows.
- 2. Jesus can truly sympathize with and intercede for us. He has experienced all that we might undergo. When we are hungry, weary, or lonely, he fully understands, for he has gone through it all himself (Heb. 4:15).
- 3. Jesus manifests the true nature of humanity. While we are sometimes inclined to draw our conclusions as to what humanity is from an inductive examination of ourselves and those around us, these are but imperfect instances of humanity. Jesus has not only told us what perfect humanity is; he has exhibited it.
- 4. Jesus can be our example. He is not some celestial superstar but one who has lived where we live. We can therefore look to him as a model of the Christian life. The biblical standards for human behavior, which seem to us to be so hard to attain, are seen in him to be within human possibility. Of course, there must be full dependence on the grace of God. That Jesus found it necessary to pray and depend on the Father is indication that we must be similarly reliant on him.
- 5. Human nature is good. When we tend toward asceticism—regarding human nature, and particularly physical nature, as somehow inherently evil or at least inferior to the spiritual and immaterial—the fact that Jesus took upon himself our full human nature is a reminder that to be human is not evil, it is good.
- 6. God is not totally transcendent. He is not so far removed from the human race. If he could actually live among us at one time as a real human person, it is not surprising that he can and does act within the human realm today as well.

With John we rejoice that the incarnation was real and complete: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

- Why is the doctrine of Jesus's humanity important?
- How would you explain the heresies of Docetism and Apollinarianism so they would be understandable to a person who has not studied doctrine or church history?
- Why is the virgin birth important to Christian theology?
- Assume that you have been asked to defend the concept of Jesus's sinlessness, particularly with the possibility that he could have sinned. What would you say?
- In what ways is your humanity similar to that of Jesus? In what ways is it dissimilar?

The Unity of the Person of Christ

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Describe the significance of the unity of two natures, divine and human, in one person, Jesus, and the complexities involved with this unity.
- 2. Demonstrate a knowledge of the biblical material related to the unity of the person of Jesus Christ.
- **3.** Recognize and describe five attempts to explain the person of Jesus Christ.
- **4.** Express a full understanding of the doctrine of two natures in one person, Jesus Christ, and the relevance it has for Christian theology.

Chapter Summary

The doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ does not end at the point of describing his divine and human natures. The unity of these two natures has extensive implications for the understanding of Christian theology. Through anthropological understanding, humans have attempted to either disclaim or overemphasize the view of the unity of Jesus Christ. However, the biblical and historical material supports the view that Christ has both a human and divine nature united in one person.

Chapter Outline

The Importance and Difficulty of the Issue

The Biblical Material

Early Misunderstandings

- Nestorianism
- Eutychianism

Other Attempts to Solve the Problem

Adoptionism

- Kenoticism
- The Doctrine of Dynamic Incarnation

Basic Tenets of the Doctrine of Two Natures in One Person

The Importance and Difficulty of the Issue

Having concluded that Jesus was fully divine and fully human, we still face a large issue: the relationship between these two natures in the one person, Jesus. This is one of the most difficult of all theological problems, ranking with the Trinity and the relationship of human free will and divine sovereignty. It is also an issue of the greatest importance. We have already explained that Christology in general is important because the incarnation involved a bridging of the metaphysical, moral, and spiritual gap between God and the human race. The bridging of this gap depended on the unity of deity and humanity within Jesus Christ. For if Jesus was both God and a human but the two natures were not united, then the gap, although smaller, remains. The separation of God and the human race is still a difficulty that has not been overcome. If the redemption accomplished on the cross is to avail for humankind, it must be the work of the human Jesus. But if it is to have the infinite value necessary to atone for the sins of all humans in relationship to an infinite and perfectly holy God, then it must be the work of the divine Christ as well. If the death of the Savior is not the work of a unified God-man, it will be deficient at one point or the other.

The doctrine of the unification of divine and human within Jesus is difficult to comprehend because it posits the combination of two natures that by definition have contradictory attributes. On the one hand, Christ as deity is infinite in knowledge, power, presence. If he is God, he must know all things. He can do all things that are proper objects of his power. He can be everywhere at once. But, on the other hand, if he was a human, he was limited in knowledge. He could not do everything. And he certainly was limited to being in one place at a time. The issue is further complicated by the relative paucity of biblical material with which to work. We have in the Bible no direct statements about the relationship of the two natures. What we must do is draw inferences from Jesus's self-concept, his actions, and various didactic statements about him.

The Biblical Material

We begin by noting the absence of any references to duality in Jesus's thought, action, and purpose. There are, by contrast, indications of multiplicity within the Godhead as a whole, for example, in Genesis 1:26, "Then God said [singular], 'Let us make [plural] mankind in our [plural] image.'" Similar references, without a shift in number, are found in Genesis 3:22 and 11:7. There are instances of one member of the Trinity addressing another in Psalms 2:7 and 40:7–8, as well as Jesus's prayers to the Father. Yet Jesus always spoke of himself in the singular: this is particularly notable in the prayer in John 17, where Jesus says that he and the Father are one (vv. 21–22) yet makes no reference to any type of complexity within himself.

There are references in Scripture that allude to both the deity and humanity of Jesus, yet clearly refer to a single subject. Among these are John 1:14 ("The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, . . . full of grace and truth"); Galatians 4:4 ("God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law"); and 1 Timothy 3:16 ("He appeared in the flesh, / was vindicated by the Spirit, / was seen by angels, / was preached among the nations, / was believed on in the world, / was taken up in glory"). The last text is particularly significant, for it refers to both Jesus's earthly incarnation and his presence in heaven before and after that.

The bridging of the metaphysical, moral, and spiritual gap between God and the human race—and hence our very salvation—depends on the unity of deity and humanity within Jesus Christ.

Other references focus on the work of Jesus in such a way as to make it clear that it is the function not of either the human or the divine exclusively, but of one unified subject. For example, in reference to the work of Christ, John says, "But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1–2). This work of Jesus, which assumes both his humanity (4:2) and deity (4:15; 5:5), is the work of one person, who is described in the same epistle as the Son whom the Father has sent as the Savior of the world (4:14). Further, several passages in which Jesus is designated by one of his titles are highly revealing. For example, we have situations in Scripture where a divine title

is used in a reference to Jesus's human activity. Paul says, "None of the rulers of this age understood it [the secret and hidden wisdom of God], for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). In Colossians 1:13–14 Paul writes, "For he [the Father] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Here the kingly status of the Son of God is juxtaposed with the redemptive work of his bodily crucifixion and resurrection. Conversely, the title "Son of Man," which Jesus often used of himself during his earthly ministry, appears in passages pointing to his heavenly status; for instance, in John 3:13, "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man." Nothing in any of these references contradicts the position that the one person, Jesus Christ, was both an earthly human and a preexistent divine being who became incarnate. Nor is there any suggestion that these two natures took turns directing his activity.[1]

Early Misunderstandings

Reflection on the relationship between the two natures arose comparatively late in church history. Logically prior were the discussions about the genuineness and completeness of the two natures. Once the church had settled these questions, at the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381), it was appropriate to inquire into the precise relationship between the two natures. In effect, the matter at issue was: What is really meant by declaring that Jesus was fully God and fully human? In the process of suggesting and examining possible answers, the church rejected some of them as inadequate.

Nestorianism

One theologian who offered an answer was Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople. It is clear that the view condemned by the church as Nestorian fell short of the full orthodox position, and was probably held by some of Nestorius's followers.[2] It is the judgment of leading scholars, however, that Nestorius himself was not a "Nestorian," but that some poorly chosen terminology, coupled with the opposition of an aggressive opponent, led to an unjust condemnation of his views.[3]

Soon after Nestorius was installed as patriarch in 428, he was obliged to rule on the suitability of referring to Mary as theotokos ("God-bearing"). Nestorius was reluctant to do this, unless *theotokos* was accompanied by the term *anthrōpotokos* ("human-bearing"). While his ideas were not unique in that time, the choice of some rather unfortunate language caused problems for Nestorius. He observed that God cannot have a mother, and certainly no creature could have generated a member of the Godhead. Mary, therefore, did not bear God; she bore a man who was a vehicle for God. Although Nestorius would later profess to agree with the Chalcedonian formulation (two natures united in one person), he preferred to think in terms of a "conjunction" rather than a union. Perhaps the best possible summation of Nestorius's thought is to say that while he did not consciously hold or overtly teach that there was a split in the person of Christ, what he said seemed to imply it. [4] From the statements of Nestorius and the reactions to his views came the traditional picture of Nestorianism as a heresy that split the God-man into two distinct persons. This heresy was condemned at the Council of Ephesus (431).

Eutychianism

Eutyches (ca. 375–454) was the archimandrite of a monastery in Constantinople. It is not easy to ascertain exactly Eutyches's doctrine. He declared that the Lord Jesus Christ after his birth possessed only one nature, that of God made flesh and become human. Eutyches rejected the idea of two natures as contrary to the Scripture and to the opinions of the fathers. He did, however, subscribe to the virgin birth and affirmed that Christ was simultaneously perfect God and perfect human. His basic contention seems to have been that there were two natures before the incarnation, and one after. [5]

Eutyches's views constituted the foundation of a movement that taught that the humanity of Jesus was so absorbed into the deity as to be virtually eliminated. In effect, Eutychianism was a form of Docetism. There was a variant interpretation of the nature as a fusion of Jesus's deity and humanity into something quite different, a third substance, a hybrid as it were. It may be that this is what Eutyches himself held, although his thought was confused (at least in the way he expressed it).

Other Attempts to Solve the Problem

Adoptionism

An early and recurrent attempt to solve the problem of "two natures in one person" is adoptionism. Put in its simplest form, this is the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was merely a human during the early years of his life. At some point, however, probably Jesus's baptism (or perhaps his resurrection), God "adopted" him as his Son. This was more a case of a human's becoming God than of God's becoming human.[6] In support of their position, adoptionists concentrate on the scriptural idea that Jesus was begotten by God (e.g., John 3:16). Those who take seriously the full teaching of Scripture, however, are aware of major obstacles to this view, including the preexistence of Christ, the prebirth narrative, and the virgin birth.

Kenoticism

In the nineteenth century, some propounded that the key to understanding the incarnation is to be found in the expression "[Jesus] made himself nothing" (Phil. 2:7). According to this view, called kenoticism (the Greek word for "to empty" is $keno\bar{o}$), what Jesus emptied himself of was the form of God (v. 6). The Second Person of the Trinity laid aside his distinctly divine attributes (omnipotence, omnipresence, etc.) and took on human qualities instead. In effect, the incarnation consisted of an exchange of part of the divine nature for human characteristics.[7] His moral qualities, such as love and mercy, were maintained. Kenoticism also holds that Jesus is God and man not simultaneously but successively. With respect to certain attributes, he is God, then he is a human, then God again. While this view solves some of the difficulty, it does not account for the evidence we cited earlier to the effect that the biblical writers regarded Jesus as both God and human. Moreover, the indications of an apparent continuing incarnation (see, e.g., 1 Tim. 3:16) militate against the maintenance of this theory, innovative though it may be.

The Doctrine of Dynamic Incarnation

A final attempt to resolve the problem of two natures in one person might be termed the doctrine of dynamic incarnation. This holds that the presence of God in the divine-human Jesus was not in the form of a personal hypostatic union between the Second Person of the Trinity and an individual human, Jesus of Nazareth. Rather, the incarnation should be thought of as the active presence of the power of God within the person Jesus. [8] Given this interpretation of the incarnation, the difference between Christ and us is only quantitative, not qualitative. But, it must be noted, this interpretation conflicts with several emphases of Scripture: the fullness of God dwelling in Jesus bodily (Col. 2:9); the preexistence of Christ (John 1:18; 8:58); and the uniqueness of his sonship (John 3:16).

Basic Tenets of the Doctrine of Two Natures in One Person

We have reviewed several attempts to resolve the difficult christological problem of two natures in one person. The classic statement of this doctrine, the standard for all Christendom, was formulated at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. This statement speaks of

one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, *inconfusedly*, *unchangeably*, *indivisibly*, *inseparably*; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person ($pros\bar{o}pon$) and one Subsistence (hypostasis), not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.[9]

This statement avoids both the heresy of Nestorianism and that of Eutychianism, insisting on both the unity of the person and the integrity and separateness of the two natures. But this serves only to heighten the tension. For what is the precise relationship between the two natures? How can both be maintained without splitting Jesus into two persons, each having a separate and unique set of attributes? And how can we maintain that Jesus is one person, with one center of consciousness, without fusing the two natures into a mixture or hybrid? The Chalcedonian conclusion is essentially negative—"without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." It tells us what "two natures in one person" does not mean. In a sense, Chalcedon is not the answer; it is the question. We must ask further: What are the essential principles of the doctrine of the incarnation, and how are they to be understood? Several crucial points will help us to understand this great mystery.

1. The incarnation was more an addition of human attributes than a loss of divine attributes. Philippians 2:6–7 is often conceived of as meaning that Jesus emptied himself of some of his divine attributes, perhaps even his deity itself. According to this interpretation, he became human by becoming something less than God. In our interpretation of Philippians 2:6–7, however, what Jesus emptied himself of was not the divine *morphē*, the nature of God. At no point does this passage say that he ceased to possess the divine nature. This becomes clearer when we take Colossians 2:9 into account: "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." What does it mean, then, to say that Jesus "made himself nothing"?

While Jesus did not cease to be in nature what the Father was, he became functionally subordinated to the Father for the period of his earthly life.

Some have suggested that Jesus emptied himself by pouring his divinity into his humanity as one pours the contents of one cup into another. This, however, fails to identify the vessel from which Jesus poured out his divine nature when he emptied it into his humanity. A better approach to Philippians 2:6–7 is to think of the phrase "taking the very nature of a servant" as a circumstantial explanation of the kenosis. We would render the first part of verse 7 "he made himself nothing by taking the very form of a servant." The participial phrase is an explanation of how Jesus emptied himself, or what he did that constituted kenosis. While the text does not specify of what he emptied himself, it is noteworthy that "the very nature of a servant" contrasts sharply with "equality with God" (v. 6). We conclude that it is equality with God, not the form of God, of which Jesus emptied himself. While he did not cease to be in nature what the Father was, he became functionally subordinated to the Father for the period of his earthly life.

2. The union of the two natures meant that they did not function independently. Jesus did not exercise his deity at certain times and his humanity at other times. His actions were always those of divinity-humanity. This is the key to understanding the functional limitations the humanity imposed on the divinity. For example, he still had the power to be everywhere (omnipresence). However, as an incarnate being, he was limited

in the exercise of that power by possession of a human body. This should not be considered a reduction of the power and capacities of the Second Person of the Trinity, but rather a circumstance-induced limitation on the exercise of his power and capacities.

Picture the following analogy. The world's fastest sprinter is entered in a three-legged race, where he must run with one of his legs tied to a leg of a partner. Although his physical capacity is not diminished, the conditions under which he exercises it are severely circumscribed. Even if his partner in the race is the world's second fastest sprinter, their time will be much slower than if they competed separately.

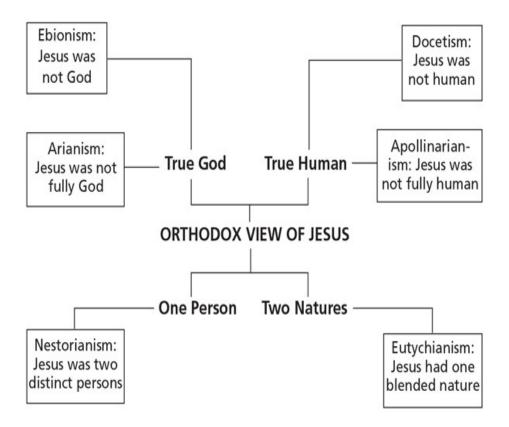
This is the situation of the incarnate Christ. Just as the runner could unloose the tie, but chooses to restrict himself for the duration of the event, so Christ's incarnation was a voluntary, self-chosen limitation. He did not have to take on humanity, but he chose to do so for the period of the incarnation.

3. In thinking about the incarnation, we must begin not with the traditional conceptions of humanity and deity, but with the recognition that the two are most fully known in Jesus Christ. We sometimes approach the incarnation with an antecedent assumption that it is virtually impossible. We know what humanity is and what deity is, and they are, of course, by definition incompatible. They are, respectively, the finite and the infinite. But this is to begin in the wrong place. Our understanding of human nature has been formed by an inductive investigation of both ourselves and other humans as we find them about us. But none of us is humanity as God intended it to be or as it came from his hand. Humanity was spoiled and corrupted by the sin of Adam and Eve. When we say that in the incarnation Jesus took on humanity, we are not talking about this kind of humanity. Jesus's humanity was not the humanity of sinful humans but that possessed by Adam and Eve from their creation and before their fall. He was not merely as human as we are; he was more human than we are. He was, spiritually, the type of humanity that we will possess when we are glorified. Jesus most fully reveals the true nature of humanity.

Jesus Christ is also our best source for knowledge of deity. We assume we know what God is really like; but it is in Jesus that God is most fully revealed and known. As John said, "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the

Father, has made him known" (John 1:18). Thus our picture of what deity is like comes primarily through the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Figure 3. The Six Basic Heresies regarding the Person of Christ



In connection with the possibility of unity between deity and humanity, we need to bear in mind the distinctive picture of humanity given us in the Bible. As the image of God, the human is already the creature most like God. It is quite possible that part of God's purpose in making humanity in his own image was to facilitate the incarnation that would someday take place.

It is important to think of the initiative of the incarnation as coming from above, as it were, rather than from below. Part of our problem in understanding the incarnation may come from the fact that we are in effect asking ourselves how a human could ever be God, as if it were a matter of a human's becoming God or somehow adding deity to one's humanity. For God to become human (or, more correctly, to add humanity to his deity), however, is not impossible. He is unlimited and therefore able to condescend to the lesser, whereas the lesser cannot ascend to the greater or higher. The

fact that a human did not ascend to divinity, nor did God elevate a human to divinity, but rather that God condescended to take on humanity, facilitates our ability to conceive of the incarnation.

It is also helpful to think of Jesus as a very complex person. We know some people who have straightforward personalities. Other persons have much more complex personalities. They may have a wider range of experience, a more varied educational background, or a more complex emotional makeup.

Now, if we imagine complexity expanded to an infinite degree, then we have a bit of a glimpse into the "personality of Jesus" as it were, his two natures in one person. For Jesus's personality included the qualities and attributes that constitute deity. This point serves to remind us that the person of Jesus was not simply an amalgam of human and divine qualities merged into some sort of tertium quid. Rather, his was a personality that, in addition to the characteristics of divine nature, had all the qualities or attributes of perfect, sinless human nature as well.

We have noted several dimensions of biblical truth that will help us to better understand the incarnation. It has sometimes been said that there are only seven basic jokes, and every joke is merely a variation on one of them. A similar statement can be made about heresies regarding the person of Christ. There are basically six, all of which appeared within the first four Christian centuries. As figure 3 illustrates, they either deny the genuineness (Ebionism) or the completeness (Arianism) of Jesus's deity, deny the genuineness (Docetism) or the completeness (Apollinarianism) of his humanity, divide his person (Nestorianism), or confuse his natures (Eutychianism). All departures from the orthodox doctrine of the person of Christ are simply variations of one of these heresies. While we may have difficulty specifying exactly the content of the doctrine of the incarnation, full fidelity to the teaching of Scripture will carefully avoid each of these distortions.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- How is it possible to bring together a human and divine nature into one person, and why is it necessary?
- How does the Bible explain the unity of the person of Jesus Christ?

- What do Nestorianism and Eutychianism have to say about the person of Jesus Christ, and how are they different from each other?
- What elements are necessary for understanding the doctrine of two natures in one person?
- Why is it important to your relationship with God that Jesus was both human and divine?

Introduction to the Work of Christ

Chapter Objectives

At the conclusion of this chapter, you should be able to achieve the following:

- 1. Recognize and explain the humiliation stage of Christ's work, which involves his incarnation and death.
- 2. Recognize and explain the exaltation stage of Christ's work, which involves his resurrection, ascension, session at the Father's right hand, and second coming.
- **3.** Identify and describe the revelatory, ruling, and reconciling functions of Jesus Christ for all believers.
- **4.** Recognize and describe five theories of the atonement.

Chapter Summary

Christ's work is uniquely suited for the role that he maintains in the Trinity. Temporally, there are two main states of Christ's work: humiliation and exaltation. Traditionally, the work of Jesus has been classified in terms of three basic functions he performs: his revelatory role, his rule, and his reconciling work. A fundamental aspect of his reconciling work is the atonement. Historically, the meaning of the atonement has been controversial. Differing theories of the atonement have covered different elements. These elements are all evident in the atonement, and should be included in an explanation of the doctrine.

Chapter Outline

The Stages of Christ's Work

• The Humiliation

» Incarnation

» Death

The Exaltation

» Resurrection

- » Ascension and Session at the Father's Right Hand
- » Second Coming

The Functions of Christ

- The Revelatory Role of Christ
- The Rule of Christ
- The Reconciling Work of Christ: Intercession and Atonement

The Manifold Theories of the Atonement

- The Socinian Theory: The Atonement as Example
- The Moral-Influence Theory: The Atonement as a Demonstration of God's Love
- The Governmental Theory: The Atonement as a Demonstration of Divine Justice
- The Ransom Theory: The Atonement as Victory over the Forces of Sin and Evil
- The Satisfaction Theory: The Atonement as Compensation to the Father

A thorough study of Christ's person, his deity and humanity, enables us to better understand what his unique nature enabled him to do for humanity. He always was, of course, the eternal Second Person of the Trinity. He became incarnate, however, because of the task that he had to accomplish—saving us from our sin.

Without prior understanding of the person and nature of Jesus Christ, one cannot fully understand the work he did. Who he was especially fitted him for what he was to do.

The Stages of Christ's Work

As we survey Jesus's work, we find that it was done in two basic stages, traditionally referred to as the state of his humiliation and the state of exaltation. Each of these stages in turn consists of a number of steps. What we have are two steps down from his glory (incarnation and death), then a series of steps back up to his previous glory, and even something beyond that.

The Humiliation

INCARNATION

The fact of Jesus's incarnation is sometimes stated in straightforward fashion, as in John 1:14, where the apostle says simply, "The Word became flesh." At other times there is emphasis on either what Jesus left behind or what he took upon himself. An instance of the former is Philippians 2:6–7: Jesus Christ

did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (NIV 1984)

An example of the latter is Galatians 4:4: "God sent his Son, born of woman, born under the law."

What Jesus gave up in coming to earth was immense. From a position of "equality with God," which entailed the immediate presence of the Father

and the Holy Spirit as well as the continuous praise of the angels, he came to earth, where he had none of these. Even if Christ had come to the highest splendor that earth could afford, the descent would still have been immense. But it was not to the highest of human circumstances that he came. Rather, he took the form of a servant, a slave. He came into a very common family. He was born in the obscure little town of Bethlehem. And even more striking, he was born in the very humble setting of a stable and laid in a manger.

He was born under the law. He who had originated the law and was the Lord of it became subject to the law, fulfilling all of it. It was as if an official, having enacted a statute that those under him had to follow, himself stepped down to a lower position where he too had to obey. Jesus's becoming subject to the law was complete. Thus he was circumcised at the age of eight days, and at the proper time he was brought to the temple for the rite of the mother's purification (Luke 2:21–39). By becoming subject to the law, says Paul, Jesus was able to redeem those who are under the law (Gal. 4:5).

What of the attributes of deity during the period of the humiliation? We have already suggested that the Second Person of the Trinity emptied himself of equality with God by adding or taking on humanity (see pp. 264–65). In doing so Jesus gave up the independent exercise of his divine attributes. This does not mean that he surrendered some (or all) of his divine attributes, but that he voluntarily gave up the ability to exercise them on his own. He could exercise them only in dependence on the Father and in connection with possession of a fully human nature. [1] Both wills, the Father's and his, were necessary for him to utilize his divine attributes. A fair analogy is a safe-deposit box; two keys are necessary to open it—the bank's and the depositor's. In like manner, if Jesus was to exercise divine power, both wills had to agree on an action for it to take place. There was, then, an immeasurable humiliation involved in assuming human nature. He could not freely and independently exercise all the capabilities he had when he was in heaven.

DEATH

The ultimate step downward in Jesus's humiliation was his death. He who was "the life" (John 14:6), the Creator, the giver of life and of the new life that constitutes victory over death, became subject to death. He who

had committed no sin suffered death, the consequence or "wages" of sin. By becoming human, Jesus became subject to the possibility of death—that is, he became mortal; and not only was death a possibility, but it also became an actuality.

Furthermore Jesus suffered not only death, but a humiliating one at that! He experienced a type of execution reserved by the Roman Empire for grievous criminals. It was a slow, painful death, virtually death by torture. Add to this the ignominy of the circumstances. The mockery and taunting by the crowds, the abuse by the religious leaders and the Roman soldiers compounded the humiliation. Death seemed to be the end of his mission; he had failed in his task. His voice was stilled, so that he could no longer preach or teach, and his body was lifeless, unable to heal, raise from the dead, or quiet storms.

The Exaltation

RESURRECTION

The death of Jesus was the low point in his humiliation; the overcoming of death through the resurrection was the first step back in the process of his exaltation. The resurrection is particularly significant, for inflicting death was the worst thing that sin and the powers of sin could do to Christ. Death's inability to hold him symbolizes the totality of his victory. What more can the forces of evil do if someone whom they have killed does not stay dead?

Because the resurrection is so important, it has occasioned a great deal of controversy. There were, of course, no human witnesses to the actual resurrection, since Jesus was alone in the tomb when it took place. We do find, however, two types of evidence. First, the tomb in which Jesus had been laid was empty, and the body was never produced. Second, a great variety of persons testified that they had seen Jesus alive. The most natural explanation of these testimonies is that Jesus was indeed alive again. Moreover, there is no other (or at least no better) way to account for the transformation of the disciples from frightened, defeated persons to militant preachers of the resurrection.[2]

One question deserving special attention is the nature of the resurrection body. There seems to be conflicting evidence on this matter. On the one hand, we are told that flesh and blood are not going to inherit the kingdom of God, and there are other indications that we will not have a material body in heaven. On the other hand, Jesus ate after the resurrection, and apparently he was recognizable. Furthermore, the marks of the nails in his hands and the spear wound in his side suggest that he still had a material body (John 20:25–27). If we are to reconcile this seeming conflict, it is important to bear in mind that Jesus was at this point resurrected but not ascended. At the time of our resurrection our bodies will be transformed in one step. In the case of Jesus, however, the two events, resurrection and ascension, were separated rather than collapsed into one. So the body he had at the point of resurrection was yet to undergo a more complete transformation at the point of the ascension. It was yet to become the "spiritual body" of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 15:44.[3]

But even though Jesus's postresurrection body may have been more physical in nature than his postascension being, his resurrection, like the virgin birth, should not be thought of as essentially a biological matter or a physical fact. Rather, it was Jesus's triumph over sin and death and all of the attendant ramifications. It was the fundamental step in his exaltation—he was freed from the curse brought on him by his voluntary bearing of the sin of the entire human race.

ASCENSION AND SESSION AT THE FATHER'S RIGHT HAND

The first step in Jesus's humiliation involved giving up the status he had in heaven and coming to the conditions of earth; the second step in the exaltation involved leaving the conditions of earth and reassuming his place with the Father. Jesus himself on several occasions foretold his return to the Father (John 6:62; 14:2, 12; 16:5, 10, 28; 20:17). Luke gives the most extended accounts of the actual ascension (Luke 24:50–51; Acts 1:6–11). Paul also writes regarding the ascension (Eph. 1:20; 4:8–10; 1 Tim. 3:16), as does the writer of the letter to the Hebrews (1:3; 4:14; 9:24).

In premodern times the ascension was usually thought of as a transition from one place (earth) to another (heaven). We now know, however, that space is such that heaven is not merely upward from the earth, and it also seems likely that the difference between earth and heaven is not merely geographic. One cannot get to God simply by traveling sufficiently far and fast in a space vehicle of some kind. God is in a different dimension of reality, and the transition from here to there requires a change not merely of place but of state. Jesus's ascension, then, was not merely a physical and spatial change but a spiritual change as well. At that time Jesus underwent

the remainder of the metamorphosis begun with the resurrection of his body.

The significance of the ascension is that Jesus left behind the conditions associated with life on this earth. Thus the pain, both physical and psychological, of earth is no longer his. The opposition, hostility, unbelief, and unfaithfulness he encountered have been replaced by the praise of the angels and the immediate presence of the Father. What a contrast to the abuse and insults he endured while on earth!

There were definite reasons why Jesus had to leave the earth. One was in order to prepare a place for our future abode (John 14:2–3). Another reason he had to go is so that the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, might come (John 16:7). The sending of the Holy Spirit was essential, for whereas Jesus could work with the disciples only through external teaching and example, the Holy Spirit could work within them (John 14:17). As a result, the believers would be able to do the works Jesus did, and even greater ones (John 14:12). And through the Holy Spirit's ministry, the Triune God would be present with them; thus Jesus could say that he would be with them forever (Matt. 28:20).

Jesus's ascension means that he is now seated at the right hand of the Father (see Matt. 26:64; Acts 2:33–36; 5:31; Eph. 1:20–22; Heb. 10:12; 1 Pet. 3:22; and Rev. 3:21; 22:1). The right hand is the place of distinction and power. Recall how James and John desired to sit at Christ's right hand, and at his left as well (Mark 10:37–40). Jesus's sitting at the right hand of God should not be interpreted as signifying rest or inactivity. It is a symbol of authority and active rule. The right hand is also the place where Jesus is ever making intercession with the Father on our behalf (Heb. 7:25).

SECOND COMING

One dimension of the exaltation remains. Scripture indicates clearly that Christ will return at some point in the future; the exact time is unknown to us. Then his victory will be complete. He will be the conquering Lord, the judge over all. At that point his reign, which at present is in some ways only potential, and which many do not accept, will be total. He himself has said that his second coming will be in glory (Matt. 25:31). The one who came in lowliness, humility, and even humiliation will return in complete exaltation. Then, indeed, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:10–11).

The Functions of Christ

Historically, it has been customary to categorize the work of Christ in terms of three "offices": prophet, priest, and king. It is important to retain the truths that Jesus reveals God to humanity, reconciles God and humanity to one another, and rules and will rule over the whole of the creation, including humanity. These truths, if not the exact titles, must be maintained if we are to recognize the whole of what Christ accomplishes in his ministry. We have chosen to speak of the three functions of Christ—revealing, ruling, and reconciling. It is appropriate to think of these aspects of Christ's work as his commission, for Jesus was the Messiah, the anointed one.

The Revelatory Role of Christ

Many references to Christ's ministry stress the revelation of the Father and of heavenly truth. And, indeed, Jesus clearly understood himself to be a prophet, for when his ministry in Nazareth was not received, he said, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home" (Matt. 13:57). That he was a prophet was recognized by those who heard him preach, at least by his followers. Moreover, at the time of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem the crowds said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee" (Matt. 21:11).

That Jesus was a prophet was in itself a fulfillment of prophecy. Peter specifically identifies him with Moses's prediction in Deuteronomy 18:15: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people" (Acts 3:22). Jesus's prophetic ministry was like that of the other prophets in that he was sent from God. Yet there was a significant difference between him and them. He had come from the very presence of God, and thus could especially reveal the Father, for he had been with him. So John says, "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship to the Father, has made him known" (John 1:18).

As prophet, Jesus reveals the Father and heavenly truth; as king, Jesus rules over all of the universe; as priest, he makes our salvation possible.

The uniqueness of Jesus's prophetic ministry notwithstanding, in a number of respects it was similar to the work of the Old Testament prophets. His message in many ways resembled theirs. There was declaration of doom and judgment, and there was proclamation of good news and salvation. In Matthew 23 Jesus pronounces judgments on the scribes and Pharisees, calling them hypocrites, serpents, and vipers. Certainly the prophetic message of condemnation of sin was prominent in his preaching. But Jesus also proclaimed good news. Among the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah in particular had spoken of the good tidings from God (Isa. 40:9; 52:7). Similarly, in Matthew 13 Jesus describes the kingdom of heaven in terms that make it indeed good news: the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field (v. 44) and like a pearl of great price (v. 46).

Christ's revealing work covers a wide span of time and forms. It began even before his incarnation. As the Logos, he is the light that has enlightened everyone coming into the world; thus, in a sense all truth has come from and through him (John 1:9). A second and most obvious period of Jesus's revelatory work was, of course, his prophetic ministry during his stay on earth. Here two forms of revelation come together. He spoke the divine word of truth. Beyond that, however, he was the truth and he was God, and so what he did was an exhibition, not merely a proclamation, of the truth and reality of God. There is, third, Christ's continuing revealing ministry through his church.[4] He promised them his presence in the ongoing task (Matt. 28:20). In many ways his ministry would be continued and completed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would be sent in Jesus's name, and would teach his followers all things and bring to remembrance all that he had said to them (John 14:26). The revealing work of the Holy Spirit would not be independent of the work of Jesus. Perhaps this is why Luke makes the somewhat puzzling statement that his first book pertained to all that Jesus "began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). We conclude that when the apostles proclaimed the truth, Jesus was continuing his work of revelation through them.

The final and most complete revelatory work of Jesus lies in the future. A time is coming when he will return; one of the words for the second coming of Christ is "revelation" (*apokalypsis*).[5] At that time we will see clearly and directly (1 Cor. 13:12); we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2). Then all

barriers to a full knowledge of God and of the truths of which Christ spoke will be removed.

The Rule of Christ

The Gospels picture Jesus as a king, the ruler over the entire universe. Isaiah had anticipated a future ruler who would sit on David's throne (Isa. 9:7). The writer to the Hebrews applies Psalm 45:6–7 to the Son of God.

```
Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. (Heb. 1:8)
```

Jesus himself said that in the new world the Son of Man would sit on a glorious throne (Matt. 19:28). He claimed that the kingdom of heaven was his (Matt. 13:41).

There is a tendency to think of Jesus's rule as being almost exclusively in the future, for as we look about us at the present time, we do not see him ruling very actively. Yet we need to note that, on the contrary, there is evidence that Christ is ruling today. In particular, the natural universe obeys him. Since Christ is the one through whom all things came into being (John 1:3) and through whom all things continue (Col. 1:17), he is in control of the natural universe. But is there evidence of a reign of Christ over modernday humans? Indeed, there is. The kingdom of God, over which Christ reigns, is present in the church. He is the head of the body, the church (Col. 1:18). When he was on earth, his kingdom was present in the disciples' hearts. And wherever believers today are following the lordship of Christ, the Savior is exercising his ruling or kingly function.

In light of the foregoing, we can see that Jesus Christ's rule is not a matter merely of his final exaltation. It is in connection with the final step in his exaltation, when he returns in power, that his rule will be complete. The hymn in Philippians 2 emphasizes that Christ has been given a

```
name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (vv. 9–11)
```

A time is coming when all will be under his rule, whether willingly and eagerly, or unwillingly and reluctantly.

The Reconciling Work of Christ: Intercession and Atonement

One aspect of Christ's work as reconciler is his intercessory ministry. The Bible records numerous instances of Jesus's interceding for his disciples while he was here on earth. The most extended is his high-priestly prayer for the group (John 17), where he prayed that they might have his joy fulfilled in themselves (v. 13). He did not pray that they be taken out of the world, but that they be kept from the evil one (v. 15). He also prayed that they might all be one (v. 21). In addition, this last prayer was for those who would believe through the disciples' word (v. 20).

Jesus continues this intercession for all believers during his heavenly presence with the Father. In Romans 8:33–34 Paul raises the question of who might be condemning us or bringing a charge against us. Surely it cannot be Christ, for he is at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. In Hebrews 7:25 we are told that he ever lives to make intercession for those who draw near to God through him, and in 9:24 we are told that he appears in the presence of God on our behalf.

What is the focus of this intercession? Jesus presents his righteousness to the Father for our justification. He also pleads the cause of his righteousness for believers who, while previously justified, continue to sin. And finally, it appears, particularly from the instances during his earthly ministry, that Christ beseeches the Father that believers might be sanctified and kept from the power of the evil tempter.

There is another, even more fundamental aspect of Christ's reconciling work, the aspect on which his intercession is based. In the atonement we come to a crucial point of Christian faith, because it is the point of transition, as it were, from the objective to the subjective aspects of Christian theology. Here we shift our focus from the nature of Christ to his active work on our behalf; here systematic theology has direct application to our lives. The atonement has made our salvation possible. It is also the foundation of other major doctrines that await our study: the doctrine of the church deals with the collective aspects of salvation; the doctrine of the last things, with its future aspects.

Our doctrines of God and of Christ will color our understanding of the atonement. If, on the one hand, God is a holy, righteous, and demanding

being, then humans will not be able to satisfy him easily, and it is quite likely that something will have to be done on humans' behalf to satisfy God. If, on the other hand, God is an indulgent, permissive Father who says, "We have to allow humans to have a little fun sometimes," then it may be sufficient simply to give them a little encouragement and instruction. If Christ is merely a human being, then the work he did serves only as an example; he was not able to offer anything on our behalf. If, however, he is God, his work for us went immeasurably beyond what we are able to do for ourselves; he served not only as an example but also as a sacrifice for us. The doctrine of humanity, broadly defined to include the doctrine of sin, also affects the picture. If humans are basically spiritually intact, they probably can, with a bit of effort, fulfill what God wants of them. Thus instruction, inspiration, and motivation constitute what humans need and hence the essence of the atonement. If, however, humanity is totally depraved and consequently unable to do what is right no matter how much they wish to or how hard they try, then a more radical work had to be done on their behalf.

The Manifold Theories of the Atonement

The meaning and impact of the atonement are rich and complex. Consequently, various theories of the atonement have arisen. Given the abundance of biblical testimony to the fact of atonement, different theologians choose to emphasize different texts. Their choice of texts reflects their views on other areas of doctrine. We will examine several of the theories, thus gaining an appreciation for the complexity of the atonement's meaning. At the same time we will come to see the incompleteness and inadequacy of any single one by itself.

The Socinian Theory: The Atonement as Example

Faustus and Laelius Socinus, who lived in the sixteenth century, developed a teaching that is best represented today by the Unitarians. They rejected any idea of vicarious satisfaction. [6] The Socinians pointed instead to 1 Peter 2:21: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." From the Socinian perspective Jesus's death fills two human needs. First, it fills the

need for an example of that total love for God that we must display if we are to experience salvation. Second, the death of Jesus gives us inspiration. The ideal of total love for God is so lofty as to seem virtually unattainable. The death of Jesus is proof that such love does lie within the sphere of human accomplishment. What he could do, we can also!

The Socinian view, however, must come to grips with the fact that numerous portions of Scripture dealing with Jesus's death speak of ransom, sacrifice, priesthood, sin-bearing, and the like. Note, in fact, the statement that follows just three verses after the Socinians' favorite text (1 Pet. 2:21): "He himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed'" (v. 24). How is such a statement to be understood? The usual reply of the Socinians and others of their conviction is that atonement is only a metaphorical concept. [7] All that is necessary for God and humans to be restored to their intended relationship is personal adoption of both the teachings of Jesus and the example he set in life and especially in death.

<u>The Moral-Influence Theory: The Atonement as a Demonstration of God's Love</u>

The moral-influence theory sees Christ's death as a demonstration of God's love. First developed by Peter Abelard, this theory did not receive much support until it was popularized by Horace Bushnell (1802–1876) in the United States and by Hastings Rashdall (1858–1924) in Great Britain. In their view, God's nature is essentially love. They minimize such qualities as justice, holiness, and righteousness. Accordingly, humans need not fear God's justice and punishment. Thus, their problem is not that they have violated God's law and that God will (indeed, must) punish them; rather, it is human attitudes that keep them apart from God.

Our separation and alienation from God may take many different forms. We may not realize that our disobedience is a source of pain to God. Or we may not realize that despite all that has transpired, God still loves us. We may fear God, or we may blame him for the problems in our relationship with him, or even for the problems of the world in general. If we were to repent and turn to God in trust and faith, however, there would be reconciliation, for the difficulty does not lie with God's ability to forgive. The difficulty lies in us. [8] Bushnell regards sin as a type of sickness from which we must be healed. Christ came to correct this defect in us. His dying

demonstrates the full extent of God's love for us. Awareness of such love serves to heal our ignorance and fear of God.

<u>The Governmental Theory: The Atonement as a Demonstration of Divine Justice</u>

The preceding views of the atonement have pictured God as basically a sympathetic, indulgent being. They hold that in order to be restored to God's favor it is necessary only to do one's best or to respond to God's love. According to the governmental theory, however, the law of God is a serious matter, and violation or disregard of it is not to be taken lightly.

The major proponent of the governmental view was Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), by training a lawyer rather than a clergyman. Grotius understood God as a holy and righteous being who has established certain laws. Sin is a violation of those laws. God as ruler has the right to punish sin, for sin inherently deserves punishment. [9] God's actions must be understood, however, in light of his dominant attribute—namely, love.

According to Grotius, although God has the right to punish sin, it is not necessary or mandatory that he do so. It is possible for God to relax the law so that he need not exact a specific punishment or penalty for each violation. He has, however, acted in such a way as to maintain the interests of government. The role of God here is as a ruler rather than as a creditor or a master. A creditor may cancel a debt if he so chooses. A master may punish or not punish, according to his will. A ruler, however, may not simply ignore or overlook violations of the rules. God must, rather, act with a view to the best interests of those under his authority. [10] It was necessary, therefore, to have an atonement that would provide grounds for forgiveness and simultaneously retain the structure of moral government. What God did through Christ's death was to demonstrate what God's justice will require us to suffer if we continue in sin. The spectacle of the sufferings Christ bore is enough to deter us from sin. And if we turn from sin, we can be forgiven and God's moral government preserved. Because of Christ's death, then, it is possible for God to forgive sins without a breakdown of the moral fiber of the universe.

As we examine the governmental theory we are struck by its lack of explicit scriptural basis. Rather, we see the lawyer's mind at work, focusing on general principles of Scripture and drawing certain inferences from them. Isaiah 42:21 is the one verse cited as a direct support of the theory

that the death of Christ was demanded by God's concern to preserve his moral government and law as he forgives sin.

It pleased the LORD for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious.

But this verse does not deal with the idea of atonement in itself. Thus, whereas other theories take an explicit biblical statement concerning the nature of the atonement and emphasize it more than others, the governmental theory works inferentially from some of the general teachings and principles of Scripture.

<u>The Ransom Theory: The Atonement as Victory over the Forces of Sin and Evil</u>

The theory with the greatest claim to having been the standard view in the early history of the church is probably the so-called ransom theory. Gustaf Aulén has called it the classic view,[11] and in many ways that designation is correct, for in various forms it dominated the church's thinking until the time of Anselm and Abelard. It was even the primary way in which Augustine understood the atonement, and thus it enjoyed the immense prestige that his name accorded.

The major early developer of the ransom theory was Origen. Origen saw biblical history as the depiction of a great cosmic drama. In the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil, Satan established control over humanity. Satan now is the governing power in the world. As world ruler, his rights cannot simply be set aside, for God will not stoop to using techniques employed by the devil; God will not "steal" humanity back, as it were. The text on which Origen and others who hold the ransom theory rely most heavily is Jesus's statement that he had come to offer his life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). To whom was this ransom paid? Certainly God would not pay a ransom to himself. Rather, it must have been paid to the evil one, for it was he who held us captive until the ransom, namely, the soul of Jesus, was paid.[12] According to Origen, Satan thought he could be the lord of the soul of Jesus; Jesus's resurrection proved otherwise. Origen also suggests that the devil did not perceive that humankind, partially freed by Christ's teachings and miracles, would be

completely delivered by his death and resurrection. So Satan released the human race, only to find that he could not hold Christ, whom he had accepted in exchange for humanity.[13]

However, Scripture does not teach that it was the payment of a ransom to Satan that ensured his defeat and the triumph of God, but Christ's taking our place to free us from the curse of the law (Rom. 6:6–8; Gal. 3:13). By bearing the penalty of our sin and thus satisfying once and for all the just requirements of the law, Christ nullified Satan's control over us at its root—the power to bring us under the curse and condemnation of the law. Christ's death, then, was indeed God's triumph over the forces of evil, but only because it was a substitutionary sacrifice.

<u>The Satisfaction Theory: The Atonement as Compensation to the</u> Father

Of all the theories we are examining in this chapter, the one that most clearly regards the major effect of Christ's death as objective is usually known as the commercial or satisfaction theory. It emphasizes that Christ died to satisfy a principle in the very nature of God the Father. Thus the atonement did not involve any sort of payment to Satan.

Anselm deals with the atonement in his major work, *Cur Deus homo?* The title (literally, "Why God human?") indicates the basic direction of the treatise. Anselm attempts to discover why God took on human nature in the first place. Anselm's understanding of the atonement (and the incarnation) builds fundamentally on his doctrine of sin. Sin is basically failure to render God his due, taking from God what is rightfully his and dishonoring him. We sinners must restore to God what we have taken from him. But it is not sufficient merely to restore to God what we have taken away, for in taking from God what is his, we have injured him; and even after what we have taken has been returned, there must be some additional compensation or reparation for the injury that has been done.[14] A good comparison is modern judicial rulings that stipulate that a thief, in addition to restoring the victim's property, must pay punitive damages or serve a prison sentence.

God's violated honor can be put right again either by his punishing humans (condemning them) or by accepting satisfaction made on their behalf.[15] How was this satisfaction to be accomplished? Humans could not possibly have rendered satisfaction on their own behalf, for even if they were to do their best, that would only be giving God his due. To be

effective, the satisfaction rendered had to be greater than what all created beings are capable of doing, since they can do only what is already required of them. So only God could make satisfaction. However, if it was to avail for humanity in relationship to God, it had to be made by a human. Therefore, the satisfaction had to be rendered by someone who is both God and a human being. Consequently, the incarnation is a logical necessity. [16]

Christ died to satisfy a principle in the very nature of God the Father.

Christ, being both God and sinless human, did not deserve death. Therefore, his offering his life to God on behalf of the human race, of which he was a part, went beyond what was required of him. Thus, it could serve as a genuine satisfaction to God for humanity's sins. Was the payment enough? Yes, it was. The death of the God-man himself, inasmuch as he, being God, had power over his own life (John 10:18) and did not have to die, has infinite value. Indeed, for his body to have suffered even the slightest harm would have been a matter of infinite value.

We have seen that Christ's death is interpreted in a wide variety of ways. Each of the theories we have examined seizes on a significant aspect of his work. While we may have major objections to some of the theories, we recognize that each one possesses a dimension of the truth. In his death Christ (1) gave us a perfect example of the type of dedication God desires of us; (2) demonstrated the great extent of God's love; (3) underscored the seriousness of sin and the severity of God's righteousness; (4) triumphed over the forces of sin and death, liberating us from their power; and (5) rendered satisfaction to the Father for our sins. We humans needed all these things done for us, and Christ did them all. Now we must ask: Which of these is the most basic? Which one makes the others possible? We will turn to these questions in the next chapter. As we do so, it will be with a profound appreciation for the full measure of what Christ did to bring us into fellowship with the Father.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- When attempting to understand the work of Christ, what did it mean for him to humiliate himself by becoming incarnate? What does it mean for the believer today?
- In light of Scripture's revelation, what does it mean for Christ to be king and priest? Are these two completely different functions?
- How is the atonement to be understood in light of the other doctrines of the Christian faith?
- According to the Socinian understanding of the atonement, what two needs does Jesus's death fulfill and why?
- How do you respond to the satisfaction theory of the atonement?

The Central Theme of Atonement

Chapter Objectives

After completing this chapter, the learner should be able to do the following:

- 1. Recall five background factors of the atonement and show how they influence a view of the atonement.
- 2. Recognize and explain the teaching of the New Testament that discusses the atonement.
- **3.** Identify and describe the basic meaning of the atonement and the importance of that meaning to the believer.
- **4.** List and describe five objections to the penal-substitution theory and demonstrate the biblical and rational problems with these objections.
- **5.** Identify and describe the implications of substitutionary atonement for all of humanity.

Chapter Summary

The doctrines of the nature of God, the status of the law, the human condition, Christ, and the Old Testament sacrificial system have great influence on one's view of the atonement. In the Gospels, Jesus Christ saw himself as a ransom, a substitute, and a sacrifice. Paul described Christ's atoning work as propitiation, or appearement of God's wrath, for the sins of humanity. Therefore, we may understand the atonement to involve sacrifice, propitiation, substitution, and reconciliation in the relationship of God to humanity. It is the penal substitution theory that best describes this relationship for the atonement.

Chapter Outline

Background Factors

- The Nature of God
- Status of the Law
- The Human Condition
- Christ

- The Old Testament Sacrificial System
- **The New Testament Teaching**
 - The Gospels
 - The Pauline Writings
- The Basic Meaning of Atonement
 - Sacrifice
 - Propitiation
 - Substitution
 - Reconciliation
- Objections to the Penal-Substitution Theory
 - Distortion of the Nature of the Godhead
 - The Morality or Rightness of Substitution
 - Divine Hypocrisy
 - The Culturally Conditioned Nature of the Theory
 - Too Individualistic a View

<u>Implications of Substitutionary Atonement</u>

In examining the several theories of the atonement in the preceding chapter, we noted that each seizes on a significant aspect of Christ's atoning work. We must now ask which of those aspects is the primary or most basic dimension of that work, the one to which the others adhere or on which they depend.

Background Factors

Our views on other doctrines necessarily have a strong influence on our conclusions regarding the atonement. So we begin by reviewing the background against which we will construct our understanding of that doctrine.

The Nature of God

Just as biblical passages appear in contexts, so also do doctrines. In every matter for theological study, the broadest context is, of course, the doctrine of God, especially where a relationship with God is involved, such as the atonement. The nature of God is perfect and complete holiness. This is not optional or arbitrary; it is the way God is by nature. Being contrary to God's nature, sin is repulsive to him. He is allergic to sin, so to speak. Yet God is a loving God who yearns for his human creatures to enjoy fellowship with him. These two attributes are not in competition with each other. God is characterized by a loving holiness, or a holy love.

Status of the Law

The second major factor to be considered as we construct our theory of the atonement is the status of God's moral and spiritual law. The law should be seen as the expression of God's person and will. He does not command love and forbid murder simply because he decides to do so. God pronounces love good because he himself is love. Lying is wrong because God himself cannot lie.

In effect, then, the law is something of a transcript of the nature of God. Disobeying the law is serious, not because the law has some inherent value or dignity that must be preserved, but because disobeying it is actually an attack on the very nature of God himself. Thus, legalism—the attitude that

the law is to be obeyed for its own sake—is unacceptable. Rather, the law is to be understood as a means of relating to a personal God.

Thus violation of the law, whether by transgressing or by failing to fulfill it, carries the serious consequences of liability to punishment, especially death. Adam and Eve were told that in the day that they ate of the fruit of the tree they would surely die (Gen. 2:15–17). According to Paul, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), and "whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction" (Gal. 6:8). There is a definite link between sin and liability to punishment. Particularly in the last of the citations (Gal. 6:7–8) a virtual cause-effect connection between sin and punishment is in evidence. In each case, however, it is understood that punishment is an inevitability rather than a possibility.

The Human Condition

Another crucial factor in our understanding of the atonement is the nature and condition of humanity. We noted earlier (see pp. 226–27) the fact of total depravity, by which we meant not that humans are as wicked as they can possibly be, but rather that they are utterly unable to do anything to save themselves or to extricate themselves from their condition of sinfulness. It follows from this that the atonement, to accomplish for humanity what needed to be done, had to be made by someone else on humanity's behalf.

Christ

Our understanding of Christ's nature is crucial here. Earlier we stated that Christ is both God and human (see chaps. 23–25). Jesus's humanity means that his atoning death is applicable to humans. Because Jesus was really one of us, he was able to redeem us. He was not an outsider attempting to do something for us, but a genuine human being representing the rest of us. This is implied in what Paul says in Galatians 4:4–5: "God sent his Son . . . born under the law, to redeem those under law." His death is of sufficient value to atone for the entire human race. The death of an ordinary human could scarcely have sufficient value to cover his or her own sins, let alone those of the whole race. But Jesus's death is of infinite worth. As God, Jesus did not have to die. Because he was sinless, he did not have to die in payment for his own sins. Thus, his death can atone for the sins of all humankind.

The Old Testament Sacrificial System

Christ's atoning death must also be seen against the background of the Old Testament sacrificial system. Before Christ's atoning death, it was necessary for sacrifices to be regularly offered to compensate for the sins that had been committed. These sacrifices were necessary, not to work a reformation in the sinner, nor to deter the sinner or others from committing further sin, but to atone for the sin, which inherently deserved punishment. There had been offense against God's law and hence against God himself, and this had to be set right.

The Hebrew word most commonly used in the Old Testament for the various types of atonement is $k\bar{a}phar$ and its derivatives. The word literally means "to cover."[1] Sinners were delivered from punishment by the interposing of something between their sin and God. God then saw the atoning sacrifice rather than the sin. The covering of the sin meant that the penalty no longer had to be exacted from the sinner.[2] Several factors were necessary for the sacrifice to accomplish its intended effect. The sacrificial animal had to be spotless, without blemish. The one for whom atonement was being made had to present the animal and lay hands on it (Lev. 1:3–4). The laying on of hands symbolized a transfer of the guilt from the sinner to the victim.[3] Then the offering or sacrifice was accepted by the priest.

Jesus's humanity means that his atoning death is applicable to humans; his deity means that his death can atone for the sins of all humankind.

While the legal portions of the Old Testament typify with considerable clarity the sacrificial and substitutionary character of Christ's death, the prophetic passages go even further. They establish the connection between the Old Testament sacrifices and Christ's death. Isaiah 53 is the clearest of all. Having described the person of the Messiah and indicated the nature and extent of the sinners' iniquity, the prophet makes an allusion to Christ's sacrifice.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (v. 6)

The iniquity of sinners is to be transferred to the Suffering Servant, just as in the Old Testament rites the sins were transferred to the sacrificial animal. The laying on of hands was an anticipation of the believer's active acceptance of Christ's atoning work.

The New Testament Teaching

The Gospels

The New Testament is much more detailed on the subject of Christ's atonement. We will look first at our Lord's own testimony regarding the nature and purpose of his death. Although Jesus did not have a great deal to say about his death during the first part of his ministry, toward the end he began to speak about it quite explicitly and clearly.

Jesus profoundly believed that the Father had sent him to do the Father's work. He declares in John 10:36 that the Father had sent him into the world. The apostle John expressly relates the sending by the Father to the Son's redemptive and atoning work: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17). The purpose of the coming was atonement, and the Father was personally involved in that work, for the penalty fell on his own Son, whom he had voluntarily sent.

Jesus had a powerful conviction that his life and death constituted a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. In particular, he interpreted his own life and death as a clear fulfillment of Isaiah 53. At the Last Supper he said, "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment" (Luke 22:37). By citing Isaiah 53:12, he identified himself as the Suffering Servant. His frequent references to his suffering make it clear that he saw his death as the primary reason for his having come. He plainly told his disciples that the Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by the religious authorities, and be killed (Mark 8:31).

Jesus saw his death as constituting a *ransom*. Without specifying to whom the ransom was to be paid, or from whose control the enslaved were

to be freed, Jesus indicated that his giving of his life was to be the means by which many would be freed from bondage (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45).

Christ also saw himself as our *substitute*. This concept is particularly prominent in the Gospel of John. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). He was, of course, stating a principle of broad application. But inasmuch as he was speaking on the eve of his crucifixion, there can be little doubt of what was on his mind. The apostle John also records Caiaphas's sneering remark to the Sanhedrin: "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (John 11:49–50). The point of interest is not the attitude of Caiaphas but the deep truth Caiaphas had unknowingly spoken. Jesus would die in the place not merely of the nation but of the entire world. Significantly, John calls attention to this remark of Caiaphas a second time (18:14).

There are also indications that Jesus saw himself in the role of a *sacrifice*. He said in his great high-priestly prayer, "And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth" (John 17:19 RSV). The verb here is common in sacrificial contexts. The statement of John the Baptist at the beginning of Jesus's ministry carries similar connotations —"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29 RSV).

Jesus had a profound sense that he was the source and giver of true life. He says in John 17:3, "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." The giving of eternal life is here linked to both the Father and the Son. We can receive this life through an especially close relationship to the Son, which he also symbolically referred to as "eating his flesh" (John 6:52–58).

To sum up what Jesus and the Gospel writers said about his death: Jesus saw a close identification between himself and his Father. He spoke regularly of the Father's having sent him. He and the Father are one, and so the work that the Son did was also the work of the Father. Jesus came for the purpose of giving his life as a *ransom*, a means of liberating those people who were enslaved to sin. He offered himself as a *substitute* for them. Paradoxically, his death gives life; we obtain it by taking him into ourselves. His death was a *sacrifice* typified by the Old Testament sacrificial system. These various motifs are vital elements in our construction of the doctrine of the atonement.

The Pauline Writings

When we turn to the writings of Paul, we find a rich collection of teachings on the atonement, teachings that agree with what the Gospels say on the subject. Paul also identifies and equates Jesus's love and working with that of the Father. Numerous texts can be cited: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:19); "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Thus, like the Gospel writers and Jesus himself, Paul does not view the atonement as something Jesus did independently of the Father; it is the work of both. Furthermore, what Paul says of the Father's love, he also says of the Son's: "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died" (2 Cor. 5:14; see also Eph. 5:2). The love of the Father and that of the Son are interchangeable. George Ladd comments: "The idea that the cross expresses the love of Christ for us while he wrings atonement from a stern and unwilling Father, perfectly just, but perfectly inflexible, is a perversion of New Testament theology." [4]

Having said this, however, we must note that the theme of divine wrath on sin is also prominent in Paul. It is important to realize, for example, that Romans 3:21–26, a passage about the redemption God has provided in Jesus Christ, is the culmination of a process of reasoning that began with the pronouncement of God's wrath against sin: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Rom. 1:18). God's holiness requires that there be atonement if the condemned condition of sinners is to be overcome. The love of God provides that atonement.

Paul frequently thought of and referred to the death of Christ as a sacrifice. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 he writes, "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." His numerous references to Christ's blood also suggest a sacrifice: "we have now been justified by his blood" (Rom. 5:9); "In him we have redemption through his blood" (Eph. 1:7); he has reconciled to himself all things, "making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col. 1:20). Ladd has pointed out, however, that there was very little actual shedding of Christ's blood as such.[5] While there was a loss of blood when the crown of thorns was put on his head and when the nails were driven into his flesh, it was not until after he had died that blood (mixed with water) gushed forth (John 19:34). So the references to Christ's blood are not to his

actual physical blood per se, but to his death as a sacrificial provision for our sins.

The apostle Paul also maintains that Christ died for us or on our behalf. God "did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32); "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us" (Eph. 5:2); Christ became a "curse for us" (Gal. 3:13; see also Rom. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:10).

Finally, Paul regards Christ's death as propitiatory; that is, Christ died to appease God's wrath against sin. This point has been questioned, especially by C. H. Dodd in his book *The Bible and the Greeks*. Dodd bases his argument on the way the verb *hilaskomai* and its cognates are used in the Septuagint. He contends that it is not propitiation but expiation that is in view in verses like Romans 3:25.[6] God was not appeased by the death of Christ. Rather, what Christ accomplished in dying was to cleanse sinners of their sin, to cover their sin and uncleanness.

It appears questionable, however, whether Dodd's conclusions, influential though they have been, are accurate.[7] His conclusions may well have resulted from an inaccurate conception that the wrath of the Father and the love of the Son constitute an irresolvable contradiction within the Trinity. This misconception betrays itself in Dodd's failure to take very seriously the contrary evidence in such passages as Zechariah 7:2; 8:22; and Malachi 1:9, where a cognate of the verb *hilaskomai* refers to propitiation or appearing God.

In contradiction to Dodd, we note that there are passages in Paul's writings that cannot be satisfactorily interpreted if we deny that God's wrath needed to be appeased. This is particularly true of Romans 3:25–26. In the past, God had left sins unpunished. He could conceivably be accused of overlooking sin since he had not required punishment for it. Now, however, he has put forth Jesus as a "propitiation" (KJV; the Greek word is *hilastērion*). This proves both that God is just (his wrath required the sacrifice) and that he is the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus (his love provided the sacrifice for them).

The numerous passages that speak of the wrath of God against sin are evidence that Christ's death was necessarily propitiatory: Romans 1:18; 2:5, 8; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22; 12:19; 13:4–5; Ephesians 2:3; 5:6; Colossians 3:6; and 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:16; 5:9. So then, Paul's idea of the atoning death (Christ as *hilastērion*) is not simply that it covers sin and cleanses from its

corruption (expiation) but that the sacrifice also appeases a God who hates sin and is radically opposed to it (propitiation).

The Basic Meaning of Atonement

Having reviewed the Bible's direct teaching on the subject of the atonement, we need now to concentrate on its basic motifs.

Sacrifice

We have already noted several references to the death of Christ as a sacrifice. We will now supplement our understanding of this concept by noting particularly what the book of Hebrews says on the subject. In Hebrews 9:6–15 the work of Christ is likened to the Old Testament Day of Atonement. Christ is depicted as the high priest who entered into the Holy Place to offer sacrifice. The sacrifice Christ offered, however, was not the blood of goats and calves, but his own blood (v. 12). Thus he secured "eternal redemption." A vivid contrast is drawn between the sacrifice of animals, which had only a limited effect, and of Christ, whose death has eternal effect. Whereas the Mosaic sacrifices had to be offered repeatedly, Christ's death was a once-for-all atonement for the sins of all humankind (v. 12).

A similar thought is expressed in Hebrews 10:5–18. Here again the idea is that instead of burnt offerings, the body of Christ was sacrificed (v. 5). This was a once-for-all offering (v. 10). Instead of the daily offering by the priest (v. 11), Christ "offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins" (v. 12 RSV). In Hebrews 13 the writer likens the death of Christ to the sin offering of the Old Testament. He died to sanctify the people through his blood. We are therefore exhorted to go to him outside the camp, and bear the abuse he endured (vv. 10–13).

What is unique about Christ's sacrifice, and very important to keep in mind, is that Christ is both the victim and the priest who offers it. What were two parties in the Levitical system are combined in Christ. The mediation Christ began with his death continues even now in the form of his priestly intercession for us.

Propitiation

In our discussion of the Pauline material on the atonement, we noted the controversy over whether Christ's death was propitiatory. Here we must note that the concept of propitiation is not limited to Paul's writings. In the Old Testament sacrificial system, the offering was made before the Lord, and there it took effect as well: "the priest shall burn it on the altar on top of the food offerings presented to the LORD. In this way the priest will make atonement for [the sinners] for the sin they have committed, and they will be forgiven" (Lev. 4:35). In view of God's anger against sin and the statement that the offering should be made to the Lord and forgiveness would follow, it follows that this verse points to an appeasement of God.[8]

Substitution

We observed that Christ died for our sake or on our behalf. But is it proper to speak of his death as substitutionary; that is, did he actually die in our place?

Several considerations indicate that Christ did indeed take our place. First, there is a whole set of passages that tell us that our sins were "laid upon" Christ, that he "bore" our iniquity, that he "was made sin" for us. One prominent instance is in Isaiah 53.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all. (v. 6)
[He] was numbered with the transgressors.
For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors. (v. 12)

On seeing Jesus, John the Baptist exclaimed, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Paul said, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). And evidently having Isaiah 53:5–6, 12 in mind, Peter wrote, "'He himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed'" (1 Pet. 2:24). The common idea in these several passages is that Jesus bore our sins—they were laid on him or transferred from us to him.

A further line of evidence is the Greek prepositions used to designate the precise relationship between Christ's work and us. The preposition that most clearly suggests substitution is *anti*. This word in nonsoteriological contexts clearly means "instead of" or "in the place of." For example, Jesus asked, "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?" (Luke 11:11). When we look at passages where the preposition *anti* is used to specify the relationship between Christ's death and sinners, this same idea of substitution is clearly present. Thus, just as substitution is in view in the "eye for an eye" statement of Matthew 5:38, it is also in view in cases like Matthew 20:28: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." A. T. Robertson says that important doctrinal passages like Matthew 20:28 "teach the substitutionary conception of Christ's death, not because *anti* of itself means 'instead,' which is not true, but because the context renders any other resultant idea out of the question." [9]

The other pertinent preposition is *hyper*. It has a variety of meanings, including "instead of." It has been asserted, however, that *anti* literally means "instead of" and *hyper* means "on behalf of." G. B. Winer counters, "In most cases one who acts in behalf of another appears for him (1 Tim. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:15), and hence *hyper* sometimes borders on *anti*, *instead* of."[10]

In some biblical passages (e.g., Rom. 5:6–8; 8:32; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 2:9), *hyper* may be taken in the sense of "on behalf of," although it probably means "instead of." In several other passages, however (notably John 11:50; 2 Cor. 5:15; Gal. 3:13), the meaning is obviously "instead of." It is not necessary that the meaning "instead of" be overt in every instance, for there is sufficient scriptural evidence that Christ's death was substitutionary.

<u>Reconciliation</u>

The death of Christ also brings to an end the enmity and estrangement that exist between God and humankind. Our hostility toward God is removed. The emphasis in Scripture is usually that we are reconciled to God—that is, he plays the active role; he reconciles us to himself. On this basis, the advocates of the moral-influence theory have contended that such reconciliation is strictly God's work.[11] Are they right?

To answer, we need to note, first, that when the Bible entreats someone to be reconciled to another, the hostility does not necessarily lie with the person who is being addressed.[12] Jesus's statement in Matthew 5:23–24 bears out this contention: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." Note that the other person is the one who feels wronged and bears the animosity; there is no indication that the one who is offering the gift feels any such hostility. Yet it is the latter who is urged to be reconciled to the other. Similarly, although God is not the one bearing animosity, it is he who works to bring about reconciliation.

Another notable biblical reference in this regard is the word of Paul in Romans 11:15. The reconciliation of the world is now possible because of the casting off of the Jews. God takes the initiative, rejecting Israel from divine favor and the grace of the gospel. The reconciliation of the world (gentiles) stands in contrast to the rejection of Israel. Reconciliation, then, is presumably God's act as well, his act of receiving the world into his favor and of dealing specially with them. As important as it is for humans to turn to God, the process of reconciliation primarily involves God's turning in favor toward them.

By substituting himself for us, Jesus actually bore the punishment that should have been ours, appeared the Father, and effected a reconciliation between God and humankind.

Objections to the Penal-Substitution Theory

Obviously, of the several theories examined in the preceding chapter, it is the satisfaction theory that best expresses the essential aspect of Christ's atoning work. Christ died to satisfy the justice of God's nature. This view has commonly been referred to as the penal-substitution theory. By substituting himself for us, Jesus actually bore the punishment that should have been ours, appeared the Father, and effected a reconciliation between God and humankind. Although the relevant Scripture passages point clearly in the direction of this theory of the atonement, several objections have

been raised. In recent years, the objections have been expanded and sharpened. [13]

Distortion of the Nature of the Godhead

To some theologians, the idea of the wrath of God obscures the fundamental nature of God, namely, that he is love.[14] There is a dual criticism here, that the picture of a wrathful, judgmental God is unfaithful to the biblical picture, and that this is unjust, punishing an innocent person for the sins of others. A further dimension of the theological problem is the apparent division that it introduces between a gentle, loving Son, and a violent, judgmental Father. Another facet of the objection relates to the concept of propitiation. That the loving Son wins over the Father from his anger and wrath against sin to a loving, forgiving spirit is seen as an indication of internal conflict within the mind of God or between the persons of the Trinity.[15]

In answering this objection it is helpful to recall the numerous references indicating that Christ was sent by the *Father's* love. So it is not the case that the propitiation changed a wrathful God into a loving God. While the Father's holiness and righteousness and justice required that there be a payment for sin, his love provided it. This is indicated quite clearly in 1 John 4:10: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

Propitiation, therefore, does not detract from God's love and mercy. By requiring the payment of the penalty, God demonstrated how great are his holiness and justice. By providing that payment himself, he manifested the extent of his love. As Paul puts it in Romans 3:26, "He did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

The Morality or Rightness of Substitution

The second objection suggests that the Father's substituting his Son to bear our penalty smacks of unfairness and injustice. To use a courtroom analogy, suppose that a judge, upon finding a defendant guilty, proceeds to punish not the defendant but an innocent party. Would this not be improper? [16]

This criticism is based on an unbiblical separation of the persons of the Trinity. The punishment for human sins is not something forced on an

innocent and unwilling Son. Jesus said, "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father" (John 10:17–18). Jesus was not compelled by the Father to lay down his life. He did so voluntarily and thus pleased the Father. The second answer is that Christ's work is also the Father's. Several texts indicate that the Father and the Son are one. Thus, the Father did not place the punishment on someone other than himself. It is clear that God is both the judge and the person paying the penalty. In terms of our courtroom analogy, it is not as if the judge passes sentence on the defendant, and some innocent and hitherto uninvolved party then appears to pay the fine or serve the sentence. Rather, it is as if the judge passes sentence on the defendant, then removes his robes and goes off to serve the sentence in the defendant's place.

Divine Hypocrisy

Why does God not simply forgive sins? If we humans are capable of forgiving one another simply by an act of goodwill, should not God be able to do the same?[17] This fails to consider, however, that God is not merely a private person who has been wronged but also the official administrator of the judicial system. For God to remove or ignore the guilt of sin without requiring a payment would in effect destroy the very moral fiber of the universe, the distinction between right and wrong. An additional consideration is that when someone sins against us, we are aware that the fault may at least in part be ours, and that we have on numerous other occasions sinned against others. But with God, who does not tempt or do wrong, there is no such element of imperfection to make our sin seem less dreadful.

The Culturally Conditioned Nature of the Theory

Another critique of the penal-satisfaction view of the atonement notes that it actually grew up in a period in which society was structured on the basis of feudalism. In Anselm's version, from which the modern penal-satisfaction views are derived, the owing of honor to the feudal lord became a very important matter. Thus, he came to conceive of the individual's relationship to God on that model.[18] The view hinders the church's mission. The whole idea of a vengeful God is offensive to persons today.

Some critics contend that the popularity of the penal-substitutionary view is tied to a modern view, and as such has little to say to a postmodern world. [19]

It is true that this conception of a holy God is unacceptable to many persons today. It should be noted, however, that to some extent this has always been the case. There is and will always be a scandal to the gospel. While we must be careful not to state the doctrine in an unnecessarily offensive fashion, we also cannot accommodate the biblical view to an anthropocentric and in some ways libertine culture without in the process making it something less than God's revealed truth.

<u>Too Individualistic a View</u>

Some criticize the emphasis on the individual's relationship to God and on individual sins, to the neglect of the broader societal dimensions of sin. Beyond that, it is far too Western in its origins and its tone to be acceptable to persons in other parts of the world, particularly those in shame-based, rather than guilt-based, societies.[20] To be sure, just as a missionary must begin with the recipient's language, so certain aspects of the multifaceted explanation of the atonement may need to be used as the beginning of the conversation. Yet the penal-substitution dimension of the atonement is more than just a Western concept; it is based on the Scripture itself.

Implications of Substitutionary Atonement

The substitutionary theory of the atoning death of Christ, when grasped in all its complexity, is a rich and meaningful truth. It carries several major implications for our understanding of salvation:

- 1. The penal-substitution theory confirms the biblical teaching of the total depravity of all humans. God would not have gone so far as to put his precious Son to death had it not been absolutely necessary. Humans are totally unable to meet their own need.
- 2. God's nature is not one-sided, nor is there any tension between its different aspects. He is not merely righteous and demanding, nor is he merely loving and giving. He is righteous, so much so that sacrifice for sin had to be provided. He is loving, so much so that he provided that sacrifice himself.

- 3. There is no other way of salvation but by grace and, specifically, the death of Christ. It has an infinite value and thus covers the sins of all humankind for all time. A finite sacrifice, by contrast, cannot even fully cover the sins of the individual offering it.
- 4. There is security for the believer in his or her relationship to God, for the basis of the relationship, Christ's sacrificial death, is complete and permanent. Although our feelings might change, the ground of our relationship to God remains unshaken.
- 5. We must never take lightly the salvation we have. Although it is free, it is also costly, for it cost God the ultimate sacrifice. We must therefore always be grateful for what he has done; we must love him in return and emulate his giving character.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

Questions for Review and Reflection

- How does Paul regard Christ's death in his New Testament writings?
- What elements are involved in the basic meaning of the atonement and why?
- What are the objections to the penal-substitution theory of the atonement, and how would you respond to them?
- What significance for Christian theology may be drawn from the penal-substitution theory of the atonement?
- What did you learn to appreciate about the nature of God from this chapter?

The Holy Spirit

The Person of the Holy Spirit

Chapter Objectives

Following the study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- **1.** Express at least three reasons why the study of the Holy Spirit is important.
- 2. Cite reasons why understanding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been and continues to be difficult.
- **3.** Understand the nature (the deity and personality) of the Holy Spirit.
- **4.** Assess the implications of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Summary

Because the Holy Spirit is not systematically described in Scripture, the doctrine of the Third Person of the Trinity has been controversial. The Spirit is important, since he provides contact between the believer and God. From the biblical evidence, we can discover his deity and personality. Several conclusions about the person and work of the Holy Spirit may be drawn from our study.

Chapter Outline

The Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Difficulties in Understanding the Holy Spirit

The Nature of the Holy Spirit

- The Deity of the Holy Spirit
- The Personality of the Holy Spirit

<u>Implications of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit</u>

The culminating parts of our survey of systematic theology should be seen in the context of the doctrines we have already examined. We began with God, the Supreme Being, and his work in planning, creating, and caring for all that is. We then examined the highest of the creatures, humans, in terms of their divinely intended destiny and their departure from that divine plan. We saw as well the consequences that came on the human race and the provision that God made for their redemption and restoration. Creation, providence, and the provision of salvation are the objective work of God. We come now to the subjective work of God—the application of his divine saving work to humans. We will examine the actual character of the salvation received and experienced by humans. Next we will investigate the collective form faith takes—that is, the church. And we will look, finally, at the completion of God's plan, that is, the last things.

The Holy Spirit is the point at which the Trinity becomes personal to the believer.

Another way of viewing our survey of systematic theology is to see it as focusing on the work of the different members of the Trinity. The Father is highlighted in the work of creation and providence (part 3), the Son has effected redemption for sinful humanity (parts 4–5), and the Holy Spirit applies this redemptive work to God's creature, thus making salvation real (parts 6–8). An understanding of the Third Person of the Trinity will illumine the doctrine of salvation.

The Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

There are several reasons why the study of the Holy Spirit is of special significance for us. One is that the Holy Spirit is the point at which the Trinity becomes personal to the believer. We generally think of the Father as transcendent and far off in heaven; similarly, the Son seems far removed in history and thus also relatively unknowable. But the Holy Spirit is active within the lives of believers; he is resident within us. He is the particular

person of the Trinity through whom the entire Triune Godhead currently works in us.

A second reason why the study of the Holy Spirit is especially important is that we live in the period in which the Holy Spirit's work is more prominent than that of the other members of the Trinity. The Father's work was the most conspicuous in the Old Testament period, as was the Son's in the period covered by the Gospels and up to the ascension. The Holy Spirit has occupied center stage from the time of Pentecost on, that is, the period covered by the book of Acts and the Epistles, and the ensuing periods of church history.

A third reason for the importance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is that in a culture that stresses the experiential, it is primarily through the Holy Spirit's work that we feel God's presence within and the Christian life is given a special tangibility.

<u>Difficulties in Understanding the Holy Spirit</u>

While study of the Holy Spirit is especially important, our understanding is often more incomplete and confused here than with most of the other doctrines. Among the reasons for this is that we have less explicit revelation in the Bible regarding the Holy Spirit than about the Father or the Son. Perhaps this is in part because a large share of the Holy Spirit's ministry is to declare and glorify the Son (John 16:14). Unlike other doctrines, there are no systematic discussions regarding the Holy Spirit. Virtually the only extended treatment is Jesus's discourse in John 14–16. On most of the occasions, the Holy Spirit is mentioned in connection with another issue.

A further problem is the lack of concrete imagery. God the Father is understood fairly well because the figure of a father is familiar to practically everyone. The Son is not hard to conceptualize, for he actually appeared in human form and was observed and reported on. But the Spirit is intangible and difficult to visualize. Complicating this matter is the unfortunate terminology of the King James Version and other older English translations that refer to the Holy Spirit as the "Holy Ghost."

In addition, a problem arises from the fact that during the present era, the Spirit performs a ministry of serving the Father and Son, carrying out their will (which, of course, is also his). Now this temporary subordination of

function—the Son's during his earthly ministry and the Spirit's during the present era—must not lead us to draw the conclusion that there is an inferiority in essence as well. Yet in practice many of us have an unofficial theology that looks on the Spirit as being of a lower essence than the Father and the Son. In effect, the Trinity is visualized as FATHER, SON, and holy spirit. This error is similar to that of the Arians. From the biblical passages that speak of the Son's subordination to the Father during his earthly ministry, they concluded that the Son is of a lesser status and essence than is the Father.

In the last half of the twentieth century, on the popular or lay level, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit became the most controversial of all doctrines. As a result, there has been some reluctance to discuss the Spirit, for fear that such discussion might lead to dissension. While in certain circles "charismatic Christian" is a badge of prestige, in others it is a stigma.

The Nature of the Holy Spirit

The Deity of the Holy Spirit

The deity of the Holy Spirit is not as easily established as is the deity of the Father and the Son. There are, however, several bases on which one may conclude that the Holy Spirit is God in the same fashion and to the same degree as are the Father and the Son.

First, we should note that various references to the Holy Spirit are interchangeable with references to God. In Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira had sold a piece of property and represented the money they brought as the whole of what they had received. In rebuking Ananias, Peter asks, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?" (v. 3). In the next verse he asserts, "You have not lied just to human beings but to God." It seems that in Peter's mind "lying to the Holy Spirit" and "lying to God" were interchangeable expressions.

Another passage where "Holy Spirit" and "God" are used interchangeably is Paul's discussion of the Christian's body. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 he writes, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?" In 6:19 he uses almost identical language: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples

of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" It is clear that, to Paul, to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit is to be inhabited by God. By equating the phrase "God's temple" with the phrase "a temple of the Holy Spirit," Paul makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is God.

Further, the Holy Spirit possesses the attributes or qualities of God. One of these is omniscience. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:10–11:

These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

And Jesus promises in John 16:13 that his followers will be guided into all truth by the Spirit.

The power of the Holy Spirit is also spoken of prominently in the New Testament. In Luke 1:35, a reference to the virgin conception, the phrases "the Holy Spirit" and "the power of the Most High" are in parallel or synonymous construction. Paul acknowledged that the accomplishments of his ministry were achieved "by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God" (Rom. 15:19). Moreover, Jesus attributed to the Holy Spirit the ability to change human hearts and personalities: it is the Spirit who works conviction (John 16:8–11) and regeneration (John 3:5–8) within us. While these texts do not specifically affirm that the Spirit is omnipotent, they certainly indicate that he has power that presumably only God has.

Yet another attribute of the Spirit that brackets him with the Father and the Son is his eternality. In Hebrews 9:14 he is spoken of as "the eternal Spirit" through whom Jesus offered himself up. Only God, however, is eternal (Heb. 1:10–12), all creatures being temporal. So the Holy Spirit must be God.

In addition to having divine attributes, the Holy Spirit performs certain works that are commonly ascribed to God. He was and continues to be involved with the creation, in both originating it and providentially keeping and directing it. The psalmist says,

When you send your Spirit, they [all the parts of the creation previously enumerated] are created, and you renew the face of the ground. (Ps. 104:30) The most abundant biblical testimony regarding the Holy Spirit's role concerns his spiritual working on or within humans. We have already noted Jesus's attribution of regeneration to the Holy Spirit (John 3:5–8). This is confirmed by Paul in Titus 3:5. In addition, the Spirit raised Christ from the dead and will also raise us; that is, God will raise us through the Spirit (Rom. 8:11).

Giving the Scriptures is another divine work of the Holy Spirit. In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul writes, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Peter also speaks of the Spirit's role in giving us the Scriptures, but emphasizes the influence on the writer rather than the end product: "For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

Our final consideration arguing for the deity of the Holy Spirit is his association with the Father and the Son on a basis of apparent equality. One of the best-known evidences is the baptismal formula prescribed in the Great Commission: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). The Pauline benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14 is another evidence, as is 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, where Paul in discussing spiritual gifts coordinates the three members of the Godhead. Peter likewise, in the salutation of his first epistle, links the three together, noting their respective roles in the process of salvation: "[To the exiles of the dispersion] who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood" (1 Pet. 1:2).

The Personality of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force. This point is especially important at a time when pantheistic tendencies are entering Western culture through the influence of Eastern religions. The Bible makes clear in several ways that the Holy Spirit is a person and possesses all the qualities that implies.

The first evidence of the Spirit's personality is the use of the masculine pronoun in representing him. Since the Greek word *pneuma* ("spirit") is neuter and since pronouns are to agree with their antecedents in person, number, and gender, we would expect the neuter pronoun to be used to

represent the Holy Spirit. Yet in John 16:13–14 Jesus's description of the Holy Spirit's ministry uses a masculine pronoun where we would expect a neuter pronoun. The only possible antecedent in the immediate context is "Spirit of truth" (v. 13). Either John in reporting Jesus's discourse made a grammatical error at this point (this is unlikely since we do not find any similar error elsewhere in the Gospel), or he deliberately chose to use the masculine to convey to us that Jesus is referring to a person, not a thing.

A second line of evidence of the Holy Spirit's personality is a number of passages where his work is, in one way or another, reminiscent of the work of someone else who is clearly a personal agent. The term *paraklētos* ("counselor, advocate") is applied to the Holy Spirit in John 14:26; 15:26; and 16:7. In each of these contexts, it is obvious that it is not some sort of abstract influence that is in view, for Jesus is also expressly spoken of as a *paraklētos* (1 John 2:1). Most significant are Jesus's words in John 14:16, where he says that he will pray to the Father who will give the disciples another *paraklētos*. The word for "another" means "another of the same kind."[1] In view of Jesus's statements linking the Spirit's coming with his own going away (e.g., 16:7), this means that the Spirit is a replacement for Jesus and will carry on the same role. The similarity in their function is an indication that the Holy Spirit, like Jesus, must be a person.

Another function that both Jesus and the Holy Spirit perform, and that accordingly serves as an indication of the Spirit's personality, is glorifying another member of the Trinity. In John 16:14 Jesus says that the Spirit "will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you." A parallel is found in John 17:4, where in his high-priestly prayer Jesus states that during his ministry on earth he glorified the Father.

The most interesting groupings of the Holy Spirit with personal agents are those in which he is linked with both the Father and the Son. Among the best known once again are the baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19 and the benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14. Jude enjoins, "But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life" (vv. 20–21). Peter addresses his readers as those who are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood" (1 Pet. 1:2). The Holy Spirit is also linked with the Father and the Son in various events of Jesus's

ministry. At the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:16–17), all three persons of the Trinity were present. Jesus said his casting out of demons was related to the Father and the Spirit (Matt. 12:28). The conjunction of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son in these events is an indication that he is personal, just as they are.

The Spirit's possession of certain personal characteristics is our third indication of his personality. Among the most notable are intelligence, will, and emotions, traditionally regarded as the three fundamental elements of personhood. Of various references to the Spirit's intelligence and knowledge, we cite here John 14:26, where Jesus promises that "the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." The will of the Spirit is attested in 1 Corinthians 12:11, which states that the various spiritual gifts are "the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines." That the Spirit has emotions is evident in Ephesians 4:30, where Paul warns against grieving the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit can also be affected as is a person, thus displaying personality passively. It is possible to lie to the Holy Spirit, as Ananias and Sapphira did (Acts 5:3–4). Paul speaks of the sins of grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30) and quenching the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19). Stephen accuses his adversaries of always resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). While it is possible to resist a mere force, one cannot lie to or grieve something impersonal. And then, most notably, there is the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:29). This sin, which Jesus suggests is more serious than blasphemy against the Son, surely cannot be committed against something impersonal.

In addition, the Holy Spirit engages in moral actions and ministries that can be performed only by a person. Among these activities are teaching, regenerating, searching, speaking, interceding, commanding, testifying, guiding, illuminating, and revealing. One interesting and unusual passage is Romans 8:26: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans." Surely, Paul has a person in view. And so does Jesus whenever he speaks of the Holy Spirit, as, for example, in John 16:8: "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" (NIV 1984).

All of the foregoing considerations lead to one conclusion. The Holy Spirit is a person, not a force, and that person is God, just as fully and in the same way as are the Father and the Son.

Implications of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

A correct understanding of who and what the Holy Spirit is carries certain implications:

- 1. The Holy Spirit is a person, not a vague force. Thus, he is someone with whom we can have a personal relationship, someone to whom we can and should pray.
- 2. The Holy Spirit, being fully divine, is to be accorded the same honor and respect that we give to the Father and the Son. It is appropriate to worship him as we do them. He should not be thought of as in any sense inferior in essence to them, although his role may sometimes be subordinated to theirs.
- 3. The Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son. His work is the expression and execution of what the three of them have planned together. There is no tension among their persons and activities.
- 4. God is not far off. In the Holy Spirit, the Triune God comes close, so close as to actually enter into each believer. God is even more intimately involved with us now than in the incarnation. Through the operation of the Spirit he has truly become Immanuel, "God with us."

Praise ye the Spirit! Comforter of Israel,

Sent of the Father and the Son to bless us; Praise ye the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

Praise ye the Triune God.

(Elizabeth Rundle Charles, "Praise Ye the Triune God," c. 1858)

Questions for Review and Reflection

- As you consider the Holy Spirit, what reasons can you give for studying his person and work?
- What particular difficulties are related to consideration of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit?

- What are some biblical evidences that the Holy Spirit is deity?
- Why is it important to affirm that the Holy Spirit is a person?
- What have you learned about the Holy Spirit?

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Chapter Objectives

After you have carefully studied this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Examine the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.
- 2. Describe the work of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus.
- 3. Show how the work of the Holy Spirit affects the life of the believer at the beginning of and throughout the Christian life.
- **4.** Evaluate the occurrence of miraculous gifts today.
- **5.** Draw several conclusions about the significance of the Holy Spirit's work today.

Chapter Summary

While there has been some controversy over the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, it is evident that the Spirit was at work throughout both the Old Testament and the New Testament eras. He was particularly evident in the life and ministry of Jesus. He continues to work in the lives of persons whom God calls to repentance and faith. With the changes in attitude toward the gifts of the Spirit in recent years, the miraculous gifts have assumed a significant role in some circles. Some assessment needs to be made regarding how one should view these gifts.

Chapter Outline

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Christian

- The Beginning of the Christian Life
- The Continuation of the Christian Life

The Miraculous Gifts Today

<u>Implications of the Work of the Spirit</u>

The work of the Holy Spirit is of special interest to Christians, for it is particularly through this work that God is personally involved and active in the life of the believer. Moreover, in the recent past this facet of the doctrine has been the subject of the greatest controversy regarding the Holy Spirit. While this controversy centers on certain of his more spectacular special gifts, that is too narrow a basis on which to construct our discussion here. The controversial issues must be seen against the backdrop of the Spirit's more general activity.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

It is often difficult to identify the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, which reflects the earliest stages of progressive revelation. In fact, the term "Holy Spirit" is rarely employed here. Rather, the usual expression is "the Spirit of God." Most Old Testament references to the Third Person of the Trinity consist of the two nouns "Spirit" and "God." It is not apparent from this construction that a separate person is involved. The expression "Spirit of God" could well be understood as being simply a reference to the will, mind, or activity of God. 1 There are, however, some cases where the New Testament makes it clear that an Old Testament reference to the "Spirit of God" is a reference to the Holy Spirit. One of the most prominent of these New Testament passages is Acts 2:16–21, where Peter explains that what is occurring at Pentecost is the fulfillment of the prophet Joel's statement, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (Acts 2:17). Surely the events of Pentecost were the realization of Jesus's promise, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Acts 1:8). In short, the Old Testament "Spirit of God" is synonymous with the Holy Spirit.[2]

There are several major areas of the Holy Spirit's working in Old Testament times. First is the creation: "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Gen. 1:2). God's continued working with the creation is attributed to the Spirit. Job says,

By his breath [or spirit] the skies became fair; his hand pierced the gliding serpent. (26:13)

Another general area of the Spirit's work is the giving of prophecy and Scripture.[3] The Old Testament prophets testified that their speaking and writing were a result of the Spirit's coming upon them. Ezekiel offers the clearest example: "As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me" (2:2; cf. 8:3; 11:1, 24; see also 2 Pet. 1:21).

Yet another work of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament was in conveying certain necessary skills for various tasks. [4] For example, we read that in appointing Bezalel to construct and furnish the tabernacle, God said, "and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts" (Exod. 31:3–5). Administration also seems to have been a gift of the Spirit. Even Pharaoh recognized the Spirit's presence in Joseph: "So Pharaoh asked them, 'Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" (Gen. 41:38). In the time of the judges, administration by the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit was especially dramatic. [5] Much of what was done was accomplished by what we would today call "charismatic leadership." The description of the call of Gideon reads, "Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him" (Judg. 6:34). The Spirit's working at the time of the judges consisted largely of granting skill in waging war. The Spirit also endowed the early kings of Israel with special capabilities. We are told, for example, that David's anointing was accompanied by the coming of the Spirit of God (1 Sam. 16:13).

The Spirit is seen not only in dramatic incidents, however. In addition to the qualities of national leadership and the heroics of war, he was present in Israel's spiritual life. In this connection he is referred to as a "good Spirit." Addressing God, Ezra reminded the people of Israel of the provision made for their ancestors in the wilderness: "You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst" (Neh. 9:20). The goodness of the Spirit is seen also in references to him as a "holy Spirit." Asking that his sins be blotted out, David prays,

The Old Testament depicts the Holy Spirit as producing the moral and spiritual qualities of holiness and goodness in the person on whom he comes or in whom he dwells. In certain cases, particularly in the book of Judges, his presence seems to be intermittent and related to a particular activity or ministry.

The Old Testament witness to the Spirit anticipates a coming time when the ministry of the Spirit is to be more complete. [6] Part of this relates to the coming Messiah, on whom the Spirit is to rest in an unusual degree and fashion. Jesus quotes the opening verses of Isaiah 61 ("The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, / because the Lord has anointed me / to proclaim good news to the poor") and indicates that they are now being fulfilled in him (Luke 4:18–21). There is a more generalized promise, however, not restricted to the Messiah. This is found in Joel 2:28–29.

And afterward,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

At Pentecost Peter quoted this prophecy, indicating that it had now been fulfilled.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus

In Jesus's life we find a pervasive and powerful presence and activity of the Spirit. Even the very beginning of his incarnate existence was a work of the Holy Spirit. [7] After informing Mary that she was to have a child, the angel explained, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). John the Baptist's announcement of Jesus's ministry also highlights the place of the Holy Spirit. John emphasized that,

unlike his own baptism, which was merely with water, Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8).

The Spirit is present in dramatic form from the very beginning of Jesus's public ministry, when there was a perceivable coming of the Holy Spirit on him at his baptism (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32). Immediately afterward, Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:1). The direct result was the major temptation, or series of temptations, at the inception of the public ministry.[8] Jesus was directed by the Holy Spirit into the situation where the temptation took place. Mark's statement is forceful: "At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness" (1:12). Jesus is virtually "expelled" by the Spirit. What is noteworthy here is that the presence of the Holy Spirit in Jesus's life brings him into direct and immediate conflict with the forces of evil.

The rest of Jesus's ministry was also conducted through the Spirit's power and direction. This was obviously true of Jesus's teaching.[9] Luke tells us that following the temptation "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit" (4:14). He proceeded then to teach in all the synagogues.

What is true of Jesus's teaching is also true of his miracles, particularly his exorcism of demons. Here the confrontation between the Holy Spirit and the unholy forces at work in the world is manifest. On one occasion the Pharisees claimed that Jesus cast out demons by the prince of demons. Jesus pointed out the internal contradiction in this statement (Matt. 12:25–27) and then countered, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (v. 28). His condemnation of the Pharisees' words as "blasphemy against the Spirit" (v. 31) and his warning that "anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven" (v. 32) are evidence that what he had just done was done by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Not only his teaching and miracles but also Jesus's whole life at this point was "in the Holy Spirit." When the seventy returned from their mission and reported that even the demons were subject to them in Jesus's name (Luke 10:17), Jesus was "full of joy through the Holy Spirit" (v. 21). Even his emotions were "in the Holy Spirit."

There is no evidence of growth of the Holy Spirit's presence in Jesus's life. There is no series of experiences of the coming of the Holy Spirit, just the conception and the baptism. There is, however, a growing implementation of the Spirit's presence. There is also no evidence of any

type of ecstatic phenomena in Jesus's life or any teaching of his on the subject. In light of the problems the church encountered in Corinth, and the phenomena of Pentecost and later experiences recorded in Acts, it is surprising that neither the Savior's personal life nor his teaching gives any hint of such charismata.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Christian

The Beginning of the Christian Life

In Jesus's teaching we find an especially strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in initiating persons into the Christian life. Jesus taught that the Spirit's activity is essential in both conversion, which from the human perspective is the beginning of the Christian life, and regeneration, which from God's perspective is its beginning.

Conversion is the human's turning to God. It consists of a negative and a positive element: repentance, that is, abandonment of sin; and faith, that is, acceptance of the promises and the work of Christ. Jesus spoke especially of repentance, and specifically of conviction of sin, which is the prerequisite of repentance. He said: "When he [the Counselor] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned" (John 16:8–11 NIV 1984). Without this work of the Holy Spirit, there can be no conversion.

Regeneration is the miraculous transformation of the individual and the implantation of spiritual energy. Jesus made very clear to Nicodemus that regeneration, which is essential to our acceptance by the Father, is a supernatural occurrence, and the Holy Spirit is the agent who produces it (John 3:3, 5–6). The flesh (i.e., human effort) is not capable of effecting this transformation. Nor can this transformation even be comprehended by the human intellect. Jesus in fact likened this work of the Spirit to the blowing of the wind: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (v. 8).[10]

We are initiated into the Christian life through the Spirit's activity in our conversion and regeneration.

The Continuation of the Christian Life

The work of the Spirit is not completed when one becomes a believer; on the contrary, it is just beginning. He performs a number of other roles in the ongoing Christian life:

- 1. One of the Spirit's other roles is empowering. Jesus probably left his disciples flabbergasted when he said, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). It probably seemed incredible to the disciples, who by now were very much aware of their own weaknesses and shortcomings, that they would do greater works than the Master himself had done. Yet Peter preached on Pentecost Sunday and three thousand believed. Jesus himself never had that type of response, as far as we know. Perhaps he did not gather that many genuine converts in his entire ministry! The key to the disciples' success was not in their abilities and strengths, however. Jesus had told them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–5), who would give them the power he had promised, the ability to do the things he had predicted (v. 8).
- 2. Another element of Jesus's promise was that the Holy Spirit would indwell the believer (John 14:16–17). Jesus had been a teacher and leader, but his influence was that of external word and example. The Spirit, however, is able to affect one more intensely because, dwelling within, he can get to the very center of one's thinking and emotions, and lead one into all truth, as Jesus promised (John 16:13–14).
- 3. The Spirit evidently has a teaching role. Earlier in the same discourse we read that he would bring to mind and clarify for the disciples the words Jesus had already given to them (John 14:26). This ministry of illumination by the Holy Spirit was not merely for that first generation of disciples but also includes helping believers today to understand the Scripture.
- 4. Another point of particular interest is the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit. We are familiar with Jesus's intercession, as the High Priest, on our behalf. Paul also speaks of similar intercessory prayer by the Holy Spirit: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through

wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God" (Rom. 8:26–27). Thus believers have the assurance that when they do not know how to pray, the Holy Spirit wisely intercedes for them that the Lord's will be done.

5. The Holy Spirit also works sanctification in the life of the believer. By sanctification is meant the continued transformation of moral and spiritual character so that the believer's life actually comes to mirror the standing he or she already has in God's sight. In Romans 8:1–17, Paul dwells on this work of the Holy Spirit.

Life in the Spirit is what God intends for the Christian. Paul in Galatians 5 contrasts life in the Spirit with life in the flesh. He instructs his readers to walk by the Spirit instead of gratifying the desires of the flesh (v. 16). If they heed this instruction, the Spirit will produce in them a set of qualities collectively referred to as the "fruit of the Spirit" (vv. 22–23). These qualities cannot in their entirety be produced in human lives by unaided self-effort. They are a supernatural work. They are opposed to the works of the flesh—a list of sins in verses 19–21—just as the Spirit himself is in opposition to the flesh. The work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, then, is not merely the negative work of mortification of the flesh (Rom. 8:13) but also the production of a positive likeness to Christ.

6. The Spirit also bestows certain special gifts on believers in the body of Christ. In Paul's writings there are three different lists of such gifts; there is also a brief one in 1 Peter (see fig. 4). Certain observations need to be made regarding these lists. First, while all of them have reference to the gifts of the Spirit, their basic orientations differ. Ephesians 4:11 is really a listing of various offices in the church, or of persons who are God's gifts to the church. Romans 12:6–8 and 1 Peter 4:11 catalog several basic functions performed in the church. The list in 1 Corinthians is more a matter of special abilities. It is likely that when these passages speak of the "gifts of the Spirit," they have different meanings in view. Hence no attempt should be made to reduce this expression to a unitary concept or definition. Second, it is not clear whether these gifts are endowments from birth, special enablements received at some later point, or a combination of the two. Third, some gifts, such as faith and service, are qualities or activities expected of every Christian; in such cases it is likely that the writer has in mind an unusual capability in that area. Fourth, since none of the four lists

includes all the gifts found in the other lists, it is quite conceivable that collectively they do not exhaust all possible gifts of the Spirit. These lists, then, individually and collectively, are illustrative of the various gifts with which God has endowed the church.

Figure 4. The Gifts of the Spirit

Rom. 12:6–8	3 1 Cor. 12:4–11	Eph. 4:11	1 Pet. 4:11
prophecy	wisdom	apostles	speaking
service	knowledge	prophets	service
teaching	faith	evangelists	
exhortation	healing	pastors and teachers	;
liberality	working of miracles		
giving aid	prophecy		
acts of mercy	ability to distinguish spirits	5	
	various tongues		
	interpretation of tongues		

It is also important at this point to note several observations Paul made regarding both the nature of the gifts and the way in which they are to be exercised. These observations appear in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14.

- 1. The gifts are bestowed on the body (the church). They are for the edification of the whole body, not merely for the enjoyment or enrichment of the individual members possessing them (12:7; 14:5, 12).
- 2. No one person has all the gifts (12:14–21), nor is any one of the gifts bestowed on all persons (12:28–30). Consequently, the individual members of the church need one another.
- 3. Although not equally conspicuous, all gifts are important (12:22–26).
- 4. The Holy Spirit apportions the various gifts to whom and as he wills (12:11).

The Miraculous Gifts Today

Certain of the more spectacular gifts have attracted particular attention and stirred considerable controversy in recent years. These are sometimes referred to as remarkable gifts, miraculous gifts, special gifts, sign gifts, or charismatic gifts, the last being a somewhat redundant expression, since *charismata* basically means gifts. Most frequently mentioned are faith healing, exorcism of demons, and especially glossolalia, or speaking in tongues. The question that has occasioned the most controversy is whether the Holy Spirit is still dispensing these gifts in the church today, and, if so, whether they are normative (i.e., whether every Christian can and should receive and exercise them).

Charismatic groups appeared early in church history. The most prominent was the Montanists, who flourished in the latter half of the second century. At his baptism Montanus spoke in tongues and began prophesying. He declared that the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus, was giving utterance through him. Montanus and two of his female disciples were believed to be spokespersons of the Holy Spirit. The Montanists taught that their prophecies clarified the Scriptures and that Spirit-inspired prophets would continue to arise within the Christian community. [11]

Groups like the Montanists did not have a lasting effect on the church. For centuries there was relatively little emphasis on the Holy Spirit and his work. At the close of the nineteenth century, however, a development occurred that was to give the Holy Spirit, in some circles at least, virtually the preeminent role in theology. There were some outbursts of speaking in tongues, or glossolalia, in North Carolina as early as 1896. In Topeka, Kansas, Charles Parham, the head of a small Bible school, assigned his students to study the baptism of the Holy Spirit during his absence. When Parham returned, their unanimous conclusion was that the Bible teaches that there is to be a baptism of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion and new birth, and that speaking in tongues is the sign that one has received this gift.[12]

The real outbreak of Pentecostalism, however, occurred in meetings organized by a black holiness preacher, William J. Seymour, beginning in 1906. Because these meetings were held in a former Methodist church at 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles, they came to be referred to as the Azusa Street meetings. [13] From this beginning, the Pentecostal phenomenon spread throughout the United States and to other countries, most notably

Scandinavia. In recent years, Pentecostalism of this type has become a powerful force in Latin America and in third-world countries elsewhere.

For many years the Pentecostal movement was a relatively isolated factor within Christianity. It was found mostly in denominations composed heavily of persons from the lower socioeconomic classes. In the early 1950s, however, this began to change. In some previously unlikely places, glossolalia began to be practiced. In Episcopal, Lutheran, and even Catholic churches, there was an emphasis on special manifestations of the Holy Spirit's work. There are significant differences between this movement, which could be called neo-Pentecostal or charismatic, and the old-line Pentecostalism that had sprung up at the beginning of the twentieth century and continues to this day. Neo-Pentecostalism is more of a transdenominational movement, drawing many of its participants from the middle and upper-middle classes. [14] The two groups also differ in the way they practice their charismatic gifts. In the old-line Pentecostal groups, a number of members might speak or pray aloud at once. Such is not the case with charismatic Christians, some of whom use the gift only in their own private prayer time. Public manifestations of the gift are usually in special groups rather than in the plenary worship service of the congregation.

We need to examine both sides of the issue of special gifts if it is to be correctly understood and dealt with. Because glossolalia is the most prominent of these gifts, we will concentrate on it. Our conclusions will serve to evaluate the other gifts as well. The case for glossolalia, relying heavily on the narrative passages in the book of Acts, is rather straightforward. The argument usually begins with the observation that subsequent to the episodes of conversion and regeneration recorded in Acts, there customarily came a special filling or baptism with the Holy Spirit, and that its usual manifestation was speaking in an unknown tongue. There is no indication that the Holy Spirit would cease to bestow this gift on the church. [15]

Often an experiential argument is also employed in support of glossolalia. People who have experienced the gift themselves or have observed others practicing it have a subjective certainty about the experience. They emphasize the benefits that it produces in the Christian's spiritual life, especially vitalizing one's prayer life. [16]

In addition, the advocates of glossolalia argue that the practice is nowhere forbidden in Scripture. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul does not censure proper use of the gift, but only perversions of it. In fact, he says, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you" (1 Cor. 14:18).

Those who reject the idea that the Holy Spirit is still dispensing the charismatic gifts argue that historically the miraculous gifts ceased; they were virtually unknown throughout most of the history of the church. [17] A few who reject the possibility of contemporary glossolalia utilize 1 Corinthians 13:8 as evidence: "where there are tongues, they will be stilled." They argue that tongues, unlike prophecy and knowledge, were not intended to be continually given until the end time, but have already ceased. [18] Therefore, tongues are not included in the reference to the imperfect gifts, which will pass away when the perfect comes (vv. 9–10).[19] Some theologians would argue for the passing of the miraculous gifts on the basis of Hebrews 2:3–4: "Salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will." The thrust of this argument is that the purpose of the miraculous gifts was to attest to and thus authenticate the revelation and the incarnation. When that purpose had been fulfilled, the miracles, being unnecessary, simply faded away. [20]

A second aspect of the negative argument is the existence of parallels to glossolalia that are obviously not to be interpreted as special gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is noted, for example, that similar phenomena are found in other religions. The practices of certain voodoo witch doctors are a case in point. Psychology, too, finds parallels between speaking in tongues and certain cases of heightened suggestibility caused by brainwashing or electroshock therapy.[21]

One particular point of interest has been the study of glossolalia by linguists. Although some advocates of glossolalia say that the tongues of Corinth and those today are merely utterances of apparently unrelated syllables, others maintain that the tongues of Corinth and of today are, like those at Pentecost, actual languages. The latter group must answer scientific charges that many cases of glossolalia simply do not display a sufficient number of the characteristics of language to be classified as such. [22]

Is there a way to deal responsibly with the considerations raised by both sides of this dispute? Because the issue has a significant effect on how one conducts one's Christian life, and even on the very style or tone of the Christian life, the question cannot simply be ignored. While few dogmatic

conclusions can be drawn in this area, a number of significant observations can be made.

Regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we note first that the book of Acts speaks of a special work of the Spirit subsequent to new birth. It appears, however, that the book of Acts covers a transitional period. Since that time the normal pattern has been for conversion/regeneration and the baptism of the Holy Spirit to coincide. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." From verse 12 it is very clear that this "one body" is Christ. Thus Paul appears to be saying in verse 13 that we become members of Christ's body by being baptized into it by the Spirit. Baptism by the Spirit appears to be, if not equivalent to conversion and new birth, at least simultaneous with them.

But what of the cases in Acts where there clearly was a separation between conversion/regeneration and the baptism of the Spirit? In keeping with the observation in the preceding paragraph that Acts covers a transitional period, it is my interpretation that these cases did indeed involve people who were regenerated before they received the Holy Spirit. They were the last of the Old Testament believers. [23] They were regenerate because they believed the revelation they had received and feared God. They had not received the Spirit, however, for the promise of his coming could not be fulfilled until Jesus had ascended. (Keep in mind that even the disciples of Jesus, who were certainly already regenerate under the New Testament system, were not baptized with the Spirit until Pentecost.) But when on Pentecost those who were already regenerate under the Old Testament system received Christ, they were filled with the Spirit. As soon as that happened, there were no longer any regenerate Old Testament believers. After the events of Pentecost we find no other clear cases of such a postconversion experience among Jews. What happened to the Jews as a group (Acts 2) also happened to the Samaritans (Acts 8) and to the gentiles (Acts 10). Thereafter, regeneration and the baptism of the Spirit were simultaneous. The case of the disciples of Apollos in Acts 19 appears to be a matter of incompletely evangelized believers, for they had been baptized only into the baptism of John, which was a baptism of repentance, and had not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. In none of these four cases was the baptism of the Holy Spirit sought by the recipients,

nor is there any indication that the gift did not fall on every member of the group. This interpretive scheme seems to fit well with the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:13, with the fact that Scripture nowhere commands us to be baptized in or by the Holy Spirit, and with the record in Acts.

In my judgment it is not possible to determine with any certainty whether the contemporary charismatic phenomena are indeed gifts of the Holy Spirit. There simply is no biblical evidence indicating the time of fulfillment of the prediction that tongues will cease. Nor is the historical evidence clear and conclusive. There is a great deal of evidence on both sides. Each group is able to cite an impressive amount of data that are to its advantage, bypassing the data presented by the other group. This lack of historical conclusiveness is not a problem, however. On the one hand, even if history proved that the gift of tongues has ceased, there is nothing to prevent God from reestablishing it. On the other hand, historical proof that the gift has been present through the various eras of the church would not validate the present phenomena.

What we must do, then, is to evaluate each case on its own merits. This does not mean that we are to sit in judgment on the spiritual experience or the spiritual life of other professing Christians. What it does mean is that we cannot assume that everyone who claims to have had a special experience of the Holy Spirit's working has really had one. Scientific studies have discovered enough non-Spirit-caused parallels to warn us against being naively credulous about every claim. Certainly not every exceptional religious experience can be of divine origin, unless God is a very broadly ecumenical and tolerant being indeed, who even grants special manifestations of his Spirit to some who make no claim to Christian faith and may actually be opposed to it. Certainly if demonic forces could produce imitations of divine miracles in biblical times (e.g., the magicians in Egypt were able to imitate the plagues up to a certain point), the same may be true today as well. Conversely, however, no conclusive case can be made for the contention that such gifts are not for today and cannot occur at the present time. Consequently, one cannot rule in a priori and categorical fashion that a claim of glossolalia is spurious. In fact, it may be downright dangerous, in light of Jesus's warnings regarding blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, to attribute specific phenomena to demonic activity.

In the final analysis, whether the Bible teaches that the Spirit dispenses special gifts today is not an issue of great practical consequence. For even if

he does, we are not to set our lives to seeking them. He bestows them sovereignly; he alone determines the recipients (1 Cor. 12:11). If he chooses to give us a special gift, he will do so regardless of whether we expect it or seek it. What we are commanded to do (Eph. 5:18) is be filled with the Holy Spirit (the form of the Greek imperative suggests ongoing action). This is not so much a matter of our getting more of the Holy Spirit; presumably all Christians possess the Spirit completely. It is, rather, a matter of his possessing more of our lives. Each of us is to aspire to giving the Holy Spirit full control of his or her life. When that happens, our lives will manifest whatever gifts God intends for us to have, along with all the fruit and acts of his empowering that he wishes to display through us. It is to be remembered, as we noted earlier, that no one gift is for every Christian, nor is any gift more significant than the others.

Being filled with the Spirit is not so much a matter of our getting more of the Spirit as it is a matter of his possessing more of our lives.

Of more importance, in many ways, than receiving certain gifts is the fruit of the Spirit. These virtues are, in Paul's estimation, the real evidence of the Spirit at work in Christians. Love, joy, and peace in an individual's life are the surest signs of a vital experience with the Spirit. In particular, Paul stresses love as more desirable than any gifts, no matter how spectacular (1 Cor. 13:1–3).

But what is proper procedure with regard to an actual case of modern-day public practice of what is claimed to be the biblical gift of glossolalia? First, no conclusions should be drawn in advance as to whether it is genuine. Then the procedure laid down by Paul so long ago should be followed. Thus, if one speaks in tongues, there should be an interpreter so that the group as a whole may be edified. Only one should speak at a time and no more than two or three at a session (1 Cor. 14:27). If no one is present to interpret, whether the speaker or some other person, then the would-be speaker should keep silent in the church and restrict the use of tongues to personal devotional practice (v. 28). On the one hand, we must not prohibit speaking in tongues (v. 39); on the other hand, we are nowhere commanded to seek this gift.

Finally, we should note that the emphasis in Scripture is on the one who bestows the gifts rather than on those who receive them. God frequently performs miraculous works without involving human agents. We read, for example, in James 5:14–15 that the elders of the church are to pray for the sick. It is the prayer of faith, not a human miracle worker, that is said to save them. Whatever be the gift, it is the edification of the church and the glorification of God that are of ultimate importance.

Implications of the Work of the Spirit

The implications of the work of the Spirit include the following:

- 1. The gifts we have are bestowed on us by the Holy Spirit. We should recognize that they are not our own accomplishments. They are intended to be used in the fulfillment of his plan.
- 2. The Holy Spirit empowers believers in their Christian life and service. Personal inadequacies should not deter or discourage us.
- 3. The Holy Spirit dispenses his gifts to the church wisely and sovereignly. Possession or lack of a particular gift is no cause for pride or regret. His gifts are not rewards to those who seek or qualify for them.
- 4. No one gift is for everyone, and no one person has every gift. The fellowship of the body is needed for full spiritual development of the individual believer.
- 5. We may rely on the Holy Spirit to give us understanding of the Word of God and to guide us into his will for us.
- 6. It is appropriate to direct prayer to the Holy Spirit, just as to the Father and the Son, as well as to the Triune God. In such prayers we will thank him for and especially ask him to continue the unique work he does in us.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- How would you describe the work of the Holy Spirit during the Old Testament era?
- How did the Holy Spirit minister in the life of Jesus Christ? What can be learned from this about the Spirit's work?

- How does the Holy Spirit work in the life of the Christian believer? Consider the experience of the new birth and subsequent growth toward maturity.
- As you consider the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, what role should the gifts play in the life of the believer and the church? Defend your position.
- In your relationship with God, what aspect of the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit is most significant?

Recent Issues regarding the Holy Spirit

Chapter Objectives

After completing the study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Identify the various ways in which prophecy recently has been related to the work of the Holy Spirit.
- 2. Explain and assess the activity of the Holy Spirit in other religions, particularly found in the writings of Amos Yong.
- **3.** Evaluate the activity of other spirits, especially as understood by the spiritual-warfare movement.

Chapter Summary

The recent revival of interest in the activity of the Holy Spirit has taken several forms, each of which may provide valuable insights, but which also include certain difficulties. Some affirm that, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, any believer with a gift of prophecy may speak words from God. Amos Yong asserts that the Holy Spirit may be active in other religions beyond Christianity. There are also those who hold that there are other spirits active in the world. In various forms, the spiritual-warfare movement asserts that evil spirits oppose God and intend harm to his people.

Chapter Outline

The Holy Spirit and Prophecy Today

The Holy Spirit and Other World Religions

The Holy Spirit and Other "Spirits"

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as we noted earlier, there has been a revival of interest and activity relative to the Holy Spirit. Some of this has been the resurgence of older issues, but some has been concerned with issues unique to cultural and general theological factors of the times.

This period in some significant ways is more conducive to an interest in the Holy Spirit. For one thing, the postmodern emphasis on the subjective and experiential dimension of life has correlated well with the Holy Spirit as the person of the Trinity who particularly relates to Christians in the actual living of their Christian lives. This emphasis on the subjective dimension in the Spirit's work and in the Christian life has compensated for the relatively lesser amount of biblical material on the Holy Spirit, as compared to the many references to the Father and the Son. It also means that the doctrinal understanding of the Holy Spirit has tended to focus more on humans' personal experiences than on biblical sources.

The Holy Spirit and Prophecy Today

One area of interest in the Holy Spirit has been the appearance of present-day manifestations of the gift of prophecy. Some contend that the New Testament phenomenon of prophetic speaking did not cease with the closing of the New Testament canon, but is occurring in the church today, is a desirable element of church life, and should be encouraged and fostered.

According to this view, a distinction needs to be drawn between what is designated as prophecy in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Basically, this approach says that Old Testament prophecy involved divinely inspired forthtelling, some of it predictive of the future, but all of it representing a specially revealed message from God. As such, it is authoritative, infallible, and, when recorded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, becomes Scripture. In the New Testament, however, this role of declaring authoritative, specially revealed truth from God is played not by the prophet but by the apostle, the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament prophet. In the New Testament church, prophecy was more generalized—that is, it was conferred on and practiced by potentially any believer.

Most advocates of the practice of the gift of prophecy for today insist that it is not to be regarded as equal in authority to Scripture. Whereas Scripture is regarded by virtually all of these persons as fully God's Word and therefore authoritative and even inerrant, the word of prophecy is imperfect and impure, containing elements that are not to be trusted and obeyed. Thus Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:20–21, speaking of prophesying, tells his readers to test everything, holding fast to what is good. [1] This implies that there were prophecies that were not good, true, or authoritative. The prophecy is a human response to a revelation, or a report of the revelation. [2]

There are both more moderate and more radical forms of pro-prophecy in contemporary evangelicalism. Wayne Grudem represents a more modest version of the view. He sees the gift as a "something that God may suddenly bring to mind, or something that God may impress on someone's heart or thoughts in such a way that the person has the sense that it is from God."[3] For example, someone might feel especially led to pray for someone and later learn that there was a special need of which the person praying was not specifically aware.

A more radical approach to the contemporary gift of prophecy is that of Jack Deere. There is a danger, he says, of knowledge of the Bible serving as a filter, interpreting and restricting experience. [4] He believes God speaks through dreams, visions, a voice audible to one alone, an internal audible voice, and ordinary experiences. [5] He especially emphasizes knowing particular events in advance, and knowing the presence of sin in persons' hearts, unknown to others. He recognizes the dangers that can come from this approach, including the "God told me to tell you . . ." type of ministry. There are several guidelines to avoid these dangers, such as seeking permission from God to speak, speaking with humility, and distinguishing between revelation, interpretation, and illumination. [6]

By way of evaluation, these promoters of present-day prophecies have correctly pointed out the danger of allowing presuppositions or preconceptions to control our beliefs and practices. The accommodation can be to a rather naturalistic worldview, where we really do not look for or pray to God to work in any way that would not be predictable on a natural basis.

Some of the types of experiences these theologians describe are also familiar to many noncharismatics. Many of us have times when we had what we felt were insights into situations and persons that went beyond pure objective knowledge of information. As a pastor, for example, I remember one woman saying to me, "When you preach, it is as if you look right down into my soul and see what is there." Many of us have had strong convictions that God was leading us in a certain way, sometimes in contradiction to what purely rational considerations would be.

Noncharismatics often refer to this as illumination (especially into understanding the meaning and application of Scripture), discernment, or something of the type. Basically, the difference is that noncharismatics see these as less dramatic or crisis-oriented than do the charismatics. They also usually tend to think in terms of applying biblical principles to contemporary situations rather than a more literal application of biblical teachings and events to the contemporary.

To be sure, this reminder that the Holy Spirit is personal and active in the life of the Christian and the church is important and necessary. There are, however, certain problems and dangers in this approach. One is that, as with other pneumatological issues, advocates often appeal to the subjective and experiential dimension. There is no clear biblical evidence that the role of prophecy was to continue beyond the New Testament. Admittedly, this is an argument from silence, but in this case the burden of proof is on the affirmative, and the absence may therefore be significant. Proponents who argue that prophecy is intended to be a permanent gift do not really make their case biblically. Rather, cases of purported prophecy, together with a simple assumption that being a New Testament Christian means a rather literal repetition of New Testament instances, are the norm.

Sometimes little real consideration is given to the difference between the context of the New Testament churches and today's church. The churches in the book of Acts did not have ready access to the New Testament writings. Indeed, many of those were in the process of being written. God has now made a permanent provision for some of what prophecy was needed for. There seems to me to be inadequate appreciation of God's indirect processes or secondary causes. Interestingly, Deere recognizes this possible problem, referencing the man who was waiting for God to rescue him but declined to accept rescue from persons in a boat and a helicopter.[7]

There is a problem with a word of prophecy being in error. Most persons advocating this view acknowledge the problem of error. To make this a matter of a report of the revelation, rather than being revelation itself, is, to say the least, interesting. Even making it a matter of group judgment does

not completely solve the problem, for there are shifting and overlapping subgroups within the larger group, such as when the majority shifts in terms of what it believes. The difficulty of possible conflicting prophecies is solved by saying that when a second prophecy comes, the first prophet is to yield to him or her. Here there is something of the same sort of difficulty all views of this type have; namely, what if I have a prophecy that your prophecy is wrong? This should not be the case; at least it was not within the church in Acts.

The prophetic movement gives scant attention to Jesus's promises regarding the later work of the Holy Spirit related to the revelation Jesus had given. Note, for example, the following:

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you. (John 16:13–15; see also John 15:26)

Some of these statements pertain primarily to the original hearers, but some apply to subsequent generations of Jesus's followers. Calvin and other Reformers made much of this fusion of Word and Spirit. Perhaps we should think of this as illumination of the Scriptures that were given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, rather than as revelation. It is a matter of insight rather than of new truth.

Certainly it is appropriate to speak of God leading or guiding in a personal and subjective and even surprising way. This, however, is a message for me, and should not be applied to others. While there certainly are cases in Scripture of persons advising others, in general God reveals his will for a person to that person, not to someone else.

There is such a thing as God "revealing" his will for a group. This, however, when based on the pattern in Acts, is a matter of the group receiving the communication as a group. While there may be a leader who persuades the others, it is a matter of persuasion, not of mere proclamation. The Spirit is the one who convinces, who brings about conviction, as Jesus pointed out: "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to

sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8 NIV 1984). While his reference here is specifically to conviction of sin, in light of the other statements in this discourse, it seems to have broader application.

This prophetic movement's approach fails to take account of some postbiblical insights of psychology and sociology. This actually occurs both from modern and postmodern perspectives. From the modern perspective, psychology offers alternative explanations of some things that some claim to be spiritual working. Some of it may be a matter of subjective psychological phenomena rather than of an objective connection with the Holy Spirit. From a postmodern perspective, we are reminded that all our knowledge is conditioned by our cultural and historical situation. It may be that what is perceived as such a powerful impression by the Holy Spirit is actually our own personality or biases. One pastor presented to his church a set of five initiatives that he felt God had led him to propose, suggesting that if the congregation did not adopt them, he was not sure he would remain with that church. He commented, "I just like change—any kind of change," without realizing that perhaps what he was convinced was God's leading was a manifestation of his own personality characteristics. The church did approve all of his proposals, but within two years he left for a different type of ministry nonetheless.

The valid insights of this prophetic movement may be incorporated without falling into some of its pitfalls. Experience is a suspect criterion, in part because some of us have had experiences that contradict the experiences marshaled here. For example, I have found that the working of the Spirit is something of which I am not conscious but for which I pray. I have found that persons were blessed from what I thought was a poor sermon, or even in a way that I had not consciously intended. In other words, the "prophetic" dimension is sometimes in the reception more than in the declaration.

When I pray for people, I often pray not knowing the exact need, rather than knowing their situation clearly. This may well be what Paul was referring to when he wrote, "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God" (Rom. 8:26–27). It is probably significant that this passage immediately precedes the statement "and we

know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (v. 28).

The Holy Spirit and Other World Religions

Traditionally, the question of Christianity's relationship to other world religions has been an important one. It has been especially urgent at times when contact between these different religions has been most prevalent, such as when Christianity expanded into other cultures. In the past the issues usually fell into the area of Christology and soteriology (that is, whether Christ is the exclusive means of salvation). Three positions have been defined. Exclusivism is the view that Christianity is true and that only those who overtly subscribe to its beliefs and practices receive salvation. Inclusivism insists that salvation is only through Jesus Christ or the church, but there may be people who are Christians without being consciously involved in Christianity. Pluralism teaches that all religions are actually speaking of the same thing, so that the different religions are simply alternate routes, leading to the same goal.

The discussion about Christianity's relationship to other world religions is being pursued in terms of pneumatology—that is, whether and to what extent and in what form the Holy Spirit may be active in religions other than overt Christianity.

Now, however, the discussion is also being pursued in terms of pneumatology—that is, whether and to what extent and in what form the Holy Spirit may be active in religions other than overt Christianity. Amos Yong, an Asian American Pentecostal, believes that a pneumatological approach to theology of religions "not only helps with our understanding of religious pluralism (the theological or theoretical dimensions) but enables our engaging with religious otherness (the practical or intersubjective dimension). . . . [It] begins with the universal presence of the Holy Spirit as the universal presence and activity of God."[8]

Yong bases this starting point on the reference to the Spirit being poured out "on all people" in Acts 2:17, which he understands "to have universal application on the one hand and to include the world of the religions on the other."[9] That the hearers all heard the message being spoken in their own language must be seen in connection with the Tower of Babel incident in Genesis. This means that this "outpouring of the Spirit redeems the diversity of languages." This diversity of languages is also connected with the diversity of cultures, and since culture is inseparably connected with religion, "the principle of linguistic and cultural diversity necessarily includes that of religious diversity. Hence, the Pentecost narrative can be understood to redeem not only human language and culture, but also human religiosity."[10] This does not mean that all human religiousness is sanctified, any more than are all human words, or every aspect of culture. It does mean, however, that there is a narrative ground for "understanding the world of the religions in pneumatological perspective."[11]

Yong's view contains several key elements. One is the dynamic nature of religion. Conversion should be understood not as a point but as an ongoing process. This is true of traditions as well. So Yong says that his pneumatological approach makes it possible "to recognize 'religions' and 'religious traditions' not as nouns but as verbs: they are formed by the processes of human 'traditioning,' and, therefore, shaped by the various human responses and activities to realities considered transcendent."[12] In this pneumatological approach, rather than being subordinated to doctrines, praxis (ritual, piety, devotion, morality, and the like) becomes equal to or even more important than doctrines.[13]

Yong broaches the question of interreligious dialogue. He believes that the Holy Spirit, who enables Christians to speak in other tongues, can also enable one to understand another religion from within it.[14] This has significant implications for missionary strategy. Whereas traditionally missionaries had engaged both in dialogue and proclamation in relation to those of other faiths, the pneumatological approach means entering into the situation of the person from another religion, with the benefits of removing misunderstandings of the other's faith, while experiencing a deepening of one's own commitment and recognizing erroneous elements of one's own faith.[15] He urges a type of dialogue in which one does not simply pretend to listen to the other in order to gain an opportunity to proclaim one's own faith, but rather attempts to so enter into the other's faith that one sees the

world and life as a Buddhist or Hindu sees it. While recognizing that this sort of dialogical "conversion" (which is simply a case of incarnating one's own faith in another culture) could result in actually becoming converted to the other faith in the full religious sense, Yong is confident that this is not likely to happen, because this whole pneumatological theology of religions is based on belief in the working of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Christ. [16]

Some have raised questions as to the uniqueness of Christianity in a scheme in which the Holy Spirit is seen as present and active in other religions. Qualitative uniqueness, however, means that each religion has characteristics that are different from other religions. Yong is concerned about the attempt to judge that true revelation is found only in Christianity. He contends that there is a human craving for security that seeks to erect standards to judge the authenticity of revelation. We must remember, however, that "if there is one consistent feature of the scriptural narratives about the Spirit, it is that the Spirit cannot be controlled by human ideologies; rather, like the wind, the Spirit's comings and goings cannot be predicted. This unpredictability applies not only to human interpretation of divine revelation, but also to the norms and criteria with which we attempt to discern the presence and activity of the Spirit and of other spirits."[17] We cannot judge in advance what is genuine revelation and what is not.

There is much that is commendable about Yong's position. It indeed is the case that effective mission activity must involve empathetic inquiry and listening. Further, just as the fall did not obliterate the image of God in humans, the Spirit is not necessarily totally absent in any but Christian circles. There is such a thing as common grace, and the Holy Spirit's work is a part of that. Having acknowledged these valuable elements in this pneumatology, there is much that should give us pause about Yong's contentions. For one thing, the process by which he gets from the Pentecost passage in Acts 2 to this fully developed pneumatology contains a number of gaps, both exegetical and logical. Further, he seems to assume several elements of recent and present culture without acknowledging or perhaps even recognizing them.

A prominent example would be Yong's preference for verbs over nouns in the discussion of religion. The twentieth century displayed a marked disdain for substantives, preferring verbs or adjectives. This assumption may be valid, but that needs to be justified if such extensive conclusions are to rest on it. He uses behavioral sciences selectively to bolster his case, for example, in appealing to the desire for security. Finally, there seems to be real ambiguity or perhaps even ambivalence regarding Yong's effort to spell out more exactly the degree of Christianity's singularity as a channel of God's grace.

The Holy Spirit and Other "Spirits"

In recent years there has been a marked increase in interest in the presence and activity of other spirits in the world. In the spiritual-warfare movement this has taken a variety of forms. It has been prominent in the third wave of the modern charismatic movement. It also is a vivid feature of much African Christianity, where there is a strong sense of the presence of evil spirits. Charles Kraft and C. Peter Wagner—two Fuller Theological Seminary professors who, as former missionaries and students of worldwide Christianity, came in contact with the struggle of Christians with evil—helped to popularize it in the United States.

In general, the term "spiritual warfare" refers to the fact that the Christian is involved in the struggle between the forces of God and those of evil, so that Clinton Arnold defines the term as "a way of characterizing our common struggle as Christians."[18] As developed by many today, the view features a worldview in which spiritual beings play a very large part in what transpires, both on the earth and on a more cosmic scale. The Christian life is focused on the struggle with the evil beings, whether they are considered angels or spirits. The movement was given widespread exposure through a novel written by Frank Peretti.[19] Although it is a novel, it is given a specific setting and seems intended to convey the impression that this is representative of what is actually occurring within the world today.

Often this view is seen as the revival of a worldview that has been suppressed by the modernist (by which is meant Enlightenment) worldview that virtually excluded the spiritual world, particularly evil spirits. Gregory Boyd has blended this view with his open theism to offer a solution to the problem of evil. In his understanding, the classical view of God had allowed Greek philosophical ideas to overwhelm the biblical, thus positing an all-knowing, all-powerful (or all-controlling) God. Since everything that happens is necessarily part of God's will, somehow evil occurrences must

be willed by God, although in some versions human will enters the picture. In contrast, Boyd sees evil as in large part caused by personal evil forces. Thus, there need be no attempt to justify God in light of these evil events. The problem is rather one of engaging in the struggle with the forces of evil. In their battle, the evil spirits employ natural and human agents. They do this in part by actually taking control of humans, whether on the lesser scale of simply influencing their thoughts, or on the more radical scale of demon possession of humans, even of Christians in some cases. They may also utilize nature, including bringing illness on believers, or working through social and political institutions and processes. The task of believers is to be aware of the activity of these evil forces and to resist them in spiritual combat, rebuking the evil spirits, casting them out of those possessed, and engaging in other acts of spiritual warfare. [20]

Beyond the struggle that goes on here on earth between good and evil forces, there is also a cosmic dimension. In the heavens, as it were, the struggle between evil spirits on the one hand, and the forces of good, including both spirits and Christians, on the other hand, is going on. It is important that Christians be aware of this great struggle, arm themselves for it, and participate in it. Combat on this extraterrestrial level involves what Wagner calls "strategic-level spiritual warfare," or SLSW.[21]

The notion of "spiritual warfare" features a worldview in which spiritual beings play a very large part in what transpires, both on the earth and on a more cosmic scale.

Often in the more radical forms of spiritual-warfare thinking, the organization of this evil spiritual world is spelled out in considerable detail. There are levels of organization. In addition, based on Daniel 10, spiritual mapping is done in the belief that there are territorial spirits. There also are spirits who have jurisdiction over particular areas of human temptation and sin.[22]

Similar movements can be found among Christians in the less-developed countries. In Africa, for example, there is a strong belief in evil spirits. Traditional African culture makes much of the power of spirits, and,

consequently, when Christians are able to overcome evil spirits, evangelism gains credibility. In addition, traditional African religion believes in the activities of the spirits of one's ancestors on one's behalf.

Spiritual warfare has made a major contribution to Christianity in general by calling attention to the reality of the spiritual struggle that is going on. Modern culture had tended to eliminate or at least ignore the reality of supernatural forces, and had reduced all of the evil in the world to naturalistically explainable causes. Many Christians have tended to be conformed to this same outlook, and have not really considered the possibility of demonic activity. The decline in awareness of sin and temptation has been part of this response. Scripture makes clear that there is a devil and that this devil has a force of demons or evil spirits; he and his forces are desperately spiritually opposing God and his followers. Christians are repeatedly exhorted by the Scripture writers to engage in this spiritual struggle.

There are, however, a number of points at which this version of the Christian life must be carefully scrutinized and questioned. For one thing, it is important to remember that Christ has decisively overcome the forces of evil in his death and resurrection, and this victory will be finally realized fully in the eschaton. Beyond that, we have gained considerable insight into the role of natural causes of diseases. It is not necessary to automatically assume that a particular illness is the result of satanic oppression. While it may be common to assume that this warfare model is more in keeping with postmodernism than with modernism, it should be noted that much of the description of the spiritual struggle going on has more in common with the premodern than with the postmodern period.[23] True postmodern thought does not ignore the correct insights of modernity regarding scientific and medical matters. One spiritual-warfare leader gave a sermon describing his "black night of the soul," which had required him to take a leave of absence for several months from his duties. To a person with even a basic understanding of psychology, his description sounded a great deal like the clinical symptoms of depression, yet he seemed not to have considered that possibility. God, we should remember, works both directly and immediately, and indirectly and through means. It is just as much a case of divine healing when God works through the skilled efforts of a physician as when he intervenes miraculously. While the latter may be the more

spectacular, we do not honor God when we neglect the means he may have provided for our welfare.

More serious, however, is the discrepancy between some portions of this theory and the New Testament practice, particularly that of Jesus. The rather facile equation of spiritual-warfare practices with the New Testament is questionable at best. We have noted the teaching that the victory has in a sense already been won. So, for example, we find that in Jesus's encounters with demons, there was no struggle. As Robert Guelich puts it, "Jesus does not have to subdue the demons. Their behavior from the outset shows them to recognize the hopelessness of their situation before him. They come to him as supplicants rather than negotiators."[24] Further, the exorcisms found in some of the spiritual-warfare literature seem to bear more resemblance to magical formulas than to the biblical incidents of which these are claimed to be modern-day examples. [25] Beyond that, the emphasis on military-type organization of the forces of evil and of the territorial spirits has little or no precedent in the biblical accounts. As Guelich summarizes his assessment of Peretti's view, the "accent on spiritual warfare as the fundamental description of the Christian life risks turning the 'Prince of peace' into the 'Commander-in-chief,' a role that fits the messianic expectation of Jewish apocalyptic literature more than the Christology of the Gospels and the Pauline corpus. It leads to numerous distortions about the person and work of Christ, the believers' role in proclaiming the gospel with its personal and social implications, Satan and his hosts, and the nature of evil."[26] Paul Hiebert believes the difficulty comes from reading the Scripture through the lens of a worldview that is foreign to it, such as a tribal worldview of animistic societies, or an Indo-European worldview based on a cosmic dualism, such as Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, or Hinduism. [27]

We conclude then that while the spiritual-warfare movement has correctly reemphasized the reality and activity of evil spiritual forces, especially in places such as Africa, it risks seriously distorting the biblical teaching on these matters. [28] In fact, as Guelich points out, it may lead into the second of the two mistakes C. S. Lewis mentions regarding devils: "to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them." [29] Thus, paradoxically, it may lead to the Christian becoming a victim of Satan's battle plan. [30]

Questions for Review and Reflection

- How is prophecy defined by those who affirm the present-day manifestations of the gift of prophecy?
- What are some problems for the recent gift-of-prophecy approach?
- What are the implications for missionary strategy of Yong's pneumatological approach?
- How does Scripture support and challenge the views of the spiritual-warfare movement?
- What have you found valuable in overcoming the spiritual struggles that you face?

Salvation

Conceptions of Salvation

Chapter Objectives

After reading this chapter, the student should be able to do the following:

- 1. Identify and explain the details on which various conceptions of salvation differ.
- 2. Identify and describe five conceptions of salvation.
- **3.** Compare and contrast five conceptions of salvation and evaluate which one best explains the biblical evidence.

Chapter Summary

Differing conceptions of salvation have developed over many years, each emphasizing various aspects of salvation. They differ on how salvation is related to time, the nature and locus of the need to be dealt with, the medium of salvation, the direction of movement in salvation, and the extent of salvation. Five current conceptions of salvation include liberation theology, existential theology, secular theology, contemporary Roman Catholic theology, and evangelical theology.

Chapter Outline

Details on Which Conceptions of Salvation Differ

- The Time Dimension
- Nature and Locus of the Need
- The Medium of Salvation
- The Direction of Movement in Salvation
- The Extent of Salvation

Current Conceptions of Salvation

- Liberation Theologies
- Existential Theology
- Secular Theology

- Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology
- Evangelical Theology

Salvation is the application of the work of Christ to human life. Accordingly, the doctrine of salvation has particular appeal and relevance, since it pertains to our most crucial need. While the term "salvation" may seem to persons familiar with it to have a somewhat obvious meaning, there are, even within Christian circles, rather widely differing conceptions of what salvation entails. Before examining the more prominent of these conceptions, it will be helpful to look briefly at various details on which they differ. This will give us categories we can employ as we analyze the several views.

Details on Which Conceptions of Salvation Differ

The Time Dimension

Salvation is variously thought of as a single occurrence at the beginning of the Christian life, a process continuing throughout the Christian life, or a future event. Some Christians regard salvation as basically complete at the initiation of the Christian life. They tend to say, "We have been saved." Others see salvation as in process: "we are being saved." Yet others think of salvation as something that will be received in the future: "we shall be saved." Two or all three of these views may be combined, in which case the separate aspects of salvation (e.g., justification, sanctification, glorification) are understood as occurring at different times.

We must also determine the kind of chronological framework that is involved. Because particular actions can take place in a single moment or over a period of time, salvation and its constituent aspects can be conceived of in several different ways:

1. A series of points:
2. A series of discontinuous processes:
3. A series of overlapping processes:
4. A single continuous process with distinguishable components:

Nature and Locus of the Need

A second question relates to the nature and locus of the need that must be dealt with. In the traditional view, the human's basic deficiency is thought of as being vertical, as separation from God. What is needed is to restore the broken relationship between God and the creature. This is the evangelical view of salvation. A second view is that the primary human problem is horizontal. This may mean a deficient individual adjustment to others or a fundamental lack of harmony within society as a whole. Salvation involves the removal of ruptures within the human race, the healing of personal and social relationships. "Relational theology" is concerned with this process on the level of individual maladjustments and small-group problems. Liberation theologies are concerned with the conflicts among different racial, gender, or economic classes. A third view is that the primary human problem is internal. The individual is plagued with feelings that must be eradicated—guilt, inferiority, insecurity. "Adjustment," "self-understanding," "self-acceptance," and "growth in self-esteem" are catchwords here.

The Medium of Salvation

The question of how salvation is obtained or transmitted is also highly important. Some views regard the transmission of salvation as virtually a physical process. This is true of certain sacramentalist systems that believe salvation or grace to be obtained by means of a physical object. For example, in traditional Roman Catholicism, grace is believed to be actually transmitted and received by taking the bread of the Eucharist into one's body. While the value of the sacrament depends to some extent on the inward attitude or condition of the communicant, grace is received primarily through the external physical act. Others think salvation is conveyed by moral action. Here salvation is created by altering the state of affairs. This idea of salvation is found in the social gospel movement and in liberation theologies. Evangelical theologies represent a third idea: salvation is mediated by faith. Faith appropriates the work accomplished by Christ. The recipient is, in a sense, passive in this process.

The Direction of Movement in Salvation

An additional consideration is the direction of movement in salvation. Does God work by saving individuals, effecting a personal transformation that proceeds outward into society and changes the world of which the redeemed are a part? Or does God work by altering the structures of our society and then using these altered structures to change the persons who make it up?

The social gospel movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was convinced that the basic human problem lies not in a perverted human nature but in an evil social environment. So instead of attempting to cure individuals, we must alter the conditions leading to their illness. We might say that the advocates of the social gospel were proposing a sort of spiritual public-health ministry.

The opposite approach has been advocated by those segments of Christianity that emphasize conversion. The evils of society result from the fact that it is composed of evil individuals. Only as these individuals are transformed is there any real hope for changing society.

The Extent of Salvation

The extent of salvation is an issue for those who think of salvation as applying to individuals rather than to society. The question is: Who or how many will be saved? The particularist position, on the one hand, sees salvation as based on individual responses to the grace of God. It maintains that not all will respond affirmatively to God; consequently, some will be lost and some saved. The universalist position, on the other hand, holds that God will restore all humans to the relationship with him for which they were originally intended. There are two varieties of the universalist position. One might be a universalist by being an optimistic particularist. That is to say, one might hold both that it is necessary to accept Jesus Christ personally in order to be saved and that every individual will do so. Unfortunately, however, it does not appear that everyone in the past has accepted Christ; indeed, countless numbers did not even have the opportunity to do so. It consequently is not feasible to think of all as being saved in this fashion, unless there is some sort of unconscious means by which the conditions for salvation can be fulfilled. The more common universalist position is to assume that in the end God will somehow simply accept all persons into eternal fellowship with himself.

Current Conceptions of Salvation

Liberation Theologies

One of the vital movements currently propounding its unique view of salvation is the cluster of theologies that may collectively be referred to as "liberation theologies." We might subdivide this movement into black, feminist, and third-world theologies. It is especially the last of these three that is referred to as liberation theology. While some significant differences have occasionally produced conflict among these groups, there is a sufficient commonality among them to enable us to trace some basic features of their view of the nature of salvation.

One of the common emphases is that the basic problem of society is the oppression and exploitation of the powerless classes by the powerful. Salvation consists in deliverance (or liberation) from such oppression. The method of liberation will be appropriate to the nature of the specific situation.

The liberation theologies' analysis of humanity's predicament stems from two sources. First, there is a consensus that the capitalist or "developmentalist" approach to economic and political matters (all problems will automatically be solved as undeveloped nations advance along the path laid out by the industrial nations) is inherently both wrong and inept. To the liberation theologians it is increasingly apparent that the economic development of the advanced nations, as well as the prosperity of the elite social classes, is achieved at the expense of the less fortunate, who will never extricate themselves from their plight. Second, there is a sense that the Bible identifies with the oppressed. Liberation theologians acknowledge that their theology is biased in its approach to the Bible, but respond that the biblical writers shared this bias. The history of God's redemptive working is a history of groups of oppressed people. The people of Israel were oppressed in Egypt and in later history as well by more powerful nations. From the fact that much of Scripture is written from the perspective of the powerless, liberation theology concludes that God's message of salvation concerns them in particular.

> In the evangelical view, the primary human problem is our separation from God, the Word of God is his

means of presenting to us the salvation found in Christ, and faith is our means of accepting that salvation.

But what is the specific nature of salvation as viewed by liberation theologies? They do not think of salvation primarily as individual life after death. The Bible, it is contended, concerns itself much more with achieving the kingdom of God in the present age. Even eternal life is usually placed in the context of a new social order and is regarded not so much as being plucked out of history as being a participant in its culmination. The salvation of all persons from oppression is the goal of God's work in history and must therefore be the task of those who believe in him utilizing every means possible, including political effort and even revolution if necessary.

Existential Theology

A variety of twentieth-century theologies were existential in the sense of being based on or constructed from existential philosophy. Perhaps the outstanding representative of existential theology in this sense is Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann sought to interpret the New Testament and indeed to construct a theology on the basis of the thought of the existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger. Bultmann borrowed from Heidegger the concept of authentic and inauthentic existence. He mentions two tendencies in "modern man." There is a tendency to be guided in life by a self-orientation to fulfill one's desires for happiness and security, usefulness and profit. This is selfishness and presumptuousness. Not only are humans disrespectful of the concerns and needs of others, but they are also disobedient to the commands and claims of God on their lives. They either deny that God exists or, if they do believe, deny that God has legitimate right to their obedience and devotion. [1]

Another tendency of "modern man" is autonomy. This is the belief that one can gain real security by one's own efforts, through the accumulation of wealth, the proliferation of technology, and the quest to wield influence, either individually or collectively. This is, unfortunately, an unattainable hope, because of insuperable obstacles, like death and natural disasters. The continued human selfish and autonomous action constitutes a rejection or denial of all that the human is intended to be.[2]

What, then, is authentic existence or salvation? The word of God "calls man away from his selfishness and from the illusory security which he has built up for himself. It calls him to God, who is beyond the world and beyond scientific thinking. At the same time, it calls man to his true self."[3] Construed as obeying God by "turning our backs on self and abandoning all security," salvation is not, then, an alteration in the substance of the soul, as some have tended to understand regeneration, nor is it a forensic declaration that we are righteous in the sight of God, the traditional understanding of justification. Rather, it is a fundamental alteration of our *Existenz*, our whole outlook on and conduct of life.[4]

While Bultmann's particular existential theology has lost its popularity, together with the program of demythologization on which it rested, elements of existential philosophy live on in many forms in later theology. Opposition to "rationalism," preference for the "Hebrew" mentality versus the "Greek," resistance to inclusive explanations, and application of theology to immediate personal concerns are among many evidences of its continued presence.

<u>Secular Theology</u>

The whole cultural milieu within which theology is developed has been changing. God's activity was thought to be the explanation of the existence of the world and of what goes on within it, and he was the solver of the problems humans faced. Today, however, many people in practice put their trust in the visible, in the here and now, and in explanations that do not assume any transcendent or supersensible entities. They have become secular; that is, they have unconsciously adopted a lifestyle that in practice has no place for God. Part of this secular outlook is the result of a basic pragmatism. Scientific endeavor has succeeded in meeting human needs; religion is no longer necessary or effective. This is therefore a post-Christian era.[5]

There are two possible responses the church can make to this situation. One is to see Christianity and secularism as competitors, alternatives to one another. In the twentieth century, a different response was increasingly adopted by Christian theologians. That is to regard secularism not as a competitor but as a mature expression of Christian faith. One of the forerunners of this approach was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In the final years of his life, he developed a position that he referred to as "religionless

Christianity."[6] God has educated his highest creature to be independent of him. Just as wise parents help their children to become independent of them, so in secularization God has been striving to bring the human race to a point of self-sufficiency. Others picked up and elaborated on Bonhoeffer's ideas. John A. T. Robinson in Great Britain and the Death of God theologians in the United States have been the primary proponents of secular theology.[7]

Secular theology rejects the traditional understanding that salvation consists of removal from the world and reception of supernatural grace from God. Rather, salvation is not so much *through* religion as *from* religion. Realizing one's capability and utilizing it, becoming independent of God, coming of age, affirming oneself, and getting involved in the world—this is the true meaning of salvation.

Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology

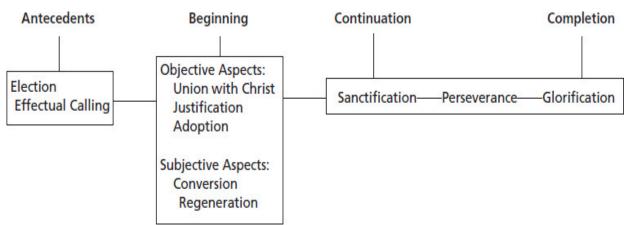
It is difficult to characterize contemporary Roman Catholic thinking on any subject because, whereas at one time there was a uniform, official position within Roman Catholicism on most issues, now there appears to be only great diversity. Official doctrinal standards still remain, but they are now supplemented, and in some cases are seemingly contradicted, by later statements. Among these later statements are the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council and the published opinions of individual Catholic scholars. It is necessary to see some of these statements against the background of the traditional stance of the church.

The official Catholic position has long been that the church is the only channel of the God's grace. This grace is transmitted through the sacraments of the church. Those outside the official or organized church cannot receive it. The church regarded itself as having an exclusive franchise for the distribution of divine grace.

This traditional position that union with the church is necessary for salvation has now been modified. For example, Yves Congar argues in effect for degrees of membership in the church.[8] While the majority of the human race has no visible and official connection with the church, there is nonetheless such a thing as an invisible membership. The Second Vatican Council adopted a position similar to Congar's: the people of God are not limited to the visible, hierarchical church. The people of God are divided into three categories in accordance with their degree of involvement with the church:

- 1. Catholics, who are "incorporated" into the church.
- 2. Non-Catholic Christians, who are "linked" to the church. While their situation is not as secure as that of Roman Catholics, they have genuine churches and are not completely separated from God.
- 3. Non-Christians, who are "related" to the church.[9]

Figure 5. The Aspects of Salvation



The third group includes those whom Karl Rahner refers to as "anonymous Christians." That people are outside the visible Catholic Church (or any Christian church for that matter) does not mean that all of them are apart from the grace of God. Christ died for them as well, and we should not deny this grace.

There has also been discussion within the church regarding the nature of salvation. There has been a greater openness to the classical Protestant concept of justification. In this regard, Hans Küng's work on Karl Barth's theology has been particularly significant. In the past, Catholicism included what Protestants term justification and sanctification in one concept, sanctifying grace. Küng, however, talks about objective and subjective aspects of justification. The former corresponds to what Protestants usually refer to as justification. In this aspect of salvation, the human is passive and God is active. The latter corresponds roughly to what Protestants have usually called sanctification; here the human is active. [10] Küng observes that Barth emphasized the former whereas the Council of Trent emphasized the latter. Nonetheless, there is no real conflict between Barth and Trent. [11]

To summarize: The Catholic Church has in recent years been more open to the possibility that some who are outside the visible church, and perhaps some who make absolutely no claim of being Christians, may be recipients of grace. As a result, the Catholic understanding of salvation has become considerably broader than the traditional conception. In addition, the current understanding includes dimensions that have usually been associated with Protestantism.

Evangelical Theology

The traditional orthodox or evangelical position on salvation is correlated closely with the orthodox understanding of the human predicament. In this understanding, the relationship between the human being and God is the primary one. When that is not right, the other dimensions of life are adversely affected as well.

Evangelicals understand the Scriptures to indicate that there are two major aspects to the human problem of sin. First, sin is a broken relationship with God. The human has failed to fulfill divine expectations, whether by transgressing limitations that God's law has set or by failing to do what is positively commanded there. Deviation from the law results in a state of guilt or liability to punishment. Second, the very nature of the person is spoiled as a result of deviation from the law. Now there is an inclination toward evil, a propensity for sin. Usually termed "corruption," this inclination often manifests itself as internal disorientation and conflict. Beyond that, because we live in the context of a network of interpersonal relationships, the rupture in our relationship with God also results in a disturbance of our relationships with other persons. Sin even takes on collective dimensions: the whole structure of society inflicts hardships and wrongs on individuals and minority groups.

Salvation both reestablishes our relationship with God and transforms the radically corrupt nature of our hearts.

Certain aspects of the doctrine of salvation relate to the matter of one's standing with God. (For a diagram of the temporal relationships between the various aspects of salvation, see figure 5.) The individual's legal status must

be changed from guilty to not guilty. This is a matter of one's being declared just or righteous in God's sight, of being viewed as fully meeting the divine requirements. The theological term here is "justification." One is justified by being brought into a legal union with Christ. More is necessary, however, than mere remission of guilt, because the warm intimacy that should characterize one's relationship with God has been lost. This problem is rectified by adoption, in which one is restored to favor with God and able to claim all the benefits provided by the loving Father.

In addition to the need to reestablish one's relationship with God, there is also a need to alter the condition of one's heart. The basic change in the direction of one's life from an inclination toward sin to a positive desire to live righteously is termed "regeneration" or, literally, "new birth." An actual alteration of one's character is involved, an infusion of a positive spiritual energy. This, however, is merely the beginning of the spiritual life. The individual's spiritual condition is progressively altered; one actually becomes holier. This progressive subjective change is referred to as "sanctification" ("making holy"). Sanctification finally comes to completion in the life beyond death, when the spiritual nature of the believer will be perfected. This is termed "glorification." The individual's maintaining faith and commitment to the very end through the grace of God is "perseverance."

What, according to the evangelical construction of theology, are the means of salvation or, more broadly put, the means of grace? In the evangelical view, the Word of God plays an indispensable part in the whole matter of salvation. Peter speaks of this instrumental role of the Word of God: "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. . . . And this is the word that was preached to you" (1 Pet. 1:23, 25). Thus the Word of God, whether read or preached, is God's means of presenting to us the salvation found in Christ; faith is our means of accepting that salvation.[12] Paul put this quite clearly in Ephesians 2:8–9: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Works, then, are not a means of receiving salvation. Rather, they are the natural result and evidence of genuine faith. [13] Faith that does not produce works is not real faith. Conversely, works that do not stem from faith and a proper relationship to Christ will have no bearing at the time of judgment.

What, in evangelical theology, is the extent of salvation? That is, who will be saved? And specifically, will all be saved? From time to time, the position that all will be saved has been espoused in the church. This position, as we mentioned earlier in this chapter, is known as universalism. The church's usual view throughout history, however, and the view espoused by most evangelicals, is that while some or even many will be saved, some will not. The church took this position not because it did not want to see everyone saved, but because it believed there are clear statements in Scripture to the effect that some will be lost.

As we have done with respect to other issues, we will adopt the evangelical position on salvation. Although God is concerned about every human need, both individual and collective, Jesus made clear that the eternal spiritual welfare of the individual is infinitely more important than the supplying of temporal needs. God's preoccupation with humans' eternal spiritual welfare together with the biblical picture of sin as being so thoroughgoing that a radical transformation of human nature is required if restoration to favor with God is to be experienced are compelling evidence for the evangelical view of salvation.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- Why are there so many details on which conceptions of salvation differ?
- What are the two sources from which liberation theologies analyze the human predicament?
 How do these sources affect their view of the nature of salvation?
- How has the Roman Catholic position on salvation changed?
- What is involved in salvation, according to the evangelical position?
- If you have experienced salvation, how would you describe the process of salvation in your life?

The Antecedent to Salvation: *Predestination*

Chapter Objectives

After you have completed your study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Define and describe the doctrine of predestination.
- 2. Compare, contrast, and analyze the predestinarian views of the Calvinists and Arminians.
- 3. Construct a meaningful solution to the problem of predestination.
- **4.** Identify at least four conclusions that emanate from the doctrine of predestination.

Chapter Summary

Predestination is God's choosing of persons for either eternal life or eternal death. The basic issues of the doctrine are most clearly delineated in the formulations of John Calvin and James Arminius. A solution is suggested and four implications of the doctrine are identified.

Chapter Outline

Differing Views of Predestination

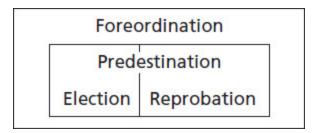
- Calvinism
- Arminianism

A Suggested Solution

Implications of Predestination

Of all the doctrines of the Christian faith, certainly one of the most puzzling and least understood is the doctrine of predestination. It seems to many to be obscure and even bizarre. It appears to others to be an unnecessary inquiry into something that exceeds the human capacity to understand. Such theological hairsplitting is considered to have little if any practical significance. Perhaps more jokes have been made about this doctrine than about all other Christian doctrines combined. Yet because the biblical revelation mentions it, the Christian has no option but to inquire into its meaning, even if it is difficult and obscure.

Figure 6. The Terminology of Predestination



What precisely do we mean by the term "predestination"? Although some use it interchangeably with "foreordination" and "election," [1] for our purposes here "predestination" is midway in specificity between "foreordination" and "election." "Foreordination," as seen in figure 6, is the most inclusive term, denoting God's will with respect to all matters that occur, whether that be the fate of individual human persons or the falling of a rock. "Predestination" refers to God's choice of individuals for eternal life or eternal death. "Election" is the selection of some for eternal life, the positive side of predestination; "reprobation" is the negative side.

<u>Differing Views of Predestination</u>

<u>Calvinism</u>

While the doctrine of predestination has been developed by various theologians from Augustine to Karl Barth, the contrasting formulations of John Calvin and James Arminius most clearly focus the basic issues. What is designated Calvinism has taken many different forms over the years. We

shall here examine certain common features of them all. A mnemonic aid sometimes used to summarize the complete system is the acronym TULIP: total depravity, unconditional predestination, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance.[2] While there are somewhat varying interpretations of these expressions, and not all of these concepts are essential to our current considerations, we will utilize them as the framework for our examination of this view of predestination.

Calvinists think of the whole human race as lost in sin. Total depravity means that every individual is so sinful as to be unable to respond to any offer of grace. This condition, which we fully deserve, involves both moral corruption (and hence moral disability) and liability to punishment (guilt). All persons begin life in this condition. For this reason it is called "original sin." Sometimes the phrase "total inability" is used, meaning that sinners have lost the ability to do good and are unable to convert themselves.[3] Numerous passages indicate both the universality and the seriousness of this condition (e.g., John 6:44; Rom. 3:1–23; 2 Cor. 4:3–4; and especially Eph. 2:1–3).

Calvinism's second major concept is the sovereignty of God. He is the Creator and Lord of all things, and consequently he is free to do whatever he wills. [4] He is not subject to or answerable to anyone. One of the passages frequently cited in this connection is the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Those who were hired at the eleventh hour were paid the same amount promised to those hired at the beginning of the day. When those hired earlier complain about this seeming injustice, the master replies to one of them, "I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?" (Matt. 20:13– 15). Another significant passage is Paul's metaphor of the potter and the clay. To the individual who complains that God is unjust, Paul responds: "But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? 'Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "Why did you make me like this?" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?" (Rom. 9:20–21). This concept of divine sovereignty, together with human inability, is basic to the Calvinistic doctrine of election.

Election, according to Calvinism, is God's choice of certain persons for his special favor. It may refer to the choice of Israel as God's special covenant people or to the choice of individuals to some special office. The sense that primarily concerns us here, however, is the choice of certain persons to be God's spiritual children and thus recipients of eternal life. [5] One piece of biblical evidence that God has selected certain individuals for salvation is found in Ephesians 1:4–5: "For he [the Father] chose us in him [Jesus Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will." Jesus indicated that the initiative had been his in the selection of his disciples to eternal life: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last" (John 15:16). Furthermore, all who are given to Jesus by the Father will come to him: "All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37).

The interpretation that God's choice or selection of certain individuals for salvation is absolute or unconditional is in keeping with God's actions in other contexts, such as his choice of the nation Israel, which followed through on the selection of Jacob and rejection of Esau. In Romans 9 Paul argues impressively that all of these choices are totally of God and in no way depend on the people chosen. Having quoted God's statement to Moses in Exodus 33:19—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, / and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion"—Paul comments, "It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (Rom. 9:15–16).[6]

We have already seen several characteristics of election as viewed by Calvinists. One is that election is an expression of God's sovereign will or good pleasure. It is not based on any merit in the one elected or on foreseeing that the individual will believe. It is the cause, not the result, of faith. Second, election is efficacious. Those whom God has chosen will most certainly come to faith in him and, for that matter, will persevere in that faith to the end. All of the elect will certainly be saved. Third, election is from all eternity. It is not a decision made at some point in time when the individual is already existent. It is what God has always purposed to do. Fourth, election is unconditional. It does not depend on humans' performing a specific action or meeting certain conditions or terms of God.

He simply wills to save them and brings it about. Finally, election is immutable. God does not change his mind. Election is from all eternity and out of God's infinite mercy; he has no reason or occasion to change his mind. [7]

For the most part, Calvinists insist that election is not inconsistent with free will, that is, as they understand the term. They deny, however, that humans have free will in the Arminian sense. Sin has removed, if not freedom, at least the ability to exercise freedom properly. Loraine Boettner, for example, compares fallen humanity to a bird with a broken wing. The bird is "free" to fly, but is unable to do so. Likewise, "the natural man is free to come to God but not able. How can he repent of his sin when he loves it? How can he come to God when he hates God? This is the inability of the will under which man labors."[8] Only when God comes in his special grace to those whom he has chosen are they able to respond.

One area where there are variations among Calvinists is the concept of reprobation. Some hold to double predestination, the belief that God chooses some to be saved and others to be lost. Others say that God actively chooses those who are to receive eternal life, and passes by all the others, leaving them in their self-chosen sins.[9] While the effect is the same in both cases, the latter view assigns the lostness of the nonelect to their own choice of sin rather than to the active decision of God, or to God's choice by omission rather than commission.

<u>Arminianism</u>

Arminianism is a term that covers a large number of subpositions. It may range all the way from the evangelical views of Arminius himself to left-wing liberalism. Arminianism also includes conventional Roman Catholicism with its emphasis on the necessity of works in the process of salvation. For the most part, we will consider the more conservative or evangelical form of Arminianism, but we will construe it in a fashion broad enough to encompass the position of most Arminians.

While statements of the view vary to some degree, the logical starting point is the concept that God desires all persons to be saved.[10] Arminians point to some definite assertions of Scripture. That God finds no pleasure in the death of sinners is clear from Peter's statement, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to

repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Paul echoes a similar sentiment: "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3–4; see also Ezek. 33:11; Acts 17:30–31).

Not only didactic statements but also the universal character of many of God's commands and exhortations express his desire for the salvation of the entire human race. The Old Testament contains universal invitations; for instance,

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! (Isa. 55:1)

Jesus's invitation was similarly without restriction: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). If, then, it is not God's intent that all persons be saved, he must be insincere in his offer.

A second major tenet of Arminianism is that all persons are able to believe or to meet the conditions of salvation. If this were not the case, the universal invitations to salvation would make little sense. But is there room in this theology for the concept that all persons are able to believe? There is, if we modify or eliminate the idea of the total depravity of sinners. Or like John Wesley and others, we might adopt the concept of "prevenient grace."[11]

As generally understood, prevenient grace is God's grace given to all humans indiscriminately. It is seen in God's sending the sunshine and the rain on all people. It is also the basis of all the goodness found in humans everywhere. Beyond that, it is universally given to counteract the effect of sin. Since God has given this grace to all, everyone is capable of accepting the offer of salvation; consequently, there is no need for any special application of God's grace to particular individuals.

A third basic concept is the role of foreknowledge in the election of persons to salvation. For the most part, Arminians desire to retain the term "election" and the idea that individuals are foreordained to salvation. This means that God must prefer some people to others. In the Arminian view, he chooses some to receive salvation, whereas he merely passes the others

by. Those who are predestined by God are those who in his infinite knowledge he is able to foresee will accept the offer of salvation made in Jesus Christ. This view is based on the close connection in Scripture between foreknowledge and foreordination or predestination. The primary passage appealed to is Romans 8:29: "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." A supporting text is 1 Peter 1:1–2, where Peter addresses the "elect . . . who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Both references represent foreordination as based on and resulting from foreknowledge. [12]

Finally, the Arminian raises objections to the Calvinistic understanding of predestination as unconditional or absolute. Some of these are practical rather than theoretical in nature. Many of them reduce to the idea that Calvinism is fatalistic. If God has determined everything that is to occur, does it really make any difference what humans do? Ethical behavior becomes irrelevant. If we are elect, does it matter how we live? We will be saved regardless of our actions.

A further objection is that Calvinism negates any missionary or evangelistic impulse. If God has already chosen who will be saved, and their number cannot be increased, then what is the point of preaching the gospel? The elect will be saved anyway, and neither more nor less than the appointed number will come to Christ. So why bother to raise funds, send missionaries, preach the gospel, or pray for the lost? Such activities must surely be exercises in futility.[13]

The last objection is that the Calvinistic doctrine is a contradiction to human freedom. Our thoughts, choices, and actions are not really our doing. They are not free, but are caused by an external force, namely, God. And so we are not really human in the traditional sense of that word. We are automatons, robots, or machines. This, however, contradicts everything we know about ourselves and the way we regard others as well. There is no point in God's commending us for having done good, or rebuking us for having done evil, for we could not have done otherwise. [14]

A Suggested Solution

Can we now draw some conclusions regarding the nettlesome matter of the decrees of God with respect to salvation? Note that we are not dealing here with the whole matter of the decrees of God in general, or whether God renders certain every event that occurs within all of time and within the entire universe. We are concerned merely with the issue of whether some are singled out by God to be special recipients of his grace.

Scripture speaks of election in several different senses. Election sometimes refers to God's choice of Israel as his specially favored people. It occasionally points to the selection of individuals to special positions of privilege and service, and, of course, to selection to salvation. In view of the varied meanings of election, any attempt to limit our discussion to only one of them will inevitably result in a truncation of the topic.

Logically prior to the Bible's teaching that God has specially chosen some to have eternal life is its vivid picture of the natural lostness, blindness, and inability of humans to respond in faith to the opportunity for salvation. In Romans, especially chapter 3, Paul depicts the human race as hopelessly separated from God because of their sin. They are unable to do anything to extricate themselves from this condition and, in fact, being quite blind to their situation, have no desire to do so. Calvinists and conservative Arminians agree on this. It is not merely that humans cannot in their natural state do good works of a type that would justify them in God's sight. Beyond that, they are afflicted with spiritual blindness (Rom. 1:18–23; 2 Cor. 4:3–4) and insensitivity.

If this is the case, it follows that no one would ever respond to the gospel call without some special action by God. It is here that many Arminians, recognizing human inability as taught in Scripture, introduce the concept of prevenient grace, which is believed to have a universal effect nullifying the noetic results of sin, thus making belief possible. The problem is that there is no clear and adequate basis in Scripture for this concept of a universal enablement. Brought back to the question of why some believe, we do find an impressive collection of texts suggesting that God has selected some to be saved and that our response to the offer of salvation depends on this prior decision and initiative by God. For example, in connection with Jesus's explaining that he spoke in parables so that some would hear but not understand, we observe that he went on to say to the disciples, "But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear" (Matt. 13:16). One might construe this to mean that they were not as spiritually

incapacitated as were the other hearers. We can get a better grasp of what is entailed here, however, if we look at Matthew 16. Jesus had asked the disciples who people said he was, and they had recited the varied opinions —John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets (v. 14). Peter, however, confessed, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Jesus's comment is instructive: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven" (v. 17). It was a special action of God that made the difference between the disciples and the spiritually blind and deaf. This is in accordance with Jesus's statements: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day" (John 6:44); and "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). Jesus also tells us that this drawing and choosing are efficacious: "All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37); and "Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me" (v. 45). The concept that our belief depends on God's initiative also appears in the book of Acts, where Luke tells us that when the gentiles at Antioch of Pisidia heard of salvation, "they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

Furthermore, the Arminian argument that God's foreordaining is based on his foreknowledge is not persuasive. For the Hebrew word *yada*', which seems to lie behind the references to "foreknowledge" in Romans 8:29 and 1 Peter 1:1–2 (NIV), signifies more than an advance knowledge or precognition. It carries the connotation of a positive and intimate relationship. It suggests looking with favor on or loving someone, and is even used of sexual relations.[15] This, then, is not a neutral advance knowledge of what someone will do, but an affirmative choice of that person. Against this Hebraic background, it appears likely that the references to foreknowledge in Romans and 1 Peter are presenting foreknowledge not as the grounds for predestination but as a confirmation of it.

An impressive collection of texts suggests that God has selected some to be saved and that our response

to the offer of salvation depends on this prior decision by God.

But what of the universal offers of salvation and the general invitations to the hearers to believe? Arminians sometimes argue that, on Calvinistic grounds, someone might choose to accept salvation but not be permitted to be saved. But according to the Calvinistic understanding, this scenario never takes place, for no one is able to will to be saved, to come to God, to believe, without special enablements. God sincerely offers salvation to all, but all of us are so settled in our sins that we will not respond unless assisted to do so.

Is there real freedom in such a situation? Here we refer the reader to our general discussion of human freedom in relationship to the plan of God (see p. 129). Now, however, we are dealing specifically with spiritual ability or freedom of choice in regard to the critical issue of salvation. And here the chief consideration is depravity. If, as we have argued, humans in the unregenerate state are totally depraved and unable to respond to God's grace, there is no question as to whether they are free to accept the offer of salvation—no one is! Rather, the question to be asked is: Is anyone who is specially called free to reject the offer of grace? The position taken herein is not that those who are called *must* respond, but that God makes his offer so appealing that they *will* respond affirmatively.

It is not that those who are called must respond, but that God makes his offer so appealing that they will respond.

Implications of Predestination

Correctly understood, the doctrine of predestination has several significant implications:

1. We can have confidence that what God has decided will come to pass. His plan will be fulfilled, and the elect will come to faith.

- 2. We need not criticize ourselves when some people reject Christ. Jesus himself did not win everyone in his audience. He understood that all those whom the Father gave to him would come to him (John 6:37) and only they would come (v. 44). When we have done our very best, we can leave the matter with the Lord.
- 3. Predestination does not nullify incentive for evangelism and missions. We do not know who the elect and the nonelect are, so we must continue to spread the Word. Our evangelistic efforts are God's means to bring the elect to salvation. God's ordaining of the end includes the ordaining of the means to that end as well. The knowledge that missions are God's means is a strong motive for the endeavor and gives us confidence that it will prove successful.
- 4. Grace is absolutely necessary. While Arminianism often gives strong emphasis to grace, in our Calvinistic scheme there is no basis for God's choice of some to eternal life other than his own sovereign will. There is nothing in the individual that persuades God to grant salvation.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- How are the terms "foreordination," "election," "predestination," and "reprobation" used in this chapter?
- How would you differentiate between the perspectives of the Calvinists and Arminians?
- How would you construct a view of predestination and defend it?
- What implications come from the doctrine of predestination, and how would you evaluate them?
- Regardless of the position you hold, what do you believe are the most encouraging aspects of the doctrine of predestination?

The Beginning of Salvation: Subjective Aspects

Chapter Objectives

Following your study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Recognize the necessity of effectual calling to bring about salvation.
- 2. Express the essential nature of the human response of conversion and distinguish between the related concepts of repentance and faith.
- **3.** Examine the divine work of regeneration, which brings about new life and transformation.
- **4.** State and describe six implications that result from effectual calling, conversion, and regeneration.

Chapter Summary

Salvation begins with three steps: effectual calling, conversion, and regeneration. Through the Holy Spirit, God calls the unbeliever to salvation. The human response to that call involves turning from sin to faith in Christ. Faith also includes belief. God responds by regenerating the person to new life in Christ. We can only stand in awe of God's work of saving us and regenerating us as spiritual beings.

Chapter Outline

Effectual Calling

Conversion

- Repentance
- Faith

Regeneration

- The Biblical Descriptions
- The Meaning of Regeneration

<u>Implications of Effectual Calling, Conversion, and Regeneration</u>

The doctrine of salvation encompasses a large and complex area of biblical teaching and of human experience. Consequently, it is necessary to draw some distinctions among its various facets. While we could organize the material in many different ways, we have chosen to utilize a temporal scheme, in terms of its beginning, continuation, and completion. Chapters 33 and 34 both deal with the inception of the Christian life. Conversion and regeneration (chap. 33), on the one hand, are subjective aspects of the beginning of the Christian life; they deal with change in our inward nature, our spiritual condition. Conversion is this change as viewed from the human perspective; regeneration is this change as viewed from God's perspective. Union with Christ, justification, and adoption (chap. 34), on the other hand, are objective aspects of the beginning of the Christian life; they refer primarily to the relationship between the individual and God.

Effectual Calling

In the preceding chapter we examined the whole complex of issues involved in predestination, concluding that God chooses some persons to be saved and that their conversion is a result of that decision on God's part. Because all humans are lost in sin, spiritually blind, and unable to believe, however, some action by God must intervene between his eternal decision and the conversion of the individual within time. This activity of God is termed special or effectual calling.

Scripture speaks of a general calling to salvation, an invitation extended to all persons. Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Further, when Jesus said, "For many are invited, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14), he was probably referring to God's universal invitation. But note the distinction here between calling and choosing. Those who are chosen are the objects of God's special or effectual calling.

Special or effectual calling is God's particularly effective work with the elect, enabling them to

respond in repentance and faith, and rendering it certain that they will.

Special calling means that God works in a particularly effective way with the elect, enabling them to respond in repentance and faith, and rendering it certain that they will. The circumstances of special calling can vary widely. We see Jesus issuing special invitations to those who became the inner circle of disciples (see, e.g., Matt. 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; John 1:35–51). He singled out Zacchaeus for particular attention (Luke 19:1–10). In these cases, Jesus no doubt presented his claims in a direct and personal fashion that carried a special persuasiveness not felt by the surrounding crowd. We see another dramatic approach by God in the conversion of Saul (Acts 9:1–19). Sometimes God's calling takes a quieter form, as in the case of Lydia: "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message" (Acts 16:14).

Special calling is in large measure the Holy Spirit's work of illumination, enabling the recipient to understand the true meaning of the gospel. This working of the Spirit is necessary because the depravity characteristic of all humans prevents them from grasping God's revealed truth. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 2:6–16, George Ladd remarks that

the first work of the Spirit is to enable men to understand the divine work of redemption. . . . This [the cross] was an event whose meaning was folly to Greeks and an offense to Jews. But to those enlightened by the Spirit, it is the wisdom of God. In other words, Paul recognizes a hidden meaning in the historical event of the death of Christ ("God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself," 2 Cor. 5:19) that is not evident to the human eye but which can be accepted only by a supernatural illumination. . . . Only by the illumination of the Spirit can men understand the meaning of the cross; only by the Spirit can men therefore confess that Jesus who was executed is also the Lord (1 Cor. 12:3).[1]

Special or effectual calling, then, involves an extraordinary presentation of the message of salvation, sufficiently powerful to counteract the effects of sin and enable the person to believe. It is also so appealing that the person will believe. Special calling is in many ways similar to the prevenient grace of which Arminians speak. It differs from that concept, however, in two respects. It is bestowed only on the elect, not on all humans, and it leads infallibly or efficaciously to a positive response by the recipient.

Conversion

The Christian life, by its very nature and definition, represents something quite different from the way we previously lived. In contrast to being dead in sins and trespasses, it is *new* life. While it is of lifelong and even eternal duration, it has a finite point of beginning. "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step," the Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu is reputed to have said. And so it is with the Christian life. The first step of the Christian life is called conversion. It is the act of turning from one's sin in repentance and turning to Christ in faith.

The image of turning from sin is found in both the Old and New Testaments. In the book of Ezekiel, we read the word of the Lord to the people of Israel: "Therefore, you Israelites, I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!" (18:30–32). In Ephesians 5:14 Paul uses different imagery, but the basic thrust is the same.

Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

In Acts we find Peter advocating a change in direction of life: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19). While contemporary evangelists frequently plead, "Be converted," it is noteworthy that in the passages we have cited, the command is in the active: "Convert!"

Conversion is a single entity that has two distinguishable but inseparable aspects: repentance and faith. Repentance is the unbeliever's turning away from sin, and faith is his or her turning toward Christ. They are, respectively, the negative and positive aspect of the same occurrence.[2] In a sense, each is incomplete without the other, and each is motivated by the other. As we become aware of sin and turn from it, we see the necessity of

turning to Christ for the provision of his righteousness. Conversely, believing in Christ makes us aware of our sin and thus leads to repentance.

Scripture gives no specifications concerning the amount of time conversion involves. On some occasions (e.g., Pentecost) it appears to have been a cataclysmic decision, taking place virtually in a moment's time. But for some people conversion was more of a process (e.g., Nicodemus; see John 19:39). Similarly, the emotional accompaniments of conversion can vary greatly. Lydia's turning to Christ seems to have been very simple and calm in nature (Acts 16:14). But just a few verses later we read of the Philippian jailer who, still trembling with fear upon hearing that none of the prisoners had escaped after the earthquake, cries out, "What must I do to be saved?" (v. 30). The conversion experiences of these two people were very different, but the end result was the same.

Sometimes the church has forgotten that there is variety in God's ways of working. On the American frontier a certain type of preaching became stereotypical. Life was uncertain and often difficult, and the circuit-riding evangelist came only on infrequent occasions. The hearers were pressed to make an immediate decision. [3] And so conversion came to be thought of as a crisis decision. Although God frequently does work with individuals in this way, differences in personality type, background, and immediate circumstances may result in a very different type of conversion. It is important not to insist that the incidentals or external factors of conversion be identical for everyone.

It is important also to draw a distinction between conversion and conversions. There is just one major point in life when the individual turns toward Christ in response to the offer of salvation. There may be other points when believers must abandon a particular practice or belief lest they revert to a life of sin. These events, however, are secondary, reaffirmations of the one major step that has been taken. We might say that there may be many conversions in the Christian's life, but only one Conversion.

<u>Repentance</u>

The negative aspect of conversion is the abandonment or repudiation of sin. This is what we mean by repentance. It is based on a feeling of godly sorrow for our sin. As we examine repentance and faith, it should be remembered that they cannot really be separated from one another. We will

deal with repentance first because where one has been logically precedes where one is going.

Two Hebrew terms express the idea of repentance. One is *naham*, signifying "to pant, sigh, or groan." It came to mean "to lament or to grieve." When referring to an emotion aroused by consideration of one's own character and deeds, it means "to rue" or "to repent."[4] Interestingly, when *naham* occurs in the sense of "repent," the subject of the verb is usually God. A prime example is Genesis 6:6: "The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled."

The type of genuine repentance that humans are to display is more commonly designated by the word *shub*. It is used extensively in the prophets' calls to Israel to return to the Lord. It stresses the importance of a conscious moral separation, the necessity of forsaking sin and entering into fellowship with God.[5]

There are also two major New Testament terms for repentance. The word metamelomai means "to have a feeling of care, concern, or regret." [6] It stresses the emotional aspect of repentance, a feeling of regret or remorse for having done wrong. Jesus used the word in his parable of the two sons. When the first son was asked by his father to go and work in the vineyard, "'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went" (Matt. 21:29). The second son said he would go, but did not. Jesus likened the chief priests and Pharisees (whom he was addressing) to the second son and repentant sinners to the first son. The word *metamelomai* is also used of Judas's remorse over his betrayal of Jesus (Matt. 27:3). It appears that *metamelomai* can designate simply regret and remorse over one's actions, as in the case of Judas. Or it can represent true repentance, which involves an actual alteration of behavior, as in the case of the first son. Judas and Peter responded to their sins in contrasting ways. Peter returned to Jesus and was restored to fellowship. In the case of Judas, awareness of sin led only to despair and self-destruction.

The other major New Testament term for repentance is $metanoe\bar{o}$, which literally means "to think differently about something or to have a change of mind." It was a key term in the preaching of the early church. On Pentecost Peter urged the multitude, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

From these texts it is clear that repentance is a prerequisite for salvation. The large number of verses and the variety of contexts and cultural settings show that repentance is an essential part of the Christian gospel. It was prominent in the preaching of John the Baptist and of Jesus (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). And Paul declared in his message to the philosophers on Mars Hill: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). This last statement is especially significant, for it is universal: "all people everywhere." Repentance is an ineradicable part of the gospel message.

Repentance is godly sorrow for one's sin together with a resolution to turn from it. There are other forms of regret over one's wrongdoing that are based on different motivations. If we have sinned and the consequences are unpleasant, we may well regret what we have done. But that is not true repentance. That is mere penitence. Real repentance is sorrow for one's sin because of the wrong done to God and the hurt inflicted on him. This sorrow is accompanied by a genuine desire to abandon that sin.

The Bible's repeated emphasis on the necessity of repentance is a conclusive argument against what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace" (or "easy believism").[7] It is not enough simply to believe in Jesus and accept the offer of grace; there must be a real alteration of the inner person. If belief in God's grace were all that is necessary, who would not wish to become a Christian? But Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). If there is no conscious repentance, then there is no real awareness of having been saved from the power of sin. There may be a corresponding lack of depth and commitment. Any attempt to increase the number of disciples by making discipleship as easy as possible ends up diluting the quality of discipleship instead.

Faith

As repentance is the negative aspect of conversion, turning from one's sin, so faith is the positive aspect, laying hold of the promises and the work of Christ. Faith is at the very heart of the gospel, for it is the vehicle by which we are enabled to receive the grace of God.

Old Testament Hebrew conveys the idea of faith primarily with verb forms. Perhaps that is because the Hebrews regarded faith as something one does rather than as something one has. Specifically, the Hebrew idea of faith is a confident resting or leaning on someone or something, usually God or his word of promise.

In the New Testament, the one primary word that represents the idea of faith is the verb *pisteuō* together with its cognate noun *pistis*. The verb has two basic meanings. First, it means "to believe what someone says, to accept a statement (particularly of a religious nature) as true."[8] An example is found in 1 John 4:1: "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." A dramatic instance of the verb is Jesus's statement to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would" (Matt. 8:13). These and numerous other instances (e.g., Matt. 9:28; Mark 5:36) establish that faith involves believing that something is true. Indeed, the author of Hebrews declares that faith in the sense of acknowledging certain truths is indispensable to salvation: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

At least equally important are the instances in which *pisteuō* and *pistis* signify "personal trust as distinct from mere credence or belief."[9] This sense is usually identifiable through the use of a preposition. In Mark 1:15 the Greek preposition *en* ("in") is used: after the Baptist's arrest Jesus preached in Galilee, saying, "Repent and believe in the good news!" The preposition *eis* ("in") is used in Acts 10:43: "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." The same construction is found in Matthew 18:6; John 2:11; Acts 19:4; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 1:29; 1 Peter 1:8; and 1 John 5:10. The apostle John speaks of believing in the name of Jesus: "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12; see also 2:23; 3:18; and 1 John 5:13). This construction had special significance to the Hebrews, who regarded one's name as virtually equivalent to the person. Thus, to believe on or in the name of Jesus was to place one's personal trust in him.[10]

On the basis of the foregoing considerations, we conclude that the type of faith necessary for salvation involves both believing that and believing in, or assenting to facts and trusting in a person. It is vital to keep these two together. The God in whom we are to trust reveals himself, at least in part, through communicating information about himself to which we are to assent.

Sometimes faith is pictured as being antithetical to reason and unconfirmable. It is true that faith is not something established on an antecedent basis by indisputable evidence. But faith, once engaged in, enables us to reason and to recognize various supporting evidences.[11] This means that faith is a form of knowledge; it works in concert with, not against, reason. Pertinent here is Jesus's response to the two disciples whom John the Baptist sent to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Luke 7:19). Jesus responded by telling them to report to John the miracles they had seen and the message they had heard. Jesus in effect said to John, "Here is the evidence you need in order to be able to believe."

Although we have depicted conversion as a human response to divine initiative, even repentance and faith are gifts from God. Jesus made very clear that conviction, which presupposes repentance, is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8–11). Jesus also said, "No one can come to me [i.e., exercise faith] unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44 NIV 1984). Thus, both repentance and faith are gracious works of God in the life of the believer.

Regeneration

Conversion refers to the human being's response to God's offer of salvation and approach to the human. Regeneration is the other side of conversion. It is completely God's doing. It is God's transformation of individual believers, his giving a new spiritual vitality and direction to their lives when they accept Christ.

Regeneration is God's transformation of individual believers—reversing their natural tendencies, giving a new spiritual vitality to their lives, and thus restoring them to what they were originally intended to be.

Underlying the doctrine of regeneration is an assumption that human nature is in need of transformation. The human being is spiritually dead and therefore needs new birth or spiritual birth.[12] Not only are unbelievers unable to perceive spiritual truths, but they are also incapable of doing anything to alter their condition of blindness and their natural tendency toward sin. When one reads the description of the sinful human in Romans 3:9–20, it is apparent that some radical change or metamorphosis is needed, rather than a mere modification or adjustment in the person.

The Biblical Descriptions

The biblical descriptions of the new birth are numerous, vivid, and varied. Even in the Old Testament we find a striking reference to God's renewing work. He promises, "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 11:19–20).

In the New Testament, the term that most literally conveys the idea of regeneration is *palingenesia* ("rebirth"). It appears just twice in the New Testament. One of these instances is Matthew 19:28, where it refers to the "renewal of all things" that will be part of the consummation of history. The other is Titus 3:5, which refers to salvation: God our Savior "saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." Here we have the biblical idea of rebirth.

The best-known and most extensive exposition of the concept of the new birth is found in Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. Jesus told Nicodemus, "No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again" (v. 3). At a later point in the discussion he made the comment, "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'" (v. 7). In the same conversation, Jesus spoke of being "born of the Spirit." He had in mind a supernatural work transforming the life of the individual. This work, which is indispensable for entrance into the kingdom of God, cannot be achieved by human effort or planning. It is also spoken of as being "born of God" or "born through the word of God" (John 1:12–13; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23; 1 John 2:29; 5:1, 4). Whoever undergoes this experience is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Paul speaks of the renewing in the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5), of being made alive (Eph. 2:1, 5), and of resurrection from the dead

(Eph. 2:6). The same idea is implicit in Jesus's statements that he had come to give life (John 6:63; 10:10, 28).

The Meaning of Regeneration

While it is fairly easy to list instances where the idea of new birth occurs, it is not so easy to ascertain its meaning. But we ought not be surprised that the new birth is difficult to understand. [13] Jesus indicated to Nicodemus that the concept is difficult. It is like the wind: although one does not know where it comes from or where it goes, one hears its sound (John 3:8). Not only is the new birth not perceived by the senses, but the concept itself encounters natural resistance.

Despite the problems in understanding the concept, several assertions can be made about regeneration. First, it involves something new, a whole reversal of the person's natural tendencies. It is not merely an amplification of present traits; for one side of regeneration involves putting to death or crucifying existent qualities. Contrasting the life in the Spirit with that in the flesh, Paul says: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:24–25). Other references to the death of the individual or of certain aspects of the individual include Romans 6:1–11 and Galatians 2:20; 6:14.

As a putting to death of the flesh, the new birth involves counteracting the effects of sin. This is perhaps most clearly seen in Paul's statement in Ephesians 2:1–10. The deadness that requires a transformation is a result of the sin in which we live, being led by the prince of the power of the air. Although regeneration involves something totally new to us, it does not result in anything foreign to human nature. Rather, the new birth is the restoration of human nature to what it was originally intended to be and what it in fact was before sin entered the human race at the time of the fall. It is simultaneously the beginning of a new life and a return of the old life and activity.

Further, it appears that the new birth is itself instantaneous. Nothing in the descriptions of the new birth suggests that it is a process rather than a single action. It is nowhere characterized as incomplete. Scripture speaks of believers as "born again" or "having been born again" rather than as "being born again" (John 1:12–13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:1, 5–6; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23; 1 John 2:29; 5:1, 4). While it may not be possible to determine the

precise time of the new birth, and there may be a whole series of antecedents, it appears that the new birth itself occurs in an instant.[14]

Although regeneration is instantaneously complete, it is not an end in itself. As a change of spiritual impulses, regeneration is the beginning of a process of growth that continues throughout one's lifetime. This process of spiritual maturation is sanctification. Having noted that his readers were formerly dead but are now alive, Paul adds, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10). He speaks in Philippians 1:6 of continuing and completing what has been begun.

New birth is a supernatural occurrence. It is not something that can be accomplished by human effort. Jesus made this clear in John 3:6: "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." Regeneration is especially the work of the Holy Spirit. Although salvation was planned and originated by the Father and actually accomplished by the Son, it is the Holy Spirit who applies it to the life of the believer, thus bringing to fulfillment the divine intention for humans.

The doctrine of regeneration places the Christian faith in an unusual position. On the one hand, Christians reject the current secular belief in the goodness of the human and the optimistic expectations that arise from it. The very insistence on regeneration is a declaration that without external help and complete transformation there is no possibility that genuine good on a large scale will emerge from humankind. On the other hand, despite the pessimistic assessment of humans' natural powers, Christianity is optimistic: with supernatural aid humans can be transformed and restored to their original goodness. It was in regard to God's ability to change human hearts, enabling us to enter his kingdom, that Jesus said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

Implications of Effectual Calling, Conversion, and Regeneration

The implications of effectual calling, conversion, and regeneration include the following:

1. Human nature cannot be altered by social reforms or education. It must be transformed by a supernatural work of the Triune God.

- 2. No one can predict or control who will experience new birth. It is ultimately God's doing; even conversion depends on his effectual calling.
- 3. The beginning of the Christian life requires a recognition of one's own sinfulness and a determination to abandon the self-centered way of life.
- 4. Saving faith requires correct belief regarding the nature of God and what he has done. Correct belief is insufficient, however. There must also be active commitment of oneself to God.
- 5. One person's conversion experience may be radically different from another's. What is important is that there be genuine repentance and faith.
- 6. The new birth is not felt when it occurs. It will, rather, establish its presence by producing a new sensitivity to spiritual things, a new direction of life, and an increasing ability to obey God.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What is the role of effectual calling in the salvation of an individual? Why is effectual calling essential to salvation?
- What is the meaning of conversion, and how do repentance and faith relate to it?
- How would you describe the relationship between faith and knowledge?
- What is regeneration? How does it relate to the other parts of salvation?
- What did you learn about salvation from this study that you did not know previously?

The Beginning of Salvation: Objective Aspects

Chapter Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Define and describe union with Christ.
- 2. Contrast inadequate models with scriptural teaching on union with Christ and note the implications.
- 3. Define and describe justification.
- **4.** Examine justification as a forensic doctrine and recognize the relationship between faith and works.
- **5.** Define and describe adoption.

Chapter Summary

There are three essential elements among the objective aspects of salvation: union with Christ, justification, and adoption. Union with Christ is generally an inclusive term for all of salvation. However, it can also be specific, referring to an intimate relationship with Christ akin to the marriage relationship between husband and wife. In justification God imputes the righteousness of Christ to the believer, which cancels God's judgment on the believer. Finally, adoption means that the justified believer actually receives favored status with God and is adopted into his family.

Chapter Outline

Union with Christ

- The Scriptural Teaching
- Inadequate Models
- Characteristics of the Union
- Implications of Union with Christ

Justification

- Justification and Forensic Righteousness
- Objections to the Doctrine of Forensic Justification
- Faith and Works
- The Lingering Consequences of Sin

Adoption

- The Nature of Adoption
- The Benefits of Adoption

We have examined those aspects of the beginning of the Christian life that involve the actual spiritual condition of the person, that is, the subjective aspects. In this chapter we will consider the change in the individual's status or standing in relationship to God, that is, the objective dimensions of salvation's inception.

Union with Christ

The Scriptural Teaching

In one sense, union with Christ is an inclusive term for the whole of salvation; the various other doctrines are simply subparts. [1] While this term and concept are often neglected in favor of concentrating on other concepts such as regeneration, justification, and sanctification, it is instructive to note the large number of references to the oneness between Christ and the believer. The most basic references in this connection depict the believer and Christ as being "in" one another. On the one hand, we have many specific references to the believer's being in Christ, including 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" There are two such phrases in Ephesians 1:3–4: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." Two verses later we read "to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us" (vv. 6–8). Similar expressions occur in 1 Corinthians 1:4–5; 15:22; Ephesians 2:10; and 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

On the other hand, Christ is said to be in the believer. Paul says, "To [the saints] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Christ's presence in the believer is also expressed, in a somewhat different way, in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." There is

also Jesus's analogy of the vine and branches, which emphasizes the mutual indwelling of Christ and the believer (John 15:4–5). All that the believer has spiritually is based on Christ's being within. Our hope of glory is Christ in us. Our spiritual vitality is drawn from his indwelling presence. Other passages include Jesus's promises to be present with the believer (Matt. 28:20; John 14:23). Finally, the believer is said to share "with Christ" his suffering (Rom. 8:17), crucifixion (Gal. 2:20), death (Col. 2:20), burial (Rom. 6:4), quickening (Eph. 2:5), resurrection (Col. 3:1), and glorification and inheritance (Rom. 8:17).

Inadequate Models

We must nevertheless ask precisely what is entailed in the union between believers and Christ, for the language of these references is less than lucid. In what sense can Christ be said to be in us, and we in him? Are these expressions completely metaphorical, or is there some literal referent?

Several explanations that have been offered do not accurately convey what this doctrine involves. Among them is the view that our union with Christ is metaphysical. The underlying idea here is the pantheistic concept that we are one in essence with God. This explanation, however, goes beyond the teaching of Scripture.

A second model is that our union with Christ is mystical.[2] The relationship between the believer and Jesus is so deep and absorbing that the believer virtually loses his or her own individuality. In contrast, Scripture makes it clear that, strong as Christ's influence is on the believer, they remain two. They do not merge into one, nor is one of them submerged into the personality of the other.

A third model sees our union with Christ as being like the union between two friends or between a teacher and student. A psychological oneness results from sharing the same interests and being committed to the same ideals. If the second model errs by making the connection between Christ and the believer too strong, this third model makes it too weak.

A fourth inadequate model is the sacramental view: the believer obtains the grace of Jesus Christ by receiving the sacraments.[3] Indeed, one actually takes Christ into oneself by participating in the Lord's Supper, eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood. This model is based on a literal interpretation of Jesus's words in instituting the Lord's Supper, "this is my body. . . . This is my blood" (Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–

20; see also John 6:53). Taking these passages in the most literal sense seems unwarranted and leads to some virtually ludicrous conclusions (e.g., that Jesus's flesh and blood are simultaneously part of his body and the elements of the Eucharist, as the Lord's Supper is often termed by sacramentalists). A further difficulty with this view is that a human intermediary administers the sacraments. This conception contradicts the statements in Hebrews 9:23–10:25 that Jesus has eliminated the need for mediators and that we may now come directly to him.

Characteristics of the Union

Just what does the concept of union with Christ mean positively? To gain a grasp of the concept, we will note several characteristics of the union. We must not expect to be able to comprehend this matter completely, for Paul said, "This is a profound mystery" (Eph. 5:32). He was referring to the fact that knowledge of this union is inaccessible to humans except through special revelation from God.

The first characteristic of our union with Christ is that it is judicial in nature. When the Father evaluates or judges us before the law, he does not look on us alone. God always sees the believer in union with Christ and measures the two of them together. Thus he does not say, "Jesus is righteous but that human is unrighteous." He sees the two as one and says in effect, "They are righteous." The believer has been incorporated into Christ and Christ into the believer (although not exclusively so). All the assets of each are now mutually possessed. From a legal perspective, the two are now one.

Second, the union is spiritual. This has two meanings. In one sense, the union is effected by the Holy Spirit. There is a close relationship between Christ and the Spirit, closer than is often realized. Note the interchangeability of Christ and the Spirit in Romans 8:9–10: "You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you . . . the Spirit gives life because of righteousness" (see also 1 Cor. 12:13). John Murray says, "Christ dwells in us if his Spirit dwells in us, and he dwells in us by the Spirit." The Spirit is "the bond of this union." [4]

In a second sense, even as our union with Christ is brought about by the Holy Spirit, it is also a union of spirits. It is not a union of persons in one essence, as in the Trinity, or of natures in one person, as in the incarnation

of Jesus Christ. It is not a physical bonding, as in the welding of two pieces of metal. It is in some way a union of two spirits that does not extinguish either of them. It does not make the believer physically stronger or more intelligent but produces a new spiritual vitality within the human.

Finally, our union with Christ is vital. His life actually flows into ours, renewing our inner nature (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:16) and imparting spiritual strength. There is a literal truth in Jesus's metaphor of the vine and the branches. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit if it does not receive life from the vine, so we cannot bear spiritual fruit if Christ's life does not flow into us (John 15:4).

Various analogies have been used to illuminate the idea of union with Christ. Several of them are drawn from the physical realm. In mouth-tomouth resuscitation, one person actually breathes for another. An artificial heart performs the vital function of supplying the body cells with blood (and hence with oxygen and various essential nutrients) during heart surgery. And drawing on the realm of parapsychology, there is evidence that thoughts can somehow be transmitted from certain individuals to others. Now since Christ has designed and created our entire nature, including our psyches, it is not surprising that, dwelling within us in some way that we do not fully understand, he is able to affect our very thoughts and feelings. A final illustration, and one with biblical warrant, is that of husband and wife. Not only do the two become one physically but ideally they also become so close in mind and heart that they have great empathy for and understanding of one another. While none of these analogies in itself can give us an adequate understanding, collectively they may enlarge our grasp of our union with Christ.

Implications of Union with Christ

Our union with Christ has certain implications for our lives. First, we are accounted righteous. Paul wrote, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Because of our judicial union with Christ, we have a right standing in the face of the law and in the sight of God. We are as righteous as is God's own Son, Jesus Christ.

Second, we now live in Christ's strength.[5] Paul affirmed, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13 NRSV). He also claimed, "The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20; see also 2 Cor. 12:9).

Being one with Christ also means that we will suffer. The disciples were told that they would drink the cup that Jesus drank, and be baptized with the same baptism as he (Mark 10:39). If tradition serves us correctly, most of them suffered a martyr's death. Jesus had told them not to be surprised if they encountered persecution (John 15:20). Paul did not shrink from this prospect; indeed, one of his goals was to share Christ's sufferings: "for whose sake I have lost all things. . . . I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Phil. 3:8, 10).

Finally, we also have the prospect of reigning with Christ. The two disciples who asked for positions of authority and prestige were instead promised suffering (Mark 10:35–39); but Jesus also told the entire group that because they had continued with him in his trials, they would eat and drink at his table in his kingdom, "and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:30). Paul made a similar statement:

If we endure, we will also reign with him. (2 Tim. 2:12)

Although we often have trials and even suffering here, we are given resources to bear them. And for those who suffer with Christ, a glorious future lies ahead.

Justification

Humankind has a twofold problem as a result of sin and the fall. First, there is a basic corruption of human nature; our moral character has been polluted through sin. This first aspect of the curse is nullified by regeneration, which reverses the direction and general tendencies of human nature. Second, our guilt or liability to punishment remains, for we have failed to fulfill God's expectations. It is to this second aspect of the problem that justification relates. Justification is God's action pronouncing sinners righteous in his sight. We have been forgiven and declared to have fulfilled all that God's law requires of us. This is an issue of considerable practical significance, for it deals with the questions: How can I be right with God? How can I, a sinner, be accepted by a holy and righteous judge?

Justification and Forensic Righteousness

In order to understand justification, it is necessary first to understand the biblical concept of righteousness, for justification is a restoration of the individual to a state of righteousness. In the Old Testament, the verb *tsadaq* means "to be righteous" or "to conform to a given norm."[6] The particular norm in view varies with the situation. Sometimes the context is family relationships. Tamar was more righteous than Judah, because he had not fulfilled his obligations as her father-in-law (Gen. 38:26). And David, in refusing to slay Saul, was said to be righteous (1 Sam. 24:17; 26:23), for he was abiding by the standards of the monarch-subject relationship. Clearly, righteousness is understood as a matter of living up to the standards set for a relationship. Ultimately, God's own person and nature are the measure or standard of righteousness.

In the Old Testament, the concept of righteousness frequently appears in a forensic or juridical context. A righteous person is one who has been declared by a judge to be free from guilt. The task of the judge is to condemn the guilty and acquit the innocent: [7] "When people have a dispute, they are to take it to court and the judges will decide the case, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty" (Deut. 25:1). God is the Judge of human beings (Ps. 9:4; Jer. 11:20). Those who have been acquitted have been judged to stand in right relationship to God, that is, to have fulfilled what was expected of them in that relationship. In the Old Testament sense, then, justification involves ascertaining that a person is innocent and then declaring what is indeed true: that he or she is righteous, that is, has fulfilled the law.

Justification is God's action pronouncing sinners righteous in his sight; it is a forensic act imputing the righteousness of Christ to the believer.

The New Testament advances this Old Testament view of justification. Without such an addition, it would have been shocking and scandalous for Paul to say, as he did, that God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). Justice demands that they be condemned; a judge who justifies or acquits the unrighteous is acting unrighteously himself. And so when we read that, on

the contrary, God in justifying the ungodly has shown himself to be righteous (Rom. 3:26), we must also understand that such justification is apart from the works of the law. In the New Testament, justification is God's declarative act by which, on the basis of the sufficiency of Christ's atoning death, he pronounces believers to have fulfilled all the requirements of the law that pertain to them. Justification is a forensic act imputing the righteousness of Christ to the believer; it is not an actual infusing of holiness into the individual. It is a matter of declaring the person righteous, as a judge does in acquitting the accused.[8] It is not a matter of making the person righteous or altering his or her actual spiritual condition.

Several factors support the argument that justification is forensic or declarative in nature:

- 1. The concept of righteousness as a matter of formal standing before the law or covenant, and of a judge as someone who determines and declares our status in that respect.
- 2. The juxtaposition of "justify" (*dikaioō*) and "condemn" in passages like Romans 8:33–34: "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." "Justifies" and "condemn" are parallel here. Certainly the act of condemning is not a matter of changing someone's spiritual condition, of somehow infusing sin or evil. It is simply a matter of charging a person with wrong and establishing guilt. Correspondingly, the act of justifying is not a matter of infusing holiness into believers but of declaring them righteous. If condemning is a declarative act, justifying must be also.
- 3. Passages where *dikaioō* means "to defend, vindicate, or acknowledge (or prove) to be right." In some cases it is used of human action in relation to God. Luke reports that upon hearing Jesus's preaching, "all the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right" (Luke 7:29; see also v. 35).

We conclude from the preceding data that justification is a forensic or declarative action of God, like that of a judge in acquitting the accused.

Objections to the Doctrine of Forensic Justification

Objections have been raised to the view that justification is forensic in nature. As we deal with them, we will gain a clearer picture of the meaning of justification. William Sanday and Arthur Headlam raise the question of how God could justify the ungodly (i.e., declare them righteous). Is this not something of a fiction in which God treats sinners as if they had not sinned or, in other words, pretends that sinners are something other than what they really are? This interpretation of justification seems to make God guilty of deception, even if it is only self-deception.[9] Vincent Taylor picks up on this idea and contends that righteousness cannot be imputed to a sinner: "If through faith a man is accounted righteous, it must be because, in a reputable sense of the term, he is righteous, and not because another is righteous in his stead."[10]

We respond that the act of justification is not a matter of God's announcing that sinners are something they are not. There is a constitutive aspect to justification as well; for what God does is actually to constitute us righteous by imputing (not imparting) the righteousness of Christ to us. Here we must distinguish between two senses of the word "righteous." One could be righteous by virtue of never having violated the law. Such a person would be innocent, having totally fulfilled the law. But even if we have violated the law, we can be deemed righteous once the prescribed penalty has been paid. There is a difference between these two situations, which points out the insufficiency of defining justification simply as God's regarding me "just as if I had never sinned." Humans are not righteous in the former sense but in the latter. For the penalty for sin has been paid, and thus the requirements of the law have been fulfilled. It is not a fiction, then, that believers are righteous, for the righteousness of Christ has been credited to them. This situation is somewhat analogous to what takes place when two corporations merge. Their separate assets are brought into the union and are thereafter treated as mutual possessions. [11]

One objection sometimes raised to the doctrines of substitutionary atonement and forensic justification is that virtue simply cannot be transferred from one person to another. However, Christ and the believer do not stand at arm's length from one another so that when God looks squarely at the believer he cannot also see Christ with his righteousness but only pretends to. Rather, Christ and the believer have been brought into such a unity that Christ's spiritual assets, as it were, and the spiritual liabilities and

assets of the believer are merged. Thus, when looking at the believer God the Father does not see him or her alone. He sees the believer together with Christ, and in the act of justification justifies both of them together. It is as if God says, "They are righteous!" He declares what is actually true of the believer, which has come to pass through God's constituting the believer one with Christ. This union is like that of a couple who, when they marry, merge their assets and liabilities. With their property held in joint tenancy, the assets of the one can wipe out the liabilities of the other, leaving a positive net balance.

Justification, then, is a three-party, not a two-party, matter. And it is voluntary on the part of all three. Jesus willingly volunteered to give himself and unite with the sinner. There is also a conscious decision on the part of the sinner to enter into this relationship. And the Father willingly accepts it. That no one is constrained means that the whole matter is completely ethical and legal.

Numerous passages of Scripture indicate that justification is the gift of God. One of the best known is Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Another is Ephesians 2:8–9: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Justification is something completely undeserved. It is not an achievement. It is an obtainment, not an attainment. Even faith is not some good work God must reward with salvation. It is God's gift. It is not the cause of our salvation, but the means by which we receive it. And, contrary to the thinking of some, it has always been the means of salvation. In his discussion of Abraham, the father of the Jews, Paul points out that Abraham was justified not by works but by faith. He makes this point both positively and negatively. He affirms that Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Gal. 3:6). Then he rejects the idea that we can be justified by works: "All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. . . . Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God" (vv. 10–11). So God has not introduced a new means of salvation. He has always worked in the same way.

Some have contended that the idea of forensic justification is based on a misunderstanding of Paul's purpose in this writing. In the later twentieth century, a "new perspective on Paul" arose, suggesting that traditional interpretations of Paul as objecting to Judaism as a legalistic approach to

meriting salvation were mistaken. Rather, he was combating the Judaizers who were insisting that Paul's gentile converts must be circumcised. Judaism was not a religion of salvation by works but rather taught that good works were a response to God's gracious establishment of the covenant with Israel. This is what E. P. Sanders calls "covenantal nomism."[12] Thus Paul's doctrine of justification was not central but was a doctrine developed to deal with the specific issues of his controversies with the Judaizers.[13]

We may note briefly, however, that the concept of imputed righteousness antedates Paul's writings, so that he elaborated rather than originated it. Further, he identified his conversion with justification by faith apart from works long before he encountered the Judaizers. Finally, he continued to emphasize this doctrine after the controversy with the Judaizers had subsided. In view of these considerations, it can hardly be understood merely as a doctrine created to deal with this specific situation. [14]

Yet another objection to the doctrine is that while Paul teaches that our sins are imputed to Christ (2 Cor. 5:19–21; Rom. 4:8), the reverse does not follow. What God counts as righteousness is not Christ's righteousness imputed to us but rather our faith (albeit in Christ). The texts that speak of imputation in relationship to righteousness are Galatians 3:6; Romans 4:3, 5–6, 9, 11, 22–24. Some contend, however, that these do not speak of Christ's righteousness being counted as our righteousness, but of our faith being counted as righteousness. [15]

We should note, however, that the broad context in which the discussion takes place is significant. Robert Gundry maintains that the framework of thought within which Paul discusses justification is a "covenantal framework," rather than a "bookkeeping framework." He concedes that bookkeeping is an appropriate concept for understanding the transfer of our transgressions to Christ, but not for understanding the crediting of righteousness to the believer.[16] Yet Paul speaks of debt, work, and so on, which is certainly more of a bookkeeping than a covenantal framework. It appears that a more natural understanding of these passages is that faith is the means by which one obtains the righteousness of Christ, rather than constituting the righteousness imputed to us.[17]

The issue of imputed versus imparted righteousness continues to rise in new contexts, usually in more nuanced ways than in the classic dispute between Protestants and Catholics. Sometimes it is asserted that justification is not a matter of transfer of external righteousness so much as actual participation in the righteousness of Christ, so that in Christ one does not merely have one's sins atoned for but also dies to the power of sin.[18] Sometimes a distinction is made between the justification that takes place at the point of conversion and that at the final judgment. In this distinction, the judgment takes into account the works one has done, which are the basis, not simply of rewards, but of the determination of one's final status before God as well.[19] N. T. Wright examines several Pauline passages and contends that this element of the basis of future judgment has been overlooked by many theologians, who have tended to treat Reformed views of justification as the whole of the biblical teaching.[20]

This, then, seems to be the crucial element of difference between one of the more conservative new-perspective scholars and his critics. Wright insists that the final judgment should be considered a second or final justification. The first takes place at the point of saving faith and is based only on God's imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer. The final justification, however, is based at least in part on the believer's faithful adherence to the covenant between the believer and God, that is, righteous works done, as depicted in Matthew 25:31–46.[21]

The common element in these nuanced statements of forensic justification criticizing the classic Protestant view is that the latter has too sharply separated what it terms justification and sanctification. In some cases, this is attributed to reading Paul's view, which is based on a Jewish, circular way of thinking, through Greek, linear categories. [22]

This observation helpfully reminds us that God's work of salvation must issue in a transformed person and in holy living. However, it attributes to the opposing view a sharper distinction than is inherent in the concept of forensic justification, and then seeks to rectify that separation by arguing for a stronger conclusion. While Paul genuinely distinguishes between the concepts of justification and sanctification, this does not mean that one can exist without the other, nor does it give a basis for antinomianism. Further, critics of forensic justification often fail to acknowledge that many of their assumptions are derived from the current intellectual milieu, which they then read into the biblical material. We see this quite clearly in the Jewish/Western distinction, which has been highly dubious at least since the work of James Barr and others, fifty or more years ago. This objection must be judged inadequate.

Faith and Works

The principle of salvation by grace brings us to the question of the relationship of faith to works. The position we have taken is that works do not produce salvation. Yet the biblical witness also indicates that while it is faith that leads to justification, justification must and will invariably produce works appropriate to the nature of the new creature that has come into being. It is good, when we quote the classic text on salvation by grace, Ephesians 2:8–9, not to stop short of verse 10, which points to the outcome of this grace: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." James puts it even more forcefully: "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:17; see also v. 26). Despite the fairly common opinion that there is a tension between Paul and James, both make essentially the same point: that the genuineness of the faith that leads to justification becomes apparent in the results that issue from it. If there are no good works, there has been neither real faith nor justification.

While it is faith that leads to justification, justification must and will invariably produce good works.

The Lingering Consequences of Sin

One issue remains: the consequences of sin seem to linger on, even after sin has been forgiven and the sinner justified. An example is David. He was told that his sin in committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering Uriah had been put away so that he would not die; nevertheless, the child born to Bathsheba would die because of David's sin (2 Sam. 12:13–14). Is such forgiveness real and complete? Is it not as if God in such instances holds back a bit on his forgiveness so that a bit of punishment remains? And if this is the case, is there real grace?

We need to make a distinction here between the temporal and eternal consequences of sin. When one is justified, all the eternal consequences of sin are canceled, including eternal death. But the temporal consequences of sin, both those that fall on the individual and those that fall on the human race collectively, are not necessarily removed. Thus we still experience physical death and the other elements of the curse of Genesis 3. A number

of these consequences follow from our sins in a cause-and-effect relationship that may be either physical or social in nature. God ordinarily does not intervene miraculously to prevent the carrying through of these laws. So if, for example, a person in a fit of rage, perhaps a drunken state, kills his family but later repents and is forgiven, God does not bring the family members back to life. The sin has led to a lifetime loss. There is a warning here—although God's forgiveness is boundless and accessible, sin is not something to be treated lightly. Though forgiven, it can still carry heavy consequences.

Adoption

The effect of justification is primarily negative: the cancellation of the judgment against us. Unfortunately, it is possible to be pardoned without simultaneously acquiring positive standing. Such is not the case with justification, however, for not only are we released from liability to punishment, but we are also restored to a position of favor with God. This transfer from a status of alienation and hostility to one of acceptance and favor is termed adoption. [23] It is referred to in several passages in the New Testament. Perhaps the best known is John 1:12: "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." Paul notes that our adoption is a fulfillment of part of God's plan (Eph. 1:5). And in Galatians 4:4–5, Paul links adoption with justification: "But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship."

One dimension of salvation that has not received much emphasis in Western thought is that Jesus is said to be the firstborn of many brothers and sisters (Rom. 8:29). While this does not mean that we ever attain the deity that was his, it does mean that we have been ushered into those benefits of children of the Father that Jesus enjoyed during the time of his earthly ministry. Jesus's role fits well with the African concept of the elder brother, which it shares with Hebrew thought. [24]

The Nature of Adoption

There are several characteristics of our adoption. First, it occurs simultaneously with conversion, regeneration, justification, and union with Christ. It is, additionally, the condition in which the Christian lives and operates from that time onward. Although adoption is logically distinguishable from regeneration and justification, adoption is not really separable from them. Only those who are justified and regenerated are adopted, and vice versa. [25] Adoption involves a change of both status and condition. In the formal sense, adoption is a declarative matter, an alteration of our legal status. We become God's children. In addition, however, there is the actual experience of being favored of God. We enjoy what is designated the spirit of sonship. The Christian looks affectionately and trustingly on God as Father rather than as a fearsome slave driver and taskmaster (John 15:14–15).

Through adoption we are restored to the relationship with God that humans once had but lost. We are by nature and creation children of God, but we have voted ourselves out of God's family as it were. God, in adopting us, however, restores us to the relationship with him for which we were originally intended.

Thus, adoption introduces a type of relationship with God quite different from that which humans in general have with him. John clearly points out this distinction: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1). The unbeliever simply does not have, and cannot experience, the type of filial relationship the believer experiences. [26]

The Benefits of Adoption

The meaning or significance of adoption becomes most apparent when we examine its effects in and upon the believer's life. One of these is, of course, forgiveness. God delights in forgiving; he is merciful, tenderhearted, and kind (Deut. 5:10; Ps. 103:8–14). He is not to be feared, but trusted. Our adoption means that there is continued forgiveness. In light of the fact that God has forgiven us, Paul urges us to forgive others: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

Our adoption also involves reconciliation. Not only has God forgiven us, but we also have been reconciled to him. We no longer carry enmity toward him. God has shown his love for us by taking the initiative in restoring the

fellowship damaged by our sin (Rom. 5:8, 10). In adoption both sides are reconciled to one another.

There is also liberty for the children of God. The child of God is not a slave who obeys out of a sense of bondage or compulsion. As God's children we need not fear the consequences of failing to live up to the law: "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, '*Abba*, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Rom. 8:14–16). A similar thought is expressed in Galatians 3:10–11. We are free persons. We are not obligated to the law in quite the way in which a slave or servant is.

This liberty is not license, however. There are always some who pervert their freedom. Paul gave warning to such people: "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love" (Gal. 5:13). The believer keeps the commandments, not out of fear of a cruel and harsh master, but out of love for a kindly and loving Father (John 14:15, 21; 15:14–15).[27]

Adoption means that the Christian is the recipient of God's fatherly care. Paul noted that "we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16–17). As heirs we have available to us the unlimited resources of the Father (Phil. 4:19). The believer can pray confidently, knowing that there is no limitation on what God is able to do. According to Jesus, the Father who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the fields cares even more for his human children (Matt. 6:25–34). His provision is always wise and kind (Luke 11:11–13).

It should not be thought that God is indulgent or permissive, however. He is our heavenly Father, not our heavenly Grandfather. Thus, discipline is one of the features of our adoption. In the letter to the Hebrews, there is a rather extended discussion of this subject (12:5–11). Quoting Proverbs 3:11–12, the writer comments: "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?" (Heb. 12:7). Discipline may not be pleasant at the moment of application, but it is beneficial in the long term. Love is concern and action for the ultimate welfare of another. Therefore, discipline should be thought of as evidence of love rather than of lack of love.

Finally, adoption involves the Father's goodwill. It is one thing for us to be pardoned, for the penalty incurred by our wrongdoing to have been paid. That, however, may simply mean we will not be punished in the future. It does not necessarily guarantee goodwill. If a criminal's debt to society has been paid, society will not necessarily thereafter look favorably or charitably on him or her. There will instead be suspicion, distrust, even animosity. With the Father, however, there are the love and goodwill that we so much need and desire. He is ours and we are his, and he through adoption extends to us all the benefits his measureless love can bestow.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- How would you define and explain each of the three objective doctrines of salvation: union with Christ, justification, and adoption?
- What are the similarities and differences among these three doctrines?
- What are the problems with considering justification as a forensic doctrine? How would you respond to those objections?
- What are the benefits of adoption?
- In what ways can adoption arouse in you a special sense of worship and thanksgiving?

The Continuation and Completion of Salvation

Chapter Objectives

Following your study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Define and explain what sanctification is and how it is accomplished in the life of the believer.
- 2. Define and describe the doctrine of perseverance.
- **3.** Differentiate between the Calvinistic and Arminian views of perseverance and resolve the conflicting views.
- **4.** Understand the meaning of glorification and the joy and encouragement it provides.

Chapter Summary

After the miraculous work of salvation, God continues the process of transforming the believer into the image of Christ. Sanctification is the process of turning from sin and toward holiness with the goal of leading a sinless life. Perseverance means that God will enable the believer to remain in the faith through the remainder of his or her life. Glorification will be accomplished in the life to come, when we will become all that God intends us to be.

Chapter Outline

Sanctification

- The Meaning of Sanctification
- Characteristics of Sanctification
- Sanctification: Complete or Incomplete?

Perseverance

- The Calvinist View
- The Arminian View
- A Resolution of the Problem

Glorification

- The Meaning of "Glory"
- The Glorification of the Believer

The beginnings of salvation as we examined them in the preceding two chapters are both complex and profound. Yet they are not the end of God's special working to restore his children to the likeness to him for which they are destined. Having begun this work of transformation, he continues and completes it.

Sanctification

The Meaning of Sanctification

Sanctification is the continuing work of God in the life of believers, making them actually holy. By "holy" here is meant "bearing an actual likeness to God." Sanctification is a process by which one's moral condition is brought into conformity with one's legal status before God. It is a continuation of what was begun in regeneration, when newness of life was conferred on and instilled within the believer. In particular, sanctification is the Holy Spirit's applying to the life of the believer the work done by Jesus Christ.

There are two basic senses of the word "sanctification," which are related to two basic concepts of holiness. The first is holiness as a formal characteristic of particular objects, persons, and places. In this sense holiness refers to a state of being separate, set apart from the ordinary or mundane and dedicated to a particular purpose or use. In the Old Testament, particular places (especially the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies), objects (e.g., Aaron's garments and the Sabbath day), and persons (e.g., the priests and Levites) were specially set apart or sanctified to the Lord.

This sense of sanctification is found in the New Testament as well. Peter refers to his readers as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Pet. 2:9). Here, being sanctified means "to belong to the Lord." Sanctification in this sense is something that occurs at the very beginning of the Christian life, at the point of conversion, along with regeneration and justification. It is in this sense that the New Testament so frequently refers to Christians as "saints," even when they are far from perfect. [1] Paul, for example, addresses the persons in the church at Corinth in this way (1 Cor. 1:2), even though it was probably the most imperfect of the churches to which he ministered.

The second sense of holiness or sanctification is moral goodness or spiritual worth. This sense gradually came to predominate. It designates not merely that believers are formally set apart, or belong to Christ, but also that they are then to conduct themselves accordingly. They are to live lives of purity and goodness.[2]

To bring the nature of sanctification more sharply into focus, it will be helpful to contrast it with justification. There are a number of significant differences. One pertains to duration. Justification is an instantaneous occurrence, complete in a moment, whereas sanctification is a process requiring an entire lifetime for completion. There is a quantitative distinction as well. One is either justified or not, whereas one may be more or less sanctified. That is, there are degrees of sanctification but not of justification. Justification is a forensic or declarative matter, as we have seen earlier, while sanctification is an actual transformation of the character and condition of the person. Justification is an objective work affecting our standing before God, our relationship to him, while sanctification is a subjective work affecting our inner person.

Characteristics of Sanctification

We need to look now at the characteristics of sanctification. We must first emphasize that sanctification is a supernatural work; it is something done by God, not something we do ourselves. Thus, it is not reform that we are speaking of. Paul wrote, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23; see also Eph. 5:26; Titus 2:14; Heb. 13:20–21).

Further, this divine working within the believer is a progressive matter. This is seen, for example, in Paul's assurance that God will continue to work in the lives of the Philippians: "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). Paul also notes that the cross is the power of God "to us who are being saved" (1 Cor. 1:18). The form of the Greek verb clearly conveys the idea of ongoing activity.

The aim of this divine working is likeness to Christ himself. This was God's intention from all eternity: "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" (Rom. 8:29). The word

translated "to be conformed to" indicates a likeness to Christ that is not just an external or superficial resemblance; it signifies the whole set of characteristics or qualities that make something what it is. Further, it indicates vital connection with the Son. Our being made like Christ is not an arm's-length transaction. What we come to have we have *together with* him.

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit.[3] In Galatians 5 Paul speaks of the life in the Spirit: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (v. 16); "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (v. 25 RSV). He also lists a group of qualities he designates collectively as "the fruit of the Spirit": "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (vv. 22–23). Similarly, in Romans 8 Paul says much about the Spirit and the Christian. Christians walk according to the Spirit (v. 4), set their minds on the things of the Spirit (v. 5), are in the Spirit (v. 9); the Spirit dwells in them (v. 9); by the Spirit they have put to death the deeds of the body (v. 13); they are led by the Spirit (v. 14); the Spirit bears witness that they are children of God (v. 16); and the Spirit intercedes for them (vv. 26–27). It is the Spirit who is at work in the believer, bringing about likeness to Christ.

One might conclude from the preceding that sanctification is completely a passive matter on the believer's part. This is not so, however. While sanctification is exclusively of God—that is, its power rests entirely on his holiness[4]—the believer is constantly exhorted to work and to grow in the matters pertaining to salvation. For example, Paul writes to the Philippians: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Phil. 2:12–13). Paul urges both practice of virtues and avoidance of evils (Rom. 12:9, 16–17). We are to put to death the works of the body (Rom. 8:13) and present our bodies a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1–2). So while sanctification is God's work, the believer has a role as well, entailing both removal of sinfulness and development of holiness.

Sanctification: Complete or Incomplete?

One major issue over which there has been disagreement throughout church history is whether the process of sanctification is ever completed within the earthly lifetime of the believer. Do we ever come to the point where we no longer sin? Those who answer that question in the affirmative, the perfectionists, hold that it is possible to come to a state where a believer does not sin, and that indeed some Christians do arrive at that point. This does not mean that the person cannot sin, but that indeed he or she does not sin. Nor does this mean that there is no further need for the means of grace or for the Holy Spirit, that there is no longer any temptation or struggle with the innate tendency toward evil, or that there is no room for further spiritual growth. [5] It does mean, however, that it is possible not to sin, and that some believers actually do abstain from all evil. Ample biblical texts support such a view. One of them is Matthew 5:48, where Jesus tells his hearers, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Paul prays for the Thessalonians, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23; see also Eph. 4:13; Heb. 13:20–21). These verses seem to offer prima facie evidence that total sanctification is a possibility for all believers, and a reality for some. [6]

No less earnest about their convictions are those who maintain that perfection is an ideal never attained within this life. They contend that much as we should desire and strive after complete deliverance from sin, sinlessness is simply not a realistic goal for this life. Certain passages indicate that we cannot escape sin.[7] One of the more prominent of these passages is 1 John 1:8–10: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us." That this passage was written to believers renders the statement that there is sin in all of us the more cogent.

While sanctification is exclusively of God, the believer is constantly exhorted to work and to grow in the matters pertaining to salvation.

Another passage very frequently alluded to by the nonperfectionist is Romans 7, where Paul describes his own experience. On the assumption that Paul has in view his life after conversion (an assumption not all scholars accept), this passage appears to be a vivid and forceful testimony to the effect that the believer is not free from sin. Paul puts it powerfully: "I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (vv. 18–19). This word came from one of the greatest of all Christians, indeed, many would say, the greatest Christian of all time. If even he confessed having great difficulty with sin, certainly we must conclude that perfection is not to be experienced in this life.

How shall we untangle all of these considerations and arrive at a conclusion on this difficult but important topic? We begin by noting again the nature of sin. It is not merely acts of an external nature. Jesus made quite clear that even the thoughts and attitudes we have are sinful if they are less than perfectly in accord with the mind of the almighty and completely holy God (see, e.g., Matt. 5:21–28). Thus, sin is of a considerably more pervasive and subtle character than we might tend to think.

We also need to determine the nature of the perfection that is commanded of us. The Greek word *teleioi* ("perfect"), which is found in Matthew 5:48, does not mean "flawless" or "spotless." Rather, it means "complete." It is quite possible, then, to be "perfect" without being entirely free from sin.[8] That is, we can possess the fullness of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:13) and the full fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23) without possessing them perfectly.

The standard to be aimed for is complete freedom from sin. The commands to strive by the grace of God to attain that goal are too numerous to ignore. And, certainly, if it is possible by this enablement to avoid giving in to a particular temptation, then it must be possible to prevail in every case. We must also note, however, the forcefulness of passages like 1 John 1. In addition to these didactic passages, Scripture freely portrays the great men and women of God as sinners. Our conclusion is that while complete freedom from and victory over sin are the standard to be aimed at and are theoretically possible, it is doubtful whether any believer will attain this goal within this life.

Certain difficulties attach to assuming such a stance, however. One is that it seems contradictory to repeatedly exhort Christians to a victorious, spotless life unless it is a real possibility.[9] But does this necessarily follow? We may have a standard, an ideal, that we press toward but that we do not expect to reach within a finite period of time. It has been observed that no one has ever reached the North Star by sailing or flying toward it.

That does not change the fact, however, that it is still the mark toward which we press, our measure of "northernness." Similarly, although we may never be perfectly sanctified within this life, we shall be in the eternity beyond and hence should presently aim to arrive as close to complete sanctification as we can.

Another problem is the presence of teachings like 1 John 3:4–6: "Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him." Does this not confirm the perfectionist position? Note, however, that the form of the Greek verbs in the phrases "everyone who sins" and "who continues to sin" indicates recurrent action. The meaning here is that everyone who continues in habitual sin is guilty of lawlessness and has never known Christ.

There are important practical implications of our view that though sinlessness is not experienced in this life, it must be our aim. On the one hand, this position means that there need not be great feelings of discouragement, defeat, even despair and guilt, when we do sin. But on the other hand, it also means that we will not be overly pleased with ourselves or indifferent to the presence of sin. For we will faithfully and diligently ask God to overcome completely the tendency toward evil, which, like Paul, we find so prevalent within us.

Perseverance

Will the believer who has genuinely been regenerated, justified, adopted by God, and united with Jesus Christ persist in that relationship? In other words, will a person who becomes a Christian always remain such? And if so, on what basis? This issue is of considerable importance from the standpoint of practical Christian living. If, on the one hand, there is no guarantee that salvation is permanent, believers may experience a great deal of anxiety and insecurity that will detract from the major tasks of the Christian life. On the other hand, if our salvation is absolutely secure, if we are preserved quite independently of our lives or actions, then there may well be, as a result, a sort of indifference to the moral and spiritual demands of the gospel. Therefore, determining the scriptural teaching concerning the

security of the believer is worth the necessary time and effort. Two major positions have been taken on the issue of whether the salvation of the believer is absolutely secure—the Calvinist and the Arminian. These two positions hold certain conceptions in common. They agree that God is powerful and faithful, willing and able to keep his promises. They agree, at least in their usual forms, that salvation is neither attained nor retained by human works. They agree that the Holy Spirit is at work in all believers (although there may be some disagreement about the Spirit's presence and activity). Both are convinced of the completeness of the salvation God provides. Both insist that the believer can indeed know that he or she currently possesses salvation. There are, however, significant points of difference between the two.

The Calvinist View

The Calvinist affirms that since God has elected certain individuals out of the mass of fallen humanity to receive eternal life, and those so chosen will necessarily come to receive that life, it follows that their salvation must be permanent. If the elect could at some point lose their salvation, God's election of them to eternal life would not be truly effectual. Thus, the doctrine of election as understood by Calvinists requires perseverance as well.

The Calvinist does not hold the doctrine of perseverance because of logical consistency alone, however. Numerous biblical teachings serve independently to support the doctrine. Among them is a group of texts emphasizing the indestructible quality of the salvation God provides.[10] An example is 1 Peter 1:3–5: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."

Various texts emphasizing the persistence and power of divine love also support the doctrine of perseverance.[11] One such testimony is found in Paul's statement in Romans 8:31–39, culminating in verses 38–39: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of

God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Christ does not simply give us eternal life and then abandon us to our human self-efforts. Rather, the work begun in us is continued to completion (Phil. 1:6). Moreover, Christ constantly intercedes for us to the Father (Heb. 7:25), who always hears his prayers (John 11:42). Support for the Calvinist position is also afforded by the biblical assurances that, because of God's provisions, we will be able to deal with and overcome whatever obstacles and temptations come our way. Our Master will enable us, his servants, to stand in the face of the judgment (Rom. 14:4). He provides a way for coping with temptations (1 Cor. 10:13).

The Calvinist finds the greatest source of encouragement concerning this matter, however, in the direct promises of the Lord's keeping. One of the most straightforward is Jesus's statement to his disciples: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27–30). Accordingly, Paul had complete confidence in the Lord's keeping: "Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

In addition, many Calvinists infer their view of perseverance from other doctrines.[12] Among them is the doctrine of union with Christ. If believers have been made one with Christ and his life flows through them (John 15:1–11), nothing can conceivably nullify that connection. The doctrine of the new birth, the Holy Spirit's impartation of a new nature to the believer, likewise lends support to the doctrine of perseverance (1 John 3:9). If salvation could be lost, regeneration would have to be reversed. But can this be? Can spiritual death actually come to someone in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, that is, who has already been given eternal life? This must surely be impossible, for eternal life is by definition everlasting. Finally, perseverance is implied by the biblical teaching that we can be assured of salvation. Relevant passages here include Hebrews 6:11; 10:22; and 2 Peter 1:10. Perhaps the clearest of all is found in the book of 1 John. Having cited several evidences (the testimony of the Spirit, the water, and the blood) that God has given us eternal life in his Son, the apostle summarizes: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). That we can have such assurance means that our salvation must be secure.

The Arminian View

Arminians take a different stance. The first class of biblical materials cited by Arminians consists of warnings against apostasy. Jesus warned his disciples about the danger of being led astray (Matt. 24:3–14). Would Jesus have issued such a warning to his disciples if it were not possible for them to fall away and thus lose their salvation? Similarly, Paul, whom Calvinists frequently cite in support of their position, suggested that there is a conditional character to salvation: "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel" (Col. 1:21–23). The writer to the Hebrews was especially vehement, calling his readers' attention on several occasions to the dangers of falling away and the importance of being on guard. One notable example is Hebrews 2:1: "We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." A slightly different injunction is found in 3:12–14. It is difficult, says the Arminian, to understand why such warnings were given if the believer cannot fall away. [13]

The Arminian also cites texts that urge believers to continue in the faith. An example of these exhortations to faithfulness, which frequently appear in conjunction with warnings such as we have just noted, is Hebrews 6:11–12: "We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."

Arminians also base their view on passages that apparently teach that people do apostatize.[14] Hebrews 6:4–6 is perhaps the most commonly cited and straightforward instance: "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace." Another instance is Hebrews 10:26–27. These are clear statements about people who, having had the experience of salvation, departed from it.

The Bible does not simply remain on this abstract level, however. It also records concrete cases of specific persons who apostatized or fell away.[15] One of the most vivid is the case of King Saul in the Old Testament. He had been chosen and anointed king of Israel, but eventually proved so disobedient that God did not answer him when he prayed (1 Sam. 28:6). Rejected by God, Saul lost his position as king and came to a tragic death.

A striking New Testament instance of apostasy is Judas. It seems inconceivable to the Arminian either that Jesus would have intentionally chosen an unbeliever to be one of his most intimate associates and confidants or that he made a mistake of judgment in his selection. The conclusion is clear: when chosen, Judas was a believer. Yet Judas betrayed Jesus and ended his own life apparently without any return to faith in Christ. Surely this must be a case of apostasy. Others who are mentioned include Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11); Hymenaeus and Alexander, who "have rejected [faith and a good conscience] and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19–20); Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:16–18); Demas (2 Tim. 4:10); and false teachers and those who follow them (2 Pet. 2:1–2). In addition to biblical examples, Arminians also point to various extrabiblical cases of persons from history or from their current experience who at one time gave every appearance of being regenerate yet subsequently abandoned any semblance of Christian faith.

Arminians also raise several practical objections to the Calvinistic understanding of perseverance. One of these objections is that the Calvinistic view is in conflict with the scriptural concept of human freedom.[16] If it is certain that those who are in Christ will persevere and not fall away, then it must surely be the case that they are unable to choose apostasy. And if this is the case, they cannot be free. Yet Scripture, the Arminians point out, depicts humans as free beings, for they are repeatedly exhorted to choose God and are clearly portrayed as being held responsible by him for their actions.

A Resolution of the Problem

The advocates of each of these opposed positions have cogent arguments to which they can appeal in support of their positions. Is there truth in both, or must we choose one or the other? One way to deal with this dilemma is to examine two key biblical passages that serve, respectively, as the major textual support for each of the two theories. These passages are John 10:27–30 and Hebrews 6:4–6.

Jesus's words in John 10:27–30 constitute a powerful declaration of security. Verse 28 is especially emphatic: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand." In the clause "and they shall never perish," John uses a Greek grammatical construction that is a very emphatic way of declaring that something will not happen in the future. A literal translation would be something like, "They shall not, repeat, shall not ever perish in the slightest." This assertion is followed by statements that no one can snatch believers out of Jesus's hand or out of the Father's hand (vv. 28–29). All in all, this passage is as definite a rejection of the idea that a true believer can fall away as could be given.

Arminians argue that Hebrews 6 presents an equally emphatic case for their position. The passage seems clear enough: "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance" (vv. 4–6). The description is apparently of genuinely saved persons who abandon the faith and thus lose their salvation. Because of the complexity of the issue and the material in this passage, however, a number of interpretations have grown up:

- 1. The writer has in mind genuinely saved persons who lose their salvation.[17] It should be noted that once they have lost their salvation, there is no way they can regain it or be renewed to salvation.
- 2. The persons described were never regenerate. They merely tasted of the truth and the life, were but exposed to the Word of God; they did not fully experience these heavenly gifts. They do in fact apostatize, but from the vicinity of spiritual truth, not from its center.[18]
- 3. The people in view are genuinely and permanently saved; they are not lost. Their salvation is real, the apostasy hypothetical. That is, the "if" clause does not really occur. The writer is merely describing what would be the case if the elect were to fall away (an impossibility).[19]

On close examination, the second explanation is difficult to accept. The vividness of the description, and particularly the statement "who have

shared in the Holy Spirit," argues forcefully against denying that the people in view are (at least for a time) regenerate. The choice must therefore be made between the first and third views.

Part of the difficulty in interpretation stems from the ambiguity of the Greek word translated "if they then commit apostasy" or "if they fall away." This is a legitimate translation of the word, but it could also be rendered in several other ways, including "when they fall away" and "because they fall away." The meaning in cases like this must be determined on the basis of the context. The key element in the present context is found in verse 9: "Though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—things that have to do with salvation." It is our contention that the referents in verses 4–6 and verse 9 are the same. They are genuinely saved people who could fall away. Verses 4–6 declare what their status would be if they did. Verse 9, however, is a statement that they will not fall away. They could, but they will not! Their persistence to the end is evidence of that truth. The writer to the Hebrews knows that his readers will not fall away; he is convinced of better things regarding them, the things that accompany salvation. [20] He speaks of their past work and love (v. 10), and exhorts them to continue earnestly in the same pursuits (v. 11). The full data of the passage would seem to indicate, then, that the writer has in view genuine believers who could fall away, but will not.

We are now able to correlate John 10 and Hebrews 6. While Hebrews 6 indicates that genuine believers *can* fall away, John 10 teaches that they *will not*.[21] There is a logical possibility of apostasy, but it will not come to pass in the case of believers. Although they could abandon their faith and consequently come to the fate described in Hebrews 6, the grace of God prevents them from apostatizing. God does this, not by making it impossible for believers to fall away, but by making it certain that they will not. Our emphasis on *can* and *will not* is not inconsequential. It preserves the freedom of the individual. Believers are capable of repudiating their faith, but will freely choose not to.

At this point someone might ask: If salvation is sure and permanent, what is the purpose of the warnings and commands given to the believer? The answer is that they are the means by which God renders it certain that the saved individual will not fall away.[22] Consider as an analogy the case of parents who fear that their young child may run out into the street and be struck by a car. One way the parents can prevent that from happening is to

build a fence around the yard, which would prevent the child from leaving the yard, but would also remove the child's freedom. Try as he or she might, the child could not possibly get out of the yard. Another possibility is for the parents to teach and train the child regarding the danger of going into the street and the importance of being careful. This is the nature of the security we are discussing. It is not that God renders apostasy impossible by removing the very option. Rather, he uses every possible means of grace, including the warnings contained in Scripture, to motivate us to remain committed to him. Because he enables us to persevere in our faith, the term "perseverance" is preferable to "preservation."

While genuine believers can fall away, they will not.

But what of the claims that Scripture records cases of actual apostasy? When closely examined, these instances appear much less impressive than at first glance. Some cases, such as that of Peter, should be termed backsliding rather than apostasy. It is a bit difficult, however, to know how to classify the situation of King Saul, since he lived under the old covenant. As for Judas, there were early indications that he was not regenerate. Consider particularly the reference to his thievery (John 12:6). The references to Hymenaeus and Alexander in 1 Timothy 1:19–20 and to Hymenaeus and Philetus in 2 Timothy 2:17–18 need to be seen in light of Paul's statements in 1 Timothy 1:6–7 about persons who have wandered away into vain discussions. Paul's remark that they do not understand what they are saying may well imply that they are not true believers. The proximity of 1 Timothy 1:6–7 to the reference to Hymenaeus and Alexander (vv. 19–20), and the use of the key word *astocheō* ("to swerve" from the truth) in both 1 Timothy 1:6 and the reference to Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:18), may indicate that the two situations were similar. As for the other names (e.g., Demas) cited by the Arminians, there is insufficient evidence to warrant the conclusion that they were true believers who fell away.

Even less reliable are the instances cited of contemporary persons who supposedly were at one time true believers but fell away. The difficulty here is that we can also cite instances of persons who by their own testimony were never really Christians, but were thought to be so. Further, we must be

careful to distinguish cases of temporary backsliding, such as that of Peter, from real abandonment of the faith. It is necessary to ask regarding someone who seems to have lost the faith, "Is he or she dead yet?" Beyond that, we must note that the Bible does not justify identifying every person who makes an outward profession of faith as genuinely regenerate (see Matt. 7:15–23).

The practical implication of our understanding of the doctrine of perseverance is that, on the one hand, believers can rest secure in the assurance that their salvation is permanent; nothing can separate them from the love of God. Thus they can rejoice in the prospect of eternal life. On the other hand, our understanding of the doctrine of perseverance allows no room for indolence or laxity. It is questionable whether anyone who reasons, "Now that I am a Christian, I may live as I please," has really been converted and regenerated. Genuine faith issues, instead, in the fruit of the Spirit. Assurance of salvation, the subjective conviction that one is a Christian, results from the Holy Spirit's giving evidence that he is at work in the life of the individual.

Glorification

The final stage of the process of salvation is termed "glorification." In Paul's words, those whom God "foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. . . . And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified" (Rom. 8:29–30). Glorification is the point at which the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of the last things overlap, for it looks beyond this life to the world to come. The topic receives little treatment in standard theology textbooks, and even less attention in sermons, yet it is rich in practical significance, for it gives believers encouragement and strengthens their hope.

Glorification is multidimensional. It involves both individual and collective eschatology. It involves the perfecting of the spiritual nature of the individual believer, which takes place at death, when the Christian passes into the presence of the Lord. It also involves the perfecting of the bodies of all believers, which will occur at the time of the resurrection in

connection with the second coming of Christ.[23] It even involves transformation of the entire creation (Rom. 8:18–25).

The Meaning of "Glory"

To understand the doctrine of glorification, we must first know the meaning of the term "glory," which translates a number of biblical words. One of them is the Hebrew *kabod*, which refers to a perceptible attribute, an individual's display of splendor, wealth, and pomp.[24] When used with respect to God, it does not point to one particular attribute, but to the greatness of his entire nature.[25] Psalm 24:7–10 speaks of God as the King of glory. As King he is attended by his hosts and marked by infinite splendor and beauty.

In the New Testament, the Greek word *doxa* conveys the meaning of brightness, splendor, magnificence, and fame.[26] Here we find glory attributed to Jesus Christ, just as it was to God in the Old Testament. Jesus prayed that the Father would glorify him as he had glorified the Father (John 17:1–5). It is especially in the resurrection of Christ that we see his glory (Acts 3:13–15; 1 Pet. 1:21). The second coming of Christ is also to be an occasion of his glory. Jesus himself has drawn a vivid picture of the glorious nature of his return: "They [will] see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30).

The Glorification of the Believer

Not only Christ, but all true believers as well, will be glorified. What precisely will be entailed in the glorification of the believer? One of its aspects will be a full and final vindication of the believer.[27] The justification that took place at the moment of conversion will be manifested, or made obvious, in the future. This is the meaning of Romans 5:9–10. In Romans 8, Paul contemplates the future judgment and asks who will bring any charge against the elect; because Christ died for us and now intercedes for us, no one will (vv. 33–34). Neither things present nor things to come can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (vv. 38–39). Like a student who is thoroughly prepared for an examination, the Christian regards the last judgment not with apprehensiveness but with anticipation, knowing that the result will be positive.

In glorification the individual will also be perfected, morally and spiritually.[28] Several biblical references point to a future completion of

the process begun in regeneration and continued in sanctification. One of the most direct of these statements is Colossians 1:22: "But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation." The concept of future flawlessness or blamelessness is also found in Ephesians 1:4; Philippians 1:9–11; and Jude 24. Guiltlessness is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:8. Our moral and spiritual perfection will be attained in part through the removal of temptation, for the source of sin and evil and temptation will have been conclusively overcome (Rev. 20:7–10).

The future glorification will also bring fullness of knowledge. In 1 Corinthians 13:12 Paul contrasts the imperfect knowledge we now have with the perfect knowledge that is to come: "Now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." Our knowledge will increase because we will see the Lord; we will no longer have to be content with merely reading accounts written by those who knew him during his earthly ministry. As John says, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

There will also be a glorification of the body, in connection with the resurrection of the believer. At the second coming of Christ, all who have died in the Lord will be raised; and they, together with the surviving believers, will be transformed. Three passages in particular emphasize the change that will be produced in the body of the believer. In Philippians 3:20–21 Paul says, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." In 2 Corinthians 5:1–5 Paul envisions the body that we will have, a body eternal in nature, not made by human hands but coming from God. It will be our heavenly dwelling. That which is mortal will be swallowed up by life (v. 4). The third passage is 1 Corinthians 15:38–50. Paul draws a comparison between the body we are to have and our present body:

- 1. The present body is perishable, subject to disease and death; the resurrection body is incorruptible, immune to disease and decay.
- 2. The present body is sown in dishonor; the resurrection body will be glorious.
- 3. The present body is weak; the resurrection body is powerful.
- 4. The present body is physical; the resurrection body will be spiritual.

Paul notes that the great change that will take place at the time of the coming of Christ will be instantaneous: "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51–52). Bernard Ramm comments: "In short, the four positive attributes of the resurrection body may be equated with the glorification of that body. This glorification is no process, no matter of growth, but occurs suddenly, dramatically, at the end-time."[29]

When glorified, we will be everything that God has intended us to be.

Finally, we should note the relationship between the believer's glorification and the renewal of the creation. Because humans are part of the creation, their sin and fall brought certain consequences to it as well as to themselves (Gen. 3:14–19). Creation is presently in subjection to futility (Rom. 8:18–25). Yet Paul tells us that "the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God" (v. 21). The nature of the transformation that is to take place is stated more specifically in Revelation 21:1–2: "Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." At that time God will declare, "I am making everything new!" (v. 5). Part of the glorification of the human will be the provision of a perfect environment in which to dwell. It will be perfect, for the glory of God will be present.

In this life believers sometimes groan and suffer because they sense their incompleteness. Yet they have a sure hope. The doctrine of sanctification continues God's work of justification by conforming them to the very image of Christ. The doctrine of perseverance guarantees that the salvation they possess will never be lost. And the doctrine of glorification promises that something better lies ahead. We will be everything that God has intended us to be. In part our glorification will take place in connection with death and our passage from the limitations of this earthly existence; in part it will occur in connection with the second coming of Christ.

That we will thereafter be perfect and complete is sure.

Complete in Thee! No work of mine

May take, dear Lord, the place of Thine;

Thy blood hath pardon bought for me,

And I am now complete in Thee.

Yea, justified! O blessed thought!

And sanctified! Salvation wrought!

Thy blood hath pardon bought for me,

And glorified, I too shall be!

(Aaron R. Wolfe and James M. Gray, "Complete in Thee")

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What is sanctification, and how is it accomplished in the life of the believer?
- Why is the doctrine of perseverance important to the faith of the believer?
- How would you resolve the differences between the Calvinist and Arminian views of perseverance?
- What is the meaning of the doctrine of glorification?
- In what ways does glorification provide you with hope, encouragement, and joy?

Church

The Nature of the Church

Chapter Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Define and explain the concept of the church.
- 2. Compare and contrast four views of what church unity should entail.
- 3. Identify the characteristics of the true church by examining the images Paul used.
- **4.** Relate the implications of the study of the church to our understanding of the church.

Chapter Summary

The church is one of the few visible forms of a corporate relationship among believers. There are several conceptions of what is meant by the unity of the church. The Bible employs a number of images to describe the church. Among the more important of these images are the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Each picture contributes to our understanding of the church.

Chapter Outline

The Basic Meaning of the Term "Church"

The Unity of the Church

Biblical Images of the Church

- The People of God
- The Body of Christ
- The Temple of the Holy Spirit

Implications

We have discussed to this point the nature of salvation as it pertains to individual Christians. Yet the Christian life is not a solitary matter. Typically, in the book of Acts, we find that conversion leads the individual into the fellowship of a group of believers. That collective dimension of the Christian life we call the church.

The Basic Meaning of the Term "Church"

The church is one aspect of Christian doctrine on which virtually everyone, believer and unbeliever alike, has an opinion. Part of the reason is that, as an institution of society, the church can be observed and studied by the methods of social science. This presents us with a dilemma, however. We may be tempted to define the church by what it is found to be empirically. Such an approach, however, would confuse the actual with the ideal and thus, interesting though it may be, must be bypassed.

The other way of approaching and defining the church is through the same means we have used in the preceding portions of this book, namely, studying the biblical material. The meaning of the term "church" can best be seen against both the New Testament and the Old Testament background. The Greek word used in the New Testament for church (*ekklēsia*) referred in classical Greek simply to the assembly of the citizens of a city. The closest Old Testament equivalent (*qahal*) is not so much a specification of the members of an assembly as a designation of the act of assembling.

In the New Testament, the word "church" has two senses. On the one hand, it denotes all believers in Christ at all times and places. This universal sense is found in Matthew 16:18, where Jesus promises that he will build his church, and in Paul's image of the church as the body of Christ (e.g., Eph. 1:22–23; 4:4; 5:23). More frequently, on the other hand, "church" refers to a group of believers in a given geographical locality. This is clearly the meaning in, for instance, 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1.

The Unity of the Church

Of assistance in understanding the nature of the church is a doctrine clearly taught in the New Testament, the unity of the church. The ideal of unity is emphasized in Jesus's high-priestly prayer (John 17:20–23) as well as in Paul's discussion of the church in Ephesians 4:1–16. It is also reflected in a reference to the local church at Jerusalem (Acts 4:32) and in an appeal to believers to be of one accord and one mind (Phil. 2:2).

Paradoxically, however, the church as it exists in the world today does not seem to be unified. We see countless denominations, sometimes quite similar in teachings, competing with one another. And the relationships between members of the local church are sometimes characterized by aloofness or even outright hostility. Yet we know that as believers we should be pursuing unity, for this is Christ's declared will for the church. We must ask, then, just what he had in view. In recent years there have been a number of different conceptions of what unity should entail.

Some Christians regard church unity as essentially spiritual in nature. They find unity in the fact that all believers serve and love the same Lord. Although they are not organically connected with other groups of believers and may not cooperate in any outward endeavors, they love one another, even those with whom they have no contact. One day, when the bride of Christ, the church, is gathered, there will be actual unity. Unity, in other words, applies to the universal or invisible church more than to the visible church.

A second view focuses on mutual recognition and fellowship. This approach emphasizes that although congregations and denominations are separate from one another, they are basically of the same faith, and so should strive to give observable expression to this unity in whatever fashion possible. Thus, there will be fellowship among different groups, ready transfers of membership, and pulpit exchanges. Whenever possible, congregations and denominations will work together in their service of the Lord.

A third view promotes conciliar unity. While retaining their individual identity, denominations bind themselves together in a formal association or council. They witness to their own traditions and convictions, but also seek to combine their strengths in action.

Finally, there is the view that church unity means organic unity. Here congregations unite in one large denomination, combining their traditions. The United Church of Canada, which combined Methodists, Presbyterians,

and Congregationalists into one fellowship, is an example of such a movement. The ultimate aim is the uniting of all denominations into one group.

In general, the drives toward conciliar and organic unity, especially the latter, have been in considerable decline in recent years. Certainly, believers should desire and seek to bring about spiritual unity and, to the extent possible, mutual recognition and fellowship. Each person and congregation will have to determine the degree to which closer involvement and cooperative activity are consistent with preservation of their biblical convictions and fulfillment of the task given by the Lord.

Biblical Images of the Church

We next need to inquire regarding the qualities or characteristics that are present in the true church. We will approach this topic through an examination of certain images Paul used of the church. While there are a large number of such images,[1] we will examine three in particular. Arthur Wainwright has argued that in much of Paul's writing there is an implicit trinitarianism that shows itself even in the structure with which he organizes his letters.[2] It is also present in the way he understands the church, for he describes it as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The People of God

Paul wrote of God's decision to make believers his people:

```
I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. (2 Cor. 6:16)
```

The church is constituted of God's people. They belong to him and he belongs to them.

The concept of the church as the people of God emphasizes God's initiative in choosing them. In the Old Testament, he did not adopt as his own an existing nation but actually *created* a people for himself. He chose

Abraham and then, through him, brought into being the people of Israel. In the New Testament, this concept of God's choosing a people is broadened to include both Jews and gentiles within the church. So Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:13–14; see also 1 Thess. 1:4).

Among the Old Testament texts in which Israel is identified as God's people are Exodus 15:13, 16; Numbers 14:8; Deuteronomy 32:9–10; Isaiah 62:4; Jeremiah 12:7–10; and Hosea 1:9–10; 2:23. In Romans 9:24–26 Paul applies the statements in Hosea to God's taking in of gentiles as well as Jews:

```
[God] called [us], not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles[.] As he says in Hosea:

"I will call them 'my people' who are not my people;
and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one,"

and,

"In the very place where it was said to them,
'You are not my people,'
there they will be called 'children of the living God.'"
```

The concept of Israel and the church as the people of God contains several implications. God takes pride in them. He cares for and protects his people; he keeps them "as the apple of his eye" (Deut. 32:10). Finally, he expects that they will be his people without reservation and without dividing their loyalty. Jehovah's exclusive claim on his people is pictured in the story of Hosea's exclusive claim on his unfaithful wife, Gomer. All of the people of God are marked with a special brand, as it were. In the Old Testament, circumcision was the proof of divine ownership. It was required of all male children of the people of Israel, as well as of all male converts or proselytes. It was an external sign of the covenant that made them God's people. It was also a subjective sign of the covenant in that it was applied individually to each person, whereas the ark of the covenant served as an objective sign for the whole group.

The church is the chosen people of God; they belong to him and he belongs to them.

Instead of this external circumcision of the flesh, found in the administration of the old covenant, we find under the new covenant an inward circumcision of the heart. Paul wrote, "No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code" (Rom. 2:29; see also Phil. 3:3). Whereas in the Old Testament, or under the old covenant, the people of God had been national Israel, inclusion among the people of God was not, in the New Testament, based on national identity: "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel" (Rom. 9:6). Inclusion within the covenant of God distinguishes the people of God; they are made up of all those "whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles" (v. 24). For Israel the covenant was the Abrahamic covenant; for the church it is the new covenant accomplished and established by Christ (2 Cor. 3:3–18).

A particular quality of holiness is expected of the people of God. God had always expected Israel to be pure, or sanctified. As Christ's bride, the church must also be holy: "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:25–27).

The Body of Christ

Perhaps the most extended image of the church is its representation as the body of Christ. This image emphasizes that the church is the focal point of Christ's activity now just as was his physical body during his earthly ministry. The image is used both of the church universal (Eph. 1:22–23) and of individual local congregations (1 Cor. 12:27). The image of the body of Christ also emphasizes the connection of the church, as a group of believers, with Christ. Salvation, in all of its complexity, is in large part a result of union with Christ. We observed in chapter 34 several references to the believer's being "in Christ." Here we find an emphasis on the converse of this fact. Christ in the believer is the basis of belief and hope. Paul writes, "To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the

glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27; see also Gal. 2:20).

There are several aspects to the image of the church as the body of Christ.

- 1. Christ is the head of this body (Col. 1:18) of which believers are individual members or parts. All things were created in him, through him, and for him (v. 16). He is the beginning, the firstborn (v. 15). God purposed "to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" (Eph. 1:10). Believers, united with him, are being nourished through him, the head to which they are connected (Col. 2:19). As the head of the body, he also rules the church: "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority" (Col. 2:9–10). Christ is the Lord of the church.
- 2. The image of the body of Christ also speaks of the interconnectedness among all the persons who make up the church. Christian faith is not to be defined merely in terms of individual relationship to the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul develops the concept of the interconnectedness of the body, especially in terms of the gifts of the Spirit. Here he stresses the dependence of each believer on every other.

There is mutuality in this understanding of the body; each believer encourages and builds up the others. In Ephesians 4:11–16 Paul develops this idea of the value of each one's contribution to the others. There is to be a purity of the whole. Members of the body are to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2) and restore those who are found to be in sin (v. 1). In some cases, as here, dealing with sinful members may involve gentle restoration. At other times, it may involve barring from the fellowship those who are defiling it, that is, actual exclusion or excommunication. In Matthew 18:8, 17, Jesus spoke of this possibility, as did Paul in Romans 16:17 and 1 Corinthians 5:12–13.

3. The body is to be characterized by genuine fellowship. This does not mean mere social interrelatedness, but an intimate feeling for and understanding of one another. There are to be empathy and encouragement (edification). Thus Paul writes, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). Those who were part of the church in the book of Acts even shared material possessions with one another.

One aspect of the body of Christ that has been inadequately emphasized is that the fellowship extends across time. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us of the great cloud of witnesses (12:1), those who have gone before (chap. 11). The African emphasis on ancestors fits well with this idea of the church transcending the boundaries of time. [3] We are one with those who have gone before, and with those who are yet to come.

- 4. The body is to be a unified body. Members of the church in Corinth were divided as to what religious leader they should follow (1 Cor. 1:10–17; 3:1–9). Social cliques or factions had been formed and were very much in evidence at the gatherings of the church (1 Cor. 11:17–19). This was not to be, however, for all believers are baptized by one Spirit into one body (1 Cor. 12:12–13; see also Eph. 4:4–6).
- 5. The body of Christ is also universal. All ethnic and social barriers have been removed, as Paul indicated: "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" (Col. 3:11). The same idea, with special reference to eliminating divisions between Jews and gentiles within the body, is found in Romans 11:25–26, 32; Galatians 3:28; and Ephesians 2:15.
- 6. As the body of Christ, the church is the extension of his ministry. Having indicated that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him (Matt. 28:18), he sent his disciples to evangelize, baptize, and teach, promising them that he would be with them always, even to the end of the age (vv. 19–20). He told them that they were to carry on his work, and would do so to an amazing degree (John 14:12). The work of Christ, then, if it is done at all, will be done by his body, the church.

The Temple of the Holy Spirit

Filling out Paul's trinitarian concept of the church is the picture of the church as the temple of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who brought the church into being at Pentecost, where he baptized the disciples and converted three thousand, giving birth to the church. And he has continued to populate the church: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" (1 Cor. 12:13).

The church is now indwelt by the Spirit, both individually and collectively. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If

anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple" (1 Cor. 3:16–17). Elsewhere he describes believers as "a holy temple in the Lord . . . a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph. 2:21–22).

Dwelling within the church, the Holy Spirit imparts his life to it. Those qualities that are his nature and that are spoken of as the "fruit of the Spirit" will be found in the church: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). The presence of such qualities is indicative of the activity of the Holy Spirit and thus, in a sense, of the genuineness of the church.

It is the Holy Spirit who conveys power to the church, as Jesus indicated in Acts 1:8. Because of the imminent coming of the Spirit with power, Jesus could give his disciples the incredible promise that they would do even greater works than he had done (John 14:12). Thus Jesus told them, "It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7). It is the Spirit who does whatever is necessary to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (v. 8).

The Spirit, being one, also produces a unity within the body. This does not mean uniformity, but oneness in aim and action. The early church is described as being "one in heart and mind" (Acts 4:32). They even held all their material goods in common (2:44–45; 4:32, 34–35). The Spirit had created in them a stronger consciousness of membership in the group than of individual identity, and so they viewed their possessions not as "mine" and "yours," but as "ours."

The Holy Spirit, dwelling within the church, also creates a sensitivity to the Lord's leading. Jesus had promised to continue to abide with his disciples (Matt. 28:20; John 14:18, 23). Yet he had said as well that he had to go away so that the Holy Spirit could come (John 16:7). We conclude that the indwelling Spirit is the means of Jesus's presence with us. So Paul wrote: "You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:9–10). Paul uses interchangeably the ideas of Christ's being in us and the Spirit's dwelling in us.

As the Spirit indwelt Jesus's disciples, he brought to their remembrance the Lord's teachings (John 14:26) and guided them into all truth (16:13). This work of the Spirit was dramatically illustrated in the case of Peter. In a vision Peter was told to kill and eat certain unclean beasts that had been let down to earth in something like a great sheet (Acts 10:11–13). Peter's first response was, "Surely not, Lord!" (v. 14), for he was well aware of the prohibition against eating unclean animals. Peter soon realized, however, that the essence of the message of the vision was not that he should eat unclean animals but that he should bring the gospel to the gentiles as well as to the Jews (vv. 17–48). The Spirit who dwelled within made Peter both aware that the Lord was leading him to the gentiles and willing to obey. The Holy Spirit renders believers who are set in their ways responsive and obedient to the leading of the Lord.

The Spirit is in one sense also the sovereign of the church. It is he who equips the body by dispensing gifts, which in some cases are persons to fill various offices and in other cases are special abilities. He decides when a gift will be bestowed and on whom it is to be conferred (1 Cor. 12:11).

Finally, the Holy Spirit makes the church holy and pure. For just as the temple was a holy and sacred place under the old covenant because God dwelled in it, so also are believers sanctified under the new covenant because they are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19–20).

Implications

The implications of the study of the church include the following:

- 1. The church is not to be conceived of primarily as a sociological phenomenon, but as a divinely established institution. Accordingly, its essence is to be determined not from an analysis of its activity, but from Scripture.
- 2. The church exists because of its relationship to the Triune God. It exists to carry out its Lord's will by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 3. The church is the continuation of the Lord's presence and ministry in the world.
- 4. The church is to be a fellowship of regenerate believers who display the spiritual qualities of their Lord. Purity and devotion are to be emphasized.

5. While the church is a divine creation, it is made up of imperfect human beings. It will not reach perfect sanctification or glorification until its Lord's return.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- In what ways is the word "church" used in the New Testament?
- What do each of the different conceptions of church unity emphasize? How would you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each?
- How do the biblical images of the church relate to the definition of the church?
- Five implications were stated in our study of the church. What is the meaning of each, and how does each contribute toward our better understanding of the church?
- What steps would you take to promote unity in the church while allowing for diversity in opinion and practice?

The Role and Government of the Church

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Identify and describe four functions of the church: evangelism, edification, worship, and social concern.
- 2. Recognize and define the gospel as the heart of the church's ministry, implicit in every function of the church.
- **3.** Identify and evaluate the episcopal, presbyterian, and congregational forms of church government.
- **4.** Recognize groups that have virtually eliminated governmental structure.
- **5.** Identify biblical principles on which a structure of church government might be established.

Chapter Summary

The church has been charged to carry out Christ's ministry in the world. To accomplish this, certain functions must be met. A balance of these functions is essential to the spiritual health and well-being of the body. The gospel is at the very heart of the ministry of the church and is implicit in all of the functions of the church. As the church has developed, several forms of church government have appeared. The four most basic forms are episcopal, presbyterian, congregational, and nongovernment.

Chapter Outline

The Functions of the Church

- Evangelism
- Edification
- Worship
- Social Concern

The Heart of the Ministry of the Church: The Gospel

Forms of Church Government

- Episcopal
- Presbyterian
- Congregational
- Nongovernment

A System of Church Government for Today

The functions of the church are very important topics, for the church was not brought into being by our Lord simply to exist as an end in itself. Rather, it was brought into being to fulfill the Lord's intention for it. It is to carry on the Lord's ministry in the world—to perpetuate what he did and to do what he would do were he still here. Our first consideration in this chapter will be the various functions the church is charged with carrying out.[1] Then we will examine what is at the heart of the ministry of the church and gives form to all that the church does, namely, the gospel. Finally, we will note several types of church government and try to determine which is best suited to carrying out the Lord's work.

The Functions of the Church

Evangelism

The one topic emphasized in both accounts of Jesus's last words to his disciples is evangelism. In Matthew 28:19 he instructs them, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." In Acts 1:8 he says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This was the final point Jesus made to his disciples. It appears that he regarded evangelism as the very reason for their being.

The call to evangelize is a command. Having accepted Jesus as Lord, the disciples had brought themselves under his rule and were obligated to do whatever he asked. He had said, "If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15). If the disciples truly loved their Lord, they would carry out his call to evangelize. It was not an optional matter for them.

The disciples were not sent out merely in their own strength, however. Jesus prefaced his commission with the statement, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). Having all authority, he commissioned the disciples as his agents. Thus they had the right to go and evangelize all nations. Further, Jesus promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come upon them and that they would consequently receive power. So they were both authorized and enabled for the task. Moreover, they were assured that he was not sending them off on their own. Although

he was to be taken from them bodily, he would nonetheless be with them spiritually to the very end of the age (Matt. 28:20).

Note also the extent of the commission: it is all-inclusive. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus speaks of "all nations," and in Acts 1:8 he gives a specific enumeration: "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." There was no geographical restriction on the commission. The disciples were to take the gospel message everywhere, to all nations and every type of people. They could not, of course, accomplish this on their own. Rather, as they won converts, those converts would in turn evangelize yet others. Thus the message would spread in ever-widening circles, and the task would eventually be completed.

Therefore, if the church is to be faithful to its Lord and bring joy to his heart, it must be engaged in bringing the gospel to all people. This includes people whom we may by nature tend to dislike. It extends to those who are unlike us. And it goes beyond our immediate sphere of contact and influence. In a very real sense, local evangelism, church extension or church planting, and world missions are all the same thing. The only difference lies in the length of the radius. The church must work in all of these areas. If it does not, it will become spiritually ill, for it will be attempting to function in a way its Lord never intended.

Edification

The second major function of the church is the edification of believers. Although Jesus laid greater emphasis on evangelism, the edification of believers is logically prior. Paul repeatedly spoke of the edification of the body. In Ephesians 4:12, for example, he indicates that God has given various gifts to the church "to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." Believers are to grow up into Christ: "from him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (v. 16). The potential for edification is the criterion by which all activities, including our speech, are to be measured: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (v. 29).

There are other passages, such as 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul links spiritual gifts to edification. All the various members of the church have

been given gifts. These gifts are not for personal satisfaction, but for the edification (building up) of the body as a whole (14:4–5, 12). While there is diversity of gifts, there is not to be division within the body. Some of these gifts are more conspicuous than others, but they are not therefore more important (12:14–25). No one gift is for everyone (12:27–31); this means, conversely, that no one person has all the gifts.

Moreover, in Paul's discussion of certain controversial spiritual gifts, he brings up the matter of edification. He says, for example, in 1 Corinthians 14:4–5: "Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified." The importance of edifying others as one exercises controversial gifts is mentioned again, in varying ways, in verses 12, 17, and 26. The last of these references sums up the matter: "Everything must be done so that the church may be built up." Note that edification is mutual upbuilding by all the members of the body, not merely the minister or pastor.

There are several means by which members of the church are to be edified. One of them is fellowship.[2] The New Testament speaks of *koinōnia*, literally, "a having or holding all things in common." And indeed, according to Acts 5, the members of the early church even held all their material possessions in common. Paul speaks of sharing one another's experiences: "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). While hurt is reduced, joy is increased by being shared. We are to encourage and sympathize with one another.

The church also edifies its members through instruction or teaching.[3] This is part of the broad task of discipling. One of Jesus's commands in the Great Commission was to teach converts "to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). To this end, one of God's gifts to the churches is "pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11) to prepare and equip the people of God for service. Education may take many forms and occur on many levels. It is incumbent on the church to utilize all legitimate means and technologies available today. Preaching is a means of instruction that has been used by the Christian church from its very beginning.[4] In 1 Corinthians 14, when Paul speaks of prophesying, he is probably referring

to preaching. He comments that prophesying is of greater value than is speaking in tongues, because it edifies or builds up the church (vv. 3–4).

To the end of mutual edification God has equipped the church with various gifts apportioned and bestowed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11). As we noted earlier (see p. 309), the New Testament contains four significantly different lists of these gifts. Whenever virtues that, on biblical grounds, are to be expected of all believers—like faith, service, and giving—are represented as special gifts of the Spirit, it appears that the writer has in mind unusual or extraordinary dimensions or degrees of those virtues. The Holy Spirit in his wisdom has given just what is needed, so that the body as a whole may be properly built up and equipped.

Worship

Another activity of the church is worship. Whereas edification focuses on the believers and benefits them, worship concentrates on the Lord. The early church came together to worship on a regular schedule, a practice commanded and commended by the apostle Paul. His direction to the Corinthians to set aside money on the first day of every week (1 Cor. 16:2) intimates that they regularly gathered for worship on that day. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts his readers not to neglect the assembling of themselves together as was the habit of some (Heb. 10:25). Although worship emphasizes God, it is also intended to benefit the worshipers. This we infer from Paul's warning against prayers, songs, and thanksgivings that fail to edify because no one is present to interpret their meaning to those who do not understand (1 Cor. 14:15–17).

It is important at this point to note the particular place of each of the various functions of the church. In biblical times the church gathered for worship and instruction. Then it went out to evangelize. In worship, the members of the church focus on God; in instruction and fellowship, they focus on themselves and fellow Christians; and in evangelism, they turn their attention to non-Christians. It is well for the church to keep some separation among these several activities. If this is not done, one or more may be crowded out. As a result the church will suffer since all of these activities, like the various elements in a well-balanced diet, are essential to the spiritual health and well-being of the body. For example, worship of God will suffer if the gathering of the body becomes oriented primarily to the interaction among Christians, or if the service is aimed exclusively at

evangelizing the unbelievers who are present. This was not the pattern of the church in the book of Acts. Rather, believers gathered to praise God and be edified; then they went forth to reach the lost in the world outside.

For spiritual health, the church must carefully balance its major functions—evangelism, edification, worship, and social concern.

Social Concern

Cutting across the various functions of the church is its responsibility to perform acts of Christian love and compassion for both believers and non-Christians. It is clear that Jesus cared about the problems of the needy and the suffering. [5] He healed the sick and even raised the dead on occasion. If the church is to carry on his ministry, it will be engaged in some form of ministry to the needy and the suffering. That Jesus expects this of believers is evident in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). Jesus told this parable to the lawyer who, understanding that one can inherit eternal life by loving God with one's whole being and loving one's neighbor as oneself, asked who his neighbor was. In answering the question, Jesus also explained what it means to love one's neighbor as oneself. In the same vein, Jesus suggests in Matthew 25:31–46 that the one sign by which true believers can be distinguished from those who make empty professions is acts of love done in Jesus's name and emulating his example.

Emphasis on social concern carries over into the Epistles as well. James is particularly strong in stressing practical Christianity. Consider, for example, his definition of religion: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27). He speaks out sharply against showing favoritism to the rich, an evil that occurred even within the church (2:1–11). He denounces verbal encouragement unaccompanied by action: "Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (2:15–17).

Social concern includes condemning unrighteousness as well. Amos and several other Old Testament prophets spoke out emphatically against the evil and corruption of their day. John the Baptist likewise condemned the sin of Herod, the ruler of his day, even though it cost him his liberty (Luke 3:19–20) and eventually even his life (Mark 6:17–29).

The church is to show concern and take action wherever it sees need, hurt, or wrong. Obviously the church has a great deal to do by way of improving its record in this area. Yet it occasionally fails to note just how much has already been accomplished. What percentage of the colleges and hospitals in Britain and the United States were founded in earlier years by Christian groups? Today many of the charitable and educational functions once carried out by the church are instead managed by the state and supported by taxes paid by both Christians and non-Christians. Consider also that the social needs in developed countries are not nearly as severe as they once were.

Many of the churches that minimize the need for regeneration claim that evangelicals have not participated sufficiently in the alleviation of human needs. [6] When, however, one shifts the frame of reference from the American domestic scene to the world, the picture is quite different. Evangelicals, concentrating their medical, agricultural, and educational ministries in countries where the needs are most severe, have outstripped their counterparts in the mainline churches in worldwide mission endeavor. Indeed, on a per capita basis, evangelicals have done more than have the liberal churches, and certainly much more than has the general populace. [7]

The Heart of the Ministry of the Church: The Gospel

It is important for us now to look closely at the one factor that gives basic shape to everything the church does, the element that lies at the heart of all its functions, namely, the gospel, the good news. At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus announced that he had been anointed specifically to preach the gospel; later he charged the apostles to continue his ministry by spreading the gospel. Jesus entrusted to the believers the good news that had characterized his own teaching and preaching from the very beginning. In the book of Mark, Jesus's first recorded activity after his baptism and temptation is his preaching the gospel in Galilee (Mark 1:14–15). Similarly,

Luke records that Jesus inaugurated his ministry in Nazareth by reading from Isaiah 61:1–2 and applying the prophecy to himself.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18–19)

The key New Testament word with reference to the gospel, *euangelion*, denotes good tidings.[8] It has two basic senses: active proclamation of the message and the content proclaimed. Both senses occur in 1 Corinthians 9:14: "those who preach the gospel [the content] should receive their living from the gospel [the act of proclaiming it]." On many occasions Paul uses *euangelion* without any qualifier; that is, there is no adjective, phrase, or clause to define what he means by "the gospel" (e.g., Rom. 1:16; 10:16; 11:28). Obviously, *euangelion* had a meaning sufficiently standardized that Paul's readers knew precisely what he meant.

The question arises: If Paul and his readers viewed the gospel as involving a certain content, what is that content? While Paul nowhere gives us a complete and detailed statement of the tenets of the gospel, some passages are indicative of what it includes. In Romans 1:3–4 he speaks of the gospel "regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul reminds his readers in what terms he had preached the gospel to them (v. 1): "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas . . . to the Twelve . . . to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, . . . to James, then to all the apostles, and . . . to me also" (vv. 3–8). A briefer reference is Paul's exhortation in 2 Timothy 2:8: "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel."

Paul viewed the gospel as centering on Jesus Christ and what God has done through him. The essential points of the gospel are Jesus Christ's

status as the Son of God, his genuine humanity, his death for our sins, his burial, resurrection, subsequent appearances, and future coming in judgment. We must not think, however, of the gospel as merely a recital of theological truths and historical events. Rather, it relates them to the situation of every individual believer. Thus, Jesus died "for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). Nor is the resurrection of Jesus an isolated event; it is the beginning of the general resurrection of all believers (1 Cor. 15:20 in conjunction with Rom. 1:3–4). Furthermore, the fact of coming judgment pertains to everyone. We will all be evaluated on the basis of our personal attitude toward and response to the gospel (2 Thess. 1:8).

To Paul, the gospel is all-important. He declares to the church in Rome that the gospel "is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Rom. 1:16). Convinced that only the gospel can bring salvation along with all its attendant blessings, Paul insists that the gospel is absolute and exclusive. Nothing is to be added to or taken from it, nor is there any alternate route to salvation.

Knowing that the gospel is the only route to salvation, Paul is determined to defend it. He writes to the Philippians of his "defending and confirming the gospel" (Phil. 1:7). He was prepared to give a reasoned argument for it. It is in this particular letter that Paul speaks of his defense of the gospel. It is likely that the jailer who had responded to Paul's presentation of the gospel and become a believer (Acts 16:25–34) was a member of the church in Philippi. Having witnessed in that very city an earthshaking demonstration of the power of God to salvation, could Paul ever have surrendered the gospel? Yet some people have contended that the gospel needs no defense, that it can stand on its own two feet. This reasoning, however, runs contrary to the pattern of Paul's own activity: for example, his speech in the middle of the Areopagus (Acts 17:16–34).[9] The objection to an apologetic approach fails to recognize that in creating belief, the Holy Spirit makes use of human minds and reason.

But we must not characterize Paul's activity as simply a defense of the gospel. He went on the offensive as well. He was eager to proclaim the good news to all nations. He had a sense of compulsion about his mission: "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).

The gospel not only cuts across all racial, social, economic, and educational barriers (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 3:28) but also spans the centuries of time. A message that does not become obsolete (Jude 3), it is the church's

sacred trust today. This good news that the church offers to the world brings hope. In this respect the message and ministry of the church are unique, for in our world today there is little hope. Existentialism has spawned literary works like Jean-Paul Sartre's No Exit and Albert Camus's "Myth of Sisyphus." There is little encouraging news, whether social, economic, or political, in the newspapers. In *Herzog*, Saul Bellow has captured well the spirit of the entire age: "But what is the philosophy of this generation? Not God is dead, that period was passed long ago. Perhaps it should be stated Death is God. This generation thinks—and this is its thought of thoughts that nothing faithful, vulnerable, fragile can be durable or have any true power. Death waits for these things as a cement floor waits for a dropping light bulb."[10] By contrast, the church says with Peter, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). There is hope, and it comes to fulfillment when we believe and obey the gospel. Because the gospel has been, is, and will always be the way of salvation, the only way, the church must preserve it at all costs.

Forms of Church Government

As groups of believers become more permanent and formally constituted, the question of church government naturally arises. The issue of church government is, in the final analysis, a question of where authority resides within the church and who is to exercise it. Although advocates of the various forms of church government agree that God is (or has) the ultimate authority, they differ in their conceptions of how or through whom he expresses or exercises it. Throughout the history of the church there have been several basic forms of church government. Our study will begin with the most highly structured—the episcopal—and move on to the less structured. After we have surveyed the basic forms, we will attempt to determine whether one is more adequate than the others.

<u>Episcopal</u>

In the episcopal form of church government, authority resides in a particular office, that of the bishop. There may be varying degrees of episcopacy, that is to say, the number of levels of bishops varies. The simplest form of episcopal government is found in the Methodist Church, which has only one level of bishops. Somewhat more developed is the governmental structure of the Anglican or Episcopal Church, while the Roman Catholic Church has the most complete system of hierarchy, with authority being vested especially in the supreme pontiff, the bishop of Rome, the pope.

Inherent in the episcopal structure is the idea of different levels of ministry or different degrees of ordination.[11] The first level is that of the ordinary minister or priest. In some churches there are steps or divisions within this first level, for example, deacon and elder. The clergy at this level are authorized to perform all of the basic duties associated with the ministry; that is, they preach and administer the sacraments. Beyond this level, however, is the level of bishop. The role of the bishops is to exercise the power of God that has been vested in them. In particular, as God's representatives and pastors they govern and care for a group of churches rather than merely one local congregation.[12] Among their powers is the ordination of ministers or priests.

<u>Presbyterian</u>

The presbyterian system of church government places primary authority in a particular office as well, but there is less emphasis on the individual office and officeholder than on a series of representative bodies that exercise that authority. The key officer in the presbyterian structure is the elder, [13] a position with a background in the Jewish synagogue. Elders are also found in the New Testament church. In Acts 11:30 we read of elders in the Jerusalem congregation: the believers in Antioch provided relief to the believers in Jerusalem, "sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul." The Pastoral Epistles also make mention of elders.

It seems that in New Testament times the people chose their elders, those whom they assessed to be particularly qualified to rule the church. In selecting elders to rule the church, the people were conscious of confirming, by their external act, what the Lord had already done. In the presbyterian system, the authority of Christ is understood as dispensed to individual believers and delegated by them to the elders who represent them. Once elected or appointed, the elders function on behalf of or in the place of the

individual believers. It is therefore at the level of the elders that divine authority actually functions within the church.[14]

This authority is exercised in a series of governing assemblies. At the level of the local church the session (Presbyterian)[15] or consistory (Reformed)[16] is the decision-making group. All the churches in one area are governed by the presbytery (Presbyterian) or classis (Reformed). The next grouping is the synod, made up of an equal number of lay elders and clergy chosen by each presbytery or classis. At the highest level the Presbyterian Church also has a general assembly, composed again of lay and clergy representatives from the presbyteries. The prerogatives of each of the governing bodies are spelled out in the constitution of the denomination.

The presbyterian system differs from the episcopal in that there is only one level of clergy.[17] There is only the teaching elder or pastor. No higher levels, such as bishop, exist. Of course, certain persons are elected to administrative posts within the ruling assemblies. They are selected (from below) to preside or supervise, and generally bear a title such as stated clerk of the presbytery. They are not bishops, there being no special ordination to such office. No special authority is attached to the office. Another leveling measure in the presbyterian system is a deliberate coordinating of clergy and laity. Both groups are included in all of the various governing assemblies. Neither has special powers or rights that the other does not have.

Congregational

A third form of church government stresses the role of the individual Christian and makes the local congregation the seat of authority. Two concepts are basic to the congregational scheme: autonomy and democracy. By autonomy we mean that the local congregation is independent and self-governing.[18] There is no external power that can dictate courses of action to the local church. By democracy we mean that every member of the local congregation has a voice in its affairs. They possess and exercise authority. Authority is not the prerogative of a lone individual or select group. Among the major denominations that practice the congregational form of government are the Baptists, Congregationalists, and most Lutheran groups.

An ideal form of church government will fulfill the biblical principles of order and the priesthood of all believers.

The principle of autonomy means that each local church calls its own pastor and determines its own budget. It purchases and owns property independently of any outside authorities.[19] The principle of democracy rests on the priesthood of all believers, which, it is felt, would be surrendered if bishops or elders were given the decision-making prerogative. The work of Christ has made such rulers unnecessary, for now every believer has access to the Holy of Holies and may directly approach God. Moreover, as Paul has reminded us, each member or part of the body has a valuable contribution to make to the welfare of the whole.[20]

There are some elements of representative democracy within the congregational form of church government. Certain persons are elected by a free choice of the members of the body to serve in special ways.[21] All major decisions, however, such as the calling of a pastor and purchasing or selling property, are made by the church as a whole.

Nongovernment

Certain groups, such as the Quakers (Friends) and the Plymouth Brethren, deny that the church has a need for a concrete or visible form of government. Accordingly, they have virtually eliminated all governmental structure. They stress instead the inner working of the Holy Spirit, who exerts his influence on and guides individual believers in a direct fashion rather than through organizations or institutions.

A System of Church Government for Today

Attempts to develop a structure of church government that adheres to the authority of the Bible encounter difficulty at two points. The first is the lack of didactic material. There is no prescriptive exposition of what the government of the church is to be like. When we turn to examine the descriptive passages, we find a second problem. There is so much variation in the descriptions of the New Testament churches that we cannot discover

an authoritative pattern. We must therefore turn to the principles we find in the New Testament, and attempt to construct our governmental system on them.

One principle that is evident in the New Testament, and particularly in 1 Corinthians, is the value of order. It is desirable to have certain persons responsible for specific ministries. Another principle is the priesthood of all believers.[22] All persons are capable of relating to God directly. Finally, the idea that each person is important to the whole body is implicit throughout the New Testament and explicit in passages like Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12.

It is my judgment that the congregational form of church government most nearly fulfills the principles that have been laid down. It takes seriously the principle of the priesthood and spiritual competency of all believers. It also takes seriously the promise that the indwelling Spirit will guide all believers. At the same time, the need for orderliness suggests that a degree of representative government is necessary. In some situations leaders must be chosen to act on behalf of the group. Those chosen should always be conscious of their answerability to those whom they represent, and where possible, major issues should be brought to the membership as a whole to decide.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What are the functions of the church, and how do they relate to one another?
- Why is the gospel at the heart of the ministry of the church?
- What does Paul have to say about the gospel in his writings?
- How do congregational churches relate to other congregational churches?
- How would you respond if a new congregation asked you to advise them on what form of church government they should choose?

The Ordinances of the Church: *Baptism and the Lord's Supper*

Chapter Objectives

After completing the study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Recall and describe each of the three basic views of baptism: means of saving grace, sign and seal of the covenant, and token of salvation.
- 2. Identify and clearly articulate the meaning of baptism for the individual believer.
- **3.** Identify the subjects for baptism and assess the appropriate mode for baptism.
- **4.** Examine four major views of the Lord's Supper and the implications of each view.
- **5.** Discover answers to the issues involved in an adequate view of the Lord's Supper.

Chapter Summary

Since virtually all Christian churches perform the rite of baptism, baptism plays a significant role in the life of the church. Three basic views are maintained by different groups of Christians. In resolving these issues, it is important to consider the meaning of baptism, the subjects of baptism, and the mode of baptism. The Lord's Supper is vital to all Christian groups. It continues what baptism began in initiating one into the Christian faith. There are four major views of the Lord's Supper, and at least six issues posed by these views that must be resolved.

Chapter Outline

Baptism: The Initiatory Rite of the Church

- The Basic Views of Baptism
 - » Baptism as a Means of Saving Grace
 - » Baptism as a Sign and Seal of the Covenant
 - » Baptism as a Token of Salvation
- Resolving the Issues

- » The Meaning of Baptism
- » The Subjects of Baptism
- » The Mode of Baptism

The Lord's Supper: The Continuing Rite of the Church

- Major Views
 - » The Traditional Roman Catholic View
 - » The Lutheran View
 - » The Reformed View
 - » The Zwinglian View
- Dealing with the Issues
 - » The Presence of Christ
 - » The Efficacy of the Rite
 - » The Proper Administrator
 - » The Appropriate Recipients
 - » The Elements to Be Used
 - » The Frequency of Observance

Baptism: The Initiatory Rite of the Church

Virtually all Christian churches practice the rite of baptism. They do so in large part because Jesus, in his final commission, commanded the apostles and the church to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). It is almost universally agreed that baptism is in some way connected with the beginning of the Christian life, with one's initiation into the universal, invisible church as well as the local, visible church. Yet there is also considerable disagreement regarding baptism.

Christians have debated three basic questions about baptism: (1) What is the meaning of baptism? What does it actually accomplish? (2) Who are the proper subjects of baptism? Is it to be restricted to those who are capable of exercising conscious faith in Jesus Christ, or may it also be administered to children and even infants? If so, on what basis? (3) What is the proper mode of baptism? Must it be by dipping (immersion), or are other methods (pouring, sprinkling) acceptable? These questions have been arranged in decreasing order of significance, since our conclusion as to the meaning and value of the act of baptism will go far toward determining our conclusions on the other issues.

The Basic Views of Baptism

BAPTISM AS A MEANS OF SAVING GRACE

Before we attempt to resolve these issues, it will be wise for us to sketch the various ways in which Christians interpret baptism. Some groups believe that the act of baptism in water actually conveys grace to the person baptized. This is the doctrine of baptismal regeneration: baptism effects a transformation, bringing a person from spiritual death to life. The most extreme form of this view is to be found in traditional Catholicism. We will, however, focus on a classic Lutheran position that shares many features with Catholicism.

Baptism, according to the sacramentalists, is a means by which God imparts saving grace; it results in the remission of sins.[1] In the Lutheran understanding, the sacrament is ineffectual unless faith is already present. The sacrament itself, however, is God's doing rather than something we

offer. Baptism is the Holy Spirit's work of initiating people into the church: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" (1 Cor. 12:13).[2]

In the sacramentalists' view, baptism objectively unites the believer with Christ once and for all (Rom. 6:3–5). The sacrament also has a subjective effect. The knowledge that one has been baptized and therefore is united with Christ in his death and resurrection will be a constant source of encouragement and inspiration to the believer.[3]

The subjects of baptism, according to Lutheranism, fall into two general groups. First, there are adults who have come to faith in Christ. Explicit examples are found in Acts 2:41 and 8:36–38. Second, children and even infants were also baptized in New Testament times. Evidence is seen in the fact that children were brought to Jesus to be touched (Mark 10:13–16). In addition, we read in Acts that whole households were baptized (Acts 11:14 [see 10:48]; 16:15, 31–34; 18:8). It is reasonable to assume that most of these households were not composed exclusively of adults. Children are part of the people of God, just as surely as, in the Old Testament, they were part of the nation of Israel.[4]

That children were baptized in the New Testament is precedent for the practice today. Moreover, the baptism of children is necessary to remove the taint of original sin. Since children are not capable of exercising the faith needed for regeneration, it is essential that they receive the cleansing wrought by baptism.

Lutheran theologians are aware of the charge of inconsistency between the practice of infant baptism and the insistence on justification by faith alone. They have generally dealt with this apparent dilemma in one of two ways. One is the suggestion that infants who are baptized may possess an unconscious faith. Evidence is found in Matthew 18:6 ("one of these little ones . . . who believe in me"); 19:14; Mark 10:14; and Luke 18:16–17. Another proof is the prophecy that John the Baptist "will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born" (Luke 1:15).[5] The second means of dealing with the apparent inconsistency is to maintain that it is the faith of the parents (or even of the church) that is involved when a child is baptized. [6] In Roman Catholicism, this dilemma does not occur since, according to Catholic doctrine, faith is not really necessary. The only requisites are that

someone present the child and that a priest properly administer the sacrament.[7]

In the Lutheran view, the mode of baptism is not of great importance. Indeed, we are uncertain what method was used in biblical times, or even whether there was only one method. Since there is no essential, indispensable symbolism in the mode, baptism is not tied to one form.

BAPTISM AS A SIGN AND SEAL OF THE COVENANT

The position held by traditional Reformed and Presbyterian theologians is tied closely to the concept of the covenant. They regard the sacraments as signs and seals of God's working out the covenant he has established with the human race. Like circumcision in the Old Testament, baptism makes us sure of God's promises.

The significance of the sacrament of baptism is not quite as clear-cut to the Reformed and Presbyterian as to the baptismal regenerationist. The covenant, God's promise of grace, is the basis, the source, of justification and salvation; baptism is the act of faith by which we are brought into that covenant and hence experience its benefits. The act of baptism is both the means of initiation into the covenant and a sign of salvation. In the case of adults, these benefits are absolute, while the salvation of infants is conditional upon future continuance in the vows made.

The subjects of baptism are in many ways the same as in the sacramentalists' view. On the one hand, all believing adults are to be baptized. They have already come to faith. On the other hand, the children of believing parents are also to be baptized. While the baptism of children is not explicitly commanded in Scripture, it is nonetheless implicitly taught. God made a spiritual covenant with Abraham *and with his seed* (Gen. 17:7). This covenant has continued to this day. In fact, there has been and is only one mediator of the covenant (Acts 4:12; 10:43). New Testament converts are participants in or heirs to the covenant (Acts 2:39; Rom. 4:13–18; Gal. 3:13–18; Heb. 6:13–18). Thus, the situation of believers both in the New Testament and today is to be understood in terms of the covenant made with Abraham.[8]

A key step in the argument now occurs: as circumcision was the sign of the covenant in the Old Testament, so is baptism in the New Testament. Baptism has been substituted for circumcision.[9] It was Christ who made this substitution. He commissioned his disciples to go and evangelize and

baptize (Matt. 28:19). The two rites clearly have the same meaning. That circumcision pointed to a cutting away of sin and a change of heart is seen in numerous Old Testament references to circumcision of the heart, that is, spiritual circumcision as opposed to physical circumcision (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25–26; Ezek. 44:7, 9). Baptism is similarly pictured as a washing away of sin (Acts 2:38). Conclusive evidence for the supplanting of circumcision by baptism is found in Colossians 2:11–12: "In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."

Two additional observations need to be made here. First, those who hold that baptism is essentially a sign and seal of the covenant claim that it is not legitimate to impose on a child the requirements incumbent on an adult. Second, those who hold this view emphasize that what really matters is not one's subjective reaction but one's objective initiation into the covenant with its promise of salvation.[10]

In the Reformed and Presbyterian approach to baptism, the mode is a relatively inconsequential consideration. What was important in New Testament times was the fact and results of baptism, not the manner in which it was administered.

BAPTISM AS A TOKEN OF SALVATION

The third view we will examine sees baptism as a token, an outward symbol or indication of the inward change that has been effected in the believer.[11] It is an initiatory rite—we are baptized into the name of Christ. [12] Christ commanded the act of baptism (Matt. 28:19–20). Since it was ordained by him, it is properly understood as an ordinance rather than a sacrament. It does not produce any spiritual change in the one baptized. We continue to practice baptism simply because Christ commanded it and because it serves as a form of proclamation of our salvation.

The act of baptism conveys no direct spiritual benefit or blessing. In particular, we are not regenerated through baptism, for baptism presupposes faith and the salvation to which faith leads. It is, then, a testimony that one has already been regenerated. If there is a spiritual benefit, it is the fact that baptism brings us into membership or participation in the local church. [13]

For this view of baptism, the question of the proper subjects of baptism is of great importance. Candidates for baptism will already have experienced the new birth on the basis of faith. The baptism of which we are speaking is believers' baptism, not necessarily adult baptism. It is baptism of those who have met the conditions for salvation (i.e., repentance and active faith). Evidence for this position can be found in the New Testament. First, there is a negative argument or an argument from silence. The only people whom the New Testament specifically identifies by name as having been baptized were adults at the time of their baptism. [14] The argument that there must surely have been children involved when whole households were baptized does not carry much weight with those who hold to believers' baptism. Further, Scripture makes it clear that personal, conscious faith in Christ is a prerequisite to baptism. In the Great Commission, the command to baptize follows the command to disciple (Matt. 28:19). John the Baptist required repentance and confession of sin (Matt. 3:2, 6). In the conclusion of his Pentecost sermon, Peter called for repentance, then baptism (Acts 2:37–41). Belief followed by baptism is the pattern in Acts 8:12; 18:8; and 19:1–7. [15] All these considerations lead to the conclusion that responsible believers are the only people who are to be baptized.

Regarding the mode of baptism, there is some variation. Certain groups, particularly the Mennonites, practice believers' baptism, but by modes other than immersion. [16] Probably the majority of those who hold to believers' baptism utilize immersion exclusively, however, and are generally identified as Baptists. Where baptism is understood as a symbol and testimony of the salvation that has occurred in the life of the individual, it is not surprising that immersion is the predominant mode, since it best pictures the believer's resurrection from spiritual death. [17]

Resolving the Issues

We now come to the issues that we raised at the beginning of this chapter. We must ask ourselves which of the positions we have sketched is the most tenable in light of all the relevant evidence.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

Is baptism a means of regeneration, an essential to salvation? A number of texts seem to support such a position. On closer examination, however, the persuasiveness of this position becomes less telling. In Mark 16:16 we

read, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved"; note, however, that the second half of the verse does not mention baptism at all: "but whoever does not believe will be condemned." It is simply absence of belief, not of baptism, that is correlated with condemnation. Beyond this, however, the entire verse (and indeed the whole passage, vv. 9–20) is not found in the best texts.

Another verse cited in support of the concept of baptismal regeneration, the idea that baptism is a means of saving grace, is John 3:5: "no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit." However, we must ask what being "born of water" would have meant to Nicodemus, and our conclusion, while not unequivocal, seems to favor the idea of cleansing or purification, not baptism.[18] Further, in view of the overall context, it appears that being born of water is synonymous with being born of the Spirit.

Baptism is an act of faith and a powerful testimony to the believer's union with Christ.

A third passage that needs to be taken into account is 1 Peter 3:21: "this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Note that this verse is actually a denial that the rite of baptism has any effect in itself. It saves only in that it is "the pledge of a clear conscience toward God," an act of faith acknowledging dependence on him. The real basis of our salvation is Christ's resurrection.

A number of passages in the book of Acts link repentance and baptism. Probably the most crucial is Peter's response on Pentecost to the question, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). He replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (v. 38). The emphasis in the remainder of the narrative, however, is that three thousand received his word—then they were baptized. In Peter's next recorded sermon (3:17–26), the emphasis is on repentance, conversion, and acceptance of Christ; there is no mention of baptism. Thus, unlike repentance and conversion, baptism is not indispensable to salvation. It

seems, rather, that baptism may be an expression or a consequence of conversion.

Finally, we must examine Titus 3:5. Here Paul writes that God "saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." If this is an allusion to baptism, it is vague. It seems rather that "the washing of rebirth" refers to a cleansing and forgiveness of sins. We conclude that there is little biblical evidence to support the idea that baptism is a means of regeneration or a channel of grace essential to salvation.

What of the claim that baptism is a supplanting of the Old Testament rite of circumcision as a mark of one's entrance into the covenant? Significant here is Paul's assertion that Old Testament circumcision was an outward formality denoting Jewishness, but the true Jew is one who is a Jew inwardly: "No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God" (Rom. 2:29). Paul is asserting not merely that circumcision has passed, but that the whole framework of which circumcision was a part has been replaced. If anything has taken the place of external circumcision, it is not baptism but internal circumcision.

What, then, is the meaning of baptism? To answer this question, we note, first, that there is a strong connection between baptism and our being united with Christ in his death and resurrection. Paul emphasizes this point in Romans 6:1–11. At a specific moment, the believer actually becomes linked to Christ's death and resurrection (vv. 3–5). We note, second, that the book of Acts often ties belief and baptism together. Baptism ordinarily follows or virtually coincides with belief. Baptism is itself an act of faith and commitment. While faith is possible without baptism (i.e., salvation does not depend on one's being baptized), baptism is a natural accompaniment and the completion of faith.

Baptism is a powerful proclamation of the truth of what Christ has done; it is a "word in water" testifying to the believer's participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a symbol rather than merely a sign, for it is a graphic picture of the truth it conveys. There is no inherent connection between a sign and what it represents. It is only by convention, for example, that green traffic lights tell us to go rather than to stop. By contrast, the sign at a railroad crossing is more than a sign; it is also a symbol, for it is a

rough picture of what it is intended to indicate, the crossing of a road and a railroad track. Baptism is a symbol, not a mere sign, for it actually pictures the believer's death and resurrection with Christ.

THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM

Who are the proper subjects of baptism? The issue here is whether to hold to infant baptism or believers' baptism (i.e., the position that baptism should be restricted to those who have confessed faith in Christ's atoning work). Note that our dichotomy is not between infant and adult baptism, for those who reject infant baptism stipulate that candidates for baptism must actually have exercised faith. We contend that believers' baptism is the correct position.

We note that the case for baptism of infants rests on either the view that baptism is a means of saving grace or the view that baptism, like Old Testament circumcision, is a sign and seal of entrance into the covenant. Since both of those views were found to be inadequate, we must conclude that infant baptism is untenable. The meaning of baptism requires us to hold to the position of believers' baptism.

THE MODE OF BAPTISM

It is not possible to resolve the issue of the proper mode of baptism on the basis of linguistic data alone. We should note, however, that the predominant meaning of the Greek word *baptizō* is "to dip or to plunge under water."[19] Even Martin Luther and John Calvin acknowledged immersion to be the basic meaning of the term and the original form of baptism practiced by the early church.[20] Several considerations indicate that immersion was the biblical procedure. John baptized at Aenon "because there was plenty of water" (John 3:23). When baptized by John, Jesus came "up out of the water" (Mark 1:10). Upon hearing the good news, the Ethiopian eunuch said to Philip, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" (Acts 8:36). Then they both went down into the water, Philip baptized him, and they came up out of the water (vv. 38–39).

There is no doubt that the procedure followed in New Testament times was immersion. But does that mean we must practice immersion today? Or are there other possibilities? Those to whom the mode does not seem crucial maintain that there is no essential link between the meaning of

baptism and the way in which it is administered. But if, as we stated in our discussion of the meaning, baptism is truly a symbol, and not merely an arbitrary sign, we are not free to change the mode.

In Romans 6:3–5 Paul appears to be contending that there is a significant connection between how baptism is administered (one is lowered into the water and then raised out of it) and what it symbolizes (death to sin and new life in Christ—and beyond that, baptism symbolizes the basis of the believer's death to sin and new life: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ). In light of these considerations, immersionism seems the most adequate of the several positions. While it may not be the only valid form of baptism, it is the form that most fully preserves and accomplishes the meaning of baptism.

Whatever mode be adopted, baptism is not a matter to be taken lightly. It is of great importance, for it is both a sign of the believer's union with Christ and, as a confession of that union, an additional act of faith that serves to more firmly cement the relationship.

The Lord's Supper: The Continuing Rite of the Church

While baptism is the initiatory rite, the Lord's Supper is the continuing rite of the visible church. It may be defined, in preliminary fashion, as a rite Christ himself established for the church to practice as a commemoration of his death.

We immediately encounter a curious fact about the Lord's Supper. Virtually every branch of Christianity practices it. Yet there are many different interpretations. Historically, it has actually kept various Christian groups apart. So it is at once a factor that unites and divides Christendom.

On occasion the subject of the spiritual or practical value of the Lord's Supper has become lost in the dispute over theoretical issues. The theoretical questions are important (they affect the spiritual considerations), and so they ought not to be too quickly dismissed. If, however, we get bogged down in the technical issues, and do not move on to deal with the practical meaning, we will have missed the whole point of Christ's having established the Supper. Experience of the meaning of the Lord's Supper, not just comprehension, is our goal.

<u>Major Views</u>

THE TRADITIONAL ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW

The official Roman Catholic position on the Lord's Supper was spelled out at the Council of Trent (1545–63). While many Catholics, especially in Western countries, have now abandoned some of the features of this view, it is still the basis of the faith of large numbers.

Transubstantiation is the doctrine that, as the administering priest consecrates the elements, an actual metaphysical change takes place. The substance of the bread and wine—what they actually are—is changed into Christ's flesh and blood, respectively. The accidents, however, remain unchanged. Thus the bread retains the shape, texture, and taste of bread. However, the whole of Christ is fully present within each of the particles of the host.[21] All who participate in the Lord's Supper, or the Holy Eucharist as it is termed, literally take the physical body and blood of Christ into themselves.

A second major tenet of the Catholic view is that the Lord's Supper involves a sacrificial act. In the Mass a real sacrifice is again offered by Christ on behalf of the worshipers in the same sense as was the crucifixion. [22]

A third tenet of the Catholic view is sacerdotalism, the idea that a properly ordained priest must be present to consecrate the host. Without such a priest to officiate, the elements remain merely bread and wine. When, however, a qualified clergyman follows the proper formula, the elements are completely and permanently changed into Christ's body and blood.[23]

In the traditional administration of the sacrament, the cup was withheld from the laity, being taken only by the clergy. The major reason was the danger that the blood might be spilled. [24] For the blood of Jesus to be trampled underfoot would be a desecration. In addition, there were two arguments to the effect that it is unnecessary for the laity to take the cup. First, the clergy act representatively for the laity; they take the cup on behalf of the people. Second, nothing would be gained by the laity's taking the cup. The sacrament is complete without it, for every particle of both the bread and wine contains fully the body, soul, and divinity of Christ. [25]

The Lutheran view differs from the Roman Catholic view at many but not all points. Luther retained the Catholic conception that Christ's body and blood are physically present in the elements. What Luther denied was the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. The molecules are not changed into flesh and blood. But the body and blood of Christ are present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine. The bread and wine have not become Christ's body and blood, but we now have the body and blood in addition to the bread and wine. While some have used the term "consubstantiation" to denote Luther's concept that body and bread are concurrently present, that blood and wine coexist, it was not Luther's term. Thinking in terms of one substance interpenetrating another, he used as an analogy an iron bar heated in fire. The substance of the iron does not cease to exist when the substance of fire interpenetrates it, heating it to a high temperature. [26]

Luther rejected other facets of the Catholic conception of the Mass, in particular the idea that the Mass is a sacrifice. Since Christ died and atoned for sin once and for all, and since the believer is justified by faith on the basis of that onetime sacrifice, there is no need for repeated sacrifices. [27] Luther also rejected sacerdotalism. The presence of Christ's body and blood does not result from the priest's actions. It is instead a consequence of Jesus Christ's power.

What of the benefit of the sacrament? Here Luther's statements are less clear. He insists that by partaking of the sacrament one experiences a real benefit—forgiveness of sin and confirmation of faith. This benefit is due, however, not to the elements in the sacrament, but to one's reception of the Word by faith.[28] Here Luther sounds almost as if he regards the sacrament as simply a means of proclamation to which one responds as to a sermon. If the sacrament is merely a form of proclamation, however, what is the point of the physical presence of Christ's body and blood? At other times Luther appears to have held that the benefit comes from actually eating the body of Christ. What is clear from Luther's disparate statements is that by virtue of taking the elements, believers receive a spiritual benefit they otherwise would not experience.

THE REFORMED VIEW

The third major view of the Lord's Supper is the Calvinistic or Reformed view. While the term "Calvinism" usually stirs up images of a specific view

of predestination, that is not what we have in mind here. Rather, we are referring to Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper.

The Reformed view holds that Christ is present in the Lord's Supper but not physically or bodily. Rather, his presence in the sacrament is spiritual or dynamic. Using the sun as an illustration, Calvin asserted that Christ is present influentially. The sun remains in the heavens, yet its warmth and light are present on earth. So the radiance of the Spirit conveys to us the communion of Christ's flesh and blood.[29] According to Romans 8:9–11, it is by the Spirit and only by the Spirit that Christ dwells in us. The notion that we actually eat Christ's body and drink his blood is absurd. Rather, true communicants are spiritually nourished as the Holy Spirit brings them into closer connection with the person of Christ.

Further, while the elements of the sacraments signify or represent the body and blood of Christ, they do more than that. They also seal. Louis Berkhof suggests that the Lord's Supper seals the love of Christ to believers, giving them the assurance that all the promises of the covenant and the riches of the gospel are theirs by a divine donation. In exchange for a personal claim on and actual possession of all this wealth, believers express faith in Christ as Savior and pledge obedience to him as Lord and King.[30]

There is, then, a genuine objective benefit of the sacrament. It is not generated by the participant; rather, it is brought to the sacrament by Christ himself. By taking the elements the participant actually receives anew and continually the vitality of Christ. This benefit should not be thought of as automatic, however. The effect of the sacrament depends in large part on the faith and receptivity of the participant.

THE ZWINGLIAN VIEW

The view that the Lord's Supper is merely a commemoration is usually associated with Ulrich Zwingli, who emphasized the role of the sacrament in bringing to mind the death of Christ and its efficacy in behalf of the believer. Thus, the Lord's Supper is essentially a commemoration of Christ's death.[31]

The value of the sacrament lies simply in receiving by faith the benefits of Christ's death. The effect of the Lord's Supper is as a type of proclamation.[32] The Lord's Supper differs from sermons only in that it involves a visible means of proclamation. In both cases, as with all

proclamation, responsive faith is necessary if there is to be any benefit. We might say, then, that it is not so much that the sacrament brings Christ to the communicant as that the believer's faith brings Christ to the sacrament.

Dealing with the Issues

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

We must now come to grips with the issues posed by these views and seek to arrive at some resolution. The first issue pertains to whether, and in what sense, the body and blood of Christ are actually present in the elements employed. Several answers have been given to this question:

- 1. The bread and wine *are* the physical body and blood of Christ (the Roman Catholic view).[33]
- 2. The bread and wine contain the physical body and blood (the Lutheran view).[34]
- 3. The bread and wine *contain spiritually* the body and blood (the Reformed view).[35]
- 4. They *represent* the body and blood (the Zwinglian view).[36]

The most natural and straightforward way to render Jesus's words, "This is my body," and "This is my blood," is to interpret them literally. In this case, however, certain considerations do in fact argue against literal interpretation.

First, if we take "This is my body" and "This is my blood" literally, a problem results. If Jesus meant that the bread and wine were at that moment in the upper room actually his body and blood, he was asserting that his flesh and blood were in two places at once, since his corporeal form was right there beside the elements. This would have been something of a denial of the incarnation, which limited his physical human nature to one location.

Second, there are conceptual difficulties for those who declare that Christ has been bodily present in the subsequent occurrences of the Lord's Supper. Here we face the problem of how two substances (e.g., flesh and bread) can be in the same place simultaneously (the Lutheran conception) or of how a particular substance (e.g., blood) can exist without any of its customary characteristics (the Catholic view). Those who hold to a physical presence

offer explanations of their view that assume a type of metaphysic that seems very strange or even untenable to twenty-first-century minds.

If Jesus's words are not to be taken literally, what did he mean when he said, "This is my body," and "This is my blood"? As he spoke these words, he was focusing attention on his relationship with individual believers. On many of the other occasions when he addressed this topic, he used metaphors to characterize himself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life"; "I am the vine, you are the branches"; "I am the good shepherd"; "I am the bread of life." At the Last Supper he used similar metaphors: "This [bread] is my body"; "This [wine] is my blood," which could be rendered, "This represents [or signifies] my body," and "This represents [or signifies] my blood." This approach spares us from the type of difficulties incurred by the view that Christ is physically present in the elements.

But what of the idea that Christ is spiritually present? It is important to remember that Jesus promised to be with his disciples everywhere and through all time (Matt. 28:20; John 14:23; 15:4–7). Yet he has also promised to be with us especially when we gather as believers (Matt. 18:20). The Lord's Supper, as an act of worship, is therefore a particularly fruitful opportunity for meeting with him. It is likely that Christ's special presence in the sacrament is influential rather than metaphysical in nature. In this regard it is significant that Paul's account of the Lord's Supper says nothing about the presence of Christ. Instead, it simply says, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). This verse suggests that the rite is basically commemorative.

The Lord's Supper is a reminder of the death of Christ and its sacrificial character on our behalf, a symbol of our vital connection with the Lord, and a testimony to his second coming.

How, then, should we regard the Lord's Supper? We should look forward to the Lord's Supper as a time of relationship and communion with Christ, for he has promised to meet with us. We should think of the sacrament not

so much in terms of Christ's presence as in terms of his promise and the potential for a closer relationship with him.

THE EFFICACY OF THE RITE

What has been said about the presence of Christ has intimated a great deal about the nature of the benefit conferred by the Lord's Supper. It is also apparent from Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 11:27–32 that there is nothing automatic about this benefit. Many at Corinth who participated in the Lord's Supper, instead of being spiritually edified, had become weak and ill; some had even died (v. 30). Thus the effect of the Lord's Supper must be dependent on or proportional to the faith of the believer and his or her response to what is presented in the rite. A correct understanding of the meaning of the Lord's Supper and an appropriate response in faith are necessary for the rite to be effective.

It is therefore important to note what the Lord's Supper symbolizes. It is in particular a reminder of the death of Christ and its sacrificial and propitiatory character as an offering to the Father on our behalf. It further symbolizes our dependence on and vital connection with the Lord, and points forward to his second coming. In addition, it symbolizes the unity of believers within the church and their love and concern for one another: the body is *one* body.

It is appropriate to explain the meaning of the Lord's Supper at each observance. Every individual should carefully examine his or her own understanding and spiritual condition (1 Cor. 11:27–28). The Lord's Supper will then be an occasion of recommitment of oneself to the Lord.

THE PROPER ADMINISTRATOR

Scripture gives very little guidance on the matter of who should administer the Lord's Supper. What does appear in the Gospel accounts and in Paul's discussion is that the Lord's Supper has been entrusted to, and is presumably to be administered by, the church. It would therefore seem to be in order for the persons who have been chosen and empowered by the church to supervise and conduct its services of worship to superintend the Lord's Supper as well.

THE APPROPRIATE RECIPIENTS

Nowhere in Scripture do we find an extensive statement of prerequisites for receiving the Lord's Supper. We may infer, however, that if the Lord's Supper signifies, at least in part, a spiritual relationship between the individual believer and the Lord, a personal relationship with God is a prerequisite. In other words, those who participate should be genuine believers in Christ. And while no age qualifications can be spelled out in hard-and-fast fashion, the communicant should be mature enough to be able to discern the meaning (1 Cor. 11:29).

We infer another prerequisite from the fact that there were some people whose sin was so grave that Paul urged the church to remove them from the body (1 Cor. 5:1–5). Certainly, the church should, as a first step in discipline, withhold the bread and cup from one known to be living in flagrant sin. In other cases, however, since we do not know what the requirements for membership in the New Testament churches were, it is probably best, once we have explained the meaning of the sacrament and the basis of partaking, to leave to the individuals themselves the decision as to whether to participate.

THE ELEMENTS TO BE USED

What elements are used will depend on the concerns of the participants. If their chief concern is duplication of the original meal, they will use the unleavened bread of the traditional Passover and the wine, probably diluted with anywhere from one to twenty parts of water for every part of wine. [37] If, however, the participants' chief concern is preservation of the symbolism, they might use a loaf of leavened bread and grape juice. The oneness of the loaf would symbolize the unity of the church; breaking the loaf would signify the breaking of Christ's body. The grape juice would sufficiently represent the blood of Christ.

The use of bizarre substitutes simply for variety should be avoided. Potato chips and cola, for example, bear little resemblance to the original. A balance should be sought between, on the one hand, repeating the act with so little variation that we participate routinely without awareness of its meaning and, on the other hand, changing the procedures so severely that we focus our attention on the mechanics instead of Christ's atoning work.

THE FREQUENCY OF OBSERVANCE

How often we should observe the Lord's Supper is another matter concerning which we have no explicit didactic statements in Scripture. We do not even have a precise indication of the practice in the early church, although it may well have been weekly, that is, every time the church assembled. In view of the lack of specific information, we will make our decision on the basis of biblical principles and practical considerations.

The Lord's Supper should be observed often enough to prevent long gaps between times of reflection on the truths it signifies, but not so frequently as to make it seem trivial or so commonplace that we go through the motions without really thinking about the meaning. Perhaps it would be good for the church to make the Lord's Supper available on a frequent basis, allowing the individual believer to determine how often to partake.

The Lord's Supper, properly administered, is a means of inspiring the believer's faith and love as he or she reflects again on the wonder of the Lord's death and the fact that those who believe in him will live everlastingly.

And can it be that I should gain

An interest in the Savior's blood?

Died He for me, who caused His pain?

For me, who Him to death pursued?

Amazing love! how can it be

That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

(Charles Wesley, "And Can It Be That I Should Gain," 1738)

Questions for Review and Reflection

- How do the Catholic and Lutheran positions on baptism differ?
- How would you describe the Presbyterian and Reformed interpretation of baptism? What relationship do these theologians see between baptism and circumcision?
- How does the third position, viewing baptism as a token of salvation, differ from the two other positions?
- Compare and contrast the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Zwinglian views of the Lord's Supper.
- What do you believe about the Lord's Supper?

The Last Things

Introductory Matters and Individual Eschatology

Chapter Objectives

Following your study of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Identify several reasons for the current attention to eschatology.
- 2. Recognize nine considerations important to the study of eschatology.
- 3. Define death and distinguish between physical and spiritual death.
- **4.** Examine three current views on the intermediate state (soul sleep, purgatory, and instantaneous resurrection) and propose a resolution of the difficult problems associated with this doctrine.

Chapter Summary

The study of eschatology has evoked a variety of responses among believers, ranging from virtual avoidance to total preoccupation with the doctrine. Neither extreme is desirable. For all people there exists the personal eschatological reality of death. While all persons participate in physical death, only those who are not believers will also experience spiritual death. The difficult problem of the intermediate state is addressed from the perspective of three contemporary views. A solution to the difficulties is proposed.

Chapter Outline

Introduction to Eschatology

Death

- The Reality of Death
- The Nature of Death
- Physical Death: Natural or Unnatural?
- The Effects of Death

The Intermediate State

• The Difficulty of the Doctrine

• Current Views of the Intermediate State

- » Soul Sleep
- » Purgatory
- » Instantaneous Resurrection
- » A Suggested Resolution

<u>Implications of the Doctrines of Death and the Intermediate State</u>

Introduction to Eschatology

Eschatology has traditionally meant the study of the last things. Accordingly, it has dealt with questions concerning the consummation of history, the completion of God's working in the world. In many cases it has also been literally the final topic considered in the study of theology.

In the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, eschatology received closer examination than ever before. There are a number of reasons for the current attention to eschatology. One is the rapid development of technology and consequent changes in our culture in general. To avoid obsolescence, it is necessary for corporations and public agencies to predict and prepare for the future. This has given rise to a whole new discipline—"futurism." Curiosity as to what homes, transportation, and communication will be like in the next decade or the next century gives rise to speculation and then research. There is a corresponding interest in the future in a broader sense, a cosmic sense. What does the future hold for the whole of reality?

A second major reason for the prominence of eschatology is the rise of the third world, whose present may be bleak but whose future holds great promise and potential. As Christianity continues its rapid growth in thirdworld nations, indeed, more rapid there than anywhere else, their excitement and anticipation regarding the future stimulate greater interest in eschatology than in accomplished history.

Further, the strength of communism or dialectical materialism forced theologians to focus on the future. Communism has a definite philosophy of history. It sees history as marching on to an ultimate goal. As the dialectic achieves its purposes, history keeps moving from one stage to the next. Ernst Bloch's *Das Prinzip Hoffnung (The Principle of Hope)*,[1] which represents Marxism as the world's hope for a better future, has had great impact on various Christian theologians, such as Jürgen Moltmann, who felt challenged to set forth an alternative, superior basis for hope.

Certain schools of psychology have also begun to emphasize hope. Perhaps the most notable example is Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, a blend of existentialism and psychoanalysis. From his experiences in a concentration camp during World War II, Frankl concluded that humans need a purpose for living. One who has hope, who "knows the 'why' for his existence . . . will be able to bear almost any 'how.'"[2] In a very real sense, the why, the purpose, of existence is related to the future, to what one anticipates will occur.

Finally, the threat of nuclear destruction that has hovered above the human race for some time has stirred inquiry regarding the future. And while the effect of the ecological crises we face is less rapid than nuclear war would be, they too jeopardize the future of the race. These facts make it clear that we cannot live merely in the present, preoccupied with what is now. We must think of the future.

When we examine what theologians and ministers are doing with eschatology, we find two contrasting trends. The first is an intensive preoccupation with eschatology, which could be termed "eschatomania." One pastor is reported to have preached on the book of Revelation every Sunday evening for nineteen years! Sometimes the teaching is augmented by large, detailed charts of the last times. Current political and social events, especially those relating to the nation of Israel, are identified with prophecies in the Scripture. As a result, some preachers have been caricatured as having the Bible in one hand and the daily newspaper in the other.

Another variety of eschatomania, very different in orientation and content, is the approach that makes eschatology the whole of theology. The Christian faith is regarded as so thoroughly eschatological that "eschatological" is attached as an adjective to virtually every theological concept. In the view of those who follow this approach, however, the central subject of eschatology is not the future, but the idea that a new age has begun.

The opposite of eschatomania might be called "eschatophobia"—a fear of or aversion to eschatology, or at least an avoidance of discussing it. In some cases, eschatophobia is a reaction against those who have a definite interpretation of all prophetic material in the Bible and identify every significant event in history with some biblical prediction. Not wanting to be equated with this rather sensationalistic approach to eschatology, some preachers and teachers avoid discussion of the subject altogether. In other cases, eschatophobia is a reflection of the difficulty and obscurity of many of the issues.

Somewhere between the two extremes of preoccupation with and avoidance of eschatology we must take our stance. We will find an appropriate mediating position if we keep in mind the true purpose of eschatology. Paul indicates in 1 Thessalonians 4 his reason for writing about the second coming. Some believers whose loved ones had died were experiencing a grief that was, at least to a degree, unhealthy and unnecessary. Paul did not want them to sorrow like unbelievers, who have no hope for their departed loved ones (v. 13). After describing the second coming and assuring his readers of its certainty, he counsels, "Therefore encourage one another with these words" (v. 18). It is sometimes easy to forget that the eschatological truths in God's Word, like the rest of his revelation, are intended to comfort and assure us.

The purpose of the eschatological truths in God's Word is to comfort and assure us.

As we embark on the study of eschatology, it is important to keep a number of considerations in view:

- 1. Eschatology is a major topic in systematic theology. Consequently, we dare not neglect it. Nor, since it is but one doctrine among several, should we convert our entire doctrinal system into eschatology.
- 2. The truths of eschatology deserve careful, intense, and thorough attention and study. At the same time, we must guard against exploring these matters merely out of curiosity. Further, we must avoid undue speculation and recognize that because the biblical sources vary in clarity, our conclusions will vary in degree of certainty.
- 3. We need to recognize that eschatology does not pertain exclusively to the future. Jesus did introduce a new age, and the victory over the powers of evil has already been won, even though the struggle is still to be enacted in history.
- 4. We must pair with this insight the truth that there are elements of predictive prophecy, even within Jesus's ministry, which simply cannot be regarded as already fulfilled. We must live with an openness to and anticipation of the future.
- 5. The biblical passages regarding eschatological events are far more than existential descriptions of life. They do indeed have existential significance,

but that significance is dependent on, and an application of, the factuality of the events described. They really will come to pass.

- 6. We have a responsibility as humans to play a part in bringing about those eschatological events that are to transpire here on earth and within history. Some see this responsibility in terms of evangelism; others see it in terms of social action. As we carry out our role, however, we must also be mindful that eschatology pertains primarily to a new realm beyond space and time, a new heaven and a new earth. This kingdom will be ushered in by a supernatural work of God; it cannot be accomplished by human efforts.
- 7. The truths of eschatology should arouse in us watchfulness and alertness in expectation of the future. But preparation for what is going to happen will also entail diligence in the activities that our Lord has assigned to us. We should study the Scripture intensively and watch developments in our world carefully, so that we may discern God's working and not be misled. We must not become so brash, however, as to dogmatically identify specific historical occurrences with biblical prophecy or predict when certain eschatological events will take place.
- 8. As important as it is to have convictions regarding eschatological matters, it is good to bear in mind that they vary in significance. Agreement is essential on such basic matters as the second coming of Christ and the life hereafter. However, holding to a specific position on less central and less clearly expounded issues, such as the millennium or the tribulation, should not be made a test of orthodoxy or a condition of Christian fellowship and unity. Emphasis should be placed on the points of agreement, not those of disagreement.
- 9. When we study the doctrines of the last things, we should stress their spiritual significance and practical application. They are incentives to purity of life, diligence in service, and hope for the future. They are to be regarded as resources for ministering, not topics for debate.

Death

When we speak of eschatology, we must distinguish between individual eschatology and cosmic eschatology—those experiences that lie, on the one hand, in the future of the individual and, on the other hand, those that lie in the future of the human race and indeed of the entire creation. The former

will occur to each individual as he or she dies. The latter will occur to all persons simultaneously in connection with cosmic events, specifically the second coming of Christ.

The Reality of Death

An undeniable fact about the future of every person is the inevitability of death. There is a direct assertion of this fact in Hebrews 9:27: "People are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." The thought also runs through the whole of 1 Corinthians 15, where we read of the universality of death and the effect of Christ's resurrection. While death is said to have been defeated and its sting removed by his resurrection (vv. 54–56), there is no suggestion that we will not die. Paul certainly anticipated his own death (2 Cor. 5:1–10; Phil. 1:19–26).

Although everyone at least intellectually acknowledges the reality and the certainty of death, there nonetheless is often an unwillingness to face its inevitability. At funeral homes, many people pay their formal respects and then seek to get as far away from the coffin as possible. We employ a whole series of euphemisms to avoid acknowledging the reality of physical death. Persons do not die—they expire or pass away. We no longer have graveyards, but cemeteries and memorial parks. The Christian, however, will squarely face death's reality and inescapability. Thus, Paul acknowledges that death is ever present in the world: "For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you" (2 Cor. 4:11–12).

The Nature of Death

What is death, however? How are we to define it? Various passages in Scripture speak of physical death, that is, cessation of life in our physical body. In Matthew 10:28, for example, Jesus contrasts death of the body with death of both body and soul: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Several other passages speak of loss of the *psychē* ("life"). An example is John 13:37–38.

Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me?"

Finally, death is referred to in Ecclesiastes 12:7 as separation of body and soul (or spirit).

And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

In the New Testament, James 2:26 also speaks of death as separation of body and spirit. What we are dealing with in these passages is cessation of life in its familiar bodily state. This is not the end of existence, however. Life and death, according to Scripture, are not to be thought of as existence and nonexistence, but as two different states of existence. [4] Death is simply a transition to a different mode of existence; it is not, as some tend to think, extinction.

In addition to physical death, Scripture speaks of spiritual and eternal death. Spiritual death is the separation of the person from God; eternal death is the finalizing of that state of separation—one is lost for all eternity in his or her sinful condition. [5] Scripture clearly refers to a state of spiritual deadness, which is an inability to respond to spiritual matters or even a total loss of sensitivity to such stimuli. This is what Paul has in mind in Ephesians 2:1–2: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." However, when the book of Revelation refers to the "second death" (e.g., 21:8), it is eternal death that is in view. This second death is something separate from and subsequent to normal physical death. We know from Revelation 20:6 that the second death will not be experienced by believers: "Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years." The second death is an endless period of punishment and of separation from the presence of God, the finalization of the lost state of the individual who is spiritually dead at the time of physical death.

Physical Death: Natural or Unnatural?

There has been a great deal of debate as to whether humans were created mortal or immortal, whether they would have died had they not sinned.[6] It is our position that physical death was not an original part of the human

condition. But death was always there as a threat should the human sin, that is, eat of or touch the forbidden tree (Gen. 3:3). While the death that was threatened must have been at least in part spiritual death, it appears that physical death was also involved, since the man and woman had to be driven out of the Garden of Eden lest they also eat of the tree of life and live forever (Gen. 3:22–23). Another evidence of our position is to be found in 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul is clearly referring, at least in part, to physical death when he says, "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man" (v. 21). For physical death is one of the evils countered and overcome by Christ's resurrection. This verse, then, is proof that physical death came from humans' sin; it was not part of God's original intention for the human race.

Since physical death is a result of sin, it seems probable that the humans were created with the possibility of living forever. They were not inherently immortal, however; that is, they would not by virtue of their nature have lived on forever. Rather, if they had not sinned, they could have partaken of the tree of life and thus have received everlasting life. They were mortal in the sense of being able to die; and when they sinned, that potential or possibility became a reality. We might say that they were created with contingent immortality. They could have lived forever, but it was not certain that they would.

The Effects of Death

For the unbeliever, death is a curse, a penalty, an enemy. Although death does not bring about extinction or the end of existence, it cuts one off from God and from any opportunity of obtaining eternal life. But for those who believe in Christ, death has a different character. The believer still undergoes physical death, but its curse is gone. Because Christ himself became a curse for us by dying on the cross (Gal. 3:13), believers, although still subject to physical death, do not experience its fearsome power, its curse (see 1 Cor. 15:54–57).

Looking on death as indeed an enemy, the non-Christian sees nothing positive in it and recoils from it in fear. Paul, however, was able to take an entirely different attitude toward it. He saw death as a conquered enemy, an erstwhile foe that now is forced to do the Lord's will. So Paul regarded death as desirable, for it would bring him into the presence of his Lord. He wrote to the Philippians: "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be

ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. . . . I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Phil. 1:20–23).

Death is desirable for believers, for it will bring them into the presence of their Lord.

But why is the believer still required to experience death at all? If death, physical as well as spiritual and eternal, is the penalty for sin, then when we are delivered from sin and its ultimate consequence (eternal death), why should we not also be spared from the symbol of that condemnation, namely, physical death? If Enoch and Elijah were taken to be with the Lord without having to go through death, why should not such translation be the experience of all whose faith is placed in Christ?

It is necessary to distinguish here between the temporal and the eternal consequences of sin. Although the eternal consequences of our own individual sins are nullified when we are forgiven, the temporal consequences, or at least some of them, may linger on. This is not a denial of the fact of justification, but merely evidence that God does not reverse the course of history. What is true of our individual sins is also true of God's treatment of Adam's sin or the sin of the race as well. All judgment on and our guilt for original and individual sin are removed, so that spiritual and eternal death are canceled. Nonetheless, we must experience physical death simply because it has become one of the conditions of human existence. It is now a part of life, as much as birth, growth, and suffering, and like suffering it ultimately has its origin in sin. One day every consequence of sin will be removed, but that day is not yet. The Bible, in its realism, does not deny the fact of universal physical death, but insists that it has different significance for the believer and the unbeliever.

The Intermediate State

The doctrine of the intermediate state is both very significant and problematic. It therefore is doubly important that we examine carefully this somewhat strange doctrine. "Intermediate state" refers to the condition of humans between their death and the resurrection. The question is, what is the condition of the individual during this period of time?

It is vital that we have practical answers to this question at the time of bereavement. Many pastors and parents have been asked at a graveside, "Where is Grandma now? What is she doing? Is she with Jesus already? Are she and Grandpa back together? Does she know what we are doing?" These questions are not the product of idle speculation or curiosity; they are of crucial importance to the individual posing them. An opportunity to offer comfort and encouragement is available to the Christian who is informed on the matter. Unfortunately, many Christians do not seize this opportunity because they do not know of a helpful reply.

There are two major reasons why many Christians find themselves unable to respond in this situation. The first is the relative scarcity of biblical references to the intermediate state. The second reason is the theological controversy that has developed around the doctrine. Prior to the twentieth century, orthodoxy had a fairly consistent doctrine worked out. Believing in some sort of dualism of body and soul (or spirit) in the human person, conservatives maintained that a part of the human survives death. The immaterial soul lives on in a conscious personal existence while the body decomposes. At Christ's second coming, there will be a resurrection of a renewed or transformed body, which will be reunited with the soul. Thus, orthodoxy held to both the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. [7]

Liberalism, however, rejected the idea of the resurrection of the body, replacing it with the immortality of the soul. Since those who held this view did not anticipate any future resurrection, they did not believe in a bodily second coming of Christ either.[8] Neo-orthodoxy took a quite different view of the matter. The neo-orthodox hope for the future lay in an expectation of the resurrection of the body. Underlying this view was the monistic idea of the human person as a radical unity—existence means bodily existence; there is no separate spiritual entity to survive death and exist apart from the body.[9] So whereas liberalism held to immortality of the soul, neo-orthodoxy held to resurrection of the body. Both schools

agreed that their views were mutually exclusive. That is, it was a matter of either/or; they did not consider the possibility of both/and.

<u>Current Views of the Intermediate State</u>

SOUL SLEEP

There are various current understandings of the intermediate state. One view, which over the years has had considerable popularity, is termed "soul sleep." This is the idea that the soul, during the period between death and resurrection, reposes in a state of unconsciousness. In the sixteenth century, many Anabaptists and Socinians apparently subscribed to this view. A similar position is taken today by the Seventh-Day Adventists.[10] In the case of the Adventists, however, the phrase "soul sleep" is somewhat misleading. Anthony Hoekema suggests instead "soul-extinction," since in the Adventist view one does not fall asleep at death, but actually becomes completely nonexistent, nothing surviving.[11] Hoekema's characterization of the Adventist position as soul-extinction is quite in order as long as we understand that "soul" is here being used as a synonym for "person."

The case for soul sleep rests in large measure on the fact that Scripture frequently uses the imagery of sleep to refer to death. Stephen's death is described as sleep (Acts 7:60). Paul notes that "when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep" (Acts 13:36). Paul uses the same image four times in 1 Corinthians 15 (vv. 6, 18, 20, 51) and three times in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–15. Jesus himself said of Lazarus, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up" (John 11:11), and then indicated clearly that he was referring to death (v. 14). Literal understanding of this imagery has led to the concept of soul sleep.

Those who subscribe to soul sleep maintain that the person is a unitary entity without components. Thus, when the body ceases to function, the soul (i.e., the whole person) ceases to exist. Nothing survives physical death. There is no tension, then, between immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body. The simplicity of this view makes it quite appealing. Nevertheless, there are several problems.

One problem is that there are several biblical references to personal, conscious existence between death and resurrection. The most extended is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). Another reference is Jesus's words to the thief on the cross, "Truly I tell you, today

you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). In addition, dying persons speak of giving up their spirits to God. Jesus himself said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" (Luke 23:46).

The second problem is whether it is legitimate to conclude that Scripture passages that refer to death as sleep are literal descriptions of the condition of the dead prior to the resurrection. It would seem, rather, that "sleep" should be understood simply as a euphemism for the cessation of life. Jesus's use of the image of sleep in reference to Lazarus (John 11:11) and the explanation that follows (v. 14) support this interpretation. If indeed "sleep" is more than a figure of speech, this needs to be substantiated.

Another problem for the theory of soul sleep is the conceptual difficulty attaching to the view that human nature is unitary. If indeed nothing of the person survives death, then what will be the basis of our identity? If the soul, the whole person, becomes extinct, what will come to life in the resurrection? On what basis can we maintain that what will come to life will be the person who died? It would seem that we will identify the postresurrection person with the predeath person on the basis of the body that is raised. Yet this in turn presents two further difficulties. How can the very same molecules come together to form the postresurrection person? The molecules constituting the predeath person may well have been destroyed, have formed new compounds, or even have been part of someone else's body. In this connection, cremation presents a particularly difficult problem. But beyond that, to identify the predeath and postresurrection persons on the basis of the body raised is to hold that human nature is primarily material or physical. For all of the foregoing reasons, the theory of soul sleep must be rejected as inadequate.

Purgatory

Because the doctrine of purgatory is primarily a Roman Catholic teaching, it is necessary to see it in the context of Catholic dogma in general. In that theology, immediately upon death, the individual's eternal status is determined. On the one hand, those who have died in a state of wickedness go directly to hell, where they immediately realize that they are irrevocably lost.[12] Their punishment, eternal in nature, consists of both the sense of having lost the greatest of all goods and actual suffering. The suffering is in proportion to the individual's wickedness and will intensify after the resurrection.[13] On the other hand, those who are in a perfect

state of grace and penitence, who are completely purified at the time of death, go directly and immediately to heaven, which, while it is described as both a state and a place, should be thought of primarily as a state. [14] Those who, although in a state of grace, are not yet spiritually perfect go to purgatory. Joseph Pohle defines purgatory as "a state of temporary punishment for those who, departing this life in the grace of God, are not entirely free from venial sins or have not yet fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions."[15]

Thomas Aquinas argued that the cleansing that takes place after death is through penal sufferings. In this life, we can be cleansed by performing works of satisfaction, but after death that is no longer possible. To the extent that we fail to attain complete purity through works on earth, we must be further cleansed in the life to come. "This is the reason," said Thomas, "why we posit a purgatory or place of cleansing." [16] There are three means by which the souls in purgatory can be assisted in their progress toward heaven by the faithful still on earth: the Mass, prayers, and good works. [17] These three means reduce the period of time necessary for purgatorial suffering to have its full effect. When the soul arrives at spiritual perfection, no venial sin remaining, it is released and passes into heaven.

The Roman Catholic Church bases its belief in purgatory on both tradition and Scripture. There was an ancient tradition of praying, offering the Mass, and giving alms for the benefit of the dead. Tertullian mentions anniversary Masses for the dead, a practice that suggests belief in purgatory. [18] The primary biblical text appealed to is 2 Maccabees 12:43–45.

He [Judas Maccabaeus] also took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore, he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin. (NRSV)

The New Testament text most often cited is Matthew 12:32, where Jesus says, "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." Roman Catholics contend that this verse implies that some sins (i.e., sins other than speaking against the Holy Spirit)

will be forgiven in the world to come, an interpretation held by Augustine[19] and some other fathers. Some Catholics also cite 1 Corinthians 3:15: "If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames."

The major points in our rejection of the concept of purgatory are points that distinguish Catholicism and Protestantism in general. The major text appealed to is in the Apocrypha, which Protestants do not accept as canonical Scripture. And the inference from Matthew 12:32 is rather forced; the verse in no way indicates that some sins will be forgiven in the life to come. Further, the concept of purgatory implies a salvation by works wherein humans are thought to atone, at least in part, for their sins. This idea, however, is contrary to many clear teachings of Scripture, including Galatians 3:1–14 and Ephesians 2:8–9. Accordingly, the concept of purgatory—and indeed any view that posits a period of probation and atonement following death—must be rejected.

INSTANTANEOUS RESURRECTION

A novel and creative conception that has been advanced is the idea of an instant resurrection or, more accurately, an instant reclothing. This is the belief that immediately upon death, the believer receives the resurrection body that has been promised. One of the most complete elaborations of this view is found in W. D. Davies's *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*. Davies holds that Paul had two different conceptions concerning our resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul is thinking of a future resurrection of the body. In 2 Corinthians 5, however, we have his more advanced understanding of the subject. The fear of being unclothed, which he speaks of in verse 3, has been supplanted by the realization that on both this side and the other side of death, he will be clothed.[20] Davies concludes that when Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, he no longer believed in an intermediate state. Rather, upon death there will be an immediate transition into the final state, an instantaneous reception of the heavenly body.

But has Davies solved the problem? He labors under the presupposition that human nature is an absolute unity. However, Paul's anthropology allowed him to hold to both a future resurrection of the body and a disembodied survival. They are not contradictory ideas, but complementary parts of a whole. Nor is Davies's solution as biblical as he alleges, for there are a number of passages in which Paul ties the transformation of our

bodies to a future resurrection accompanying the second advent (e.g., Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Thess. 4:16–17). Paul also makes much of the second coming as an occasion of deliverance and glorification (e.g., Rom. 2:3–16; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Thess. 1:5–2:12; 2 Tim. 4:8). And Jesus himself emphasized a future time when the dead will be raised (John 5:25–29). We must conclude that Davies's solution to the problem that he, as a result of a faulty presupposition, has injected into the writings of Paul, does little more than create additional problems.

A Suggested Resolution

Is there some way to resolve the numerous problems that attach to the issue of the intermediate state, some means of correlating the biblical testimony regarding resurrection of the body and conscious survival between death and resurrection? Several considerations must be kept in mind:

- 1. Joachim Jeremias has pointed out that the New Testament distinguishes between Gehenna and Hades. Hades receives the unrighteous for the period between death and resurrection, whereas Gehenna is the place of punishment assigned permanently at the last judgment. The torment of Gehenna is eternal (Mark 9:43, 48). Further, the souls of the ungodly are outside the body in Hades, whereas in Gehenna both body and soul, reunited at the resurrection, are destroyed by eternal fire (Mark 9:43–48; Matt. 10:28). This is a counter to the view of some of the early church fathers that all who die, righteous and unrighteous alike, descend to Sheol or Hades, a sort of gloomy, dreamy state where they await the coming of the Messiah. [21]
- 2. There are indications that the righteous dead do not descend to Hades (Matt. 16:18–19; Acts 2:31 [quoting Ps. 16:10]).
- 3. Rather, the righteous, or at least their souls, are received into paradise (Luke 16:19–31; 23:43).
- 4. Paul equates being absent from the body with being present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1–10; Phil. 1:19–26).

On the basis of these biblical considerations, we conclude that upon death believers go immediately to a place and condition of blessedness, and unbelievers enter an experience of misery, torment, and punishment. Although the evidence is not clear, it is likely that these are the very places to which believers and unbelievers will go after the great judgment, since the presence of the Lord (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23) would seem to be nothing other than heaven. Yet while the place of the intermediate and final states may be the same, the experiences of paradise and Hades are doubtlessly not as intense as what will ultimately be, since the person is in a somewhat incomplete condition.

There is no inherent untenability about the concept of disembodied existence. The human being is capable of existing in either a materialized (bodily) or immaterialized condition (see pp. 199–200). We may think of these two conditions in terms of a dualism in which the soul or spirit can exist independently of the body. Like a chemical compound, the body-soul, so to speak, can be broken down under certain conditions (specifically at death), but otherwise is a definite unity. Or we may think in terms of different states of being. Just like matter and energy, the materialized and immaterialized conditions of the human are interconvertible. Both of these analogies are feasible. Paul Helm,[22] Richard Purtill,[23] and others have formulated conceptions of disembodied survival that are neither self-contradictory nor absurd. We conclude that the disembodied intermediate state set forth by the biblical teaching is philosophically tenable.

Implications of the Doctrines of Death and the Intermediate State

The implications of the doctrinues of death and the intermediate state include the following:

- 1. Death is to be expected by all, believer and unbeliever, except by those who are alive when the Lord returns. We must take this fact seriously and live accordingly.
- 2. Although death is an enemy (God did not originally intend for humans to die), it has now been overcome and made captive to God. It therefore need not be feared, for its curse has been removed by the death and resurrection of Christ. It can be faced with peace, for we know that it now serves the Lord's purpose of taking to himself those who have faith in him.

- 3. There is between death and resurrection an intermediate state in which believers and unbelievers experience, respectively, the presence and absence of God. While these experiences are less intense than the final states, they are of the same qualitative nature.
- 4. In both this life and the life to come, the basis of the believer's relationship with God is grace, not works. There need be no fear, then, that our imperfections will require some type of postdeath purging before we can enter into the full presence of God.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What are some reasons we should study eschatology?
- What are "eschatomania" and "eschatophobia"?
- Why do believers experience death? What differences exist between believers and unbelievers regarding death?
- Compare and contrast the current views on the intermediate state.
- How would you respond to a believer asking about the current state of a deceased loved one who was a Christian? Consider the same for a non-Christian.

The Second Coming and Its Consequents

Chapter Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Identify and describe the characteristics of the second coming that can be inferred from relevant Scripture passages.
- 2. Identify and define the resurrection of the body according to the biblical material available.
- 3. Identify and explain the event of the final judgment through the context of Scripture.

Chapter Summary

Scripture has outlined three specific events that will occur at the time of the second coming. Besides the event of the second coming itself, there will also be a resurrection that precedes the final judgment. The purpose and guidance of these events are under the care of God alone; however, the hope that believers hold in the knowledge of God will be realized at the time of these events.

Chapter Outline

The Second Coming

- The Definiteness of the Event
- The Indefiniteness of the Time
- The Character of the Coming
 - » Personal
 - » Bodily
 - » Visible
 - » Unexpected
 - » Triumphant and Glorious
- The Unity of the Second Coming
- The Imminence of the Second Coming

Resurrection

- The Biblical Teaching
- A Work of the Triune God
- Bodily in Nature
- Of Both the Righteous and the Unrighteous

The Final Judgment

- A Future Event
- Jesus Christ the Judge
- The Subjects of the Judgment
- The Basis of the Judgment
- The Finality of the Judgment

<u>Implications of the Second Coming and Its Consequents</u>

Among the most important events of cosmic eschatology, as we have defined it in this work, are the second coming and its consequents: the resurrection and the final judgment.

The Second Coming

With the exception of the certainty of death, the one eschatological doctrine on which orthodox theologians most agree is the second coming of Christ. It is indispensable to eschatology. It is the basis of the Christian's hope, the one event that will mark the beginning of the completion of God's plan.

The Definiteness of the Event

Many Scriptures indicate clearly that Christ is to return. In his great discourse on the end times (Matt. 24–25), Jesus himself promises that he will come again: "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory" (24:30). Several other times in this same speech he mentions the "coming of the Son of Man" (vv. 27, 37, 39, 42, 44). Later that week, in his hearing before Caiaphas, Jesus said, "But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64). While Matthew records more of Jesus's comments on the second coming than the other Gospel writers, Mark, Luke, and John also include some. Mark 13:26 and Luke 21:27, for example, are parallel with Matthew 24:30. And John tells us that in the upper room Jesus promised his disciples, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3).

In addition to Jesus's own words, there are numerous other direct statements in the New Testament regarding his return. The second coming was part of the apostolic kerygma: "Repent, then . . . that [God] may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets" (Acts 3:19–21). Paul makes a very clear and direct statement in 1 Thessalonians 4:15–16: "According to

the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first." Other direct statements are found in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 10 and Titus 2:13, and other authors mention the second coming in Hebrews 9:28; James 5:7–8; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4, 12; and 1 John 2:28. Certainly the second coming is one of the most widely taught doctrines in the New Testament.

The second coming is the basis of the Christian's hope, the one event that will mark the beginning of the completion of God's plan.

The Indefiniteness of the Time

While the fact of the second coming is emphatically and clearly asserted in Scripture, the time is not. Although God has set a definite time, that time has not been revealed. Jesus indicated that neither he nor the angels knew the time of his return, and neither would his disciples (Mark 13:32–33, 35; see also Matt. 24:36–44). Apparently, the time of his return was one of the matters to which Jesus was referring when, just before his ascension, he responded to his disciples' question whether he would now restore the kingdom to Israel: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). Instead of satisfying their curiosity, Jesus told the disciples that they were to be his witnesses worldwide. That the time of his return is not to be revealed explains Jesus's repeated emphasis on its unexpectedness and the consequent need for watchfulness (Matt. 24:44, 50; 25:13; Mark 13:35).

The Character of the Coming

PERSONAL

That Christ's second coming will be personal in character is assumed throughout the references to his return. Jesus says, for example, "I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3). Paul's statement that "the Lord himself will descend from

heaven" (1 Thess. 4:16) leaves little doubt that the return will be personal in nature. The word of the angels at Jesus's ascension, "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11), establishes that his return will be just as personal as was his departure.

BODILY

There are those who claim that Jesus's promise to return was fulfilled on Pentecost through a spiritual coming. After all, Jesus did say, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). He also said, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them" (John 14:23). Some interpreters put a great deal of weight on the use of the Greek term *parousia* for the second coming. Pointing out that the word basically means "presence," they argue that its force in references to "the coming of the Lord" is that Jesus is present with us, not that he is coming at some future time.

Since Pentecost Christ has indeed been with and in each believer from the moment of new birth on. Several considerations, however, prevent our regarding this spiritual presence as the full meaning of the coming he promised. While it is true that the basic meaning of *parousia* is "presence," it also means "coming," and this is the meaning that is most prominent in the New Testament, as can be determined by examining how the word is used in context. Further, there are several other New Testament terms, particularly *apokalypsis* and *epiphaneia*, that clearly do indicate "coming."[1] And the statement in Acts 1:11 that Jesus will return in the same way as he departed implies that the return will be bodily. Perhaps the most persuasive argument, however, is that many of the promises of Jesus's second coming were made after Pentecost, as many as sixty years later, and they still placed the coming in the future.

VISIBLE

The Jehovah's Witnesses maintain that Christ began his reign over the earth on October 1, 1914. This was not a visible return to earth, however, for Jesus has not had a visible body since his ascension. Nor was it even a literal return, since it was in heaven that Christ ascended the throne. His presence, then, is in the nature of an invisible influence. [2]

It is difficult to reconcile the Witnesses' conception of the second coming with the biblical descriptions. Once again we point to Acts 1:11: Christ's return will be like his departure, which was certainly visible, for the disciples watched Jesus being taken into heaven (vv. 9–10). Other descriptions of the second coming make it clear that it will be quite conspicuous, including, for example, Matthew 24:30: "They [will] see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

UNEXPECTED

Although the second coming will be preceded by several signs—the desolating sacrilege (Matt. 24:15), great tribulation (v. 21), and darkening of the sun (v. 29)—they will not indicate the exact time of Jesus's return. Consequently, there will be many for whom his return will be quite unexpected. Jesus's teachings suggest that because of a long delay before the second coming, some will be lulled into inattention (Matt. 25:1–13; cf. 2 Pet. 3:3–4). When the *parousia* finally occurs, however, it will happen so quickly that there will be no time to prepare (Matt. 25:8–10). As Louis Berkhof puts it, "The Bible intimates that the measure of surprise at the second coming of Christ will be in an inverse ratio to the measure of their watchfulness."[3]

TRIUMPHANT AND GLORIOUS

Various descriptions of Christ's return indicate its glorious character, a sharp contrast to the lowly and humble circumstances of his first coming. He will come on the clouds with great power and great glory (Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27). He will be accompanied by his angels and heralded by the archangel (1 Thess. 4:16). He will sit on his glorious throne and judge all the nations (Matt. 25:31–46). The irony of this situation is that he who was judged at the end of his stay on earth will be the judge over all at his second coming.

The Unity of the Second Coming

A large and influential group of conservative Christians teaches that Christ's coming will actually take place in two stages. These stages are the rapture and the revelation, or the "coming for" the saints and the "coming with" the saints. These two events will be separated by the great tribulation, believed to be approximately seven years in duration. Those who hold this view are termed pretribulationists, and most of them are dispensationalists.

The rapture, or "coming for," will be secret; it will not be noticed by anyone except the church. Because it is to precede the tribulation, no prophecy must yet be fulfilled before it can take place. Consequently, the rapture could occur at any moment, or, in the usual terminology, it is imminent. It will deliver the church from the agony of the great tribulation. Then, at the end of the seven years, the Lord will return again, bringing his church with him in a great triumphant arrival. This will be a conspicuous, glorious, universally recognized event. [4] Christ will then set up his earthly millennial kingdom.

In contrast to pretribulationism, the other views of Christ's second coming hold that it will be a single occurrence, a unified event. They refer all prophecies regarding the second coming to the one event, whereas the pretribulationist refers some of the prophecies to the rapture and others to the revelation. [5]

How are we to resolve this issue? While numerous considerations that bear on this issue will be examined in the following chapter, there is one crucial consideration we will examine now. It relates to the vocabulary used to designate the second advent. The three major terms for the second coming are *parousia*, *apokalypsis*, and *epiphaneia*. The pretribulationist argues that *parousia* refers to the rapture, the first stage of the return, the believer's blessed hope of being delivered from this world before the tribulation begins. The other two terms refer to Christ's coming with the saints at the end of the tribulation.

When examined closely, however, the terms that designate the second coming do not support the distinction made by pretribulationists. In 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17, for example, the term *parousia* is used to denote an event that is hard to conceive of as the rapture:

According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming [parousia] of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

As George Ladd says, "It is very difficult to find a secret coming of Christ in these verses." [6] In addition, the term *parousia* is used in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, where we read that following the tribulation Christ by his coming will destroy the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist, in a public fashion. Further, Jesus said of the *parousia*: "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:27). [7]

Nor do the other two terms fit the pretribulationists' conception. Whereas supposedly the *parousia*, not the *apokalypsis* or *epiphaneia*, is the blessed hope awaited by the church, Paul is thankful that his readers have been enriched in knowledge as they "eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed [*apokalypsis*]" (1 Cor. 1:7; see also 2 Thess. 1:6–7). And Peter speaks of the believers' joy and reward in connection with the *apokalypsis*: "But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Pet. 4:13). This reference (along with 1:7 and 1:13) suggests that the believers to whom Peter is writing (who are part of the church) will receive their glory and honor at the *apokalypsis* of Christ. According to pretribulationism, however, the church should already have received its reward at the *parousia*.

Finally, Paul also speaks of the *epiphaneia* as the object of the believer's hope. He writes to Titus that believers are to live godly lives, "while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing [*epiphaneia*] of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). A similar use of *epiphaneia* can be found in 1 Timothy 6:14 and 2 Timothy 4:8. We conclude that the use of a variety of terms is not an indication that there will be two stages in the second coming. Rather, the interchangeableness of the terms clearly points to a single event.

The Imminence of the Second Coming

An additional question we must deal with is whether the second coming is imminent. Could it occur at any time, or are there some prophecies that must first be fulfilled?

Some Christians, particularly those who hold to a pretribulational coming for the saints by Christ, believe that the return could happen at any moment. In light of this, we must be prepared at all times for that possibility lest we be caught unaware. Several arguments are used in support of this position:

- 1. Jesus urged his disciples to be ready for his coming, since they did not know when it would take place (Matt. 24–25). If there are other events that must take place before Christ returns, such as the great tribulation, however, we would know at least that the return will not occur until those other events have transpired.[8]
- 2. There is a repeated emphasis that we are to wait eagerly, for the Lord's coming is at hand. Many passages (e.g., Rom. 8:19–25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 4:5; Titus 2:13; James 5:8–9; Jude 21) indicate that the coming could be very soon and perhaps at any moment. [9]
- 3. Paul's statement that we await our blessed hope (Titus 2:13) requires that the next event in God's plan be the coming of the Lord. If the next step were instead to be the great tribulation, fear and apprehensiveness would instead be our reaction. Since the return of our Lord is the next event on God's timetable, there is no reason why it could not happen at any time. [10]

When examined closely, however, these arguments are not fully persuasive. Do the commands of Christ to watch for his coming and the warnings that his return will occur at an unlikely time and without clear signs necessarily mean that it is imminent? There has already been an intervening period of almost two thousand years. While we do not know how long the delay will be or, consequently, the precise time of Christ's coming, we can still know that it is not yet. Not knowing when it will occur does not preclude knowing certain times when it will not occur.

Further, Jesus's statements did not at the time they were expressed mean that the second coming could happen immediately. He indicated through at least three of his parables (the nobleman who went to a far country, Luke 19:11–27; the wise and foolish virgins, Matt. 25:5; and the talents, Matt. 25:19) that there was to be a delay. Similarly, the parable of the servants (Matt. 24:45–51) involves a period of time for the servants to prove their character. In addition, certain events had to transpire before the second coming; for example, Peter would grow old and infirm (John 21:18), the gospel would be preached to all nations (Matt. 24:14), and the temple would be destroyed (Matt. 24:2). His saying, "Watch!" and "You do not know the hour," is not inconsistent with a delay to allow certain events to happen.

This is not to say that it is inappropriate to speak of imminence. It is, however, the complex of events surrounding the second coming, rather than

the single event itself, that is imminent. Perhaps we should speak of this complex as imminent and the second coming itself as "impending." [11]

Resurrection

The major result of Christ's second coming, from the standpoint of individual eschatology, is the resurrection. This is the basis for the believer's hope in the face of death. Although death is inevitable, the believer anticipates being delivered from its power.

The Biblical Teaching

The Bible clearly promises the resurrection of the believer. The Old Testament gives us several direct statements, the first being Isaiah 26:19.

But your dead will live, LORD; their bodies will rise—let those who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.

Daniel 12:2 teaches resurrection of both the believer and of the wicked: "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." The idea of resurrection is also asserted in Ezekiel 37:12–14.

In addition to direct statements, the Old Testament intimates that we can expect deliverance from death or Sheol. Psalm 49:15 says:

But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead; he will surely take me to himself.

While there is no statement about the body in this passage, there is an expectation that the incomplete existence in Sheol will not be our final condition. Psalm 17:15 speaks of awaking in the presence of God.

While we must exercise care not to read too much of the New Testament revelation into the Old Testament, it is significant that Jesus and the New

Testament writers maintained that the Old Testament teaches resurrection. When questioned by the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, Jesus accused them of error due to lack of knowledge of the Scriptures and of the power of God (Mark 12:24), and then went on to argue for the resurrection on the basis of the Old Testament: "Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!" (vv. 26–27). Peter (Acts 2:24–32) and Paul (Acts 13:32–37) saw Psalm 16:10 as a prediction of the resurrection of Jesus. Hebrews 11:19 commends Abraham's belief in God's ability to raise persons from the dead.

The New Testament, of course, teaches the resurrection much more clearly. John reports several occasions when Jesus spoke directly of the resurrection. One of the clearest declarations is in John 5: "Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. . . . Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned" (vv. 25, 28–29). Other affirmations of the resurrection are found in John 6:39–40, 44, 54, as well as in the narrative of the raising of Lazarus (John 11, especially vv. 24–25).

The New Testament Epistles also give testimony to the resurrection. Paul clearly believed and taught that there is to be a future bodily resurrection. The classic and most extended passage is 1 Corinthians 15. The teaching is especially pointed in verses 51–52: "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." The resurrection is also clearly taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–16 and implied in 2 Corinthians 5:1–10. And when Paul appeared before the council, he created dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees by declaring, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23:6); he made a similar declaration before Felix (Acts 24:21). John also affirms the doctrine of resurrection (Rev. 20:4–6, 13).

A Work of the Triune God

All of the members of the Trinity are involved in the resurrection of believers. Paul informs us that the Father will raise believers through the Spirit (Rom. 8:11). And there is a special connection between the resurrection of Christ and the general resurrection, a point Paul particularly emphasized in 1 Corinthians 15:12–14: "But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith." In Colossians 1:18 Paul refers to Jesus as "the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead." In Revelation 1:5 John similarly refers to Jesus as the "firstborn from the dead." This expression does not point so much to Jesus's being first in time within the group as to his supremacy over the group (cf. Col. 1:15, "the firstborn over all creation"). The resurrection of Christ is the basis for the believer's hope and confidence (1 Thess. 4:14).

Bodily in Nature

Several passages in the New Testament affirm that the body will be restored to life. One of them is Romans 8:11: "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit, who lives in you" (see also Phil. 3:20–21). In the resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says, "it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body" (v. 44). Paul also makes clear that the view that resurrection has already occurred, that is, in the form of a spiritual resurrection not incompatible with the fact that the bodies are still lying in their graves, is a heresy. He makes this point when he condemns the views of Hymenaeus and Philetus, "who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:18).

In addition, there are inferential or indirect evidences of the bodily nature of the resurrection. The redemption of the believer is spoken of as involving the body, not merely the soul (Rom. 8:22–23). In 1 Corinthians 6:12–20 Paul points out the spiritual significance of the body. Our bodies are members of Christ (v. 15). The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (v. 19). "The body . . . is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the

Lord for the body" (v. 13). In view of the emphasis on the body, the statement that immediately follows is obviously an argument for bodily resurrection: "By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also" (v. 14). The conclusion of the entire passage is: "Therefore honor God with your bodies" (v. 20).

When Christ returns, our original body will be raised and transformed; our human form will be both retained and glorified.

Another indirect argument for the bodily character of the resurrection is that Jesus's resurrection was bodily in nature. When Jesus appeared to his disciples, they were frightened, thinking that they were seeing a spirit. He reassured them by saying, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Luke 24:38–39; see also John 20:27). The fact that the tomb was empty and the body was never produced by the opponents of Christ is a further indication of the bodily nature of his resurrection. The special connection that, as we have already noted, exists between the resurrection of Christ and that of the believer argues that our resurrection will be bodily as well.

Our resurrection body will have some connection with and derive from our original body, and yet there will be a transformation or metamorphosis. An analogy here is the petrification of a log or a stump. While the contour of the original object is retained, the composition is entirely different. We have difficulty in understanding because we do not know the exact nature of the resurrection body. It does appear, however, that it will retain and at the same time glorify the human form. We will be free of the imperfections and needs we had on earth.

Of Both the Righteous and the Unrighteous

Most of the references to the resurrection are to the resurrection of believers. Isaiah 26:19 speaks of the resurrection in a fashion that indicates it is a reward. Jesus speaks of the "resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:14; see also 20:35). In Philippians 3:11 Paul expresses his desire and

hope "and so, somehow, [to attain to] the resurrection from the dead." Neither the Synoptic Gospels nor Paul's writings make explicit reference to unbelievers being raised from the dead.

However, a number of passages do indicate a resurrection of unbelievers. Daniel 12:2 says, "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." John reports a similar statement of Jesus (John 5:28–29). Paul, in his defense before Felix, said: "However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (Acts 24:14–15). And since both believers and unbelievers will be present at and involved in the last judgment, we conclude that the resurrection of both is necessary. Whether they will be raised simultaneously or at two different times will be discussed in the following chapter.

The Final Judgment

The second coming will also issue in the great final judgment. For those who are apart from Christ, and consequently will be judged to be among the unrighteous, this is one of the most frightening prospects regarding the future. For those who are in Christ, however, it is something to look forward to, for it will vindicate their lives. The final judgment is not intended to ascertain our spiritual condition or status, for that is already known to God. Rather, it will manifest or make our status public. [12]

A Future Event

The final judgment will occur in the future. In some cases God has already made his judgment manifest, as when he took righteous Enoch and Elijah to heaven to be with him, sent the destructive flood on the earth (Gen. 6–7), and struck down Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11). Friedrich Schelling, among others, maintained that the history of the world is the judgment of the world; in other words, the events that occur within history are in effect a judgment on the world. Yet this is not the whole of the Bible's statements about judgment. A definite event is to occur in the

future. Jesus alluded to it in Matthew 11:24: "But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you." On another occasion he spoke clearly of the judgment he would execute in connection with the future resurrection (John 5:27–29). There is an extended picture of this judgment in Matthew 25:31–46. The author of the letter to the Hebrews put it clearly and directly: "People are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (9:27). Other clear references include Acts 17:31; 24:25; Romans 2:5; Hebrews 10:27; 2 Peter 3:7; and Revelation 20:11–15.

Scripture specifies that the judgment will occur after the second coming. Jesus said, "For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done" (Matt. 16:27). This idea is also found in Matthew 13:37–43; 24:29–35; 25:31–46; and 1 Corinthians 4:5.

Jesus Christ the Judge

Jesus pictured himself as sitting on a glorious throne and judging all nations (Matt. 25:31–33). Although God is spoken of as the judge in Hebrews 12:23, several other references make clear that he delegates this authority to the Son. Jesus himself said, "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22), and "he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man" (John 5:27; see also Acts 10:42). Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Second Timothy 4:1 states that Christ is to judge the living and the dead.

While we are not told the exact details, it appears that believers will share in the judging. In Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:28–30 Jesus suggests that the disciples will judge the twelve tribes of Israel. We are also told that believers will sit on thrones and judge the world (1 Cor. 6:2–3; Rev. 3:21; 20:4).

The Subjects of the Judgment

All humans will be judged (Matt. 25:32; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27). Paul warns that "we will all stand before God's judgment seat" (Rom. 14:10). Every secret will be revealed; all that has ever occurred will be evaluated. Some have questioned whether the sins of believers will be included—that

would seem to be unnecessary inasmuch as believers have been justified. But the statements concerning the review of sins are universal. Louis Berkhof's perspective on this matter is probably correct: "Scripture leads us to believe that [the sins of believers] will be [revealed], though they will, of course, be revealed as *pardoned* sins."[13]

In addition, the evil angels will be judged at this time. Peter writes that "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell [Tartarus], putting them into chains of darkness to be held for judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4). Jude 6 makes an almost identical statement. The good angels, however, will participate in the judgment by gathering together all who are to be judged (Matt. 13:41; 24:31).

The Basis of the Judgment

Those who appear will be judged in terms of their earthly lives.[14] Paul said that we will all appear at the judgment, so "that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Jesus said that at the resurrection all will "come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5:29). While one might infer from Matthew 25:31–46 that it is the doing of good deeds that makes the difference, Jesus indicated that some who claim and who even appear to have done good deeds will be told to depart (Matt. 7:21–23).

The standard on the basis of which the evaluation will be made is the revealed will of God. Jesus said, "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day" (John 12:48). Even those who have not explicitly heard the law will be judged: "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:12).

The Finality of the Judgment

Once passed, the judgment will be permanent and irrevocable. The righteous and the ungodly will be sent away to their respective final places. There is no hint that the verdict can be changed. In concluding his teaching about the last judgment, Jesus said that those on his left hand "will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (Matt. 25:46).

Implications of the Second Coming and Its Consequents

The implications of the second coming include the following:

- 1. History will not simply run its course, but under the guidance of God will come to a consummation. His purposes will be fulfilled in the end.
- 2. We as believers should watch for and work in anticipation of the sure return of the Lord.
- 3. Our earthly bodies will be transformed into something far better. The imperfections we now know will disappear; our everlasting bodies will know no pain, illness, or death.
- 4. A time is coming when justice will be dispensed. Evil will be punished, and faith and faithfulness rewarded.
- 5. In view of the certainty of the second coming and the finality of the judgment that will follow, it is imperative that we act in accordance with the will of God.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What makes the time of the second coming indefinite?
- What is the character of the second coming, and what makes it significant?
- How does the Old Testament's teaching compare with the New Testament's concerning the resurrection of the body?
- What exactly will happen in the final judgment according to Scripture?
- How would you respond to the secular claim that there is no hope?

Millennial and Tribulational Views

Chapter Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1. Identify and describe three millennial views pertaining to the end times.
- 2. Evaluate three millennial views and select the view that most closely resembles the teachings of Scripture.
- **3.** Identify and describe two tribulational views and briefly discuss certain mediating positions of the tribulation.
- **4.** Analyze and evaluate the views of the tribulation and judge that most closely resembles the teaching of Scripture.

Chapter Summary

The millennium refers to the earthly reign of Jesus Christ. Three main millennial views have developed concerning the end times. The amillennial view takes the position that there will be no earthly reign of Christ. The postmillennial view regards the millennium to be in progress preceding the second coming of Christ. The final view, premillennialism, holds that the second coming will precede the millennium. The premillennial view has created controversy about the role of the tribulation and the church. Those who advocate pretribulationism believe that Christ will rapture the church before the great tribulation on earth. In contrast is the posttribulationist view, which maintains that Christ's coming will occur after the great tribulation.

Chapter Outline

Millennial Views

- Postmillennialism
- Premillennialism
- Amillennialism
- Resolving the Issues

Tribulational Views

- Pretribulationism
- Posttribulationism
- Mediating Positions
- Resolving the Issues

Over the years there has been considerable discussion in Christian theology regarding the chronological relationship between Christ's second coming and certain other events. In particular, this discussion has involved two major questions: (1) Will there be a millennium, an earthly reign of Jesus Christ, and if so, will the second coming take place before or after that period? The view that there will be no earthly reign of Christ is termed amillennialism. The teaching that the return of Christ will inaugurate a millennium is termed premillennialism, while the belief that the second coming will conclude a millennium is postmillennialism. (2) Will Christ come to remove the church from the world before the great tribulation (pretribulationism), or will he return only after the tribulation (posttribulationism)? This second question is found primarily in premillennialism. We shall examine in turn each of the millennial and then the tribulational views.

Millennial Views

<u>Postmillennialism</u>

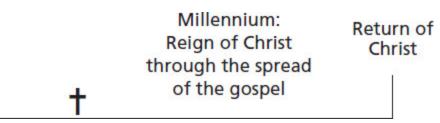
Postmillennialism rests on the belief that the preaching of the gospel will be so successful that the world will be converted. The reign of Christ, the location of which is human hearts, will be complete and universal. The petition, "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," will be actualized. Peace will prevail and evil will be virtually banished. Then, when the gospel has fully taken effect, Christ will return. Basically, then, postmillennialism is an optimistic view.

Postmillennialism, therefore, was most popular during periods in which the church appeared to be succeeding in its task of winning the world. Though propounded in the fourth century by Tyconius, and adopted by Augustine, it came to particular popularity in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Bear in mind that this was a period of great effectiveness in world missions as well as a time of concern about and progress in social conditions. Consequently, it seemed reasonable to assume that the world would soon be reached for Christ.

As we have suggested, the major tenet of postmillennialism is the successful spread of the gospel. This idea is based on several Scripture

passages. In the Old Testament, Scriptures such as Psalms 47; 72; 100; Isaiah 45:22–25; and Hosea 2:23, for example, make it clear that all nations will come to know God. In addition, Jesus said on several occasions that the gospel would be preached universally prior to his second coming (see, e.g., Matt. 24:14). Inasmuch as the Great Commission is to be carried out in his authority (Matt. 28:18–20), it is bound to succeed. Often the idea of the spread of the gospel includes a transforming effect on social conditions that follows from the conversion of large numbers of hearers. In some cases, the belief in the spread of the kingdom has taken on a somewhat more secularized form, so that social transformation rather than individual conversions is considered the sign of the kingdom. Emphasizing social transformation, liberals, insofar as they held a millennial view, were generally postmillennialists, but not all postmillennialists were liberal. Many of them envisioned an unprecedented number of conversions, with the human race becoming a collection of regenerated individuals.[1]

Figure 7. Postmillennialism



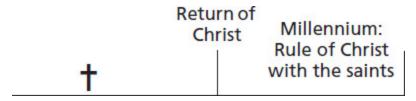
In postmillennial thought, the kingdom of God is viewed as a present reality, here and now, rather than a future heavenly realm (see fig. 7). Jesus's parables in Matthew 13 give us an idea of the nature of this kingdom. It is like leaven, spreading gradually but surely throughout the whole. Its growth will be extensive (it will spread throughout the entire world) and intensive (it will become dominant). Its growth will be so gradual that the onset of the millennium may be scarcely noticed by some. The progress may not be uniform; indeed, the coming of the kingdom may well proceed by a series of crises. Postmillennialists are able to accept what appear to be setbacks, since they believe in the ultimate triumph of the gospel.[2]

In the postmillennial view the millennium will be an extended period, but not necessarily a literal one thousand years. Indeed, the postmillennial view of the millennium is frequently based less on Revelation 20, where the thousand-year period and the two resurrections are mentioned, than on other passages of Scripture. The very gradualness of the coming of the kingdom makes the length of the millennium difficult to calculate. The point is that the millennium will be a prolonged period of time during which Christ, even though physically absent, will reign over the earth. One essential feature that distinguishes postmillennialism from the other millennial views is that it expects conditions to become better, rather than worse, prior to Christ's return. Thus it is a basically optimistic view. Consequently, it fared rather poorly in the twentieth century. Convinced postmillennialists regard the distressing conditions of the twenty-first century as merely a temporary fluctuation in the growth of the kingdom. They indicate that we are not as near the second coming as we had thought. This argument, however, has not proved persuasive to large numbers of theologians, pastors, and laypersons.

Premillennialism

Premillennialism is committed to the concept of an earthly reign by Jesus Christ of approximately a thousand years (or at least a substantial period of time). Unlike postmillennialism, premillennialism sees Christ as physically present during this time; it believes that he will return personally and bodily to commence the millennium. This being the case, the millennium must be seen as still in the future (see fig. 8).

Figure 8. Premillennialism



Premillennialism was probably the dominant millennial view during the first three centuries of the church. Much of the millennialism of this period —often termed "chiliasm," from the Greek word for "thousand"—had a rather sensuous flavor. The millennium would be a time of great abundance and fertility, of a renewing of the earth and building of a glorified Jerusalem.[4] In the Middle Ages, premillennialism became quite rare.

About the middle of the nineteenth century, premillennialism began to grow in popularity in conservative circles. This was partly because liberals, insofar as they had a millennial view, were postmillennialists, and some conservatives considered anything associated with liberalism to be suspect. The growing popularity of the dispensational system of interpretation and eschatology also lent impetus to premillennialism, especially among conservative Baptists, Pentecostal groups, and independent fundamentalist churches.

The key passage for premillennialism is Revelation 20:4–6.

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Premillennialists observe that here is evidence of a thousand-year period and two resurrections, one at the beginning and the other at the end. They insist on a literal and consistent interpretation of this passage. Since the same verb—*ezēsan* ("came to life")—is used in reference to both resurrections, they must be of the same type. The amillennialist, or for that matter the postmillennialist, is usually forced to say that they are of different types. The usual explanation is that the first resurrection is a spiritual resurrection, that is, regeneration, while the second is a literal, physical, or bodily resurrection. Thus those who take part in the first resurrection will undergo the second as well. Premillennialists, however, reject this interpretation as untenable. George Ladd says that if *ezēsan* means bodily resurrection in verse 5, it must mean bodily resurrection in verse 4; if it does not, "we have lost control of exegesis."[5]

Context, of course, can alter the meanings of words. However, in this case the two usages of $ez\bar{e}san$ occur together. Consequently, what we have here are two resurrections of the same type involving two different groups at an interval of a thousand years. It also appears from the context that those who participate in the first resurrection are not involved in the second. It is

"the rest of the dead" who do not come to life until the end of the thousand years.

It is also important to observe the nature of the millennium. Whereas the postmillennialist thinks the millennium is being introduced gradually, perhaps almost imperceptibly, the premillennialist envisions a sudden, cataclysmic event. In the premillennialist view, the rule of Jesus Christ will be complete from the very beginning of the millennium. Evil will have been virtually eliminated.

According to premillennialism, then, the millennium will not be an extension of trends already at work within the world. Instead, there will be a rather sharp break from conditions as we now find them. For example, there will be worldwide peace. This is a far cry from the present situation, where worldwide peace is a rare thing indeed, and the trend does not seem to be improving. The universal harmony will not be restricted to humans. Nature, which has been "groaning as in the pains of childbirth," awaiting its redemption, will be freed from the curse of the fall (Rom. 8:19–23). Even animals will live in harmony with one another (Isa. 11:6–7; 65:25), and the destructive forces of nature will be calmed. The saints will rule together with Christ in this millennium. Although the exact nature of their reign is not spelled out, they will, as a reward for their faithfulness, participate with him in his glory.

Premillennialists also hold that the millennium will be a tremendous change from what immediately precedes it, namely, the great tribulation. The tribulation will be a time of unprecedented trouble and turmoil, including cosmic disturbances, persecution, and great suffering. While premillennialists disagree as to whether the church will be present during the tribulation, they agree that the world situation will be at its very worst just before Christ comes to establish the millennium, which will be, by contrast, a period of peace and righteousness.

One particular premillennial approach, dispensationalism, deserves special mention, for although it is relatively new as orthodox theologies go, it has exerted a considerable influence within conservative circles. Dispensationalism is a unified interpretive scheme. That is to say, each specific part or tenet is vitally interconnected with the others. Thus, the various conclusions in eschatology follow from one another.

Dispensationalists tend to think of their system as being, first and foremost, a method of interpreting Scripture. At its core is the conviction

that Scripture is to be interpreted literally. This does not mean that obviously metaphorical passages are to be taken literally, but that if the plain meaning makes sense, one should not look further.[6] In part, this means that prophecy is interpreted very literally and often in considerable detail. Specifically, "Israel" is always understood as a reference to national or ethnic Israel, not the church.

Dispensationalism finds in God's Word evidence of a series of "dispensations" or economies under which he has managed the world. These dispensations are successive stages in God's revelation of his purposes. They do not entail different means of salvation, for the means of salvation has been the same at all periods of time, namely, by grace through faith. There is some disagreement as to the number of dispensations, the most common number being seven. Many dispensationalists emphasize that recognizing to what dispensation a given passage of Scripture applies is crucial. We should not attempt to govern our lives by precepts laid down for the millennium, for example. [7]

Traditional dispensationalists also put great stress on the distinction between Israel and the church. Some of them hold that God made an unconditional covenant with Israel; that is to say, his promises to them do not depend on their fulfilling certain requirements. They will remain his special people and ultimately receive his blessing. Ethnic, national, political Israel is never to be confused with the church, nor are the promises given to Israel to be regarded as applying to and fulfilled in the church. They are two separate entities. [8] God has, as it were, interrupted his special dealings with Israel, but will resume them at some point in the future. Unfulfilled prophecies regarding Israel will be fulfilled within the nation itself, not within the church. Indeed, the church is not mentioned in the Old Testament prophecies. It is virtually a parenthesis within God's overall plan of dealing with Israel. The millennium, then, takes on a special significance in dispensationalism. At that time God will resume his dealings with Israel, the church having been taken out of the world or "raptured" sometime earlier (just prior to the great tribulation). The millennium consequently will have a markedly Jewish character. The unfulfilled prophecies regarding Israel will come to pass at that time.

Amillennialism

Literally, amillennialism is the idea that there will be no millennium, no earthly reign of Christ. The great final judgment will immediately follow the second coming and issue directly in the final states of the righteous and the wicked (see fig. 9). Amillennialism is a simpler view than either of the others we have been considering. Its advocates maintain that it is built on a number of relatively clear eschatological passages, whereas premillennialism is based primarily on a single passage, and an obscure one at that.

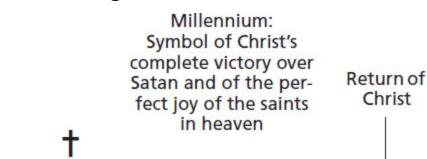
Despite amillennialism's simplicity and the clarity of its central tenet, it is in many ways difficult to grasp. This is partly because, its most notable feature being negative, its positive teachings are not always expounded. It has sometimes been distinguished more for its rejection of premillennialism than for its affirmations. Also, in dealing with the very troublesome passage of Revelation 20:4–6, amillennialists have come up with a rather wide variety of explanations. One wonders at times whether these explanations reflect the same basic view or quite different understandings of eschatological and apocalyptic literature. Finally, it has not always been possible to distinguish amillennialism from postmillennialism, since they share many common features. Indeed, various theologians who have not addressed the particular issues that serve to distinguish the two views from one another—among them are Augustine, John Calvin, and Benjamin B. Warfield—have been claimed as ancestors by both camps. What the two views share is a belief that the "thousand years" of Revelation 20 is to be taken symbolically. Both often hold as well that the millennium is the church age. Where they differ is that the postmillennialist, unlike the amillennialist, holds that the millennium involves an earthly reign of Christ.

In light of the problems in trying to grasp amillennialism, its history is difficult to trace. It is likely that postmillennialism and amillennialism simply were not differentiated for much of the first nineteen centuries of the church. When in the twentieth century postmillennialism began to fade in popularity, amillennialism was generally substituted for it, since amillennialism is much closer to postmillennialism than premillennialism. Consequently, amillennialism has enjoyed its greatest recent popularity in the period since World War I.

When amillennialists deal with Revelation 20, they usually have the whole book in view. They see the book of Revelation as consisting of several sections, seven being the number most frequently mentioned. These

several sections do not deal with successive periods of time; rather, they are recapitulations of the same period, the period between Christ's first and second comings.[9] It is believed that in each of these sections the author picks up the same themes and elaborates them. If this is the case, Revelation 20 does not refer solely to the last period in the history of the church, but is a special perspective on its entire history.





Amillennialists also remind us that the book of Revelation as a whole is symbolic. They note that even the most rabid premillennialists do not take everything in the book of Revelation literally. The bowls, seals, and trumpets, for example, are usually interpreted as symbols. By a simple extension of this principle amillennialists contend that the "thousand years" of Revelation 20 might not be literal either. In addition, they point out that the millennium is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. [10]

The question arises: If the figure of a thousand years is to be taken symbolically rather than literally, what does it symbolize? Many amillennialists utilize Warfield's interpretation: "The sacred number seven in combination with the equally sacred number three forms the number of holy perfection, ten, and when this ten is cubed into a thousand the seer has said all he could say to convey to our minds the idea of absolute completeness." [11] The references to a "thousand years" in Revelation 20, then, convey the idea of perfection or completeness. In verse 2 the figure represents the completeness of Christ's victory over Satan. In verse 4 it suggests the perfect glory and joy of the redeemed in heaven at the present time. [12]

The major exegetical problem for amillennialism, however, is not the one thousand years but the two resurrections. Among the variety of amillennial opinions about the two resurrections, the one common factor is a denial of

the premillennial contention that John is speaking of two physical resurrections involving two different groups. The most common amillennial interpretation is that the first resurrection is spiritual and the second is bodily or physical. One who argued this at some length is Ray Summers. From Revelation 20:6 ("Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them") he concludes that the first resurrection is a victory over the second death. Since it is customary in eschatological discussions to consider the second death to be spiritual rather than physical, the first resurrection must be spiritual as well. The first death, which is not mentioned but implied, must surely be physical death. If it is to be correlated with the second resurrection as the second death is with the first resurrection, the second resurrection must be physical. The first resurrection, then, is the new birth. The second resurrection is the bodily or physical resurrection that we usually have in view when we use the word "resurrection." All those who participate in the first resurrection also participate in the second resurrection, but not all those experiencing the second resurrection will have partaken of the first.[13]

The most common premillennial criticism of the view that the first resurrection is spiritual and the second physical is that it is inconsistent in interpreting identical terms (*ezēsan*) in the same context. Some amillennialists have accepted this criticism and have sought to develop a position in which the two resurrections are of the same type. James Hughes has constructed such a view. He suggests that not only is the first resurrection spiritual, but so is the second resurrection. While some commentators infer from Revelation 20:5 ("the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended") that the unjust will come to life at the end of the millennium, Hughes renders this verse, "They did not live during the thousand years, nor thereafter." Having never spiritually come to life, this group will suffer the second death. So unlike the first resurrection, which is the ascension of the just soul to heaven to reign with Christ, the second resurrection is virtually hypothetical. Like the first, however, it is spiritual in nature. Thus Hughes has managed to interpret the two occurrences of *ezēsan* consistently.[14]

Another feature of amillennialism is a more general conception of prophecy, especially Old Testament prophecy, than is found in premillennialism. Amillennialists frequently treat prophecies as historical or symbolic rather than futuristic and literal. As a general rule, prophecy

occupies a much less important place in amillennial than in premillennial thought.

Finally, we should observe that amillennialism usually does not display the optimism typically found in postmillennialism. There may be a belief that preaching of the gospel will be successful, but great success in this regard is not necessary to the amillennial scheme, since no literal reign of Christ, no coming of the kingdom before the coming of the King, is expected. This is not to say that amillennialism is like premillennialism in expecting an extreme deterioration of conditions before the second coming. Yet there is nothing in amillennialism to preclude such a possibility. And because no millennium will precede the second coming, the Lord's return may be at hand. For the most part, however, amillennialists do not engage in the type of eager searching for signs of the second coming that characterizes premillennialism.

Resolving the Issues

The issues separating these views are large and complex, but on close analysis can be reduced to a comparative few. We have noted in the course of this treatise that theology, like other disciplines, is often unable to find one view that is conclusively supported by all the data. What must be done in such situations is to find the view that has fewer difficulties than its alternatives.

The postmillennial view has much less support at the present time than it did in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its optimism regarding gospel proclamation seems somewhat unjustified. In parts of the world the percentage of the population actually practicing the Christian faith is very small. Further, some countries are still closed to Christian missionary endeavor of a conventional type.

There are also strong biblical grounds for rejecting postmillennialism. Jesus's teaching regarding great wickedness and a cooling off of the faith of many before his return seems to conflict quite sharply with postmillennial optimism. The absence in Scripture of a clear depiction of an earthly reign of Christ without his physical presence seems to be another major weakness of this position.

This leaves us with a choice between amillennialism and premillennialism. The issue comes down to the biblical references to the millennium—are they sufficient grounds for adopting the more complicated

premillennial view rather than the simpler amillennial conception? It is sometimes contended that the whole premillennial conception rests on a single passage of Scripture, and that no doctrine should be based on a single passage. But if one view can account for a specific reference better than can another, and both views explain the rest of Scripture about equally well, then the former view must certainly be judged more adequate than the latter.

We note here, on the one hand, that there are no biblical passages with which premillennialism cannot cope, or which it cannot adequately explain. We have seen, on the other hand, that the reference to two resurrections (Rev. 20) gives amillennialists difficulty. Their explanations that we have here two different types of resurrection or two spiritual resurrections strain the usual principles of hermeneutics.

Nor is the premillennialist interpretation based on only one passage in the Bible. Intimations of it are found in a number of places. For example, Paul writes, "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power" (1 Cor. 15:22–24). The particular adverbs translated "then" (*epeita* and *eita*) indicate temporal sequence. Paul could have used an adverb that suggests concurrent events (*tote*), but he did not do so.[15] We should also observe that while the two resurrections are spoken of explicitly only in Revelation 20, there are other passages that hint at either a resurrection of a select group (Luke 14:14; 20:35; 1 Cor. 15:23; Phil. 3:11; 1 Thess. 4:16) or a resurrection in two stages (Dan. 12:2; John 5:29). Accordingly, we judge the premillennial view to be more adequate than amillennialism.

Tribulational Views

An additional issue is the relationship of Christ's return to the complex of events known as the great tribulation. In theory, all premillennialists hold that there will be a great disturbance of seven years' duration (that figure need not be taken literally) prior to Christ's coming. The question is whether there will be a separate coming to remove the church from the world prior to the great tribulation or whether the church will go through the tribulation and be united with the Lord only afterward. The view that

Christ will take the church to himself prior to the tribulation is called pretribulationism; the view that he will take the church after the tribulation is called posttribulationism. There are also certain mediating positions that we will mention briefly at the conclusion of the chapter. In practice, these distinctions are drawn only by premillennialists, who tend to devote more attention to the details of the end times than do the advocates of either postmillennialism or amillennialism.

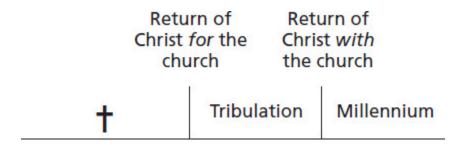
Pretribulationism

Pretribulationists hold distinctive ideas. The first concerns the nature of the tribulation. It will be a *great* tribulation unparalleled within history. It will be a period of transition concluding God's dealings with the gentiles and preparing for the millennium and the events that will transpire therein. The tribulation is not to be understood as in any sense a time for disciplining believers or purifying the church.

A second major idea of pretribulationism is the rapture of the church. Christ will come at the beginning of the great tribulation (or just prior to it, actually) to remove the church from the world. This coming in a sense will be secret. No unbelieving eye will observe it. The rapture is pictured in 1 Thessalonians 4:17: "After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with [the dead in Christ] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." Note that in the rapture Christ will not descend all the way to earth, as he will when he comes with the church at the end of the tribulation (see fig. 10).[16]

Pretribulationism, then, maintains that there will be two phases in Christ's coming, or one could even say two comings. There will also be three resurrections. The first will be the resurrection of the righteous dead at the rapture, for Paul teaches that believers who are alive at the time will not precede those who are dead. Then at the end of the tribulation there will be a resurrection of those saints who have died during the tribulation. Finally, at the end of the millennium, there will be a resurrection of unbelievers. [17]

Figure 10. Pretribulationism



This means that the church will be absent during the tribulation. We can expect deliverance from the tribulation because Paul promised the Thessalonians that they would not experience the wrath God will pour out on unbelievers: "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9); "Jesus . . . rescues us from the coming wrath" (1 Thess. 1:10).

But what of the references in Matthew 24 indicating that some of the elect will be present during the tribulation? The disciples' asking what would be the sign of Jesus's coming and of the end of the age (24:3; cf. Acts 1:6) occurred within a Jewish framework. And accordingly, Jesus's discussion here pertains primarily to the future of Israel. The Gospel uses the general term "elect" rather than "church," "body of Christ," or any similar expression. It is elect Jews, not the church, who will be present during the tribulation. This distinction between Israel and the church is a determinative and crucial part of pretribulationism, which is closely allied with dispensationalism. The tribulation is viewed as being the transition from God's dealing primarily with the church to his reestablishing relationship with his original chosen people, national Israel. [18]

There is, finally, within pretribulationism a strong emphasis that the Lord's return is imminent.[19] Since his return will precede the tribulation, nothing remains to be fulfilled prior to the rapture. His coming for the church, then, could occur at any time, even within the next instant.

Jesus urged watchfulness on his hearers, since they did not know the time of his return (Matt. 25:13). The parable of the ten virgins conveys this message. Just as in the time of Noah, there will be no warning signs (Matt. 24:36–39). The coming of the Lord will be like a thief in the night (Matt. 24:43), or like the master who returns at an unexpected time (Matt. 24:45–51). There will be sudden separation. Two men will be working in the field; two women will be grinding at the mill. In each case, one will be taken and the other left. What clearer depiction of the rapture could there be? Since it

can occur at any moment, watchfulness and diligent activity are very much in order.[20]

There is another basis for the belief that Christ's return is imminent. The church can have a blessed hope (Titus 2:13) only if the next major event to transpire is the coming of Christ. If the Antichrist and the great tribulation were the next items on the eschatological agenda, Paul would have told the church to expect suffering, persecution, anguish. But instead, he instructs the Thessalonians to comfort one another with the fact of Christ's second coming (1 Thess. 4:18). Since the next event, to which the church is to look forward with hopeful anticipation, is the coming of Christ for the church, there is nothing to prevent it from happening at any time. [21]

Finally, pretribulationism maintains that there will be at least two judgments. The church will be judged at the time of the rapture, and rewards for faithfulness will be handed out. The church will not be involved, however, in the separation of the sheep and goats at the end of the millennium. Its status will have already been determined.

Posttribulationism

Posttribulationists maintain that the coming of Christ for his church will not take place until the conclusion of the great tribulation (see fig. 11).

Figure 11. Posttribulationism

Return of
Christ

Tribulation

Millennium

They avoid use of the term "rapture" because (1) it is not a biblical expression, and (2) it suggests that the church will escape or be delivered from the tribulation, a notion that runs contrary to the essence of posttribulationism.

A first feature of posttribulationism is a less literal interpretation of the events of the last times than is found in pretribulationism.[22] For instance, while pretribulationists take the word *shabua* ' ("week") in Daniel 9:27 to be an indication that the great tribulation will be literally seven years in duration, most posttribulationists hold merely that the tribulation will last a

substantial period of time. Similarly, pretribulationists generally have a concrete conception of the millennium. In their view, for instance, the millennium will begin when Christ's feet literally stand on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). The posttribulationist's understanding of the millennium is much more generalized in nature; for example, it will not necessarily be one thousand years in length.

According to posttribulationism, the church will be present during and experience the great tribulation. The term "elect" in Matthew 24 (after the tribulation, the angels will gather the elect—vv. 29–31) should be understood in light of its usage elsewhere in Scripture, where it means "believers." Since Pentecost, the term "elect" has denoted the church. The Lord will preserve the church during, but not spare it from, the tribulation.

Posttribulationists draw a distinction between the wrath of God and the tribulation. On the one hand, the wrath of God is spoken of in Scripture as coming on the wicked—"whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them" (John 3:36; see also Rom. 1:18; 2 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 6:16–17; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15). On the other hand, believers will not undergo the wrath of God—"we [shall] be saved from God's wrath through [Christ]" (Rom. 5:9; see also 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).[23] Scripture makes clear, however, that believers will experience tribulation (Matt. 24:9, 21, 29; Mark 13:19, 24; Rev. 7:14). This is not God's wrath, but the wrath of Satan, Antichrist, and the wicked against God's people.[24]

Tribulation has been the experience of the church throughout the ages. Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). Other significant references are Acts 14:22; Romans 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; and 2 John 7. While posttribulationists draw a distinction between tribulation in general and the great tribulation, they believe that the difference is one of degree only, not of kind. Since the church has experienced tribulation throughout its history, it would not be surprising if the church also experiences the great tribulation.

Posttribulationists acknowledge that Scripture speaks of believers who will escape or be kept from the impending trouble. In Luke 21:36, for example, Jesus tells his disciples, "Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." The word here is *ekpheugō*, which means "to escape out of the midst of." A similar reference is found in Revelation 3:10. Posttribulationists argue, then, that the church will be kept

from the midst of the tribulation, not that it will be kept away from the tribulation. [25] In this respect, we are reminded of the experience of the Israelites during the plagues on Egypt.

The posttribulationist also has a different understanding of Paul's reference in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to our meeting the Lord in the air. The pretribulationist maintains that this event is the rapture; Christ will come secretly for the church, catching believers up with him in the clouds and taking them to heaven until the end of the tribulation. Posttribulationists like George Ladd, however, in light of the other scriptural usages of the Greek term translated "to meet" (apantēsis), disagree. There are only two other undisputed occurrences of this word in the New Testament (Matt. 27:32 is textually suspect). One of these references is in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, an explicitly eschatological parable. When the bridegroom comes, the announcement is made, "Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet [apantēsis] him!" (Matt. 25:6). What does the word signify in this situation? The virgins do not go out to meet the bridegroom and then depart with him. Rather, they go out to meet him and then accompany him back to the wedding banquet. The other occurrence of the word (Acts 28:15) is in a noneschatological historical narrative. Paul and his party were coming to Rome. A group of the believers in Rome, hearing of their approach, went out to the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet (apantēsis) them. This encouraged Paul, and the group then continued with him back to Rome. On the basis of these usages, Ladd argues that the word *apantēsis* suggests a welcoming party that goes out to meet someone on the way and accompanies them back to where they came from. So our meeting the Lord in the air is not a case of being caught away, but of meeting him and then immediately coming with him to earth as part of his triumphant entourage. It is the church, not the Lord, that will turn around at the meeting. [26]

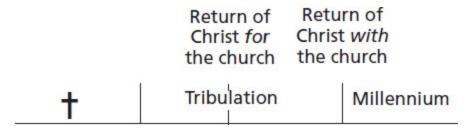
Posttribulationists have a less complex understanding of the last things than do their pretribulational counterparts. For example, there is in posttribulationism only one second coming. Since there is no interlude between the coming of Christ for the church and the end of the tribulation, there is no need for an additional resurrection of believers. There are only two resurrections: (1) the resurrection of believers at the end of the tribulation and the beginning of the millennium, and (2) the resurrection of the ungodly at the end of the millennium.

Posttribulationists also see the complex of events at the end as basically unitary. They believe that this complex of events is imminent, although they usually do not mean that the coming itself is imminent in the sense that it could occur at any moment. They prefer to speak of the second coming as *impending*.[27] Their blessed hope is not an expectation that believers will be removed from the earth before the great tribulation, but rather a confidence that the Lord will protect and keep believers regardless of what may come.[28]

Mediating Positions

Because there are difficulties attaching to both pretribulationism and posttribulationism, a number of mediating positions have been created. Three major varieties may be noted. The most common is the midtribulational view. This holds that the church will go through the less severe part (usually the first half, or three and a half years) of the tribulation, but then will be removed from the world. [29] In one formulation of this view, the church will experience tribulation but be removed before the wrath of God is poured out (see fig. 12). A second type of mediating position is the partial-rapture view. This holds that there will be a series of raptures. Whenever a portion of believers are ready, they will be removed from earth. [30] The third mediating position is imminent posttribulationism. While the return of Christ will not take place until after the tribulation, it can be expected at any moment, for the tribulation may already be occurring.[31] None of these mediating positions has had large numbers of proponents, particularly in recent years. Accordingly, we will not deal with them in detail.[32]

Figure 12. Midtribulationism



Resolving the Issues

When all considerations are evaluated, there are several reasons why the posttribulational position emerges as the more probable.

The Bible does not promise removal from adversities, but ability to endure and overcome them.

- 1. The pretribulational position involves several distinctions that seem rather artificial and lacking in biblical support. The division of the second coming into two stages, the postulation of three resurrections, and the sharp separation of national Israel and the church are difficult to sustain on exegetical grounds. The pretribulational view that the prophecies concerning national Israel will be fulfilled apart from the church and that, accordingly, the millennium will have a decidedly Jewish character cannot be easily reconciled with the biblical depictions of the fundamental changes that have taken place with the introduction of the new covenant.
- 2. Several specifically eschatological passages are better interpreted on posttribulational grounds. These passages include the indications that elect individuals will be present during the tribulation (Matt. 24:29–31) but will be protected from its severity (Rev. 3:10), descriptions of the phenomena that will accompany the appearing of Christ, and the reference to the meeting in the air (1 Thess. 4:17).
- 3. The general tenor of biblical teaching better fits the posttribulational view. For example, the Bible is replete with warnings about trials and testings that believers will undergo. It does not promise removal from these adversities, but ability to endure and overcome them.

This is not to say that there are no difficulties with the posttribulational position. For example, there is in posttribulationism relatively little theological rationale for the millennium. It seems to be somewhat superfluous.[33] But all in all, the balance of evidence favors posttribulationism.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What three millennial views have developed in Christian theology concerning the end times, and how do they differ?
- What evidence may be found to support the premillennial view of the end times?
- How would you compare and contrast the tribulational views of premillennialism?
- What characteristics of posttribulationism make it more appealing than the other views?
- How would you describe your own approach to the millennial views?

Final States

Chapter Objectives

At the conclusion of this chapter, you should be able to achieve the following:

- 1. Recognize and describe the two final states of humanity that have clearly been revealed in Scripture.
- **2.** Identify and define heaven in relation to the final state of the righteous.
- **3.** Identify and define the punishment of future judgment.
- **4.** Recognize and understand the impact of the doctrine of the final states and how it relates to the present life of the Christian.

Chapter Summary

The future, eternal condition of the human individual is determined by the decisions made in this present life. For the righteous, eternal life in the presence of the Lord will be the result. For the wicked, eternal punishment constituting banishment from the presence of God will be the consequence. The judgment of both the righteous and the wicked will also include degrees of reward and punishment.

Chapter Outline

Final State of the Righteous

- The Term "Heaven"
- The Nature of Heaven
- Our Life in Heaven: Rest, Worship, and Service
- Issues regarding Heaven

Final State of the Wicked

- The Finality of the Future Judgment
- The Eternality of Future Punishment

• Degrees of Punishment

<u>Implications of the Doctrine of the Final States</u>

When we speak of the final states, we are in a sense returning to the discussion of individual eschatology, for at the last judgment every individual will be consigned to the particular state he or she will personally experience throughout all eternity. Yet the whole human race will enter these states simultaneously and collectively, so we are really dealing with questions of collective or cosmic eschatology as well.

Final State of the Righteous

The Term "Heaven"

There are various ways of denoting the future condition of the righteous. The most common, of course, is "heaven." The Hebrew and Greek words for "heaven" (*shamayim* and *ouranos*) are used in basically three different ways in the Bible. The first is cosmological.[1] The expression "heaven and earth" (or "the heavens and the earth") is used to designate the entire universe. In the creation account we are told, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Second, "heaven" is a virtual synonym for God.[2] Among examples is the prodigal son's confession to his father, "I have sinned against heaven and against you" (Luke 15:18, 21).

The third meaning of the word "heaven," and the one most significant for our purposes, is the abode of God.[3] Thus, Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). He often spoke of "your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, 45; 6:1; 7:11; 18:14) and "my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21; 10:32, 33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 19). Jesus is said to have come from heaven (John 3:13, 31; 6:42, 51).[4] Angels come from heaven (Matt. 28:2; Luke 22:43) and return to heaven (Luke 2:15). They dwell in heaven (Mark 13:32), where they behold God (Matt. 18:10) and carry out the Father's will perfectly (Matt. 6:10). They are even referred to as a heavenly host (Luke 2:13).

It is from heaven that Christ is to be revealed (1 Thess. 1:10; 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7). He has gone away to heaven to prepare an eternal dwelling for believers (John 14:2–3). As God's abode, heaven is obviously where believers will be for all eternity. Thus, the believer is to make preparation for heaven: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for

yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matt. 6:19–20).

The Nature of Heaven

Sometimes, especially in popular presentations, heaven is depicted as primarily a place of great physical pleasures, a place where everything we have most desired here on earth is fulfilled to the ultimate degree. Thus heaven seems to be merely earthly (and even worldly) conditions amplified. The correct perspective, however, is to see the basic nature of heaven as the presence of God, from which all of the blessings of heaven follow.

The presence of God means that we will have perfect knowledge. Paul makes the comment that at present "we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. . . . Now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Cor. 13:9–12). For the first time we shall see and know God in a direct way (1 John 3:2).

Heaven will also be characterized by the removal of all evils. Being with his people, God "will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:4). The very source of evil, the one who tempts us to sin, will also be gone: "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). The presence of the perfectly holy God and the spotless Lamb means that there will be no sin or evil of any kind.

Since glory is of the very nature of God, heaven will be a place of great glory.[5] The announcement of Jesus's birth was accompanied by the words:

Glory to God in the highest heaven,[6] and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests. (Luke 2:14)

The second coming of Christ will be in great glory (Matt. 24:30), and he will sit on his glorious throne (Matt. 25:31). Images suggesting immense size or brilliant light depict heaven as a place of unimaginable splendor, greatness, excellence, and beauty. The new Jerusalem that will come down

out of heaven from God is described as made of pure gold (even its streets are pure gold) and decorated with precious jewels (Rev. 21:18–21). It is likely that while John's vision employs as metaphors those items we think of as being most valuable and beautiful, the actual splendor of heaven far exceeds anything we have yet experienced. There will be no need of sun or moon to illumine the new Jerusalem, "for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp" (Rev. 21:23; see also 22:5).

The basic nature of heaven is the presence of God; our life in heaven will consist of rest, worship, and service.

Our Life in Heaven: Rest, Worship, and Service

We are told relatively little about the activities of the redeemed in heaven, but there are a few glimpses of what our future existence is to be. One quality of our life in heaven will be rest. [7] Rest, as the term is used in Hebrews, is not merely a cessation of activities, but the experience of reaching a goal of crucial importance. Thus, there are frequent references to the pilgrimage through the wilderness en route to the "rest" of the promised land (Heb. 3:11, 18). A similar rest awaits believers (Heb. 4:9–11). Heaven, then, will be the completion of the Christian's pilgrimage, the end of the struggle against the flesh, the world, and the devil. There will be work to do, but it will not involve fighting against opposing forces.

Another facet of life in heaven is worship.[8] A vivid picture is found in Revelation 19.

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

"Hallelujah!

Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,

for true and just are his judgments.

He has condemned the great prostitute

who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.

He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

And again they shouted:

"Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

"Amen, Hallelujah!" (vv. 1–4)

Then a voice from the throne exhorted the multitude to praise God (v. 5), and they did so (vv. 6–8).

There will evidently be an element of service in heaven as well. [9] When Jesus was in the region of Judea beyond the Jordan, he told his disciples that they would judge with him: "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28; see also Luke 22:28–30). In the stewardship parable in Matthew 25:14–30, the reward for work done faithfully is greater opportunity for work. Because that parable occurs in an eschatological setting, it may well be an indication that the reward for faithful work done here on earth will be work in heaven. Revelation 22:3 tells us that the Lamb will be worshiped by "his servants."

There is a suggestion that in heaven there will be some type of community or fellowship among believers: "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant" (Heb. 12:22–24). Note also the reference to "the spirits of the righteous made perfect"—heaven is a place of perfected spirituality.[10]

Issues regarding Heaven

One of the disputed questions regarding heaven is whether it is a place or a state. On the one hand, it should be noted that the primary feature of heaven is closeness and communion with God, and that God is pure spirit (John 4:24). Since God does not occupy space, which is a feature of our universe, it would seem that heaven is a state, a spiritual condition, rather than a place.[11] On the other hand, we will have bodies of some type (although they will be "spiritual bodies") and Jesus presumably continues to

have a glorified body as well, a factor that seems to require place. In addition, parallel references to heaven and earth suggest that, like earth, heaven must be a locale. The most familiar of these references is,

```
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt. 6:9–10)[12]
```

We must be mindful, however, that heaven is another realm, another dimension of reality. It is probably safest to say that while heaven is both a place and a state, it is primarily a state. The distinguishing mark of heaven will not be a particular location, but a condition of blessedness, sinlessness, joy, and peace. [13] Life in heaven, accordingly, will be more real than our present existence.

A second issue concerns the question of physical pleasures. Jesus indicated that there will be in the resurrection, presumably the life hereafter, no marrying or giving in marriage (Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35). Since sex is in this life to be restricted to marriage (1 Cor. 7:8–11), we have here an argument that there will be no sex in heaven. The high value Paul places on virginity (1 Cor. 7:25–35) suggests the same conclusion. [14] What of eating and drinking? Revelation 19:9 refers to the "wedding supper of the Lamb." Given that the references to Christ and the church as bridegroom and bride are symbolic, as is Christ as the Lamb, the marriage supper is presumably symbolic as well. Although Jesus ate with his resurrection body (Luke 24:43; cf. John 21:9–14), it should be borne in mind that he was resurrected but not yet ascended, so that the transformation of his body was probably not yet completed. The question arises: If there is to be no eating or sex, will there be any pleasure in heaven? It should be understood that the experiences of heaven will far surpass anything experienced here (1 Cor. 2:9–10). It is likely that heaven's experiences should be thought of as, for example, suprasexual, transcending the experience of sexual union with the special individual with whom one has chosen to make a permanent and exclusive commitment. [15]

A third issue relates to the question of perfection. Within this life we gain satisfaction from growth, progress, development. Will not, then, our state of

perfection in heaven be a rather boring and unsatisfying situation?[16] Bear in mind here that the contention that we cannot be satisfied unless we grow is an extrapolation from life as now constituted, and an illegitimate one at that! Frustration and boredom occur in this life whenever development is arrested at a finite point, stopping short of perfection. If, however, one were to fully achieve, if there were no feeling of inadequacy or incompleteness, there would probably be no frustration. The stable situation in heaven is not a fixed state short of one's goal, but a state of completion beyond which there can be no advance. Therefore, we will not grow in heaven. We will, however, continue to exercise the perfect character that we will have received from God. John Baillie speaks of "development *in* fruition" as opposed to "development *towards* fruition."[17]

There also is the question of how much the redeemed in heaven will know or remember. Will we recognize those close to us in this life? Much of the popular interest in heaven stems from expectation of reunion with loved ones. Will we be aware of the absence of relatives and close friends? Will we remember sinful actions done and godly deeds omitted in this life? If so, will not all of this lead to regret and sorrow? With regard to these questions we must necessarily plead a certain amount of ignorance. It does not appear, from Jesus's response to the Sadducees' question about the woman who had outlived seven husbands, all of them brothers (Luke 20:27–40), that there will be family units as such. However, the disciples were evidently able to recognize Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36). This fact suggests that there will be some indicators of personal identity by which we will be able to recognize one another. [18] But we may infer that we will not recollect past failures and sins and missing loved ones, since that would introduce a sadness incompatible with "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

A fifth question is whether there will be varying rewards in heaven. That there apparently will be degrees of reward is evident in, for example, the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11–27).[19] Ten servants were each given one pound by their master. Eventually they returned differing amounts to him and were rewarded in proportion to their faithfulness. Supporting passages include Daniel 12:3 and 1 Corinthians 3:14–15.

The differing rewards or degrees of satisfaction in heaven are usually pictured in terms of objective circumstances. For instance, we might suppose that a very faithful Christian will be given a large room in the Father's house; a less faithful believer will receive a smaller room. But if this is the case, would not the joy of heaven be reduced by one's awareness of the differences and the constant reminder that one might have been more faithful? In addition, the few pictures we do have of life in heaven evidence no real difference: all are worshiping, judging, serving. A bit of speculation may be in order at this point. May it not be that the difference in the rewards lies not in the external or objective circumstances, but in the subjective awareness or appreciation of those circumstances? Thus, all would engage in the same activity, for example, worship, but some would enjoy it much more than others. Perhaps those who have enjoyed worship more in this life will find greater satisfaction in it in the life beyond than will others. An analogy here is the varying degrees of pleasure different people derive from a concert. The same sound waves fall on everyone's ears, but the reactions may range from boredom (or worse) to ecstasy. A similar situation may well hold with respect to the joys of heaven, although the range of reactions will presumably be narrower. No one will be aware of the differences in range of enjoyment, and thus there will be no dimming of the perfection of heaven by regret over wasted opportunities.

Final State of the Wicked

Just as in the past, the question of the future state of the wicked has created a considerable amount of controversy in our day. The doctrine of an everlasting punishment appears to some to be an outmoded or sub-Christian view.[20] Part of the problem stems from what appears to be a tension between the love of God and his judgment. Yet, however we regard the doctrine of everlasting punishment, it is clearly taught in Scripture.

The Bible employs several images to depict the future state of the unrighteous. Jesus said, "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matt. 25:41). He likewise described their state as "outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12). The final condition of the wicked is also spoken of as eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46), torment (Rev. 14:10–11), the bottomless pit

(Rev. 9:1–2, 11), the wrath of God (Rom. 2:5), second death (Rev. 21:8), and eternal destruction and exclusion from the face of the Lord (2 Thess. 1:9).

If there is one basic characteristic of hell, it is, in contrast to heaven, the absence of God or banishment from his presence. It is an experience of intense anguish, whether it involves physical suffering or mental distress or both.[21] Other aspects include a sense of loneliness, of having seen the glory and greatness of God, of having realized that he is the Lord of all, and then of being cut off. There is the realization that this separation is permanent. Similarly, the condition of one's moral and spiritual self is permanent. Whatever one is at the end of life will continue for all eternity. There is no basis for expecting change for the better. Thus, hopelessness comes over the individual.

Whatever one is morally and spiritually at the end of life will continue for all eternity.

The Finality of the Future Judgment

It is important to recognize the finality of the coming judgment. When the verdict is rendered at the last judgment, the wicked will be assigned to their *final* state.[22] To some, this seems contrary to reason, and even perhaps to Scripture. Here we encounter the concept of universalism, that is, the view that all will eventually be saved. Some even contend that those who in this life reject the offer of salvation will, after their death and Christ's second coming, be sobered by their situation and will therefore be reconciled to Christ.[23]

This matter is not easily resolved. The biblical texts appear contradictory. Some passages seem to assert or imply that salvation is universal, that is, that no one will be lost. Paul says, for example,

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:10–11 NIV 1984)

Further, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Christ], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col. 1:19–20). Additional verses cited in support of universalism include Romans 5:18; 11:32; and 1 Corinthians 15:22. Many other texts appear to contradict universalism, however; for instance, "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (Matt. 25:46). Matthew 8:12; John 3:16; 5:28–29; Romans 2:5; and 2 Thessalonians 1:9 echo similar themes.

Can the apparent contradictions be reconciled? A fruitful endeavor here is to interpret the universalistic passages in such a way as to fit with the restrictive ones. For example, Philippians 2:10–11 and Colossians 1:19–20 do not say that all will be saved and restored to fellowship with God. They speak only of setting right the disrupted order of the universe, the bringing of all things into subjection to God. But this could be achieved by a victory forcing the rebels into reluctant submission; it does not necessarily point to an actual return to fellowship.

In passages that draw a parallel between the universal effect of Adam's sin and of Christ's saving work, there are elements that serve to qualify the universal dimension as it applies to Christ's work. In the case of Romans 5:18 ("Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one act of righteousness resulted in justification and life for all people"), verse 17 specifies that "those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ" (italics added). Furthermore, the term "many" rather than "all" is used in verses 15 and 19. Paul similarly restricts the meaning of "all" in 1 Corinthians 15:22 ("in Christ all will be made alive"), for in the next verse he adds: "But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him" (italics added). In fact, he had earlier made it clear that he is speaking about believers: "And if Christ has not been raised . . . then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost" (vv. 17–18).

One universalistic passage remains. Romans 11:32 seems to suggest that God saves all: "For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all." Actually, however, the mercy God has shown is in his providing his Son as an atonement and extending the offer of salvation to all. God's mercy has been shown to all humans, but only

those who accept it will experience and profit from it. Thus, although salvation is universally available, it is not universal.

Finally, Scripture nowhere gives indication of a second chance. Surely, if there is to be an opportunity for belief after the judgment, it would be clearly set forth in God's Word. What we find instead are definite statements to the contrary. A finality attaches to the biblical depictions of the sentence rendered at the judgment; for example, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), although it relates to the intermediate rather than the final state, makes it clear that their condition is absolute. It is not even possible to travel between the different states (v. 26). We must therefore conclude that restorationism, the idea of a second chance, must be rejected.

The Eternality of Future Punishment

Not only is the future judgment of unbelievers irreversible, but their punishment is also eternal. We do not reject merely the idea that all will be saved; we also reject the contention that none will be eternally punished. The school of thought known as annihilationism, however, maintains that although not everyone will be saved, there is only one class of future existence. Those who are saved will have an unending life; those who are not saved will be eliminated or annihilated. They will simply cease to exist. While granting that not everyone deserves to be saved, to receive everlasting bliss, this position maintains that no one deserves endless suffering.

There are different forms of annihilationism.[24] The form most deserving of the title sees the extinction of the evil person at death as a direct result of sin. Humans are by nature immortal and would have everlasting life but for the effects of sin. There are two subtypes of annihilationism proper. The first sees annihilation as a natural result of sin. Sin is self-destruction. After a certain length of time, perhaps proportionate to the sinfulness of the individual, those who are not redeemed wear out, as it were. The other type of pure annihilationism is the idea that God cannot and will not allow the sinful person to have eternal life. Because punishment need not be infinite, God will, after a sufficient amount has been endured, simply destroy the individual self. It should be noted that in

both subtypes of annihilationism proper, the soul or self would be immortal but for sin.[25]

The problem with annihilationism is that it contradicts the teaching of the Bible. Both the Old and New Testaments refer to unending or unquenchable fire. Jesus borrows the imagery of Isaiah 66:24 to describe the punishment of sinners in hell:

The worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark 9:48)

Such passages make it clear that the punishment is unending. It does not consume the one on whom it is inflicted and thus simply come to an end.

In addition, there are several instances where words like "everlasting," "eternal," and "forever" are applied to nouns designating the future state of the wicked: fire or burning (Isa. 33:14; Jer. 17:4; Matt. 18:8; 25:41; Jude 7), contempt (Dan. 12:2), destruction (2 Thess. 1:9), chains (Jude 6), torment (Rev. 14:11; 20:10), and punishment (Matt. 25:46). The parallelism found in Matthew 25:46 is particularly noteworthy: "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." If the one (life) is of unending duration, then the other (punishment) must be also.

A problem arises from the fact that Scripture speaks not merely of eternal death (which one might interpret as meaning that the wicked will not be resurrected) but also of eternal fire, eternal punishment, and eternal torment as well. What kind of God is it who is not satisfied by a finite punishment, but makes humans suffer for ever and ever? The punishment seems to be out of all proportion to the sin, for, presumably, all sins are finite acts against God. How does one square belief in a good, just, and loving God with eternal punishment? The question must not be dismissed lightly, for it concerns the very essence of God's nature.

We should note, first, that whenever we sin, an infinite factor is invariably involved. All sin is an offense against God, the raising of a finite will against the will of an infinite being. It is failure to carry out one's obligation to him to whom everything is due. Consequently, one cannot consider sin to be merely a finite act deserving finite punishment.

Further, if God is to accomplish his goals in this world, he may not have been free to make humans unsusceptible to endless punishment. God's omnipotence does not mean that he is capable of every conceivable action. He is not capable of doing the logically contradictory or absurd, for example. He cannot make a triangle with four corners.[26] And it may well be that those creatures that God intended to live forever in fellowship with him had to be fashioned in such a way that they would experience eternal anguish if they chose to live apart from their Maker. Humans were designed to live eternally with God; if they pervert this their destiny, they will experience eternally the consequences of that act.

We should also observe that God does not send anyone to hell. He desires that none should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). It is a human's choice to experience the agony of hell. His or her own sin sends the person there, and his or her rejection of the benefits of Christ's death prevents escape. As C. S. Lewis has put it, sin is the human saying to God throughout life, "Go away and leave me alone." Hell is God's finally saying to the human, "You may have your wish." It is God's leaving one to himself or herself, as that individual has chosen.[27]

Degrees of Punishment

We should observe, finally, that Jesus's teaching suggests that there are degrees of punishment in hell. He upbraided those cities that had witnessed his miracles but failed to repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! . . . If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you" (Matt. 11:21–24). There is a similar hint in the parable of the faithful and faithless stewards: "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:47–48 NIV 1984).

The principle here seems to be that the greater our knowledge, the greater our responsibility—and the greater our punishment if we fail in our responsibility. It may well be that the different degrees of punishment in hell are not so much a matter of objective circumstances as of subjective awareness of the pain of separation from God. This is parallel to our conception of the varying degrees of reward in heaven. To some extent, the different degrees of punishment reflect the fact that hell is God's leaving a

sinful human with the particular character the person fashioned for himself or herself in this life. The misery one will experience from having to live with one's wicked self eternally will be proportionate to one's degree of awareness of precisely what one was doing when choosing evil.

Implications of the Doctrine of the Final States

The implications of the doctrine of the final states include the following:

- 1. The decisions we make in this life will govern our future condition not merely for a period of time, but for all eternity. So we should exercise extraordinary care and diligence as we make them.
- 2. The conditions of this life, as Paul put it, are transitory. They fade into relative insignificance when compared with the eternity to come.
- 3. The nature of the future states is far more intense than anything known in this life. The images used to depict them are quite inadequate to fully convey what lies ahead. Heaven, for example, will far transcend any joy that we have known here.
- 4. The bliss of heaven ought not to be thought of as simply an intensification of the pleasures of this life. The primary dimension of heaven is the presence of the believer with the Lord.
- 5. Hell is not so much a place of physical suffering as it is the awful loneliness of total and final separation from the Lord.
- 6. Hell should not be thought of primarily as punishment visited on unbelievers by a vindictive God, but as the natural consequences of the sinful life chosen by those who reject Christ.
- 7. It appears that although all humans will be consigned either to heaven or to hell, there will be degrees of reward and punishment.

Questions for Review and Reflection

- What is the last judgment, and what makes it so significant to Christian theology?
- How is the term "heaven" used in Scripture?
- What is involved in the punishment of the wicked, as suggested in Scripture?
- What are the different forms of annihilationism? What are some problems with the view?

 How do your personal views regarding the final state affect your theology? 	

Scripture Index

Old Testament

Genesis

```
1 <u>141</u>, <u>189</u>, <u>190</u>, <u>191</u>
1-2 168
1–3 <u>181</u>
1:1 <u>89</u>, <u>134</u>, <u>136</u>, <u>470</u>
1:2 <u>136</u>, <u>304</u>
1:10 <u>138</u>
1:12 <u>138</u>
1:18 <u>138</u>
1:20 <u>181</u>
1:21 <u>138</u>, <u>181</u>
1:24 <u>181</u>
1:25 <u>138</u>
1:26 111, 186, 188, 189, 191, 260
1:26–27 <u>180</u>, <u>186</u>
1:27 <u>111</u>, <u>186</u>, <u>193</u>
1:27–28 <u>189</u>
1:28 <u>41</u>, <u>180</u>, <u>207</u>, <u>214</u>
1:31 <u>138</u>, <u>184</u>
2:7 <u>51</u>, <u>180</u>, <u>181</u>
2:15–17 <u>282</u>
2:16–17 <u>205</u>
2:17 <u>99</u>, <u>164</u>, <u>216</u>
2:24 <u>20</u>, <u>54</u>, <u>111</u>
3 <u>90</u>, <u>171</u>, <u>369</u>
3:2–3 <u>164</u>
3:3 <u>432</u>
3:4-5 <u>208</u>
```

```
3:8 <u>41</u>, <u>212</u>
```

- 3:11 <u>219</u>
- 3:12 <u>219</u>
- 3:14 <u>181</u>
- 3:14–19 <u>386</u>
- 3:16 <u>164</u>
- 3:16–19 <u>34</u>
- 3:17 <u>164</u>
- 3:18 <u>164</u>
- 3:19 <u>164</u>, <u>181</u>, <u>216</u>, <u>217</u>
- 3:20 <u>193</u>
- 3:22 <u>217</u>, <u>260</u>
- 3:22–23 <u>432</u>
- 4 <u>182</u>
- 4:26 <u>89</u>
- 5:1 <u>186</u>
- 5:1–2 <u>193</u>
- 5:2 <u>186</u>
- 6 <u>126</u>, <u>215</u>
- 6–7 <u>450</u>
- 6:5 <u>224</u>, <u>226</u>
- 6:6 <u>92</u>, <u>126</u>, <u>165</u>, <u>353</u>
- 8:21 <u>224</u>
- 9:6 <u>186</u>, <u>193</u>, <u>215</u>
- 11:7 <u>260</u>
- 17:1 <u>93</u>
- 17:7 <u>414</u>
- 18:25 <u>99</u>
- 22:12 <u>92</u>
- 25:14–30 <u>207</u>
- 35:18 <u>197</u>
- 38:26 <u>363</u>
- 41:8 <u>197</u>
- 41:37–39 <u>28–29</u>
- 41:38 <u>305</u>
- 45 <u>151</u>

Exodus

```
3:6 <u>54</u>
3:14 <u>41</u>, <u>88</u>, <u>89</u>
3:14–15 <u>239</u>
12:40–41 <u>63</u>
15:11 <u>98</u>
15:13 <u>394</u>
15:16 <u>394</u>
19 <u>170</u>
20 <u>190</u>
20:2–3 <u>108</u>, <u>139</u>
20:3 <u>90</u>, <u>205</u>
20:4 <u>108</u>
20:5 212
20:7 <u>90</u>
20:8–11 239
20:14 <u>165</u>
23:22 213
31:3–5 <u>305</u>
33:19 <u>344</u>
34:6 <u>103</u>
```

Leviticus

1:3–4 <u>283</u> 4:35 <u>287</u> 24:16 <u>239</u>

Numbers

14:8 <u>394</u> 23:19 <u>94</u>, <u>101</u>

Deuteronomy

```
5:10 <u>103</u>, <u>370</u>
6 <u>109</u>
6:4 <u>109</u>, <u>111</u>
6:5 <u>109</u>
6:6 <u>109</u>
6:7 <u>109</u>
6:8–9 <u>109</u>
7:7–8 <u>102</u>
7:10 <u>212</u>
10:16 <u>414</u>
18:15 <u>274</u>
25:1 <u>364</u>
25:13–15 <u>101</u>
30:6 <u>414</u>
32:9–10 <u>394</u>
32:10 <u>394</u>
32:35 <u>215</u>
33:2 <u>169</u>, <u>170</u>
Joshua
7 215
9:16–21 <u>101</u>
10:12–14 <u>156</u>
Judges
6:34 <u>305</u>
6:36–40 <u>153</u>
Ruth
4:7 <u>47</u>
1 Samuel
```

2:6–7 <u>149</u>

```
8:3 <u>100</u>
13:14 <u>224</u>
15:23 <u>205</u>
15:29 <u>100</u>
16:13 <u>305</u>
18:10 <u>63</u>
24:17 <u>363</u>
26:23 <u>363</u>
2 Samuel
10:18 <u>63</u>
12:13–14 <u>369</u>
12:23 <u>232</u>
14:20 <u>169</u>
23:2 <u>52</u>
24:1 <u>63</u>
24:16 <u>170</u>
1 Kings
8:46 <u>224</u>
17–18 <u>148</u>
17:21 <u>197</u>
2 Kings
6:6 <u>156</u>
6:17 <u>171</u>, <u>173</u>
13:18–19 <u>73n5</u>
19:35 <u>170</u>
1 Chronicles
19:18 <u>63</u>
21:1 <u>63</u>
```

2 Chronicles

4:2 <u>60</u>, <u>64</u> **Ezra**7:27 <u>149</u>

Nehemiah

9:6 <u>146</u> 9:20 <u>305</u>

Job

1:12 152, 169
2:6 152, 169
9:5-9 149
12:23 149
22 164
26:13 136, 304
33:4 136
37 149
38 123n4
38:4 123n4
38:7 169
42:2 123n2
42:3 123

Psalms

2:7 260 5:5 212 5:9 224 8 189, 190 8:5 189 8:5-6 189 8:7-8 189, 190 9:4 364

```
10:7 <u>224</u>
```

11:5 <u>212</u>

14 <u>224</u>

14:3 <u>228</u>

16:10 <u>438</u>, <u>447</u>

17:15 <u>447</u>

18:40 <u>212</u>

19 <u>27</u>, <u>32</u>, <u>33</u>

19:1 <u>26</u>, <u>32</u>, <u>137</u>

19:1–4 <u>27</u>

19:2 <u>32</u>

19:3 <u>32</u>

19:7–9 <u>99</u>

19:7–14 <u>32</u>

19:13 <u>151</u>

20 <u>89</u>

20:7 <u>90</u>

20:9 <u>90</u>

24:7–10 <u>384</u>

27:10–11 <u>123</u>

31:5 <u>197</u>

31:14–15 <u>149</u>

34:7 <u>170</u>

36:1 <u>224</u>

37 <u>123</u>

37:37 <u>224</u>

40:7–8 <u>260</u>

42:6 <u>197</u>

45:6 <u>110</u>, <u>241</u>

45:6–7 <u>275</u>

47 <u>454</u>

47:7–8 <u>149</u>

49:15 <u>447</u>

51 <u>224</u>, <u>226</u>

51:2 <u>226</u>

51:5 <u>226</u>, <u>254</u>

51:6 <u>226</u>

```
51:10 <u>226</u>
```

51:11 <u>305</u>

53 <u>224</u>

53:3 <u>228</u>

57:10 <u>103</u>

61:5 <u>101</u>

61:8 <u>101</u>

65:3 <u>123</u>

66:7 <u>149</u>

66:13 <u>101</u>

68:17 <u>169</u>

69:4 <u>212</u>

69:21 <u>123</u>

69:25 <u>51</u>

72 <u>454</u>

72:18 <u>169</u>

81:12–13 <u>151</u>

82:6 <u>53</u>

84:11 <u>155</u>

86:5 <u>103</u>

86:15 <u>104</u>

89:5 <u>168</u>

89:7 <u>168</u>

90:1–2 <u>91</u>

91 <u>123</u>, <u>148</u>

91:11 <u>170</u>

94:1 215

96:5 <u>136</u>

100 <u>454</u>

100:3–5 <u>184</u>

100:5 <u>18</u>

102 <u>93</u>

102:25 <u>110</u>

102:26–27 <u>93</u>

103:8–14 <u>370</u>

103:13 <u>103</u>

103:19 <u>149</u>

```
103:20 <u>169</u>
103:20–22 <u>149</u>
104 <u>27</u>, <u>146</u>
104:14 <u>149</u>
104:21–29 <u>149</u>
104:24 <u>92</u>
104:30 <u>136</u>, <u>298</u>, <u>304n2</u>
107:10–16 <u>216</u>
109:8 <u>51</u>
110:1 <u>110</u>
119:91 <u>125</u>
121 <u>123</u>
130:3 <u>224n1</u>
139:7–12 <u>91</u>
139:13–15 <u>194</u>
139:16 <u>123</u>, <u>124</u>, <u>150</u>
140:3 <u>224</u>
143:2 <u>224</u>
145:16 <u>102</u>
147:5 <u>92</u>
147:8–15 <u>149</u>
148:2 <u>168</u>, <u>169</u>
148:5 <u>168</u>
```

Proverbs

```
3:11–12 <u>371</u>
3:19–20 <u>123n4</u>
6:16–17 <u>212</u>
11:5 <u>224</u>
16:4 <u>123</u>
16:33 <u>149</u>
29:10 <u>212</u>
```

Ecclesiastes

```
5:4–5 <u>101</u>
7:20 <u>224n1</u>
12:7 <u>197</u>, <u>431</u>
```

Isaiah

```
1:24 215
6:1–4 <u>98</u>
6:1–5 <u>81</u>
6:5 <u>98</u>
6:8 <u>111</u>
7:14 <u>253</u>
8:13 <u>241</u>
9:7 <u>275</u>
10:5–12 <u>149</u>
10:20–21 <u>216</u>
11:6–7 <u>457</u>
14:24 <u>125</u>
14:27 <u>123</u>, <u>125</u>
20:1 65
22:11 <u>123</u>, <u>124</u>
26:19 <u>447</u>, <u>449</u>
33:14 <u>477</u>
37:16 <u>136</u>
37:26 <u>123</u>
40:9 <u>274</u>
40:12 <u>123n4</u>
40:12–13 <u>136</u>
40:13–14 <u>124</u>
42–48 <u>92</u>
42:21 <u>278</u>
44:6 <u>91</u>
44:8 <u>92</u>
44:24 <u>136</u>
44:28 <u>82</u>
45:1 <u>82</u>
45:12 <u>136</u>
```

```
45:22–25 <u>454</u>
48:11 <u>125</u>
52:7 <u>274</u>
53 <u>284</u>, <u>288</u>
53:5–6 <u>288</u>
53:6 <u>224</u>, <u>284</u>, <u>288</u>
53:12 <u>284</u>, <u>288</u>
55:1 <u>345</u>
55:8–9 <u>81</u>
59:7–8 <u>224</u>
61 <u>305</u>
61:1–2 <u>404</u>
61:2 <u>215</u>
62:4 <u>394</u>
63:4 <u>215</u>
63:10 <u>213</u>
65:25 <u>457</u>
66:24 <u>477</u>
```

Jeremiah

```
4:4 <u>414</u>
9:25–26 <u>414</u>
10 <u>100</u>
10:5 <u>100</u>
10:10 <u>89</u>, <u>100</u>
10:11 89
10:11–12 <u>136</u>
10:12–13 <u>123n4</u>
11:20 <u>364</u>
12:7–10 <u>394</u>
12:8 <u>212</u>
17:4 <u>477</u>
17:9 <u>219</u>, <u>226</u>
18:1 <u>44</u>
23:20 <u>123n2</u>
23:23 <u>81</u>, <u>91</u>
```

```
23:24 <u>81</u>, <u>91</u>
30:4 <u>52</u>
32:15 <u>93</u>
32:17 <u>93</u>
46:10 <u>215</u>
```

Lamentations

2:4–5 <u>213</u> 3:22–23 <u>94</u>

Ezekiel

```
2:2 <u>305</u>
8:3 <u>305</u>
11:1 <u>305</u>
11:19 <u>226</u>
11:19–20 <u>356</u>
11:24 <u>305</u>
12:1 <u>44</u>
12:8 <u>44</u>
12:17 <u>44</u>
12:21 <u>44</u>
12:26 <u>44</u>
18:30–32 <u>351</u>
20:9 125
25:14 <u>215</u>
33:11 <u>345</u>
37:12–14 <u>447</u>
44:7 <u>414</u>
44:9 <u>414</u>
```

Daniel

```
2:21 <u>149</u>
2:47 <u>29</u>
3:26 <u>29</u>
```

```
4:13 <u>168</u>
4:17 <u>168</u>
4:23 <u>168</u>
4:24–25 <u>149</u>
9:27 <u>464</u>
10 <u>325</u>
12:1 <u>123</u>
12:2 <u>447</u>, <u>449</u>, <u>461</u>, <u>477</u>
12:3 <u>474</u>
1:9–10 <u>394</u>
2:23 <u>394</u>, <u>454</u>
9:15 <u>212</u>
Joel
1:1 <u>44</u>
2:28–29 <u>305</u>
2:31–32 <u>241</u>
Amos
3:1 <u>44</u>, <u>52</u>
5:12 <u>100</u>
5:15 <u>100</u>
5:24 <u>100</u>
Jonah
1:3–16 29
```

Zechariah

4:11 <u>123</u>

```
1:6 <u>123n2</u>
7:2 <u>286</u>
8:17 <u>212</u>
8:22 <u>286</u>
14:4 <u>464</u>
```

Malachi

1:9 <u>286</u> 3:6 <u>94</u>

New Testament

Matthew

```
1 253
1:18–25 <u>253</u>
1:20 <u>241</u>
1:22 <u>123</u>
1:23 <u>253</u>
1:25 <u>253</u>
2:15 <u>123</u>
2:23 <u>123</u>
3:2 <u>353</u>, <u>415</u>
3:6 <u>415</u>
3:16 <u>306</u>
3:16–17 <u>300</u>
4:2 <u>249</u>
4:3 <u>172</u>
4:14 <u>123</u>
4:17 <u>353</u>
4:18–22 <u>350</u>
4:24 <u>173</u>
5:16 <u>125</u>, <u>470</u>
```

5:17 <u>45</u>

```
5:18 <u>52</u>
```

5:21–22 <u>204</u>, <u>226</u>, <u>240</u>

5:21–28 <u>377</u>

5:23-24 <u>289</u>

5:27–28 <u>204</u>, <u>226</u>, <u>240</u>

5:38 <u>288</u>

5:45 <u>102</u>, <u>152</u>, <u>470</u>

5:48 <u>376</u>, <u>377</u>

6 <u>205</u>

6:1 <u>470</u>

6:2 <u>205</u>

6:5 <u>205</u>

6:9 <u>470</u>

6:9–10 <u>473</u>

6:10 <u>470</u>

6:16 <u>205</u>

6:19–20 <u>470</u>

6:25 <u>102</u>, <u>197</u>

6:25–30 <u>149</u>

6:25–34 <u>371</u>

6:26 <u>102</u>, <u>109</u>, <u>147</u>

6:28 <u>102</u>

6:30 <u>109</u>, <u>147</u>

6:30-33 <u>102</u>

6:31–33 <u>147</u>

7:3 <u>219</u>

7:11 <u>470</u>

7:15–23 <u>383</u>

7:21 <u>470</u>

7:21–23 <u>451</u>

8 <u>173</u>

8:5–13 <u>154</u>, <u>173</u>

8:12 <u>475</u>, <u>476</u>

8:13 <u>354</u>

8:17 <u>123</u>

8:29 <u>172</u>

8:31 <u>172</u>

```
9:19–20 <u>173</u>
```

- 9:38 <u>241</u>
- 10:1 <u>173</u>
- 10:6 <u>192</u>
- 10:9–10 <u>63</u>
- 10:28 <u>148</u>, <u>197</u>, <u>199</u>, <u>431</u>, <u>438</u>
- 10:28–31 <u>180</u>
- 10:28–32 <u>147</u>
- 10:29 <u>92</u>
- 10:29–31 <u>150</u>
- 10:30 <u>92</u>
- 10:32 <u>470</u>
- 10:33 <u>470</u>
- 11:21–24 <u>478</u>
- 11:24 <u>450</u>
- 11:25 <u>241</u>
- 11:27 <u>116</u>
- 11:28 <u>126</u>, <u>345</u>, <u>350</u>
- 12:17 <u>123</u>
- 12:22 <u>172</u>
- 12:24 <u>172</u>, <u>220</u>
- 12:25–27 <u>306</u>
- 12:27 <u>172</u>
- 12:28 <u>110</u>, <u>173</u>, <u>300</u>, <u>306</u>
- 12:31 <u>300</u>, <u>306</u>
- 12:32 <u>306</u>, <u>436</u>
- 12:45 <u>172</u>
- 12:50 <u>470</u>
- 13 <u>274</u>, <u>455</u>
- 13:13–15 <u>71</u>
- 13:15 <u>71</u>
- 13:16 <u>347</u>
- 13:19 <u>172</u>

```
13:24–30 <u>172</u>
```

- 13:35 <u>123</u>, <u>135</u>
- 13:37–43 <u>450</u>
- 13:38 <u>172</u>
- 13:39 <u>172</u>
- 13:39–42 <u>170</u>
- 13:41 <u>110</u>, <u>238</u>, <u>275</u>, <u>451</u>
- 13:44 <u>274</u>
- 13:46 <u>274</u>
- 13:57 <u>273</u>
- 14:14 <u>103</u>, <u>157</u>, <u>250</u>
- 14:22–33 <u>154</u>
- 15:32 <u>250</u>
- 16 <u>347</u>
- 16:14 <u>347</u>
- 16:16 <u>347</u>
- 16:17 <u>347</u>, <u>470</u>
- 16:18 <u>392</u>
- 16:18–19 <u>438</u>
- 16:22 <u>72</u>
- 16:26 <u>197</u>
- 16:27 <u>450</u>
- 17:1–8 <u>474</u>
- 17:15 <u>172</u>
- 17:15–18 <u>173</u>
- 17:19–20 <u>173</u>
- 18:3 <u>232</u>
- 18:6 <u>355</u>, <u>413</u>
- 18:8 <u>395</u>, <u>477</u>
- 18:10 <u>170</u>, <u>470</u>
- 18:14 <u>470</u>
- 18:17 <u>395</u>
- 18:19 <u>470</u>
- 18:20 <u>422</u>
- 18:21–22 <u>104</u>
- 19:4 <u>135</u>
- 19:4–5 <u>54</u>

```
19:4–6 <u>20</u>
```

19:8 <u>135</u>

19:14 <u>110</u>, <u>232</u>, <u>413</u>

19:23–26 <u>109</u>

19:24 <u>110</u>

19:26 <u>93</u>, <u>255</u>, <u>357</u>

19:28 <u>275</u>, <u>356</u>, <u>451</u>, <u>472</u>

20:13–15 343

20:27 20

20:28 <u>279</u>, <u>284</u>, <u>288</u>

20:34 250

21:4 <u>123</u>

21:11 274

21:29 <u>353</u>

21:31 <u>110</u>

21:43 <u>110</u>

22:14 <u>350</u>

22:30 <u>473</u>

22:32 <u>54</u>

22:36–40 <u>190</u>

22:43 <u>54</u>

22:44 <u>54</u>

23 <u>274</u>

23:10-12 20

23:23 227

24 <u>462</u>, <u>464</u>

24–25 <u>442</u>, <u>446</u>

24:2 <u>52</u>, <u>446</u>

24:3 <u>462</u>

24:3–14 <u>380</u>

24:9 <u>464</u>

24:14 <u>446</u>, <u>454</u>

24:15 <u>444</u>

24:21 <u>135</u>, <u>444</u>, <u>464</u>

24:27 <u>442</u>, <u>445</u>

24:29 <u>444</u>, <u>464</u>

24:29–31 <u>464</u>, <u>466</u>

```
24:29–35 <u>450</u>
24:30 110, 385, 442, 444, 471
24:31 <u>170</u>, <u>451</u>
24:36 <u>169</u>
24:36–39 <u>463</u>
24:36–44 443
24:37 <u>442</u>
24:39 <u>442</u>
24:42 <u>442</u>
24:43 <u>463</u>
24:44 <u>442</u>, <u>443</u>
24:45–51 <u>446</u>, <u>463</u>
24:50 <u>443</u>
25:1–13 <u>444</u>
25:5 <u>446</u>
25:6 <u>465</u>
25:8–10 <u>444</u>
25:13 <u>443</u>, <u>463</u>
25:14–30 <u>472</u>
25:19 <u>446</u>
25:31 <u>169</u>, <u>170</u>, <u>273</u>, <u>471</u>
25:31–33 <u>110</u>, <u>450</u>
25:31–46 239, 368, 403, 444, 450, 451
25:32 <u>451</u>
25:34 <u>135</u>
25:34–40 <u>218</u>
25:41 <u>174</u>, <u>475</u>, <u>477</u>
25:41–46 <u>218</u>
25:46 <u>218</u>, <u>451</u>, <u>475</u>, <u>476</u>, <u>477</u>
26:24 <u>123</u>
26:26–28 <u>361</u>
26:37 <u>250</u>
26:42 <u>153</u>
26:53 <u>169</u>, <u>171</u>
26:56 <u>123</u>
26:63 <u>239</u>
```

26:64 <u>115</u>, <u>239</u>, <u>273</u>, <u>442</u>

```
27:3 <u>353</u>
27:4 <u>256</u>
27:5 <u>65</u>
27:19 <u>256</u>
27:32 <u>465</u>
27:46 <u>109</u>
27:54 <u>45</u>
28:2 <u>470</u>
28:18 <u>396</u>, 400
28:18–20 <u>19</u>, 454
28:19 <u>110</u>, 299, 300, 400, 412, 414, 415
28:19–20 <u>91</u>, 111, 396, 414
28:20 <u>273</u>, 274, 360, 397, 400, 402, 422, 443
```

Mark

```
1:8 <u>306</u>
1:10 <u>306</u>, <u>418</u>
1:12 <u>306</u>
1:14–15 <u>404</u>
1:15 <u>354</u>
1:16–20 <u>350</u>
1:25 <u>173</u>
1:26 <u>172</u>
1:41 <u>103</u>, <u>193</u>
2:5 238
2:7 238
2:8–10 <u>110</u>
2:27–28 <u>239</u>
3:5 <u>250</u>
3:22 <u>172</u>
3:29 <u>110</u>, <u>300</u>
4:39–41 <u>149</u>
5 <u>173</u>
5:2–4 <u>172</u>
5:5 <u>172</u>
```

5:36 <u>354</u>

```
6:5–6 <u>173</u>
```

6:6 <u>154</u>, <u>250</u>

6:8 <u>63</u>

6:17–29 <u>403</u>

6:34 <u>103</u>

8:18 <u>71</u>

8:31 <u>284</u>

8:38 <u>169</u>

9:2-8 <u>474</u>

9:17 172

9:20 172

9:21 <u>250</u>

9:23–24 <u>173</u>

9:25 <u>172</u>, <u>173</u>

9:29 <u>173</u>

9:43 <u>437</u>

9:43–48 <u>438</u>

9:48 <u>437</u>, <u>477</u>

10:6 <u>135</u>

10:13–16 <u>413</u>

10:14 <u>250</u>, <u>413</u>

10:35–39 <u>363</u>

10:37–40 273

10:39 <u>363</u>

10:45 <u>279</u>, <u>284</u>

12:13–17 <u>193</u>

12:17 <u>109</u>

12:24 <u>447</u>

12:24–27 <u>109</u>

12:25 <u>473</u>

12:26–27 <u>447</u>

12:28–31 <u>190</u>

12:30 <u>205</u>

13:7 <u>124</u>

13:10 <u>124</u>

13:19 <u>135</u>, <u>464</u>

13:20 <u>110</u>

```
13:24 464

13:26 442, 444

13:32 243, 251, 470

13:32–33 443

13:35 443

14:21 123

14:22–24 361

14:32–42 250

14:62 110

15:34 250

16:7 104

16:9–20 416

16:16 415
```

Luke

```
1 <u>253</u>
1:13-20 <u>170</u>
1:15 <u>413</u>
1:26 <u>169</u>
1:26–38 <u>170</u>, <u>253</u>
1:35 <u>254</u>, <u>298</u>, <u>306</u>
1:38 255
1:41–44 <u>194</u>
1:46–47 <u>197</u>
1:46–55 <u>255</u>
2:1 <u>153</u>
2:11 241
2:13 <u>168</u>, <u>470</u>
2:13–14 <u>169</u>
2:14 <u>471</u>
2:15 <u>470</u>
2:21–39 271
2:52 <u>249</u>
3:19–20 <u>403</u>
3:22 <u>306</u>
```

4:1 <u>306</u>

- 4:14 <u>306</u>
- 4:16 <u>251</u>
- 4:18–19 <u>404</u>
- 4:18–21 <u>305</u>
- 5 <u>155</u>
- 5:8 <u>45</u>, <u>98</u>
- 5:24–26 <u>157</u>
- 6:8 <u>250</u>
- 6:12 <u>251</u>
- 7:9 <u>250</u>
- 7:13 <u>193</u>
- 7:19 <u>355</u>
- 7:29 <u>365</u>
- 7:35 <u>365</u>
- 8 <u>173</u>
- 8:27 <u>172</u>
- 9:3 <u>63</u>
- 9:23 <u>354</u>
- 9:28–36 <u>474</u>
- 9:39 172
- 9:47 <u>250</u>
- 10:17 <u>306</u>
- 10:21 <u>306</u>
- 10:25–37 <u>403</u>
- 10:26–27 <u>190</u>
- 10:27 <u>197</u>
- 11:9–10 <u>155</u>
- 11:11 <u>288</u>
- 11:11–13 <u>371</u>
- 11:15 <u>172</u>
- 11:19 <u>172</u>
- 11:20 <u>173</u>
- 11:50 <u>135</u>
- 12:8–9 <u>110</u>, <u>238</u>
- 12:47–48 <u>478</u>
- 13:32 <u>173</u>
- 14:14 <u>449</u>, <u>461</u>

```
15 <u>102</u>
15:3–7 <u>152</u>
15:10 <u>110</u>, <u>170</u>, <u>238</u>
15:18 <u>470</u>
15:21 <u>470</u>
16:19–31 <u>198</u>, <u>435</u>, <u>438</u>, <u>477</u>
16:22 <u>170</u>, <u>171</u>
16:26 <u>477</u>
18:16–17 <u>413</u>
19:1–10 <u>350</u>
19:11–27 <u>446</u>, <u>474</u>
20:27–40 474
20:35 <u>449</u>, <u>461</u>, <u>473</u>
21:20–22 <u>123</u>
21:27 442, 444
21:36 <u>464</u>
22:3 <u>172</u>
22:19–20 <u>361</u>
22:22 <u>123</u>, <u>126</u>, <u>130</u>
22:28–30 <u>451</u>, <u>472</u>
22:30 <u>363</u>
22:37 <u>284</u>
22:42 <u>192</u>
22:43 <u>470</u>
23:40 <u>72</u>
23:41 <u>256</u>
23:43 <u>198</u>, <u>435</u>, <u>438</u>
23:46 <u>197</u>, <u>435</u>
24:25–27 <u>53</u>
24:38–39 <u>449</u>
24:39 <u>88</u>, <u>251</u>
24:43 <u>473</u>
24:44–45 <u>53</u>
24:50–51 <u>272</u>
```

John

- 1:1–3 <u>134</u>
- 1:3 <u>136</u>, <u>208</u>, <u>275</u>
- 1:9 274
- 1:12 <u>355</u>, <u>369</u>
- 1:12–13 <u>356</u>, <u>357</u>
- 1:13 <u>255</u>
- 1:14 <u>249</u>, <u>252</u>, <u>257</u>, <u>261</u>, <u>270</u>
- 1:18 <u>88</u>, <u>263</u>, <u>266</u>, <u>274</u>
- 1:29 <u>285</u>, <u>288</u>
- 1:32 <u>306</u>
- 1:33–34 <u>112</u>
- 1:35–51 <u>350</u>
- 2:11 355
- 2:23 <u>355</u>
- 3 <u>356</u>
- 3:3 <u>307</u>, <u>356</u>
- 3:5 <u>416</u>
- 3:5–6 <u>307</u>
- 3:5–8 <u>298</u>
- 3:6 <u>357</u>
- 3:7 <u>356</u>
- 3:8 <u>110</u>, <u>307</u>, <u>356</u>
- 3:13 <u>261</u>, <u>470</u>
- 3:16 <u>102</u>, <u>115</u>, <u>263</u>, <u>476</u>
- 3:17 <u>284</u>
- 3:18 <u>355</u>
- 3:23 <u>418</u>
- 3:31 <u>470</u>
- 3:36 <u>213</u>, <u>464</u>
- 4:6 <u>249</u>
- 4:18 <u>250</u>
- 4:21 88
- 4:24 <u>88</u>, <u>103</u>, <u>472</u>
- 4:34 <u>192</u>
- 5 <u>448</u>
- 5:2–18 <u>240</u>
- 5:18 <u>240</u>

```
5:21 <u>116</u>, <u>240</u>
```

- 5:22 <u>450</u>
- 5:25 <u>448</u>
- 5:25–29 <u>437</u>
- 5:26 <u>89</u>
- 5:27 <u>450</u>
- 5:27–29 <u>450</u>
- 5:28–29 <u>448</u>, <u>449</u>, <u>476</u>
- 5:29 <u>451</u>, <u>461</u>
- 5:30 <u>192</u>
- 5:39–42 <u>227</u>
- 6:37 <u>126</u>, <u>343</u>, <u>347</u>, <u>348</u>
- 6:38 <u>192</u>
- 6:39–40 <u>448</u>
- 6:42 <u>470</u>
- 6:44 126, 343, 347, 348, 355, 448
- 6:45 <u>347</u>
- 6:51 <u>470</u>
- 6:52–58 <u>285</u>
- 6:53 <u>361</u>
- 6:54 <u>448</u>
- 6:62 <u>272</u>
- 6:63 <u>116</u>, <u>356</u>
- 6:69 <u>255</u>
- 6:70 <u>116</u>
- 8:29 <u>115</u>
- 8:40 <u>249</u>
- 8:44 <u>135</u>, <u>169</u>, <u>172</u>
- 8:46 <u>255</u>
- 8:58 <u>239</u>, <u>263</u>
- 8:59 <u>239</u>
- 9 <u>156</u>
- 9:2-3 <u>164</u>
- 10 <u>147</u>, <u>382</u>
- 10:3 <u>72</u>
- 10:10 356
- 10:17–18 <u>291</u>

```
10:27–30 <u>147</u>, <u>379</u>, <u>381</u>
```

- 10:28 <u>356</u>, <u>381</u>
- 10:28–29 <u>381</u>
- 10:30 <u>112</u>, <u>239</u>
- 10:34 <u>53</u>
- 10:34–35 <u>53</u>
- 10:35 52
- 10:36 <u>284</u>
- 11 <u>448</u>
- 11:11 <u>435</u>
- 11:14 <u>250</u>, <u>435</u>
- 11:24–25 <u>448</u>
- 11:25 <u>240</u>
- 11:33 <u>250</u>
- 11:35 <u>250</u>
- 11:38 <u>250</u>
- 11:42 <u>379</u>
- 11:49–50 <u>285</u>
- 11:50 <u>289</u>
- 12:6 <u>383</u>
- 12:27 <u>197</u>
- 12:28 <u>42</u>
- 12:38 <u>123</u>
- 12:48 <u>451</u>
- 13 <u>19</u>
- 13:14 <u>19</u>
- 13:15 <u>19</u>
- 13:16 <u>19</u>
- 13:21 <u>197</u>
- 13:23 <u>250</u>
- 13:37–38 <u>431</u>
- 14–16 <u>72</u>, <u>117</u>, <u>297</u>
- 14:2 <u>272</u>
- 14:2–3 <u>273</u>, <u>470</u>
- 14:3 <u>442</u>, <u>443</u>
- 14:6 <u>271</u>
- 14:7–9 <u>239</u>

```
14:9 <u>45</u>, <u>112</u>, <u>244</u>
```

14:12 <u>272</u>, <u>273</u>, <u>308</u>, <u>396</u>, <u>397</u>

14:15 <u>371</u>, <u>400</u>

14:16 <u>112</u>, <u>116</u>, <u>299</u>

14:16–17 <u>308</u>

14:17 <u>72</u>, <u>273</u>

14:18 <u>397</u>

14:21 <u>371</u>

14:23 <u>116</u>, <u>360</u>, <u>397</u>, <u>422</u>, <u>443</u>

14:24 <u>112</u>

14:26 72, 112, 116, 274, 299, 300, 308, 320, 397

14:27 <u>116</u>

14:28 <u>243</u>

14:31 <u>102</u>

15 <u>102</u>

15:1–11 <u>379</u>

15:4 <u>362</u>

15:4–5 <u>360</u>

15:4–7 <u>422</u>

15:8 <u>125</u>

15:11 <u>250</u>

15:13 <u>284</u>

15:14–15 <u>370</u>, <u>371</u>

15:16 <u>128</u>, <u>343</u>, <u>347</u>

15:20 <u>363</u>

15:26 <u>112</u>, <u>116</u>, <u>299</u>, <u>320</u>

15:26–27 <u>72</u>

16:5 <u>272</u>

16:7 <u>112</u>, <u>116</u>, <u>273</u>, <u>299</u>, <u>397</u>

16:8 <u>72</u>, <u>300</u>, <u>321</u>, <u>397</u>

16:8–11 <u>110</u>, <u>298</u>, <u>307</u>, <u>355</u>

16:10 <u>272</u>

16:13 <u>72</u>, <u>298</u>, <u>299</u>, <u>397</u>

16:13–14 <u>112</u>, <u>299</u>, <u>308</u>

16:13–15 <u>112</u>, <u>320</u>

16:14 <u>72</u>, <u>297</u>, <u>300</u>

16:28 <u>112</u>, <u>272</u>

```
16:33 <u>464</u>
```

17 <u>192</u>, <u>260</u>, <u>275</u>

17:1 <u>192</u>

17:1–5 <u>384</u>

17:2 <u>126</u>

17:3 <u>100</u>, <u>285</u>

17:4 <u>192</u>, <u>300</u>

17:5 <u>192</u>

17:6 <u>126</u>

17:9 <u>126</u>

17:12 <u>123</u>

17:13 <u>250</u>, <u>275</u>

17:15 <u>275</u>

17:19 <u>285</u>

17:20 <u>276</u>

17:20–23 <u>392</u>

17:21 <u>112</u>, <u>275</u>

17:21–22 <u>192</u>, <u>260</u>

17:22 <u>192</u>

17:24 <u>135</u>, <u>192</u>

18:9 <u>123</u>

18:14 <u>285</u>

19:7 <u>239</u>

19:24 <u>123</u>

19:28 <u>123</u>, <u>249</u>

19:34 <u>249</u>, <u>286</u>

19:36 <u>123</u>

19:39 <u>352</u>

20:17 272

20:21–22 <u>112</u>

20:25–27 272

20:27 449

20:28 <u>239–40</u>, <u>241</u>

21:9–14 473

21:18 446

21:25 <u>50</u>

Acts

```
1:1 274
1:4–5 <u>308</u>
1:6 <u>462</u>
1:6–11 <u>272</u>
1:7 <u>443</u>
1:8 19, 91, 304, 308, 397, 400
1:9–10 444
1:11 <u>443</u>, <u>444</u>
1:16 <u>51</u>
1:18 <u>65</u>
1:23–26 <u>149</u>
1:24 <u>241</u>
2 <u>313</u>, <u>323</u>
2:16-21 304
2:17 <u>304</u>, <u>322</u>
2:20–21 241
2:23 <u>124</u>, <u>126</u>, <u>127</u>, <u>130</u>, <u>150</u>
2:24–32 <u>447</u>
2:31 <u>438</u>
2:33 115
2:33–36 273
2:36 152
2:37 <u>416</u>
2:37–41 <u>415</u>
2:38 <u>353</u>, <u>414</u>, <u>416</u>
2:39 414
2:41 <u>413</u>
2:44–45 <u>397</u>
2:47 <u>241</u>
3:13-15 <u>384</u>
3:17–26 <u>416</u>
3:18 <u>52</u>
3:19 <u>352</u>
3:19–21 <u>442</u>
3:21 52
```

```
3:22 <u>274</u>
```

4:12 <u>414</u>

4:25 <u>52</u>

4:27–28 <u>126</u>

4:32 <u>392</u>, <u>397</u>

4:34–35 <u>397</u>

5 <u>297</u>

5:1–11 <u>381</u>, <u>450</u>

5:3 <u>110</u>, <u>298</u>

5:3–4 <u>110</u>, <u>300</u>

5:4 <u>110</u>

5:19 <u>170</u>

5:31 <u>273</u>

7 <u>63</u>

7:6 <u>63</u>

7:51 <u>300</u>

7:53 <u>170</u>

7:59–60 <u>116</u>

7:60 <u>434</u>

8 <u>313</u>

8:7 <u>172</u>

8:12 <u>415</u>

8:26 <u>170</u>

8:36 <u>418</u>

8:36–38 <u>413</u>

8:38–39 <u>418</u>

8:39 <u>241</u>

9:1–19 <u>350</u>

9:31 241

10 <u>28</u>

10:3–7 <u>170</u>

10:11–13 <u>397</u>

10:14 <u>397</u>

10:17–48 <u>397</u>

10:22 <u>169</u>

10:36 241

10:42 <u>450</u>

```
10:43 <u>354</u>, <u>414</u>
```

- 10:48 <u>413</u>
- 11:13 <u>170</u>
- 11:13–14 <u>28</u>
- 11:14 <u>413</u>
- 11:21 <u>241</u>
- 11:30 <u>407</u>
- 12:6–11 <u>170</u>
- 12:7–11 <u>170</u>
- 12:15 <u>170</u>
- 12:23 <u>170</u>
- 13:10–12 <u>241</u>
- 13:32–37 <u>447</u>
- 13:36 <u>434</u>
- 13:48 <u>126</u>, <u>347</u>
- 14:15–17 <u>27</u>, <u>29</u>
- 14:22 <u>464</u>
- 15:26 <u>197</u>
- 16:14 <u>241</u>, <u>351</u>, <u>352</u>
- 16:15 <u>413</u>
- 16:25–34 <u>405</u>
- 16:30 <u>352</u>
- 16:31 <u>19</u>
- 16:31–34 <u>413</u>
- 17:16–34 <u>405</u>
- 17:22–31 <u>29</u>
- 17:23 <u>35</u>
- 17:24 <u>88</u>, <u>241</u>
- 17:24–25 <u>91</u>
- 17:25 <u>89</u>
- 17:26 <u>93</u>, <u>124</u>
- 17:27–28 <u>81</u>
- 17:28 <u>29</u>, <u>187</u>
- 17:30 <u>225</u>, <u>353</u>
- 17:30–31 <u>345</u>
- 17:31 <u>450</u>
- 18:8 <u>413</u>, <u>415</u>

```
18:26 <u>241</u>
19 <u>313</u>
19:1–7 <u>415</u>
19:4 <u>355</u>
19:12 <u>172</u>
20:19 <u>241</u>
21:14 <u>241</u>
23:6 <u>448</u>
23:8–9 <u>169</u>
24:14–15 <u>450</u>
24:21 <u>448</u>
24:25 <u>450</u>
27:23 <u>170</u>
28:15 <u>465</u>
```

Romans

```
1 <u>28</u>, <u>32</u>, <u>35</u>, <u>205</u>
1–2 <u>34</u>, <u>35</u>
1:3–4 <u>404</u>, <u>405</u>
1:16 <u>404</u>, <u>405</u>
1:18 <u>213</u>, <u>286</u>, <u>287</u>, <u>464</u>
1:18–23 <u>346</u>
1:18–32 <u>28</u>, <u>31</u>, <u>32</u>
1:20 <u>27</u>, <u>135</u>
1:21 34, 71, 205, 214, 227
1:21–23 <u>34</u>
1:26–27 <u>227</u>
1:28 <u>205</u>
1:29–31 <u>205</u>
2 35
2:1–16 <u>36</u>
2:3 241
2:3–16 437
2:4 104
2:5 213, 287, 450, 475, 476
2:8 <u>287</u>
```

- 2:12 <u>451</u>
- 2:14 28, 35
- 2:14–15 <u>204</u>
- 2:14–16 <u>28</u>
- 2:15 <u>28</u>, <u>226</u>
- 2:29 <u>72</u>, <u>394</u>, <u>417</u>
- 3 <u>34</u>, <u>35</u>, <u>36</u>, <u>224</u>, <u>346</u>
- 3:1–23 <u>343</u>
- 3:9 <u>225</u>
- 3:9–20 <u>356</u>
- 3:10-12 225
- 3:12 <u>228</u>
- 3:20 225
- 3:21–26 <u>285</u>
- 3:23 <u>224</u>, <u>225</u>
- 3:25 <u>286</u>
- 3:25–26 <u>286</u>
- 3:26 <u>290</u>, <u>364</u>
- 4:3 <u>367</u>
- 4:5 <u>364</u>
- 4:5–6 <u>367</u>
- 4:8 <u>367</u>
- 4:9 <u>367</u>
- 4:11 <u>367</u>
- 4:13–18 <u>414</u>
- 4:15 <u>287</u>
- 4:17 <u>136</u>
- 4:22–24 <u>367</u>
- 5 <u>228</u>, <u>232</u>
- 5:3 <u>464</u>
- 5:6–8 <u>288</u>
- 5:6–10 <u>102</u>
- 5:8 <u>102</u>, <u>285</u>, <u>286</u>, <u>370</u>
- 5:8–10 <u>213</u>
- 5:9 <u>286</u>, <u>287</u>, <u>464</u>
- 5:9–10 <u>385</u>
- 5:10 <u>102</u>, <u>370</u>

```
5:12 216, 225, 228, 230, 231, 254
```

- 5:12–19 <u>230</u>
- 5:14 <u>231</u>
- 5:15 <u>230</u>, <u>231</u>, <u>249</u>, <u>476</u>
- 5:15–19 <u>228</u>
- 5:17 <u>231</u>, <u>249</u>, <u>476</u>
- 5:18 <u>476</u>
- 5:19 <u>249</u>, <u>476</u>
- 6:1–11 <u>357</u>, <u>417</u>
- 6:3–5 <u>412</u>, <u>417</u>, <u>418</u>
- 6:4 <u>218</u>, <u>360</u>
- 6:6 <u>227</u>
- 6:6–8 <u>279</u>
- 6:12 <u>227</u>
- 6:14 <u>357</u>
- 6:17 <u>219</u>, <u>227</u>
- 6:23 <u>100</u>, <u>216</u>, <u>219</u>, <u>225</u>, <u>282</u>, <u>366</u>
- 7 376
- 7:5 <u>226</u>
- 7:18 <u>208</u>
- 7:18–19 <u>377</u>
- 7:23 <u>226</u>
- 7:24 <u>227</u>
- 8 <u>375</u>, <u>385</u>
- 8:1 <u>362</u>
- 8:1–17 <u>308</u>
- 8:2 <u>219</u>
- 8:4 <u>375</u>
- 8:5 <u>375</u>
- 8:7 <u>213</u>
- 8:9 <u>375</u>
- 8:9–10 <u>362</u>, <u>397</u>
- 8:9–11 <u>420</u>
- 8:10 <u>227</u>
- 8:11 <u>298</u>, <u>448</u>
- 8:13 <u>227</u>, <u>308</u>, <u>375</u>, <u>376</u>
- 8:14 <u>375</u>

```
8:14–16 <u>370</u>
8:16 <u>375</u>
8:16–17 <u>371</u>
8:17 <u>360</u>
8:18 <u>163</u>
8:18–23 <u>218</u>
8:18–25 <u>384</u>, <u>386</u>
8:19–23 <u>164</u>, <u>457</u>
8:19-25 <u>446</u>
8:21 386
8:22-23 <u>449</u>
8:26 <u>172</u>, <u>300</u>
8:26–27 <u>308</u>, <u>321</u>, <u>375</u>
8:28 <u>124</u>, <u>152</u>, <u>163</u>, <u>321</u>
8:29 115, 124, 127, 163, 187, 345, 347, 369, 375
8:29–30 <u>384</u>
8:31–39 <u>379</u>
8:32 <u>286</u>, <u>288</u>
8:33–34 <u>276</u>, <u>364</u>, <u>385</u>
8:35 <u>147</u>
8:38 <u>168</u>
8:38–39 <u>147</u>, <u>379</u>, <u>385</u>
9 343
9–11 <u>124</u>
9:6 <u>395</u>
9:11–13 <u>128</u>
9:15–16 <u>344</u>
9:18 <u>128</u>
9:20–21 343
9:20–23 <u>124</u>
9:20-24 128
9:22 <u>104</u>, <u>287</u>
9:24 395
9:24-26 394
10 <u>36</u>
10:9–10 <u>5</u>
10:13 <u>241</u>
```

10:14 <u>34</u>

10:16 <u>404</u>

11:2 <u>127</u>

11:8 <u>71</u>

11:10 <u>71</u>

11:13–15 <u>152</u>

11:15 <u>289</u>

11:25 <u>152</u>

11:25–26 <u>396</u>

11:28 <u>404</u>

11:32 <u>396</u>, <u>476</u>

11:33 <u>92</u>

11:34 <u>125</u>

12 <u>409</u>

12:1–2 <u>376</u>

12:2 <u>205</u>, <u>362</u>

12:6–8 <u>309</u>

12:9 <u>376</u>

12:15 <u>183</u>

12:16–17 <u>376</u>

12:19 <u>215</u>, <u>287</u>

13:4–5 <u>287</u>

14:4 <u>379</u>

14:10 <u>451</u>

14:11 <u>241</u>

15:19 <u>298</u>

16:17 <u>395</u>

1 Corinthians

1:2 <u>374</u>, <u>392</u>

1:4–5 <u>360</u>

1:7 <u>445</u>, <u>446</u>

1:8 385

1:9 <u>101</u>

1:10-17 396

1:18 <u>72</u>, <u>375</u>

```
1:20–21 <u>71</u>
```

1:23 72

1:24 72

2:6–16 <u>351</u>

2:7 <u>72</u>

2:8 <u>241</u>, <u>261</u>

2:9–10 473

2:10–11 <u>298</u>

2:11 71

2:13 71

2:14 71, 72

2:14–3:4 <u>196</u>

2:16 72

3:1–9 <u>396</u>

3:14–15 <u>474</u>

3:15 <u>436</u>

3:16 <u>116</u>, <u>172</u>, <u>298</u>

3:16–17 <u>110</u>, <u>396</u>

3:19 <u>71</u>

4:5 <u>437</u>, <u>450</u>

4:9 <u>170</u>

5:1–5 <u>423</u>

5:3 <u>197</u>

5:5 <u>197</u>

5:7 <u>286</u>

5:12–13 <u>395</u>

6 <u>110</u>

6:2-3 <u>451</u>

6:12-20 <u>449</u>

6:13 <u>449</u>

6:14 <u>449</u>

6:15 <u>449</u>

6:19 <u>298</u>, <u>449</u>

6:19–20 <u>110</u>, <u>397</u>

6:20 <u>449</u>

7:8–11 <u>473</u>

7:25–35 <u>473</u>

```
7:40 <u>44</u>
```

8:4 <u>109</u>

8:6 <u>109</u>, <u>136</u>

9:14 404

9:16 <u>405</u>

10:12 <u>173</u>

10:13 <u>379</u>

11:7 <u>187</u>

11:10 <u>170</u>

11:17–19 <u>396</u>

11:23 <u>44</u>

11:26 <u>422</u>

11:27–28 <u>422</u>

11:27–32 <u>422</u>

11:29 <u>423</u>

11:30 <u>422</u>

12 309, 395, 401, 409

12:3 <u>351</u>

12:4–6 <u>299</u>

12:4–11 <u>110</u>, <u>309</u>

12:7 <u>309</u>

12:11 <u>116</u>, <u>300</u>, <u>309</u>, <u>313</u>, <u>397</u>, <u>402</u>

12:12 <u>312</u>

12:12–13 <u>396</u>

12:13 312, 313, 362, 396, 412

12:14–21 <u>309</u>

12:14–25 <u>401</u>

12:18 <u>124</u>

12:22–26 <u>309</u>

12:26 <u>396</u>, <u>401</u>

12:27 <u>395</u>

12:27–31 <u>401</u>

12:28–30 <u>309</u>

13:1–3 <u>314</u>

13:8 <u>311</u>, <u>311n18</u>

13:9–10 <u>311</u>

13:9–12 <u>471</u>

```
13:12 <u>275</u>, <u>385</u>
14 <u>309</u>, <u>402</u>
14:3–4 <u>402</u>
14:4–5 <u>401</u>
14:5 <u>309</u>
14:12 <u>309</u>, <u>401</u>
14:15–17 <u>402</u>
14:17 <u>401</u>
14:18 <u>311</u>
14:26 <u>401</u>
14:27 <u>314</u>
14:28 <u>314</u>
14:39 <u>314</u>
15 <u>199</u>, <u>217</u>, <u>405</u>, <u>431</u>, <u>432</u>, <u>434</u>, <u>437</u>, <u>448</u>
15:1 <u>405</u>
15:3 <u>405</u>
15:3–8 <u>405</u>
15:6 <u>434</u>
15:12–14 <u>448</u>
15:17 <u>20</u>, <u>217</u>
15:17–18 <u>476</u>
15:18 <u>434</u>
15:20 <u>405</u>, <u>434</u>
15:21 <u>249</u>, <u>432</u>
15:22 <u>232</u>, <u>360</u>, <u>476</u>
15:22–24 <u>461</u>
15:23 <u>461</u>
15:24 <u>168</u>
15:24–28 <u>115</u>
15:38 <u>124</u>
15:38–50 <u>386</u>
15:44 <u>272</u>, <u>448</u>
15:47–49 <u>249</u>
15:51 <u>434</u>
15:51–52 <u>386</u>, <u>448</u>
15:54–56 <u>431</u>
```

15:54–57 <u>432</u>

2 Corinthians

```
1:18–22 <u>101</u>
3 <u>72</u>
3:3–18 <u>395</u>
3:14–15 <u>227</u>
3:16 <u>72</u>
3:18 <u>72</u>, <u>187</u>, <u>193</u>
4:2 <u>101</u>
4:3–4 <u>343</u>, <u>346</u>
4:4 <u>34</u>, <u>172</u>, <u>227</u>
4:6 <u>136</u>
4:11–12 <u>431</u>
4:16 <u>362</u>
4:17 <u>163</u>
5 <u>437</u>
5:1–5 <u>385</u>
5:1–10 <u>431</u>, <u>438</u>, <u>448</u>
5:2–4 <u>199</u>
5:3 <u>437</u>
5:3–4 <u>199</u>
5:4 <u>199</u>, <u>386</u>
5:8 <u>199</u>, <u>438</u>
5:10 <u>241</u>, <u>451</u>
5:14 <u>285</u>
5:15 <u>288</u>, <u>289</u>
5:17 <u>356</u>, <u>357</u>, <u>360</u>
5:19 <u>285</u>, <u>351</u>
5:19–21 <u>367</u>
5:21 <u>255</u>, <u>288</u>
6:15 <u>172</u>
6:16 <u>393</u>
11:14–15 <u>172</u>
12:7 <u>172</u>
```

```
12:8–9 <u>116</u>
12:9 <u>363</u>
12:9–10 <u>155</u>
13:5 <u>116</u>
13:14 <u>110</u>, <u>111</u>, <u>299</u>, <u>300</u>
13:20–21 <u>300</u>
```

Galatians

```
1:15 <u>56</u>, <u>124</u>
2:16 355
2:20 288, 357, 360, 363, 395
3:1–14 <u>437</u>
3:6 <u>366</u>, <u>367</u>
3:6–9 <u>35</u>
3:8 <u>124</u>
3:10–11 <u>35</u>, <u>366</u>, <u>370</u>
3:10–14 <u>35</u>
3:13 <u>279</u>, <u>286</u>, <u>289</u>
3:13-18 <u>414</u>
3:19 <u>170</u>
3:19–29 <u>35</u>
3:23–24 <u>35</u>
3:28 <u>396</u>, <u>405</u>
4:4 <u>261</u>, <u>270</u>
4:4–5 <u>124</u>, <u>283</u>, <u>369</u>
4:5 <u>271</u>
5 <u>308</u>, <u>375</u>
5:13 <u>370</u>
5:16 <u>308</u>, <u>375</u>
5:16–24 <u>208</u>
5:19–21 <u>308</u>
5:22–23 <u>308</u>, <u>375</u>, <u>377</u>, <u>397</u>
5:24 <u>227</u>
5:24–25 <u>357</u>
5:25 <u>375</u>
```

6 <u>165</u>

```
6:1 <u>395</u>
6:2 <u>395</u>
6:7–8 <u>165</u>, <u>282</u>
6:8 <u>282</u>
```

Ephesians

```
1:3–4 <u>360</u>
1:4 <u>124</u>, <u>135</u>, <u>385</u>
1:4–5 <u>343</u>
1:5 <u>369</u>
1:5–6 <u>125</u>
1:6–8 <u>360</u>
1:7 <u>286</u>
1:10 395
1:11 <u>125</u>, <u>150</u>, <u>151</u>
1:11–12 <u>124</u>
1:18 <u>72</u>
1:20 272
1:20-22 273
1:22–23 <u>392</u>, <u>395</u>
2:1 <u>356</u>, <u>357</u>
2:1–2 <u>227</u>, <u>431</u>
2:1–3 <u>343</u>
2:1–10 <u>357</u>
2:3 <u>225</u>, <u>287</u>
2:5 <u>227</u>, <u>356</u>, <u>360</u>
2:5–6 <u>357</u>
2:6 <u>356</u>
2:8–9 <u>103</u>, <u>227</u>, <u>339</u>, <u>366</u>, <u>368</u>, <u>437</u>
2:10 <u>357</u>, <u>360</u>, <u>368</u>
2:15 <u>396</u>
2:21–22 <u>396</u>
3:21 <u>91</u>
4:1–16 <u>392</u>
4:4 <u>392</u>
```

4:4–6 <u>396</u>

```
4:8–10 <u>272</u>
4:11 <u>309</u>, <u>402</u>
4:11–16 <u>395</u>
4:12 <u>401</u>
4:13 <u>376</u>, <u>377</u>
4:16 <u>401</u>
4:23–24 <u>187</u>
4:27 <u>172</u>
4:29 <u>401</u>
4:30 <u>300</u>
4:32 <u>370</u>
5:2 <u>285</u>, <u>286</u>
5:6 <u>287</u>
5:14 <u>351</u>
5:18 <u>314</u>
5:23 <u>392</u>
5:25–27 <u>395</u>
5:26 <u>375</u>
5:32 <u>361</u>
6:12 <u>168</u>, <u>172</u>
```

Philippians

```
1:6 375, 379
1:7 405
1:9-11 385
1:19-26 431, 438
1:20-23 433
1:23 438
1:29 355
2 109, 275
2:2 392
2:3 20
2:3-5 220
2:5-11 109, 115, 241
2:6 109, 241, 263, 265
2:6-7 264, 265, 270
```

```
2:7 263, 265

2:9-11 275

2:10-11 273, 476

2:11 241

2:12-13 376

3:3 394

3:8 363

3:10 41, 363

3:11 449, 461

3:20-21 385, 437, 448

4:5 446

4:11 147

4:12 147

4:13 147, 363

4:19 147, 371
```

Colossians

```
1:9 72
1:13-14 261
1:15 <u>241</u>, <u>395</u>, <u>448</u>
1:15–20 <u>241</u>
1:16 <u>168</u>, <u>395</u>
1:17 <u>146</u>, <u>208</u>, <u>241</u>, <u>275</u>
1:18 <u>275</u>, <u>395</u>, <u>448</u>
1:19 <u>124</u>, <u>241</u>
1:19–20 <u>476</u>
1:20 <u>286</u>
1:21 <u>213</u>
1:21–23 <u>380</u>
1:22 <u>385</u>
1:27 <u>360</u>, <u>395</u>
2:9 <u>241</u>, <u>263</u>, <u>264</u>
2:9–10 395
2:11–12 <u>414</u>
2:15 <u>168</u>
2:19 <u>395</u>
```

```
2:20 <u>360</u>
3:1 <u>360</u>
3:6 <u>287</u>
3:10 <u>187</u>
3:11 <u>396</u>
```

1 Thessalonians

```
1:1 <u>392</u>
1:4 <u>394</u>
1:5 <u>54</u>
1:9 <u>89</u>, <u>100</u>
1:10 <u>287</u>, <u>462</u>, <u>464</u>, <u>470</u>
2:13 <u>54</u>
2:16 287
2:18 172
3:3 <u>464</u>
3:5 <u>172</u>
4 429
4:13 <u>429</u>
4:13–15 <u>434</u>
4:13–16 <u>448</u>
4:14 <u>448</u>
4:15-16 	ag{442}
4:15–17 <u>445</u>
4:16 168, 360, 443, 444, 461, 470
4:16–17 <u>170</u>, <u>437</u>
4:16–18 <u>4</u>
4:17 <u>462</u>, <u>465</u>, <u>466</u>
4:18 <u>429</u>, <u>463</u>
5:9 <u>287</u>, <u>462</u>, <u>464</u>
5:10 <u>286</u>
5:19 <u>300</u>
5:20–21 <u>318</u>
5:23 <u>196</u>, <u>197</u>, <u>375</u>, <u>376</u>
```

5:24 <u>101</u>

2 Thessalonians

```
1:5–2:12 <u>437</u>
1:6–7 <u>445</u>
1:7 <u>442</u>, <u>470</u>
1:8 <u>405</u>, <u>464</u>
1:9 <u>475</u>, <u>476</u>, <u>477</u>
1:10 <u>442</u>
2:8 <u>445</u>
2:13 <u>135</u>
2:13–14 <u>394</u>
```

1 Timothy

```
1:6 <u>383</u>

1:6-7 <u>383</u>

1:17 <u>88</u>

1:19-20 <u>381</u>, <u>383</u>

2:3-4 <u>345</u>

2:5-6 <u>109</u>

2:6 <u>288</u>

2:14 <u>254</u>

3:16 <u>261</u>, <u>263</u>, <u>272</u>

5:21 <u>170</u>

6:14 <u>446</u>

6:15-16 <u>88</u>
```

2 Timothy

```
1:10 <u>124</u>

1:12 <u>379</u>

2:8 <u>405</u>

2:12 <u>363</u>

2:13 <u>101</u>

2:16–18 <u>381</u>

2:17–18 <u>383</u>

2:18 <u>383</u>, 449
```

```
3:2-4 <u>227</u>
3:15 <u>51</u>
3:16 <u>51</u>, <u>53</u>, <u>57n11</u>, <u>298</u>
3:17 <u>51</u>
4:1 <u>241</u>, <u>451</u>
4:8 <u>437</u>, <u>446</u>
4:10 <u>381</u>
```

Titus

```
1:2 <u>100</u>
2:11 <u>103</u>
2:13 <u>442</u>, <u>446</u>, <u>463</u>
2:14 <u>375</u>
3:4–7 <u>103</u>
3:5 <u>298</u>, <u>356</u>, <u>416</u>
```

Hebrews

```
1 109
1:1–2 <u>44</u>, <u>45</u>
1:1–3 <u>48</u>
1:2 <u>110</u>, <u>241</u>
1:3 <u>110</u>, <u>241</u>, <u>272</u>
1:4–2:9 <u>241</u>
1:5 <u>110</u>, <u>169</u>
1:5–2:9 <u>169</u>
1:8 <u>110</u>, <u>241</u>, <u>275</u>
1:10 <u>110</u>, <u>135</u>, <u>136</u>
1:10–12 <u>298</u>
1:13 <u>110</u>, <u>169</u>
1:14 <u>168</u>, <u>169</u>, <u>170</u>
2:1 380
2:2 <u>170</u>
2:3–4 <u>311</u>
2:9 <u>288</u>
3:1–6 <u>241</u>
```

```
3:11 <u>472</u>
```

3:12-14 380

3:18 472

4:3 <u>135</u>

4:12 <u>196</u>

4:13 <u>92</u>

4:14 <u>272</u>

4:14–16 <u>20</u>

4:14–5:10 <u>241</u>

4:15 <u>193</u>, <u>217</u>, <u>255</u>, <u>257</u>

5:8 <u>115</u>

6 <u>381</u>, <u>382</u>

6:4–6 <u>380</u>, <u>381</u>, <u>382</u>

6:9 <u>382</u>

6:10 <u>382</u>

6:11 <u>379</u>, <u>382</u>

6:11–12 <u>380</u>

6:13–18 <u>414</u>

6:18 <u>93</u>, <u>100</u>

7:1–11 <u>28</u>

7:9–10 <u>194</u>

7:21 <u>20</u>

7:24 <u>20</u>

7:25 <u>20</u>, <u>273</u>, <u>276</u>, <u>379</u>

7:26 <u>255</u>

9:1–10 20

9:6–15 <u>287</u>

9:12 <u>20</u>, <u>287</u>

9:14 <u>255</u>, <u>298</u>

9:23–10:25 361

9:24 <u>272</u>, <u>276</u>

9:26 <u>135</u>

9:27 148, 183, 216, 219, 431, 450, 451

9:28 442

10–13 <u>287</u>

10:5 <u>287</u>

10:5–18 287

```
10:10 <u>287</u>
10:11 287
10:12 <u>273</u>, <u>287</u>
10:22 <u>379</u>
10:25 <u>402</u>
10:26–27 <u>380</u>
10:27 <u>450</u>
10:30 215
11 <u>396</u>
11:3 <u>136</u>
11:6 <u>5</u>, <u>88</u>, <u>354</u>
11:19 <u>447</u>
12:1 <u>396</u>
12:2 <u>163</u>, <u>250</u>
12:5–11 <u>371</u>
12:6 <u>216</u>
12:7 <u>371</u>
12:22 <u>169</u>
```

James

12:22–24 <u>472</u> 12:23 <u>450</u> 13 <u>287</u>

13:20–21 <u>375</u>, <u>376</u>

```
1:13 <u>63</u>, <u>206</u>, <u>256</u>

1:14 <u>151</u>

1:14–15 <u>207</u>

1:17 <u>94</u>

1:18 <u>356</u>, <u>357</u>

1:27 <u>403</u>

2:1 <u>241</u>

2:1–11 <u>403</u>

2:9 <u>100</u>

2:15–17 <u>403</u>

2:17 <u>368</u>

2:19 <u>109</u>
```

```
2:26 <u>368</u>, <u>431</u>
3:9 <u>187</u>
4:1–2 <u>220</u>
4:4 <u>213</u>
4:7 <u>172</u>
5:7–8 <u>442</u>
5:8–9 <u>446</u>
5:14–15 <u>314</u>
5:16 <u>154</u>
```

1 Peter

```
1 127
1:1–2 <u>345</u>, <u>347</u>
1:2 <u>110</u>, <u>127</u>, <u>299</u>, <u>300</u>
1:3 <u>356</u>, <u>357</u>, <u>406</u>
1:3–5 <u>378</u>
1:6–7 <u>163</u>
1:7 <u>442–43</u>, <u>445</u>
1:8 355
1:13 <u>442–43</u>, <u>445</u>
1:20 <u>127</u>, <u>135</u>
1:21 <u>384</u>
1:23 <u>339</u>, <u>356</u>, <u>357</u>
1:25 <u>339</u>
2:9 374
2:21 <u>277</u>
2:22 <u>255</u>
2:24 <u>277</u>, <u>288</u>
3:15 <u>241</u>
3:20 <u>104</u>
3:21 <u>416</u>
3:22 <u>273</u>
4:11 <u>309</u>
4:13 <u>445</u>
4:19 <u>101</u>
```

5:8 <u>172</u>

2 Peter

```
1:10 <u>379</u>
1:16 443
1:19 <u>53</u>
1:19–21 <u>53</u>
1:20 <u>53</u>
1:20–21 <u>51</u>, <u>57n11</u>
1:21 <u>52</u>, <u>299</u>, <u>305</u>
2 <u>171</u>
2:1–2 <u>381</u>
2:4 <u>171</u>, <u>451</u>
2:9 <u>171</u>
2:10–12 <u>171</u>
3:3–4 <u>444</u>
3:4 <u>135</u>, <u>443</u>
3:7 <u>450</u>
3:9 <u>104</u>, <u>130</u>, <u>345</u>, <u>478</u>
3:12 <u>443</u>
3:15 <u>104</u>
3:16 <u>54</u>
```

1 John

```
1 <u>377</u>
1:1 <u>45</u>, <u>135</u>
1:5 <u>103</u>
1:8–10 <u>376</u>
1:9 <u>94</u>
2:1 <u>299</u>
2:1–2 <u>261</u>
2:13 <u>172</u>
2:13–14 <u>135</u>
2:16 <u>207</u>
2:18 <u>464</u>
2:22 <u>464</u>
```

2:28 <u>443</u>

```
2:29 <u>356</u>, <u>357</u>
3:1 <u>370</u>
3:2 <u>275</u>, <u>385</u>, <u>471</u>
3:4–6 <u>377</u>
3:5 <u>255</u>
3:8 <u>135</u>, <u>172</u>
3:8–10 <u>169</u>
3:9 <u>379</u>
3:12 <u>172</u>
4 <u>101</u>
4:1 <u>354</u>
4:2 <u>5</u>, <u>112</u>, <u>261</u>
4:2–3 <u>249</u>
4:3 <u>464</u>
4:6 <u>54</u>
4:8 <u>101</u>, <u>102</u>
4:10 <u>102</u>, <u>290</u>, <u>292</u>
4:13–14 <u>112</u>
4:14 <u>261</u>
4:15 <u>261</u>
4:16 <u>101</u>, <u>102</u>
5:1 <u>356</u>, <u>357</u>
5:4 <u>356</u>, <u>357</u>
5:5 <u>261</u>
5:7 <u>111</u>
5:8 <u>111</u>
5:10 <u>355</u>
5:13 <u>355</u>, <u>379</u>
5:18 <u>172</u>
5:20 <u>72</u>, <u>100</u>
```

2 John

7 <u>464</u>

Jude

```
3 <u>406</u>
6 <u>171</u>, <u>451</u>, <u>477</u>
7 <u>477</u>
9 <u>63</u>, <u>168</u>
14–15 <u>63</u>
21 <u>446</u>
24 <u>385</u>
25 <u>91</u>
```

Revelation

```
1:5 <u>448</u>
1:8 <u>91</u>
3:7 <u>100</u>
3:10 <u>464</u>, <u>466</u>
3:14 <u>135</u>
3:21 <u>273</u>, <u>451</u>
4:11 <u>241</u>
5:11 <u>169</u>
5:11–12 <u>169</u>
6:10 <u>100</u>
6:16–17 <u>464</u>
7:11 <u>169</u>
7:14 <u>464</u>
8:1–4 <u>169</u>
8:6–9:21 <u>170</u>
9:1–2 <u>475</u>
9:11 <u>475</u>
10:14 <u>218</u>
12:3 <u>172</u>
12:9 <u>172</u>
13:8 <u>135</u>
14:10 <u>169</u>, <u>464</u>
14:10–11 <u>475</u>
14:11 <u>477</u>
16:1–17 <u>170</u>
```

16:19 <u>464</u>

```
17:8 <u>135</u>
```

19 <u>472</u>

19:1–4 <u>472</u>

19:5 <u>472</u>

19:6–8 <u>472</u>

19:9 <u>473</u>

19:11–14 <u>170</u>

19:15 <u>464</u>

19:16 <u>241</u>

19:20 <u>218</u>

20 218, 455, 458, 459, 461

20:2 <u>459</u>

20:4 451, 456, 459

20:4–6 <u>448</u>, <u>456</u>, <u>458</u>

20:5 <u>456</u>, <u>460</u>

20:6 <u>218</u>, <u>432</u>, <u>459</u>

20:7–10 385

20:8 172

20:10 <u>172</u>, <u>174</u>, <u>471</u>, <u>477</u>

20:11–15 <u>450</u>

20:13 448

20:13–14 218

21:1–2 <u>386</u>

21:4 <u>471</u>, <u>474</u>

21:5 <u>386</u>

21:6 <u>91</u>

21:8 <u>432</u>, <u>475</u>

21:18–21 <u>471</u>

21:23 <u>471</u>

22:1 <u>273</u>

22:3 <u>472</u>

22:5 <u>471</u>

22:9 <u>169</u>

22:13 <u>91</u>

22:20 <u>116</u>

Apocrypha

2 Maccabees

12:43–45 <u>436</u>

Name and Subject Index

```
Abe, Gabriel 287n8
Abelard, Peter <u>277</u>, <u>279</u>
abortion 194
Abraham 43, 99, 366, 447
        God's covenant with <u>93</u>, <u>94</u>, <u>101</u>, <u>394–95</u>, <u>413–14</u>, <u>457–58</u>
absolute inerrancy 60
achievement, sin and 207
Adam <u>84, 100, 193, 217–18, 265</u>
        creation of <u>180–82</u>
        free will of <u>150</u>, <u>164</u>
        God's covenant with 230
        influence of sin on 228-33, 476
        prefall <u>186</u>, <u>190–91</u>, <u>212</u>, <u>256</u>
        sin of 205, 208, 216, 219, 254, 432–33
        special revelation and 40–41
addiction 219
adoption <u>359</u>, <u>369–71</u>
adoptionism 263
adultery 165
African traditional religion <u>287n8</u>, <u>325</u>, <u>326</u>
agapē 43, 89, 102. See also love, God's
Alexandrian fathers 196
allegorizing 21
Althaus, Paul 242
amillennialism <u>453–54</u>, <u>456</u>, <u>458–60</u>, <u>461</u>
Anabaptists 434
Ananias and Sapphira <u>110</u>, <u>297–98</u>, <u>381</u>, <u>450</u>
angelophanies 169
angels 110, 137, 167-68, 444, 451, 470
        Christians and 170–71
        evil <u>171–74</u>, <u>451</u>
```

```
guardian <u>170–74</u>
        Jesus and <u>169–70</u>, <u>238</u>
annihilationism 477
"anonymous Christians" (Rahner) 337
Anselm 31, 279, 291
anthropological argument 30–31
anthropology 182
anthropomorphisms <u>42</u>, <u>88</u>, <u>92</u>, <u>94</u>, <u>126</u>
anthropopathisms <u>92</u>, <u>94</u>, <u>126</u>, <u>165</u>
Antichrist 445, 463, 464
antinomianism 368
apantēsis <u>465</u>
apocalyptic literature 326, 458
Apocrypha <u>436–37</u>
apokalypsis 275, 443, 445
Apollinarianism 252, 266–67
Apollinarius <u>196</u>, <u>252</u>
apologetics 74, 405
apostasy 380–84
apostles <u>16</u>, <u>124</u>, <u>149</u>, <u>241</u>, <u>309</u>, <u>318</u>
        divine speech and <u>44–45</u>, <u>274</u>
        gospel proclamation of 404, 412
Apostles' Creed <u>134</u>
Aquinas, Thomas 9, 14, 30, 32, 33, 436
Arianism <u>114</u>, <u>243–44</u>, <u>266–67</u>, <u>297</u>
Aristotelian philosophy 84, 114–15
Arius 243
Arminianism
        foreknowledge <u>127</u>, <u>130</u>, <u>345</u>
        foreordination 122, 130, 342, 345, 347
        human freedom <u>126–27</u>, <u>150</u>, <u>162</u>
        mortality 216n4
        original sin 229, 230, 233
        perseverance 380–81
        predestination <u>344–46</u>, <u>347–48</u>
        prevenient grace 229, 345, 346–47, 351
Arminius, James <u>229</u>, <u>342</u>, <u>344</u>
```

```
Arnold, Clinton 324
ascension <u>272–73</u>, <u>443–44</u>
asceticism <u>138</u>, <u>201</u>, <u>257</u>
assurance of salvation 378-84
Athanasius 114
Athenians 29, 81, 225, 353, 405
atonement <u>105</u>, <u>269</u>, <u>276–80</u>, <u>281–87</u>, <u>364</u>, <u>436</u>
        expiation <u>286–87</u>
        incarnation and 19, 104-5, 283-86
        law of God and 278, 282
        love of God and 125, 277-78, 286
        meaning of <u>287–92</u>
        Old Testament <u>283–84</u>
        penal-substitution theory <u>289–92</u>
        propitiation <u>286–87</u>, <u>290</u>
        sacrificial <u>19</u>, <u>20</u>, <u>162</u>, <u>285–88</u>
        sin and 279–80
        substitutionary <u>284–85</u>, <u>288–89</u>, <u>365</u>
attitude 206, 277
Augustine 9, 14, 116, 118, 342
        on atonement <u>279</u>, <u>436</u>
        on eschatology 454, 458
        on natural headship 230, 231–32
Aulén, Gustaf 278–79
authentic existence 335
authority <u>73–74</u>, <u>220</u>
        biblical <u>50–52</u>, <u>54–55</u>, <u>61</u>, <u>69–74</u>
        in church <u>406–9</u>
        of God <u>7</u>, <u>69–74</u>
        papal <u>70</u>, <u>406</u>
        within the Trinity <u>115–16</u>
autonomy <u>335</u>, <u>408</u>
Azusa Street meetings <u>310</u>
backsliding 383–84
Baillie, John <u>474</u>
baptism 19, 306, 313, 411–18
```

```
believers' <u>415</u>, <u>417</u>
         covenant and <u>413–14</u>, <u>416–17</u>
         faith and 413, 415, 417, 420
         formula 110, 111, 299–300
         Great Commission and 19, 111, 299, 415
         of Holy Spirit 306, 310-11, 312-13, 412
         immersion <u>415</u>, <u>417–18</u>
         infant <u>413–14</u>, <u>417</u>
         of Jesus <u>113</u>, <u>243</u>, <u>263</u>, <u>306</u>, <u>415</u>, <u>418</u>
         as saving grace 412–13
         as symbol <u>218</u>, <u>417–18</u>
         as token of salvation <u>413–14</u>, <u>415–17</u>
         Trinity and <u>110</u>, <u>111</u>
         union with Christ and <u>412</u>, <u>417</u>, <u>418</u>
Baptists 9n2, 408, 415, 456
Barclay, William 28
bare theism 33
Barr, James 368
Barth, Karl 46, 168, 254n11, 342, 337
         on general revelation <u>31–33</u>
         on image of God in humans 188–89, 190
         theology of <u>14</u>, <u>154</u>
Basil <u>114</u>
Beegle, Dewey <u>55</u>, <u>63</u>
behavioral sciences <u>6</u>, <u>10</u>, <u>62</u>, <u>132</u>, <u>139</u>, <u>324</u>
         psychology <u>178–79</u>, <u>312</u>
         sociology <u>36</u>, <u>321</u>, <u>392</u>
Behe, Michael 141
belief <u>46</u>, <u>70</u>, <u>83–84</u>
         in Christ 19, 352, 354–55, 358
believers' baptism 415, 417
Bellow, Saul 406
Berkhof, Louis <u>98</u>, <u>217</u>, <u>420</u>, <u>451</u>
Bible, the 41, 51–54, 66, 339, 433
         authority of <u>10</u>, <u>50–52</u>, <u>54–55</u>, <u>61</u>, <u>69–74</u>
         canonicity <u>63–64</u>
         as constitution <u>6–7</u>
```

```
didactic passages in <u>8</u>, <u>18</u>, <u>151</u>, <u>377</u>
        history in 41–42, 60–61, 63–64
        inerrancy of 60–66
        inspiration 44–45, 49–57, 299, 304
        interpretation <u>44–45</u>, <u>47</u>, <u>74</u>, <u>457</u>
        liberation theologies and 334
        magnification <u>55–56</u>
        meaning <u>8–10</u>, <u>18</u>, <u>21</u>
        narrative passages <u>8</u>, <u>28–29</u>, <u>47</u>, <u>151</u>
        numerical approximations in 64–65
        problematic passages in 62–63, 65–66
        purpose of <u>64–65</u>, <u>139</u>
        as revelation <u>47–48</u>
        science and <u>5–6</u>, <u>60–61</u>, <u>62–63</u>, <u>139–42</u>
        truth of <u>63–66</u>
        unity <u>8</u>, <u>108–9</u>, <u>110–13</u>
        See also special revelation
biblical-theology movement 198
bishops 406–7
bitheism 113
black theology <u>334</u>
blasphemy <u>110</u>, <u>238–39</u>
        of Holy Spirit 300, 306, 313
blindness 9, 34, 71, 156, 172
        spiritual <u>346</u>, <u>356</u>
Bloch, Ernst 428
blood of Christ 419–20
body
        church as Christ's <u>395–96</u>, <u>422</u>
        physical <u>196–201</u>, <u>227</u>
        spiritual <u>272</u>, <u>448–49</u>
        as temple of Holy Spirit 110, 449
        See also resurrection body
Boettner, Loraine 252, 344
Bonhoeffer, Dietrich 336, 354
bookkeeping framework (justification) 367
"born again" 357
```

```
Boyd, Gregory 324
bride of Christ <u>395</u>, <u>473</u>
Brunner, Emil 46, 188–89, 190
Bultmann, Rudolf 14, 335
Bushnell, Horace 277
Caesar Augustus 153
Caiaphas <u>284–85</u>, <u>442</u>
calling <u>350–51</u>, <u>358</u>, <u>378</u>
Calvin, John <u>14</u>, <u>116</u>, <u>342</u>, <u>420</u>
        on baptism <u>417–18</u>
        on eschatology 458
        on revelation <u>33–34</u>, <u>320</u>
Calvinism 216
        Lord's Supper in 420–21
        original sin in 229–30
        perseverance in <u>378–79</u>, <u>381</u>
        predestination in <u>126–27</u>, <u>130</u>, <u>342–44</u>, <u>345–46</u>, <u>347–48</u>
        security of salvation in 378–79
        sovereignty of God in 161, 162
        total depravity in <u>229–30</u>, <u>342–43</u>
        TULIP in <u>342–43</u>
        unconditional plan of God in 127–28
Camus, Albert <u>179</u>, <u>406</u>
capitalism 334
Cappadocian theologians <u>114–15</u>
causes, regress of 30, 32
certainty <u>71</u>, <u>151</u>
Chalcedonian formula 262
chance 179, 182
charismata (gifts) <u>307</u>, <u>309–10</u>
charismatic groups <u>73</u>, <u>297</u>, <u>310</u>, <u>319</u>
charismatic leadership 305
charismatic movement 310-12, 324
charismatic phenomena 307, 313
"cheap grace" (Bonhoeffer) 354
children of God <u>359</u>, <u>369–71</u>
```

```
chiliasm 456
Christianity
        emergence of 242
        uniqueness of 134, 323–24
        world religions and 134, 321-24
Christian life and maturity <u>73–74</u>, <u>200–201</u>, <u>228</u>, <u>257</u>, <u>356–57</u>
Christian Science <u>161</u>
church <u>170</u>, <u>200</u>, <u>274–75</u>, <u>396</u>, <u>422</u>
        as body of Christ <u>395–96</u>, <u>422</u>
        creation doctrine and 134
        edification of 314–15, 401–3
        evangelism <u>400–401</u>, <u>402–3</u>, <u>405</u>
        fellowship <u>392–93</u>, <u>396</u>, <u>401–3</u>, <u>472</u>
        functions of <u>400–404</u>
        gifts of the Holy Spirit <u>308–9</u>, <u>314–15</u>, <u>395</u>, <u>401–2</u>
        gospel proclamation 404-6, 454
        government 406–9
        history 9, 14, 61–62
        Israel and 457–58, 466
        New Testament 318, 320, 407, 409
        as people of God <u>110</u>, <u>393–95</u>
        prophecy and 318–20
        science and <u>180–82</u>
        as temple of Holy Spirit 396–98
        third-world <u>36–37</u>, <u>153</u>
        Trinity and 398
        union with Christ 395, 422
        unity <u>61</u>, <u>392–93</u>, <u>396</u>, <u>397</u>
circular reasoning <u>50–51</u>
circumcision <u>366</u>, <u>394</u>, <u>413–14</u>, <u>416–17</u>
Clark, Gordon H. 161
Clement of Alexandria 196
clergy <u>406–8</u>, <u>423</u>
commemoration, Lord's Supper as <u>420–22</u>
communism <u>132</u>, <u>428</u>
concursive inspiration 44
condemnation <u>364–65</u>, <u>403</u>, <u>415–16</u>
```

```
conditional immortality 217
conditional unity (human nature) 199–201
confidence 17, 83, 148, 152, 348, 371, 379
Congar, Yves 336–37
congregational church government 408–9
conscience 226–27
consubstantiation 419
contextualization 4, 7, 10–11, 13, 18–21
        approaches <u>15–16</u>
        as contemporary meaning 8–9
conversion <u>206</u>, <u>208–9</u>, <u>322–23</u>, <u>333</u>, <u>350–55</u>
        Holy Spirit and 307
        as new birth 255, 338, 355-58, 379, 415
conviction of sin <u>72</u>, <u>110</u>, <u>321</u>, <u>355</u>
Cornelius 28
cosmic eschatology <u>442–52</u>
cosmology <u>30</u>, <u>33</u>, <u>41</u>, <u>141</u>
Council of Chalcedon (451) 264
Council of Constantinople (381) 114, 197, 252, 261–62
Council of Ephesus (431) 262
Council of Nicaea (325) <u>243</u>, <u>261–62</u>
Council of Trent (1545–63) <u>337</u>, <u>418</u>
covenantal framework (justification) 367
covenantal nomism 366
covenants 41, 122–23, 230
        Abrahamic <u>93</u>, <u>94</u>, <u>101</u>, <u>394–95</u>, <u>413–14</u>, <u>457–58</u>
        Adamic 230
        baptism and <u>413–14</u>, <u>416–17</u>
        new <u>368</u>, <u>394–95</u>, <u>466</u>
creation <u>10</u>, <u>82</u>, <u>133–42</u>, <u>164</u>, <u>192</u>, <u>386</u>
        dualism in <u>137–38</u>
        evil and 134, 137–38, 162–63
        ex nihilo (out of nothing) 135-36, 137, 138
        goodness of 134, 137–38, 142
        Holy Spirit and <u>136–37</u>, <u>298</u>, <u>304</u>
        of humanity <u>134</u>, <u>179–84</u>
        Jesus and <u>136–37</u>, <u>146</u>
```

```
mediate (derivative) 135
         providence of God and 146, 148-49
         relationship to God 80, 82-83, 84, 140
         Trinity and <u>112–13</u>, <u>136–37</u>
creationism 139, 230
         fiat <u>140</u>, <u>180–81</u>
         progressive <u>135</u>, <u>141</u>, <u>181–82</u>
creeds <u>41</u>, <u>134</u>
cremation 435
Cro-Magnon man 182
crucifixion 45, 126, 150, 152, 239, 249, 271
cultural mandate 190
cultural perspective 4, 9–12, 14–15, 19, 21
         meaning of Scripture and 64–65
curse, the <u>216–18</u>, <u>232</u>, <u>279</u>, <u>363</u>
Daniel <u>147</u>
Darwinism <u>132</u>, <u>141–42</u>
David <u>51–52</u>, <u>54</u>, <u>149</u>, <u>165</u>, <u>226</u>
         sin of <u>224</u>, <u>369</u>
Davies, W. D. <u>437</u>
Day of Atonement 287
dead, burial of 182
death <u>148</u>, <u>162</u>, <u>179</u>, <u>386</u>, <u>406</u>, <u>418</u>
         as consequence of sin <u>164</u>, <u>216–18</u>, <u>225</u>, <u>230</u>, <u>432–33</u>
         eternal <u>217</u>, <u>218</u>, <u>431–33</u>
         physical <u>199</u>, <u>216–18</u>, <u>430–33</u>, <u>459–60</u>
         second 218, 432, 456, 459-60, 475
         soul (spirit) and <u>197</u>, <u>431</u>, <u>434</u>
         spiritual <u>216–18</u>, <u>227</u>, <u>431–33</u>
         universality of <u>183</u>, <u>225</u>, <u>230–31</u>, <u>430–31</u>, <u>438</u>
Death of God theology 336
Deere, Jack <u>319</u>, <u>320</u>
deism <u>147–48</u>
Demas 381
Dembski, William 141–42
demon possession <u>15</u>, <u>172–73</u>, <u>324–26</u>
```

```
demons <u>171–74</u>, <u>313</u>, <u>324–27</u>, <u>451</u>
desires 207–9, 344–45, 478
deterrent, punishment as 214–16
determinism 161
devil, the. See Satan
dialectical materialism 132, 428
dichotomism <u>195</u>, <u>197</u>
dictation theory of inspiration 53, 56-57
didactic approach to inspiration 55
discernment 319
discipleship 354
discipline <u>215–16</u>, <u>371</u>, <u>423</u>, <u>462</u>
disease <u>160–61</u>, <u>386</u>
        demons and <u>172</u>, <u>325–26</u>
        sin and <u>165</u>, <u>217</u>, <u>333</u>
disembodied state <u>197–98</u>, <u>199</u>, <u>437–38</u>
disobedience 204–5, 282
dispensationalism 444, 456, 457–58, 463
Docetism <u>251–52</u>, <u>262–63</u>, <u>266–67</u>
doctrine <u>4–5</u>, <u>12</u>, <u>19</u>, <u>62</u>, <u>254</u>
        permanence criteria in 18, 20
        revelation 21, 46
Dodd, C. H. 286
dominion, human 207
doomsday philosophies 132
double predestination 344
dreams 42, 44
dualism <u>161–62</u>
        cosmic 326
        in creation <u>137–38</u>
        of human nature <u>197</u>, <u>199n8</u>, <u>434</u>, <u>438</u>
dynamic incarnation 263
dynamic theory of inspiration 53
earth, age of <u>140–41</u>
Eastern fathers 196
Eastern religions 131, 299
```

```
"easy believism" 354
Ebionism <u>243</u>, <u>266–67</u>
eclecticism 15
ecology 82-83, 142, 182-83
economic struggle 206, 334
economic view of Trinity 112-13
Eden, garden of 217
education <u>206</u>, <u>358</u>, <u>402</u>
        theological 6, 15, 18, 193
effectual calling <u>350–51</u>, <u>358</u>, <u>378</u>
Eichrodt, Walther 191
Einstein, Albert 91–92
elect, the <u>110</u>, <u>127</u>, <u>131</u>, <u>345–46</u>, <u>382</u>
        eschatology and <u>170</u>, <u>344</u>, <u>462–64</u>
        evangelism and 348
election 122, 127–28, 342–43, 345–46, 351
        of Israel <u>343</u>, <u>346</u>, <u>394–95</u>
Elijah <u>148</u>, <u>433</u>, <u>450</u>, <u>474</u>
Elisha <u>73n5</u>, <u>171</u>, <u>173</u>
Elliott, Harrison Sacket 206
'elohim 111
'el shaddai <u>93</u>
emanation <u>134</u>, <u>136</u>, <u>138</u>, <u>162</u>
emotions <u>172</u>, <u>200–201</u>, <u>227</u>, <u>352–53</u>
        of God 213
        of Holy Spirit 300
        of Jesus 306
empathy, sin and 220–21
Enlightenment 324
enmity <u>212–13</u>, <u>289</u>, <u>370</u>
epiphaneia <u>443</u>, <u>445–46</u>
episcopal church government 406–7
epistemology 47, 62
equivalent authority of Trinity 115–16
error, inerrancy and 66
eschatology 427–30
        cosmic <u>442–52</u>
```

```
the elect and 170, 344, 462-64
         individual <u>430–39</u>, <u>470–79</u>
         Israel and 429, 462–63
         kingdom of God and 430, 445, 455
eschatomania 429
eschatophobia 429
eternal death <u>217</u>, <u>218</u>, <u>431–33</u>
eternal life <u>165–66</u>, <u>217–18</u>, <u>285</u>, <u>334</u>, <u>343</u>, <u>379</u>, <u>384</u>
Eucharist 333, 361, 419
Euclid 41
Eutychianism <u>262–63</u>, <u>264</u>, <u>266–67</u>
evangelicalism <u>14</u>, <u>135</u>, <u>318–19</u>, <u>403–4</u>
evangelical theology <u>60</u>, <u>62</u>, <u>115</u>, <u>344</u>
         on salvation <u>332–33</u>, <u>338–39</u>
         on sin <u>206–7</u>, <u>232</u>
evangelism 83, 206, 325, 352, 400-401, 402-3, 405, 430
         postmillennialism and 454–55
         predestination and <u>131</u>, <u>346</u>, <u>347–48</u>
Eve 40, 90, 100, 181, 193
         free will and <u>150</u>, <u>164</u>
         mortality of 217–18
         prefall <u>186</u>, <u>190–91</u>, <u>256</u>, <u>265</u>
         sin of 205, 208, 216, 219, 254, 432
evil <u>98</u>, <u>132</u>, <u>160–66</u>, <u>279</u>, <u>306</u>, <u>324–25</u>
         and creation 134, 137–38, 162–63
         eschatology and <u>456–57</u>, <u>471</u>
         God's will and <u>126–27</u>
         human nature and <u>200–201</u>, <u>219</u>, <u>224</u>, <u>226</u>, <u>229</u>
evolution <u>33</u>, <u>132</u>, <u>134–35</u>, <u>139</u>, <u>140–42</u>, <u>206</u>
         direct human creation and 179, 180–82
exclusivism 322
excommunication 395
exegesis <u>7–10</u>, <u>74</u>, <u>151</u>
existence 182, 335
         of God <u>30–31</u>, <u>33</u>, <u>88–89</u>
existential estrangement 206
existentialism <u>132</u>, <u>179</u>, <u>190</u>, <u>206</u>, <u>406</u>
```

```
existential theology 335
Existenz 335
exorcism <u>172–73</u>, <u>306</u>, <u>310</u>, <u>326</u>
experience <u>5</u>, <u>14</u>, <u>41</u>, <u>46</u>, <u>313</u>, <u>321</u>, <u>352</u>
          authority of \frac{7}{319}
          Holy Spirit and <u>296–97</u>, <u>311</u>, <u>314</u>, <u>318</u>
          image of God and 188–89
exploitation 184, 334
faith <u>5</u>, <u>46</u>, <u>173</u>, <u>307</u>, <u>355</u>, <u>367</u>
          salvation and <u>35–36</u>, <u>333</u>, <u>344</u>, <u>351–52</u>, <u>354–55</u>, <u>358</u>, <u>366</u>
          spectacles of 34
          work of God and 154-55
          works and <u>339</u>, <u>366</u>, <u>368</u>
faithfulness of God 100, 101
fall 83, 164, 216–17, 233, 363
          of angels <u>171–72</u>
          and image of God <u>186</u>, <u>191</u>
falling away <u>380–84</u>
Father, the <u>108–10</u>, <u>112–17</u>, <u>136–37</u>, <u>215</u>, <u>297–98</u>
          Christians and <u>83</u>, <u>90</u>, <u>370–71</u>
          Jesus and <u>42</u>, <u>45</u>, <u>100</u>, <u>102</u>
          See also God; Jesus Christ, relationship with Father; Trinity, the
fear of God <u>277</u>, <u>370–71</u>
federal headship 230, 231
Feinberg, John 129–30
fellowship <u>398</u>, <u>472</u>
          church <u>392–93</u>, <u>396</u>, <u>401–3</u>, <u>472</u>
          conditions of <u>12</u>, <u>40</u>, <u>353</u>, <u>370</u>, <u>395</u>, <u>430</u>
          eternal <u>476</u>, <u>478</u>
          with God <u>83</u>, <u>105</u>, <u>122–23</u>, <u>163</u>, <u>194</u>, <u>212</u>, <u>282</u>
          of Trinity 112, 192
feminist theology <u>334</u>
fiat creationism <u>140</u>, <u>180–81</u>
finiteness of humanity 183-84
finitism 151
flesh <u>249</u>, <u>252</u>, <u>285</u>, <u>307</u>, <u>357</u>, <u>472</u>
```

```
flood, Genesis <u>104</u>, <u>140</u>, <u>215</u>, <u>224</u>, <u>450</u>
Foerster, Werner <u>135</u>
footwashing 19–20
foreknowledge 92, 126–27, 130, 150, 151n5, 345
forensic justification 335, 363–68
foreordination <u>122</u>, <u>130</u>, <u>342</u>, <u>345</u>, <u>347</u>
forgiveness 278, 291, 369–70, 436
       of Jesus <u>104</u>, <u>110</u>, <u>238–39</u>
Fosdick, Harry Emerson <u>16–17</u>, <u>197</u>
Frankl, Victor 428
freedom, human <u>128–30</u>, <u>150–51</u>, <u>162</u>, <u>194</u>
       adoption and 370-71
       Calvinist idea of 381
       plan of God and <u>125–31</u>
       predestination and 346, 348
       responsibility and 138, 150
       salvation and 382-83
       sin and <u>138</u>, <u>164</u>, <u>219</u>, <u>377</u>
free will 93, 124–25, 229, 256n14
       moral evil and <u>160</u>, <u>162</u>
       predestination and 344
       sovereignty of God and 149–50
fruit of the Spirit 308, 314, 375, 377, 384, 396–97
Fuller, Reginald 241
full inerrancy 60
functional Christology 244
fundamentalism 73, 135, 252, 456
futurism 428
Gaussen, Louis 63
Gehenna <u>437–38</u>
genealogies 21, 50, 140, 249
general calling 350
general providence <u>150–51</u>
general revelation <u>10</u>, <u>82–83</u>, <u>134</u>, <u>139</u>
       human responsibility and 28, 35–36
       insufficiency of 31–34
```

```
modes of <u>26–27</u>
        morality and <u>27–28</u>, <u>35</u>, <u>37</u>
        sin and 34, 36
        special revelation and <u>25–26</u>, <u>28–29</u>, <u>31</u>, <u>33</u>, <u>35–36</u>, <u>40–41</u>
gifts of the Spirit 71, 110, 300, 308–15, 395, 397
        church and <u>308–9</u>, <u>314–15</u>, <u>395</u>, <u>401–2</u>
Gilkey, Langdon <u>42–43</u>
glory 338, 373, 384–87, 398, 471
glossolalia <u>310–15</u>, <u>401–2</u>
gluttony 207
gnosticism 251
God <u>12</u>, <u>79–85</u>, <u>88–89</u>, <u>94</u>, <u>100</u>, <u>282</u>
        actions of 42-44, 90, 125, 148
        attributes of <u>84–85</u>, <u>98–104</u>
        authority of <u>7</u>, <u>69–74</u>
        benevolence of <u>102–3</u>
        consistency of 93–94, 126
        enemies of 212–13
        existence of 30–31, 33, 88–89
        faithfulness of <u>100</u>, <u>101</u>, <u>104</u>
        fear of <u>277</u>, <u>370–71</u>
        foreknowledge of <u>92</u>, <u>126–27</u>, <u>130</u>, <u>347</u>
        glory of 125, 137, 163, 169, 182, 314, 384
        goodness of <u>85</u>, <u>97–105</u>, <u>160–61</u>
        greatness of <u>31</u>, <u>85</u>, <u>87–94</u>, <u>160–61</u>
        holiness of 82, 84, 98–99, 212–13, 218, 282
        immanence of <u>79–85</u>, <u>91</u>, <u>148</u>
        "inabilities" of 93, 162, 478
        incomprehensibility of 43, 84
        as infinite <u>90–93</u>, <u>137</u>
        as life <u>88–89</u>
        mercy of 103, 344
        metaphysical gap between creation and 83, 139
        moral qualities of 98–104
        omnipotence of <u>33</u>, <u>61</u>, <u>92–93</u>, <u>161</u>, <u>478</u>
        omnipresence of 90–91
        omniscience of <u>42</u>, <u>61</u>, <u>92</u>, <u>188</u>
```

```
as personal <u>41–42</u>, <u>89–90</u>, <u>152–53</u>
         power of <u>92–93</u>, <u>160–61</u>, <u>255</u>
         presence of <u>471–72</u>, <u>475</u>
         providence 146–57
         purity of <u>98–100</u>
         reverence for 83-84
         righteousness of 99, 364
         as ruler 278
         and salvation desired for all 344-45, 478
         self-revelation of <u>40–41</u>, <u>83</u>, <u>84–85</u>
         in space and time 90–92
         transcendence of <u>18</u>, <u>42</u>, <u>70–71</u>, <u>79–85</u>, <u>91</u>, <u>243</u>, <u>257</u>
         truthfulness of <u>50</u>, <u>61</u>, <u>100–101</u>
         uniqueness of <u>33</u>, <u>98</u>, <u>108–9</u>, <u>113</u>, <u>139</u>, <u>243</u>
         vengeance of <u>215</u>, <u>291</u>
         as victim of evil 165
         wisdom of <u>71–72</u>, <u>92</u>, <u>130–31</u>, <u>188</u>
gods <u>88–89</u>, <u>90</u>, <u>92</u>, <u>100</u>
Golden Rule 17
goodness 17, 30-31, 136, 152, 163-64, 374
         of creation <u>134</u>, <u>137–38</u>, <u>142</u>
         of God <u>85</u>, <u>92</u>, <u>97–105</u>, <u>160–61</u>
         of non-Christians 82, 102
gospel <u>83</u>, <u>291</u>, <u>351</u>, <u>353–54</u>
         creation and 36
         proclaiming the <u>326–37</u>, <u>404–6</u>, <u>412</u>, <u>454</u>
governmental atonement theory <u>278</u>
grace <u>103</u>, <u>229</u>, <u>232</u>, <u>292</u>, <u>336–37</u>
         baptism and <u>412–13</u>
         cheap <u>354</u>
         common 323
         prevenient 229, 345, 346-47, 351
         sacraments and 333, 336
         salvation by <u>31</u>, <u>103</u>, <u>255</u>, <u>333</u>, <u>339</u>, <u>348</u>
         sanctifying <u>337</u>, <u>382–83</u>
gradational authority of Trinity 115–16
Great Commission 91, 400, 402, 454
```

```
baptism and 19, 415, 111, 299, 415
Greek, Koiné <u>42</u>, <u>65</u>
Greek philosophy 84, 114–15
Greek thought 94, 191, 244, 324, 335, 368
Gregory of Nazianzus 114
Gregory of Nyssa 114, 196
Grotius, Hugo 278
Grudem, Wayne 319
guardian angels 170–74
Guelich, Robert <u>326–27</u>
guilt 204, 213–14, 219, 229, 231–33, 338, 363
Gundry, Robert <u>367</u>
Hades <u>437–38</u>
harmonization of Scripture 63
Headlam, Arthur 365
healing 13, 173, 310, 326, 403
       prayer for <u>153</u>, <u>173</u>
heart, the 205, 298, 308, 338, 414
       enlightenment of <u>28</u>, <u>69</u>, <u>319</u>
       evil of 219, 224, 226, 229
       internal law of <u>204</u>, <u>225–26</u>
heaven 15, 81, 272, 436, 438
       cosmic spiritual warfare and 324-25
       as final state <u>470–75</u>, <u>479</u>
       kingdom of <u>274</u>, <u>275</u>
Hegel, Georg 132
Heidegger, Martin 335
hell 435–36, 437–38, 475–79
Helm, Paul 438
Henry, Carl <u>66</u>
heresies <u>266–67</u>
hermeneutics <u>74</u>, <u>181</u>
Hiebert, Paul 326
Hinduism <u>131</u>, <u>134</u>, <u>326</u>
Hippolytus 112
historical theology 9, 21
```

```
history <u>27</u>, <u>74</u>, <u>450</u>, <u>452</u>
        cyclical view of <u>131–32</u>
        God's control of <u>93</u>, <u>148–51</u>, <u>433</u>
        judgment and 450, 452
        material view of 132
        special revelation and 29, 43–44
Hitler, Adolf <u>82</u>, <u>154</u>
Hoekema, Anthony <u>434</u>
holiness 374
        of God <u>82</u>, <u>84</u>, <u>98–99</u>, <u>212–13</u>, <u>218</u>, <u>282</u>
        of God's people 98, 395, 397
"Holy Ghost" 111, 297
Holy Spirit, the <u>72–73</u>, <u>273</u>, <u>295–301</u>, <u>307–9</u>
        baptism and 306, 310-11, 312-13, 412
        biblical understanding of 18, 70–74
        blasphemy of <u>300</u>, <u>306</u>, <u>313</u>
        and conviction of sin <u>110</u>, <u>321</u>, <u>355</u>
        creation and 136-37, 298, 304
        deity of 110, 113, 117, 297–99
        empowering work of <u>305</u>, <u>307–8</u>, <u>314–15</u>, <u>400</u>
        and exorcism <u>172–73</u>, <u>306</u>
        fruit of 308, 314, 375, 377, 384, 396–97
        gifts of 71, 110, 300, 308–15, 395, 397
        indwelling of 308, 314-15, 397-98, 409
        and inspiration of the Bible <u>44</u>, <u>50–57</u>, <u>299</u>, <u>304</u>
        as person 299–301
        prophecy today and 318–21
        regeneration and <u>70–73</u>, <u>110</u>, <u>298</u>, <u>307</u>, <u>357</u>
        revealing work of 274, 308
        salvation and <u>115</u>, <u>307</u>
        sanctification and 305–8, 374–75
        Spirit of God 304–5
        spirits and 324–27
        subordination of 297, 301
        virgin birth and 253-54, 298, 306
        work of 15, 72-73, 110, 112, 298-301, 303-6
        world religions and <u>321–24</u>
```

```
homoiousios 243
homoousios 243
honesty 101
hope <u>335</u>, <u>380</u>, <u>386</u>, <u>406</u>, <u>428–30</u>
        blessed 445-46, 448, 463, 465
        church and 395, 406
        for future <u>5</u>, <u>17</u>, <u>242</u>, <u>360</u>, <u>386</u>
        in resurrection <u>384</u>, <u>434</u>, <u>447</u>
hopelessness <u>326</u>, <u>346</u>, <u>475</u>
Hordern, William 66
Hughes, James 460
humanism 193
humanity 27, 178–84, 193, 257, 336
        actions of <u>126–27</u>, <u>131</u>, <u>153</u>, <u>189–90</u>
        as animals <u>178–79</u>, <u>206</u>
        Christian view of <u>179–84</u>
        creation of <u>134</u>, <u>179–84</u>
        as eternal <u>179–80</u>, <u>478</u>
        existential view of 335
        fulfillment of <u>180</u>, <u>183</u>, <u>192</u>
        identity of <u>182–83</u>
        limitations of 29, 40, 61, 71, 183–84
        obedience of <u>137</u>, <u>370–71</u>, <u>420</u>
        restoration of 357, 395
        uniqueness of 10, 114, 183, 190
        See also human nature; relationships, human; responsibility, human; soul, human; will, human
human nature <u>195–201</u>, <u>208</u>
        dualism in 197, 199n8, 434, 438
        evil and <u>200–201</u>
        physical appearance and <u>182</u>
        as unity <u>435</u>, <u>437–38</u>
Hume, David 160
humility <u>19–20</u>, <u>270–71</u>
Hymenaeus
        and Alexander 381, 383
        and Philetus 381, 383, 448-49
hypostatic union 263
```

```
"I AM formula" 239
idolatry 88-89, 100, 108-9, 139, 205
illumination 351
       by Holy Spirit 10, 70–71, 73, 308, 319–20
       theory of inspiration 52–53
image of God 10, 27, 111, 118, 179-80, 183, 190, 266
       dominion and <u>189–92</u>, <u>193–94</u>
       fall and <u>186</u>, <u>191</u>
       functional view <u>187</u>, <u>189–91</u>, <u>192</u>
       Jesus and 188, 192–93, 375
       relational view 187–90, 192
       substantive view 187–88, 191, 192
       as universal <u>188</u>, <u>191</u>, <u>193–94</u>
immanence of God <u>79–85</u>, <u>91</u>, <u>148</u>
immersion baptism 415, 417–18
imminent posttribulationism 466
imminent second coming 444, 446–47, 463, 465
immortality, human 216-17, 432, 477-78
imputation
       of righteousness <u>232–33</u>, <u>364–65</u>, <u>367</u>
       of sin <u>230</u>, <u>232–33</u>
incarnation <u>138</u>, <u>232</u>, <u>251–52</u>, <u>257</u>
       atonement and 19, 104-5, 279-80, 283-86
       dynamic 263
       humiliation of Jesus 270–71
       redemption and 200–201
       salvation and <u>165</u>, <u>200</u>, <u>248</u>, <u>260–61</u>
       as special revelation <u>32</u>, <u>42–45</u>, <u>150</u>
       Trinity and <u>115</u>, <u>117</u>, <u>244</u>
       two natures of Jesus and <u>263–67</u>
       virgin birth and 253-55
inclusivism 26, 322
individual eschatology 430–39, 470–79
inerrancy 60–66
infants and children 231–33, 413–14, 417
injustice 290–91, 343
insensitivity <u>219–20</u>
```

```
inspiration <u>44</u>, <u>49–57</u>
        by Holy Spirit 44, 50–57, 299, 304
        inerrancy and <u>61</u>, <u>62–63</u>
instantaneous resurrection 437
intelligent design <u>30</u>, <u>33</u>, <u>141–42</u>
intercession 321
        of Jesus <u>248</u>, <u>257</u>, <u>273</u>, <u>275–76</u>, <u>287</u>, <u>379</u>
        See also prayer
intermediate state 198-200, 201, 433-39
interpretation, biblical 44–45, 47, 74
        of prophecy <u>457</u>, <u>460</u>
interreligious dialogue 323
intuition theory of inspiration <u>52</u>
Islam <u>238</u>
Israel <u>27</u>, <u>52</u>, <u>98</u>, <u>100</u>, <u>212</u>, <u>451</u>
        church and <u>457–58</u>, <u>466</u>
        election of 343, 346, 394–95
        eschatology and <u>429</u>, <u>462–63</u>
        and God's plan 122–23
        and God's unity 108-9
        preservation of <u>146–47</u>
        relationship with God <u>104</u>, <u>289</u>
        special revelation and 43-44
Jehovah's Witnesses 243, 444
Jeremias, Joachim 437–38
Jesus Christ 45, 52, 54–55, 128, 164–65, 250
        acts of 244, 265
        authority of <u>19</u>, <u>239–40</u>
        baptism of 113, 243, 263, 306, 415, 418
        compassion of <u>13</u>, <u>157</u>, <u>250</u>
        death of <u>271</u>, <u>277</u>
        deity of <u>108</u>, <u>109–10</u>, <u>112</u>, <u>113</u>, <u>117</u>, <u>237–45</u>, <u>248</u>
        exaltation of 271–73
        as example 280
        as firstborn 369, 395, 448
        glorification of <u>72</u>, <u>384–85</u>, <u>444</u>, <u>471</u>
```

```
as high priest <u>20</u>, <u>192</u>, <u>287</u>
         Holy Spirit and <u>306–7</u>, <u>362</u>
         humanity of <u>5</u>, <u>40</u>, <u>42</u>, <u>45</u>, <u>247–57</u>, <u>283</u>
         humiliation of 270–71
         and immanence 91
         and indwelling <u>360–61</u>, <u>397</u>
         and intercession <u>248</u>, <u>257</u>, <u>273</u>, <u>275–76</u>, <u>287</u>, <u>379</u>
         as judge <u>110</u>, <u>239</u>, <u>241</u>, <u>273</u>, <u>444</u>, <u>450–51</u>
         knowledge of 250–51
         limitations of humanity of 217, 265, 271
         love of <u>192–93</u>, <u>250</u>, <u>284–85</u>, <u>420</u>
         as Messiah <u>273–76</u>, <u>284</u>, <u>305–6</u>, <u>347</u>
         metaphors for 421–22
         personality of <u>266–67</u>
         physical body of 248–49
         power of <u>148–49</u>, <u>240</u>, <u>363</u>
         as prophet <u>273–74</u>
         as ransom 284–85
         reign of 110, 273, 275, 420, 453-54, 453-61
         relationship with Father <u>113</u>, <u>239–41</u>, <u>243</u>, <u>284–85</u>
         revelatory role of <u>273–75</u>
         righteousness of 365–67
         as sacrifice <u>20</u>, <u>285–87</u>
         self-consciousness of 110, 238-40, 285
         servanthood of 265, 270
         sinlessness of <u>204</u>, <u>253–57</u>
         as Son of God <u>110</u>, <u>112–17</u>, <u>136</u>, <u>240</u>, <u>296–97</u>
         as Son of Man 261, 275, 442
         subordination of <u>115–16</u>, <u>117</u>, <u>192</u>, <u>243–44</u>, <u>265</u>
         as substitute 284–85
         as Suffering Servant 284
         teaching of <u>17</u>, <u>72</u>, <u>93</u>, <u>103</u>, <u>147</u>
         unity of two natures in 259–67
         as victim of evil 165, 287
         victory of <u>271</u>, <u>273</u>, <u>279</u>, <u>325–26</u>, <u>430</u>, <u>459</u>
         work of 261, 269-80, 396
Jewish apocalyptic literature <u>326</u>, <u>458</u>
```

Job <u>123</u>, <u>152</u>, <u>169</u>, <u>172</u> John (apostle) <u>54</u>, <u>124</u>, <u>240</u>, <u>284</u>, <u>355</u> Johnson, Philip <u>141</u>

```
John the Baptist <u>285</u>, <u>288</u>, <u>306</u>, <u>413</u>
         baptism of 415, 418
         Jesus and <u>354</u>, <u>355</u>
         preaching of <u>353</u>, <u>403</u>
Jonah <u>126</u>, <u>137</u>
Judaism <u>35</u>, <u>108</u>, <u>313</u>, <u>366</u>, <u>368</u>, <u>416–17</u>
         angels and <u>168–69</u>, <u>170</u>, <u>171</u>
         Jesus and <u>110</u>, <u>239–41</u>, <u>242</u>
Judaizers <u>366–67</u>
Judas Iscariot <u>65–66</u>, <u>123</u>, <u>256</u>, <u>353</u>, <u>380–81</u>
judgment 31, 92, 100, 166, 361–62, 364
         angels and <u>170</u>, <u>451</u>
         final 367–68, 379, 385, 438, 450–51, 458
         finality of <u>451</u>, <u>475–77</u>
         love of God and <u>213</u>, <u>290</u>, <u>475–78</u>
justice <u>103</u>, <u>278</u>, <u>290–91</u>, <u>452</u>
         law of God and 99–100, 364–65
         love of God and <u>99–100</u>, <u>104–5</u>
         retribution and 215
justification 276, 335, 337–38, 359, 363–70
         baptism and 413
         forensic righteousness 335, 336–68
         sanctification and <u>368</u>, <u>374–75</u>, <u>386</u>
Justin 112
Kant, Immanuel <u>30–31</u>
kenosis <u>264–65</u>
kenoticism 263
kingdom of God 110, 238-39, 274, 275
         eschatology and 430, 445, 455
         millennial 334, 453–460, 458
         reign of Christians and 363, 457, 472
knowledge, divine <u>26–27</u>, <u>30</u>, <u>32</u>, <u>36</u>, <u>40</u>, <u>43</u>, <u>92</u>, <u>126–27</u>, <u>130</u>, <u>250–51</u>, <u>347</u>
knowledge, human 71, 183, 311, 355, 385
         of deity <u>265–66</u>
         perfect 471
         responsibility and 478–79
```

```
sin and <u>25</u>, <u>40</u>
Kraft, Charles 324
Küng, Hans 337
Ladd, George 285, 286, 351, 445, 456, 465
language 42–43, 182, 322
Lao-tzu 351
last things <u>384–87</u>. See also eschatology; judgment; second coming
law of God <u>53–54</u>, <u>99–100</u>, <u>205</u>, <u>278</u>, <u>282</u>
        atonement and 278, 282
        humiliation of Jesus and <u>270–71</u>
        internal moral <u>204</u>, <u>225–27</u>
        justice and 99–100, 364–65
Lazarus, friend of Jesus 250, 434-35, 448
Lazarus, parable of <u>171</u>, <u>198–99</u>, <u>435</u>, <u>448</u>, <u>477</u>
legalism 204, 282, 366
Lewis, C. S. <u>327</u>, <u>478</u>
liberalism <u>14</u>, <u>31</u>, <u>48</u>, <u>197</u>, <u>198</u>, <u>434</u>, <u>454–55</u>
liberation theologies 150, 206, 332–35
likeness of God. See image of God
limited inerrancy 60–61
logic <u>29–30</u>, <u>50–51</u>, <u>83</u>
Logos <u>252</u>, <u>274</u>
loneliness <u>250</u>, <u>475</u>, <u>479</u>
Lord (kyrios) <u>241–42</u>
Lord's Supper <u>333</u>, <u>361</u>, <u>418–24</u>
        as symbol 422, 423
love, God's 180, 277, 282, 371, 379
        atonement and <u>125</u>, <u>277–78</u>, <u>286</u>
        characteristics of 43, 89–90, 97, 101–4
        discipline and <u>215–16</u>
        Jesus and <u>192–93</u>, <u>250</u>, <u>284–85</u>, <u>420</u>
        judgment and <u>213</u>, <u>290</u>, <u>475–78</u>
        justice and <u>99–100</u>, <u>104–5</u>
        preservation and 147–48
        salvation and 125, 286, 290, 343, 370-71
        Trinity and <u>101–2</u>, <u>118</u>
```

```
love, human 43, 220–21, 314, 393, 403
        for God 90, 109, 180, 192-93, 227
        sin's effect on 220–21
lust 207
Luther, Martin <u>417–18</u>, <u>419–20</u>
Lutheranism 11, 14, 310, 408
        baptism in <u>412–13</u>
        Lord's Supper in <u>419–20</u>, <u>421</u>
Machen, J. Gresham <u>17</u>
machine metaphor 148, 178
magnification of Scripture <u>55–56</u>
Manichaeism 161, 326
Marcionism 251
marriage <u>20</u>, <u>473</u>
Marx, Karl <u>132</u>
Marxism <u>5</u>, <u>428</u>
Mary (mother of Jesus) <u>252–55</u>, <u>262</u>, <u>306</u>
Mass, Catholic <u>419–20</u>, <u>436</u>
material possessions 206, 207, 220
        early church and <u>365</u>, <u>396–97</u>, <u>401</u>
meaning 29–30, 56, 64–65, 132
Melchizedek 28
Mennonites 415
mercy <u>103</u>, <u>344</u>
messengers of God 168, 170
method of correlation 10–11
midtribulation 466
millennium <u>334</u>, <u>453–460</u>
mind, human <u>29–30</u>, <u>34</u>, <u>205</u>, <u>207</u>, <u>227</u>, <u>300</u>. See also reason
miracles 82, 153, 155–57, 306
        revelation and <u>43–44</u>, <u>157</u>
        transcendence and 83–84
mission 11, 36, 290-91, 323, 401, 403-4
        predestination and 346-48
modalism <u>113–14</u>, <u>118</u>
modernism 16, 139, 248, 252, 291, 324, 325–26
```

```
modernist-fundamentalist controversy 135
Moltmann, Jürgen 428
monarchianism
        dynamic 113
        modalistic 113
monism
        in creation <u>138</u>
        human <u>197–99</u>, <u>198</u>, <u>199</u>, <u>434–35</u>
monotheism 108, 110, 243
Montanism 310
moral-influence atonement theory 277–78, 289
morality 40, 98–104, 138, 162, 214, 374
        evil and 160, 162, 164
        existence of God and <u>30–31</u>
        general revelation and <u>27–28</u>, <u>35</u>, <u>37</u>
        internal law of God and 226-27
        purity and <u>98–100</u>
Mormons 88, 188
morphē (form) <u>109</u>, <u>241</u>, <u>264</u>
Morris, Leon <u>239</u>, <u>256</u>
Moses <u>89</u>, <u>146</u>, <u>474</u>
motives, sin and <u>204–5</u>, <u>225–26</u>, <u>227</u>
murder <u>186–87</u>, <u>193</u>
Murk, James 182
Murray, John 362
names of God 41, 88–90, 111, 355
narrative, biblical <u>8</u>, <u>28–29</u>, <u>47</u>, <u>151</u>
natural evil <u>160</u>, <u>164</u>
natural headship 230, 231-32
naturalistic evolution 141
natural law <u>137</u>, <u>145</u>, <u>155–56</u>
natural science <u>6</u>, <u>10</u>, <u>134–35</u>, <u>139</u>
natural theology 4, 6, 26, 154
        general revelation and 29–32
nature <u>36–37</u>, <u>457</u>
        evil in <u>160</u>, <u>324–25</u>
```

```
general revelation and 26–27, 29
       God's control of 148-49
       worship of 88, 138–39
       See also creation
nature psalms <u>27–28</u>, <u>32</u>, <u>33</u>
Nebuchadnezzar 29, 149
Neolithic period <u>182</u>
neo-orthodoxy 14, 21, 45–46, 188–89, 198, 434
neo-Pentecostalism 310-11
Nestorianism <u>262</u>, <u>264</u>, <u>266–67</u>
new age 429–30
new birth 255, 338, 355–58, 379, 415
new covenant 368, 394–95, 466
new Jerusalem <u>456</u>, <u>471</u>
new life 110, 271, 351, 357, 418
new perspective on Paul 366–68
New Testament <u>53–55</u>, <u>123–24</u>
Niebuhr, Reinhold 14, 206
Noah 215, 224
nominalists 99
non-Christians 82-83, 102, 337, 432-33
       resurrection of 499–50
nongovernment church government 408
nonpropositional revelation 46–47
nuclear holocaust 428
obedience <u>192</u>, <u>137</u>, <u>370–71</u>, <u>420</u>
Old Testament 53–55, 122–23
       on atonement 283–84
       on resurrection 447–48
       sacrificial system <u>10</u>, <u>19</u>, <u>283–84</u>, <u>287</u>
omnipotence <u>33</u>, <u>61</u>, <u>92–93</u>, <u>161</u>, <u>478</u>
ontological argument 31
open theism <u>150–51</u>, <u>324</u>
oppression <u>206</u>, <u>334</u>
oral tradition 50
orderliness in church government 409
```

```
ordination 406–7
Origen <u>196</u>, <u>279</u>
original sin <u>228–33</u>, <u>254</u>, <u>343</u>, <u>413</u>
ousia <u>114–15</u>
Pannenberg, Wolfhart 242
pantheism <u>138</u>, <u>161</u>, <u>299</u>, <u>361</u>
paradox <u>29–30</u>
paraklētos 299
Parham, Charles 310
parousia <u>443–45</u>
partial rapture 466
particularism 333–34
Passover <u>43</u>, <u>286</u>, <u>423</u>
Paul 4, 56, 81, 136, 350, 369
        on Adam and Christ 232-33
        on atonement 285–87
        on body and soul <u>198</u>
        on circumcision 416–17
        on death <u>217</u>, <u>230–31</u>, <u>432–33</u>
        on deity of Jesus <u>109</u>, <u>241</u>
        on edification of the church 401-2
        on foreknowledge of God 127-28
        on general revelation <u>28</u>, <u>29</u>, <u>34</u>, <u>204–5</u>
        gospel in <u>101</u>, <u>404–5</u>
        on Holy Spirit 298-99
        on humanity of Jesus 249
        on idols 109
        on inspiration <u>44</u>, <u>51</u>, <u>53–54</u>
        on internal law 35
        on judgment <u>385–86</u>
        on justification 366–68
        on Lord's Supper 422
        new perspective on 366–68
        on plan of God 124
        on predestination 343-44
        on preservation <u>147</u>
```

```
on resurrection <u>437</u>, <u>448</u>, <u>461</u>
        on sanctification <u>375–76</u>, <u>376–77</u>
        on second coming 445–46
        on security 379
        on sin <u>165</u>, <u>208</u>, <u>224–25</u>, <u>226</u>, <u>230–31</u>, <u>254</u>
        on understanding <u>71–72</u>
        on worship 402
Pelagianism <u>216</u>, <u>228–29</u>, <u>230</u>
penal-substitution atonement theory 289–92
Pentecost 304, 307, 312-13, 322-23, 396
        Peter's sermon on <u>124</u>, <u>308</u>, <u>353</u>, <u>415–16</u>
        as prophetic fulfillment 304, 306, 443-44
        second coming and 443-44
Pentecostalism 310–11, 456
people of God <u>110</u>, <u>393–95</u>. See also church; Israel
Peretti, Frank 324, 326
perfection <u>376–78</u>, <u>398</u>, <u>473–74</u>
persecution <u>363</u>, <u>457</u>, <u>463</u>
perseverance <u>338</u>, <u>373</u>, <u>378–84</u>
Peter 28, 45, 98, 104, 353, 397
        on foreknowledge of God 124
        on Holy Spirit 298–99
        on inspiration <u>51–52</u>, <u>53–54</u>
        Pentecost sermon of <u>124</u>, <u>308</u>, <u>353</u>, <u>415–16</u>
Pharisees <u>52</u>, <u>193</u>, <u>239</u>, <u>448</u>
        Jesus and 219–220, 227, 274, 306, 353
phenomena of Scripture (inspiration model) <u>55</u>
Phillips, J. B. <u>80</u>
philosophy <u>62</u>, <u>115</u>, <u>116</u>
        Aristotelian <u>84</u>, <u>114–15</u>
        Christian <u>31</u>, <u>33</u>
        doomsday 132
        of science 141–42
physical death <u>199</u>, <u>216–18</u>, <u>430–33</u>, <u>459–60</u>
physics <u>33</u>, <u>82</u>, <u>91–92</u>
Pike, Kenneth <u>55–56</u>
pilgrimage 472
```

```
plan of God 94, 121-26, 134, 163-64, 478
        architect metaphor for 122, 134, 136-37
        eternal <u>124</u>, <u>148</u>, <u>470–79</u>
        human action and 126-27
        human freedom and 125–31
        Israel and <u>122–23</u>
        prophecy and <u>123–24</u>
        salvation and 348
        second coming and 442
        as unconditional 127-28
pluralism <u>26</u>, <u>36</u>, <u>322</u>
pneumatological approach to other religions <u>322–24</u>
Pohle, Joseph <u>436</u>
postmillennialism <u>453–55</u>, <u>456</u>, <u>458</u>, <u>466</u>
postmodernism <u>70</u>, <u>291</u>, <u>321</u>, <u>325–26</u>
postmodern theology 47, 189, 318
posttribulationism 462, 463–67
potter and clay metaphor 124, 128, 343
pragmatism 336
prayer <u>83–84</u>, <u>146</u>, <u>321</u>, <u>371</u>, <u>436</u>
        for healing <u>153</u>, <u>173</u>
        high-priestly 192, 275, 285, 300, 392
        to Holy Spirit <u>301</u>, <u>315</u>
        of Jesus <u>155</u>, <u>251</u>, <u>257</u>, <u>275–76</u>
        providence and 154–55
        Trinity and 108, 115, 116, 118
preaching 402
predestination <u>122</u>, <u>341–48</u>
        Calvinism on <u>126–27</u>, <u>130</u>, <u>342–44</u>, <u>345–46</u>, <u>347–48</u>
        human freedom and 346, 348
        missions and <u>346</u>, <u>347–48</u>
        total depravity and 342–43, 345
premillennialism <u>453–54</u>, <u>455–61</u>
        tribulation views 461–67
presbyterian church government 407–8
preservation <u>146–48</u>
presuppositions <u>7–8</u>, <u>319</u>
```

```
pretribulationism <u>444–46</u>, <u>462–63</u>, <u>464</u>, <u>466–67</u>
prevenient grace 229, 345, 346–47, 351
pride <u>207</u>
priesthood of all believers 19, 408–9
Princeton school 55
process theology <u>32–33</u>
progress <u>17</u>
progressive creationism <u>135</u>, <u>141</u>, <u>181–82</u>
progressive revelation 20–21, 47–48, 305
promises
        of God <u>93–94</u>, <u>100–101</u>, <u>147</u>, <u>162</u>
        of Jesus <u>304</u>, <u>308</u>, <u>379</u>, <u>397</u>
prophecy 44–45, 51–52, 53–54, 284, 403
        as foreknowledge of God <u>92</u>
        fulfillment of 304, 306, 443–44, 446, 458, 466
        Holy Spirit and <u>299</u>, <u>304–5</u>
        interpretation of 457, 460
        plan of God and 123–24
        preaching and 402
        predictive 430
        repentance and 353
        special gift today <u>73</u>, <u>310</u>, <u>311</u>, <u>317–21</u>, <u>401</u>
propitiation <u>286–87</u>, <u>290</u>
proportional causation <u>32–33</u>
propositional revelation 45–47
propositional theology 47
Protestant theology <u>14</u>, <u>196</u>, <u>337</u>, <u>368</u>
        Catholic and <u>367–68</u>, <u>436–37</u>
providence <u>146–49</u>
        as government <u>148–55</u>
        human effort and 154–55
        miracles and 155–57
        prayer and 154–55
        as preservation 146–48
        sovereignty of God and <u>148–55</u>, <u>150–51</u>
psychology <u>62</u>, <u>178–79</u>, <u>320–21</u>, <u>326</u>, <u>428</u>
psychosomatic health <u>156</u>, <u>200</u>
```

```
punishment 165, 166, 171, 213–16, 338
        atonement and 278
        degrees of <u>478–79</u>
        eternal 435–36, 475–79
        liability to 229, 282, 338, 343, 363
        as remedial <u>214–15</u>
purgatory <u>435–37</u>, <u>439</u>
purity <u>374</u>, <u>395</u>, <u>398</u>, <u>430</u>, <u>436</u>
        moral <u>98–100</u>
Purtill, Richard 438
quantum mechanics 33
racial sin <u>164</u>
Rahner, Karl 337
Ramm, Bernard <u>73</u>, <u>386</u>
ransom (classic) atonement theory 278–79, 284–85
rapture <u>444–45</u>, <u>458</u>, <u>462–64</u>
        partial 466
Rashdall, Hastings 277
rationalism 335
Rauschenbusch, Walter <u>17</u>
realism 99
reason <u>74</u>, <u>188</u>, <u>205</u>, <u>207</u>, <u>227</u>
        faith and <u>71</u>, <u>355</u>
        general revelation and 25, 29–30
        Greek philosophy and 191, 335
        knowledge of God and <u>29–30</u>, <u>34</u>, <u>43</u>
rebellion <u>204–5</u>
rebirth <u>355</u>, <u>416</u>
reconciliation <u>277</u>, <u>281</u>, <u>289</u>, <u>370</u>
redemption 41–42, 45, 244, 260, 287, 449
        incarnation and 200–201
        Trinity and <u>112–13</u>
Reformed theology <u>190</u>, <u>229</u>, <u>320</u>, <u>367–68</u>
        on baptism <u>413–14</u>
        on Lord's Supper <u>420–21</u>, <u>421</u>
```

```
regeneration <u>34</u>, <u>208–9</u>, <u>335</u>, <u>338</u>, <u>350</u>, <u>355–58</u>
        adoption and 370
        baptism and 412, 415–17
        church and 403-4
        by Holy Spirit <u>70–73</u>, <u>110</u>, <u>298</u>, <u>307</u>, <u>357</u>
regret <u>353–54</u>
reincarnation 131
relational theology <u>332–33</u>
relationships, human 183, 220-21, 332-33, 395. See also fellowship
"religionless Christianity" (Bonhoeffer) 336
renewal 205, 356, 386, 416, 472
repentance <u>94</u>, <u>104</u>, <u>219</u>, <u>225</u>, <u>307</u>, <u>353</u>
        baptism and 416
        of God <u>94</u>, <u>126</u>, <u>353</u>
        in penitential psalms 226
        salvation and <u>351–54</u>, <u>355</u>, <u>358</u>
reprobation <u>122</u>, <u>344</u>
responsibility, human 190–91, 381, 430
        freedom and 138, 150
        general revelation and 28, 35–36
        for sin 206-8, 219, 231-33, 478-79
rest, eternal <u>471–72</u>
restitution <u>279–80</u>
restlessness 211, 220
restoration <u>339</u>, <u>357</u>, <u>363</u>, <u>395</u>, <u>475–77</u>
resurrection <u>197–98</u>, <u>199–200</u>, <u>298</u>, <u>447–50</u>
        first 218, 432, 459
        glorification and 384–86
        hope of <u>384</u>, <u>434</u>, <u>447</u>
        instantaneous <u>437</u>
        of Jesus 242, 251, 271–72, 279, 431–32, 448–49
        non-Christians 449-50
        in Old Testament 447–48
        physical 198–99, 434, 448–49, 456, 459–60
        second coming and <u>385–86</u>, <u>434</u>
        spiritual <u>448</u>, <u>456</u>, <u>459</u>, <u>461</u>
        three resurrections 462, 466
```

```
two resurrections <u>456</u>, <u>459–60</u>, <u>461</u>, <u>465</u>
resurrection body <u>434–35</u>, <u>437</u>, <u>452</u>
        nature of 272, 385–86, 448–49, 473
retribution, punishment as 215
revelation 21, 26, 47, 50, 242, 320
        as act <u>42–43</u>
        incarnation and <u>32</u>, <u>42</u>, <u>43</u>
        miracles and <u>43–44</u>, <u>157</u>
        nonpropositional <u>46–47</u>
        progressive <u>20–21</u>, <u>47–48</u>, <u>305</u>
        rational 34
        redemptive nature of 31
        responses to 28, 32
        second coming as <u>275</u>, <u>444–45</u>
        Trinity and 114
        See also general revelation; special revelation
Revelation, book of <u>124</u>, <u>170</u>, <u>429</u>, <u>459–60</u>
reward 472, 474–75, 479
righteousness
        forensic <u>335</u>, <u>336–38</u>
        of God 99, 364
        of Jesus <u>365–67</u>
        union with Christ and 361-62
Robertson, A. T. 288
Robinson, H. Wheeler 198
Robinson, John A. T. 198, 336
Robinson, William Childs 241
Roman Catholicism 14, 16, 21, 310, 406
        baptism in <u>412–13</u>
        contemporary theology of <u>336–38</u>
        Lord's Supper in <u>418–19</u>, <u>421</u>
        Mass in 419–20, 436
        papal authority in <u>70</u>, <u>406</u>
        Protestants and 367–68, 436–37
        purgatory in <u>435–37</u>, <u>439</u>
        salvation in <u>333</u>, <u>344</u>
        Second Vatican Council and <u>336–37</u>
```

```
Sabbath <u>239</u>, <u>240</u>
sacerdotalism 419-20
sacraments <u>412–14</u>, <u>419–23</u>
        grace and <u>333</u>, <u>336</u>
        and union with Christ 361
sacrifice
        atonement and 19, 20, 162, 285–88
        of Christ <u>20</u>, <u>285–87</u>
        Mass and <u>419–20</u>
        Old Testament system of <u>10</u>, <u>19</u>, <u>283–84</u>, <u>287</u>
Sadducees 447–48, 474
saints 374
salvation 83, 102, 138, 360, 457
        assurance of <u>378–79</u>, <u>381–84</u>
        baptism and <u>413–14</u>, <u>415–17</u>
        definition of 332–33
        doctrine of 60-61, 232, 296
        extent of 333-34
        faith and 35-36, 333, 344, 351-52, 354-55, 358, 366
        grace and 31, 103, 255, 333, 339, 348
        human freedom and 382–83
        image of God and 187
        incarnation and <u>165</u>, <u>200</u>, <u>248</u>, <u>260–61</u>
        inclusive views of 26, 322
        loss of <u>380–88</u>
        love of God and 125, 286, 290, 343, 370–71
        need of 332-33
        particularism <u>333–34</u>
        predestination and 348, 351
        process of <u>332–33</u>, <u>349–58</u>
        repentance and <u>351–54</u>, <u>355</u>, <u>358</u>
        understanding of 292, 366
        universal invitation to <u>344–45</u>, <u>347–48</u>, <u>350</u>, <u>476</u>
        universalism <u>333–34</u>, <u>339</u>, <u>475–76</u>
        by works 227–28, 229, 333, 366–68, 437
```

```
sanctification <u>56–57</u>, <u>93</u>, <u>114</u>, <u>276</u>, <u>357</u>, <u>374–78</u>
        grace and <u>337</u>, <u>382–83</u>
        and Holy Spirit <u>305–8</u>, <u>374–75</u>
        of human nature 201
        justification and <u>368</u>, <u>374–75</u>, <u>386</u>
        progressive 338, 375
Sanday, William <u>365</u>
Sanders, E. P. <u>366</u>
Sanders, John 151
Sarah 101
Sartre, Jean-Paul 406
Satan <u>34</u>, <u>52</u>, <u>169</u>, <u>171–74</u>, <u>471</u>
        atonement and 279
        spiritual warfare and <u>325–27</u>, <u>459</u>, <u>464</u>, <u>472</u>
        temptation and <u>172</u>, <u>208</u>, <u>276</u>, <u>325</u>
satisfaction, eternal 474–75
satisfaction atonement theory 279–80
Saul <u>205</u>, <u>380</u>, <u>383</u>
Schelling, Friedrich 450
Schleiermacher, Friedrich 14
scholastic orthodoxy 73
science <u>91–92</u>, <u>200</u>, <u>335–36</u>
        behavioral 6, 10, 62, 132, 139, 178–79, 324
        Bible and <u>5–6</u>, <u>60–61</u>, <u>62–63</u>, <u>139–42</u>
        church and 180–82
        natural 6, 10, 134–35, 139
        philosophy and <u>141–42</u>
second chance 475–77
second coming 4, 104, 116, 429, 441–47
        final judgment and 170, 458
        glorification and <u>273</u>, <u>437</u>, <u>471</u>
        as imminent 444, 446–47, 463, 465
        knowledge of <u>251</u>, <u>442</u>
        Lord's Supper and 422
        Pentecost and 443–44
        phases of <u>462–63</u>, <u>466</u>
        resurrection and 385–86, 434
```

```
as revelation <u>275</u>, <u>444–45</u>
second death 218, 432, 456, 459-60, 475
Second Vatican Council 336–37
secular theology <u>335–36</u>
security 220, 292, 323–24, 335, 379
        of salvation <u>378–79</u>, <u>381–84</u>
self-centeredness <u>208</u>, <u>220–21</u>, <u>335</u>
self-deceit 219, 365
semi-Arians 243
Septuagint <u>66</u>, <u>241</u>, <u>286</u>
service to God 89, 180, 182
        in heaven 472
Seventh-Day Adventists <u>434</u>
sexuality <u>138</u>, <u>207</u>, <u>254</u>, <u>449</u>, <u>473</u>
Seymour, William J. 310
Shema <u>19</u>, <u>111</u>
Sheol 438, 447
signs. See miracles
sin 164, 219, 280, 325, 346, 377
        atonement and 279–80
        of believers <u>451</u>
        consequences of <u>99–100</u>, <u>105</u>, <u>211–21</u>, <u>282</u>, <u>369</u>, <u>479</u>
        conviction of <u>72</u>, <u>110</u>, <u>321</u>, <u>355</u>
        death and 164-65, 216-18, 225, 230, 432-33
        definition of 214, 279-80, 478
        effects of 218–21, 249, 357, 363
        general revelation and 34, 36, 41
        God's will and <u>130–31</u>
        God's work and <u>151–52</u>
        God's wrath and <u>213</u>, <u>281</u>, <u>285–87</u>
        human finitude and 183-84, 206
        human freedom and 138, 164, 219, 377
        human will and 229–30, 232–33
        as inward condition 225–27
        knowledge of God and <u>25</u>, <u>40</u>
        nature and 203-5
        original <u>228–33</u>, <u>254</u>, <u>343</u>, <u>413</u>
```

```
penalty for <u>365–66</u>
        responsibility for <u>206–8</u>, <u>219</u>, <u>231–33</u>, <u>478–79</u>
        as self-destruction 477
        slavery to 218–19, 227
        social dimensions of 291–92
        source of <u>205–9</u>
        sovereignty of God and <u>149–50</u>
        special revelation and 40-41
        suffering and <u>433</u>, <u>435–36</u>
        universal 223–25
        See also total depravity
sinfulness 40, 70–71, 162, 184, 191, 224–30
sinlessness 204, 253–57, 377–78
sins <u>204</u>, <u>225–26</u>
Sisyphus <u>179</u>, <u>406</u>
slave, status of <u>20–21</u>, <u>270</u>
slavery <u>194</u>, <u>370</u>
        to sin <u>218–19</u>, <u>227</u>
Smith, Charles Ryder 213, 225
social action <u>403–4</u>, <u>430</u>
social gospel 17, 333
social transformation <u>358</u>, <u>454–55</u>
Socinianism 277, 434
sociology <u>36</u>, <u>321</u>, <u>392</u>
Son of God. See Jesus Christ
soul, human 196-201, 229-30, 252, 477
        death and <u>197</u>, <u>431</u>, <u>434</u>
        extinction of <u>434</u>
        immortality of 31, 198, 199-200
soul sleep <u>434–35</u>
sovereignty of God <u>122–24</u>, <u>127–132</u>, <u>146–57</u>, <u>255</u>, <u>334–44</u>, <u>348</u>
        in Calvinism 161, 162
        free will and 149-50
        providence and <u>148–55</u>, <u>150–51</u>
        sin and 149–50
special calling <u>350–51</u>, <u>358</u>, <u>378</u>
special revelation <u>40–48</u>, <u>361</u>, <u>457</u>
```

```
analogical nature of 42–43
        anthropic nature of 42
        general revelation and <u>25–26</u>, <u>28–29</u>, <u>31</u>, <u>33</u>, <u>35–36</u>, <u>40–41</u>
        incarnation and 32, 42–45, 150
        personal nature of <u>41–42</u>, <u>45–47</u>
        as remedial 40–41
specificity, levels of (inspiration) <u>56–57</u>
specific providence <u>150–51</u>
speech, divine 44–46, 50–52, 54–55, 136, 274
Spencer, Herbert 132
Spinoza, Benedict 161
spirit, human. See soul, human
spiritual blindness 346, 356
spiritual body <u>272</u>, <u>448–49</u>
spiritual death <u>216–18</u>, <u>227</u>, <u>431–33</u>
spiritual disability 205
spiritual gifts <u>71</u>, <u>110</u>, <u>300</u>, <u>308–15</u>, <u>395</u>, <u>397</u>
spirituality <u>138</u>, <u>472</u>
spiritual resurrection 448, 456, 461
spiritual warfare 317, 324–32
Stein, Robert <u>238–39</u>
stewardship <u>182</u>, <u>207</u>
structural evil 164
submission to God 139, 314
substitutionary atonement <u>284–85</u>, <u>288–89</u>, <u>365</u>
suffering <u>163</u>, <u>165–66</u>, <u>249</u>, <u>363</u>, <u>403</u>
        eternal <u>477–78</u>
        sin and <u>433</u>, <u>435–36</u>
        tribulation and 457, 463
Summers, Ray 459
supernatural forces <u>15–16</u>, <u>153</u>, <u>155–57</u>, <u>325</u>
superstition 154
symbolism
        in baptism <u>218</u>, <u>417–18</u>
        in Lord's Supper <u>422</u>, <u>423</u>
        in Revelation <u>459</u>
synod <u>407</u>
```

```
Tatian <u>112</u>
Taylor, Vincent 365
technology 11, 16, 82, 139, 184
teleological argument 30, 33
telos <u>132</u>, <u>192</u>
temptation <u>153</u>, <u>163</u>, <u>171–73</u>, <u>379</u>
         of Adam and Eve 208
         countering <u>208–9</u>, <u>376–77</u>
         end of <u>385</u>, <u>471</u>
         God and <u>206–7</u>, <u>291</u>
         of Jesus <u>52</u>, <u>170</u>, <u>208</u>, <u>255–56</u>, <u>306</u>
         Satan and 172, 208, 276, 325
Ten Commandments <u>108</u>, <u>190</u>, <u>205</u>
Tennant, Frederick 206
Tertullian <u>112</u>, <u>118</u>
theistic evolution 140, 180–81
Theodotus <u>113</u>
theology <u>6</u>, <u>12</u>, <u>14</u>, <u>16</u>
         culture and <u>10–11</u>
         definition of 3, 4
         as science <u>5–6</u>, <u>139</u>
         systematic <u>4</u>, <u>7–8</u>, <u>276</u>, <u>296</u>
third world 9n2, 11, 36-37, 153, 310, 334, 428
Tillich, Paul 10, 14, 206
time <u>91–92</u>, <u>163</u>, <u>332</u>, <u>396</u>, <u>442</u>
tongues, speaking in <u>310–15</u>, <u>401–2</u>
total depravity <u>201</u>, <u>254</u>, <u>276</u>, <u>282–83</u>
         in Calvinism <u>229–30</u>, <u>342–43</u>
         penal-substitution theory and 292
         predestination and 342–43, 345
         salvation and <u>348</u>, <u>351</u>
         sin and 223, 226–28
tradition <u>6</u>, <u>14</u>, <u>50</u>
traducianism 230
transcendence <u>18</u>, <u>42</u>, <u>70–71</u>, <u>79–85</u>, <u>91</u>, <u>243</u>, <u>257</u>
         belief and <u>83–84</u>
         miracles and 83-84
```

```
transformation, human <u>307</u>, <u>355–58</u>, <u>368</u>, <u>454–55</u>
transformers 15
translators 15, 18
transplanters <u>15</u>
transubstantiation <u>333</u>, <u>336</u>, <u>361</u>, <u>418–19</u>, <u>421–22</u>
tree of life 217
tribulation, great <u>444–46</u>, <u>454</u>, <u>457</u>, <u>461–67</u>
         wrath of God and <u>462</u>, <u>464</u>, <u>466</u>
trichotomism 196–97
Trinity, the 80, 84, 260, 269, 273, 301, 398
         analogies for <u>117–18</u>
         attributes of <u>84</u>, <u>101–2</u>, <u>116</u>
         authority of 115–16
         baptism and <u>110</u>, <u>111</u>
         baptism of Jesus and 113, 300
         conflict and <u>286</u>, <u>290</u>
         creation and <u>112–13</u>, <u>136–37</u>
         doctrine of 108–18
         economic versus immanent 112–13
         equality of <u>111–12</u>, <u>115–16</u>, <u>298–300</u>
         essence (substance) of <u>114–15</u>
         evidence for <u>111–12</u>
         fellowship of <u>112</u>, <u>192</u>
         incarnation and 115, 117, 244
         indivisibility of 113, 114
         and inspiration <u>56–57</u>
         love of <u>101–2</u>, <u>118</u>
         in Pauline benediction <u>110</u>, <u>111–12</u>, <u>299–300</u>
         prayer and <u>108</u>, <u>115</u>, <u>116</u>, <u>118</u>
         resurrection and 448
         subordination of <u>115–16</u>, <u>117</u>, <u>192</u>, <u>243–44</u>, <u>265</u>
         unity of 110-13, 114-15, 116
         views of <u>112–14</u>
tritheism <u>114</u>, <u>118</u>
trust <u>46</u>, <u>99</u>, <u>355</u>
truth <u>4–5</u>, <u>21</u>, <u>30</u>, <u>72</u>, <u>274</u>
         Bible and <u>63–64</u>
```

```
of God <u>50</u>, <u>61</u>, <u>100–101</u>
TULIP (Calvinism) 342-43
Tyconius 454
unconditional predestination 344, 345-46
union with Christ <u>360–63</u>, <u>379</u>
        baptism and 412, 417, 418
        church and 395, 422
universalism <u>333–34</u>, <u>339</u>, <u>475–76</u>
unmoved mover <u>30</u>, <u>33</u>
Ussher, James 140
utopianism 132
vengeance <u>215</u>, <u>291</u>
verbal theory of inspiration <u>53</u>, <u>55–56</u>
Verduin, Leonard 189–90
vine and branches metaphor 360, 362
virgin birth 243, 247, 248, 252–55, 298
        Holy Spirit and <u>253–54</u>, <u>306</u>
virgins, parable of <u>446</u>, <u>463</u>, <u>465</u>
volition. See will, human
von Harnack, Adolf 21
voodoo 312
Wagner, C. Peter <u>324</u>, <u>325</u>
Wainwright, Arthur 393
war 220
Warfield, Benjamin B. <u>55</u>, <u>63</u>, <u>458</u>, <u>459</u>
Wesley, John 345
wicked, the <u>212</u>, <u>464</u>, <u>475–79</u>
wickedness <u>212–13</u>, <u>224</u>, <u>282</u>
Wiley, Orton 229
will, human <u>125–26</u>, <u>227</u>, <u>320</u>
        sin and 229–30, 232–33
will of God 83, 122, 124-25, 134, 136
        demons and <u>324–25</u>
        Holy Spirit and 300
```

```
human freedom and 129–31
        Jesus and 271
        judgment and 451–52
        prayer and <u>155</u>
        predestination and 342
        revelation of <u>320–21</u>, <u>451</u>
        sin and <u>130–31</u>
        wisdom of God and 130–31
        wish and <u>104</u>, <u>151</u>, <u>153–54</u>
Winer, G. B. <u>288</u>
wisdom literature 123
wisdom of God <u>71–72</u>, <u>92</u>, <u>130–31</u>, <u>188</u>
women, status of <u>20–21</u>
word of God. See Bible, the
word studies 8
works <u>436</u>, <u>472</u>
        faith and <u>339</u>, <u>366</u>, <u>368</u>
        salvation by 227–28, 229, 333, 366–68, 437
works-righteousness 19, 35
world religions <u>36</u>, <u>321–24</u>
worship <u>83</u>, <u>139</u>, <u>402–3</u>, <u>422</u>, <u>472</u>
        of angels <u>169</u>
        of Christ 244, 251
        of Holy Spirit 301
        of nature 88, 138-39
        Trinity and <u>108</u>, <u>118</u>
wrath of God <u>28</u>, <u>290</u>
        great tribulation and <u>462</u>, <u>464</u>, <u>466</u>
        sin and <u>213</u>, <u>281</u>, <u>285–87</u>
Wright, N. T. <u>367–68</u>
Yahweh 89
Yong, Amos <u>317</u>, <u>322–24</u>
Zoroastrianism 161, 326
Zwingli, Ulrich <u>420–21</u>
```

Notes

Chapter 1

- [1]. Here we are speaking of science in the broader European sense: the Germans, for example, speak of *Naturwissenschaften*, or sciences of nature, and *Geisteswissenschaften*, which are roughly what we would call behavioral sciences.
- [2]. There are various ways this can be done. One essential approach is reading theology written by those from different cultures. Even better is personal interaction with such Christians and theologians. I have personally found that serving on the Commission on Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation of the Baptist World Alliance for thirty years and serving multiracial congregations and teaching in third-world countries periodically has been of great help. Interaction with Christians from many other countries and cultures, while sometimes uncomfortable, is a good sensitizing process. Writing one's own intellectual autobiography is another good way to come to grips with the particularity of one's own outlook. For a more extensive description of this process, see my *Truth or Consequences: The Promise and Perils of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 241–42.

Chapter 2

- [1]. For a discussion of the differences between transformers and translators, see William Hordern, *New Directions in Theology Today*, vol. 1, *Introduction* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 141–54.
- [2]. Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 104–10.
- [3]. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), 48–68.
 - [4]. J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923), 34–38.

- [1]. William Barclay, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 24–28.
- [2]. Clark Pinnock, A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 175–76; John Sanders, No Other Name: An Investigation of the Destiny of the Unevangelized (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 222.

- [3]. An outstanding example is Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), part 2.
- [4]. Barth explains his disenchantment with liberalism in *The Humanity of God* (Richmond: John Knox, 1960), 14.
 - [5]. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 121.
 - [6]. Ibid., 93.
 - [7]. Karl Barth, *Revelation*, ed. John Baillie and Hugh Martin (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 49.
 - [8]. Barth, Church Dogmatics II/1, 108.
 - [9]. Ibid., 119.
- [10]. Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963).
- [11]. John B. Cobb, *A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007).
- [12]. William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999).
 - [13]. E.g., William Lane Craig, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* (London: Macmillan, 1979).
- [14]. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.6.1.
- [15]. For a fuller statement of this possibility, see Millard J. Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved? The Destiny of Those Who Do Not Hear of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996). See also Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 138–41.

- [1]. Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Revelation," in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1951), 74.
 - [2]. Ibid., 75.
- [3]. Bernard Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 36–37.
 - [4]. Ibid., 39.
- [5]. Langdon Gilkey, "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language," *Journal of Religion* 41 (1961): 196.
 - [6]. Ramm, Special Revelation, 54.
 - [7]. Ibid., 59–60.
- [8]. John Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), 85–108.
- [9]. Ronald F. Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).

- [10]. George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 78. See also Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 77–112.
- [11]. Terrence Tilley, *Story Theology* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1985); George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology: Recovering the Gospel in the Church* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981); Darrell Jodock, "Story and Scripture," *Word and World* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 128–39; John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*. [12]. Ramm, *Special Revelation*, 161–87.

- [1]. Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 441.
- [2]. James Martineau, *A Study of Religion: Its Sources and Contents* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1889), 168–71.
 - [3]. Auguste Sabatier, Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion (New York: James Pott, 1916), 90.
 - [4]. Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 211–22.
 - [5]. J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 79.
- [6]. John R. Rice, *Our God-breathed Book—The Bible* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1969), 192, 261–91. Rice accepts the term "dictation" but disavows the expression "mechanical dictation."
- [7]. Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Inspiration," in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1951), 131–65.
- [8]. Dewey Beegle, *Scripture*, *Tradition*, *and Infallibility* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 175–97.
- [9]. Kenneth L. Pike, "Language and Meaning: Strange Dimensions of Truth," *Christianity Today*, May 8, 1961, 28.
- [10]. For a more fully developed theory of a trinitarian doctrine of inspiration, see Jeremy Begbie, "Who Is This God? Biblical Inspiration Revisited," *Tyndale Bulletin* 43, no. 2 (1992): 275–82.
- [11]. It should be observed that 2 Peter 1:20–21 refers to the authors, while 2 Timothy 3:16 refers to what they wrote. Thus the dilemma of whether inspiration pertains to the writer or the writing is shown to be a false issue.

Chapter 6

[1]. Michael Baumann has offered some helpful guidelines for stating the doctrine of inerrancy to avoid tactical mistakes that preclude a fair hearing ("Why the Noninerrantists Are Not Listening: Six

Tactical Errors Evangelicals Commit," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29, no. 3 [September 1986]: 317–24). For a philosopher's defense of the rationality of belief in inerrancy against some of the more common misunderstandings and even misrepresentations of the doctrine, see J. P. Moreland, "The Rationality of Belief in Inerrancy," *Trinity Journal* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 76–86.

- [2]. Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 165–66.
- [3]. Roger Nicole, "The Nature of Inerrancy," in *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, ed. Roger Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 71–95.
- [4]. Daniel P. Fuller, "Benjamin B. Warfield's View of Faith and History," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 11 (1968): 75–83.
- [5]. David Hubbard, "The Irrelevancy of Inerrancy," in *Biblical Authority*, ed. Jack Rogers (Waco: Word, 1977), 151–81.
- [6]. Richard Lovelace, "Inerrancy: Some Historical Perspectives," in Nicole and Michaels, *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, 26–36.
- [7]. Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Real Problem of Inspiration," in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1951), 219–20.
- [8]. Dewey Beegle, *Scripture*, *Tradition*, *and Infallibility* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 195–97.
 - [9]. Louis Gaussen, *The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures* (Chicago: Moody, 1949).
- [10]. Everett Harrison, "The Phenomena of Scripture," in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. Carl Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), 237–50.
- [11]. G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1937), 377.
- [12]. William Hordern, *New Directions in Theology Today*, vol. 1, *Introduction* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 83.
 - [13]. Beegle, Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility, 156–59.
 - [14]. Reported in Harrison, "Phenomena of Scripture," 239.

- [1]. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 176.
 - [2]. Richard Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 3–15.
 - [3]. Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Religious Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).
 - [4]. A. C. McGiffert, Protestant Thought before Kant (New York: Harper, 1961), 146.
- [5]. In one church a decision was to be made on two proposed plans for a new sanctuary. One member insisted that the Lord had told him that the church should adopt the plan calling for the larger sanctuary. His basis was that the ratio between the number of seats in the larger plan and the

number in the smaller plan was five to three, exactly the ratio between the number of times that Elisha told Joash he should have struck the ground and the number of times he actually struck it (2 Kings 13:18–19). The church eventually divided over this and similar issues.

Chapter 8

- [1]. J. B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small* (New York: Macmillan, 1961).
- [2]. E.g., Stephen Charnock, *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).
 - [3]. William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 1:158.
 - [4]. Charnock, Existence and Attributes of God.
- [5]. Edgar Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1927), 222.

Chapter 9

- [1]. James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith*, 36th ed. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1957), 48.
 - [2]. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 2:40–45.
- [3]. Albert Einstein, *The Meaning of Relativity*, 5th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 31.
- [4]. See James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1962), especially his criticism of Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950).
- [5]. I have discussed the question of divine foreknowledge in much greater depth in *What Does God Know and When Does He Know It?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).
- [6]. Stuart K. Hine, "How Great Thou Art" (Stanford, Valencia, CA: Manna Music, 1953). © Copyright 1953 renewed 1981 by MANNA MUSIC, INC., 25510 Ave., Stanford, Valencia, CA 91355. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission.

- [1]. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 73.
- [2]. E.g., Anselm, *Cur Deus homo?* 1.12.
- [3]. William of Ockham, Reportatio 3.13C, 12CCC.
- [4]. E.g., Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 314.
- [5]. Nels Ferré, *The Christian Understanding of God* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1951), 227–28.
 - [6]. William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 1:377–78.

- [1]. Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 33–40, 43–48; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 183–201.
- [2]. George S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), 31.
 - [3]. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 61.2; 128.3.
- [4]. Athanasius, On the Decrees of the Nicene Synod (Defense of the Nicene Council) 5.24; On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia 2.26; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 7.30.
 - [5]. Athanasius, Four Discourses against the Arians 3.23.4.
 - [6]. Basil, *Letters* 38.5; 214.4; 236.6.
- [7]. Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than 100 Disputed Questions* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 413.
 - [8]. Ibid., 433.
- [9]. Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 18.
- [10]. Kevin Giles, *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).
- [11]. Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 179–83.
 - [<u>12</u>]. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 1.9.19.
- [13]. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 2.12.2.
- [14]. For a more complete analysis of the debate, see my *Who's Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009).

- [1]. Benjamin B. Warfield, "Predestination," in *Biblical Doctrines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929), 7–8.
 - [2]. Cf. Job 42:2; Jer. 23:20; Zech. 1:6.
 - [3]. Warfield, "Predestination," 15.
 - [4]. Cf. 3:19–20; Job 38, especially v. 4; Isa. 40:12; Jer. 10:12–13.
 - [5]. Bernard Ramm, Protestant Christian Evidences (Chicago: Moody, 1953), 88.
 - [6]. Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 353–54.
 - [7]. J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 78.
- [8]. Henry C. Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 157.

- [9]. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 393–95.
- [10]. This view is based on what is known as "compatibilistic freedom": human freedom is compatible with (in this case) God's having rendered certain everything that occurs. See Antony Flew, "Compatibilism, Free Will, and God," *Philosophy* 48 (1973): 231–32.
 - [11]. John Feinberg, No One Like Him (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 638–39.
- [12]. This is what is often referred to as "middle knowledge," the knowledge of all the possibilities. While this is sometimes seen as an alternative to Calvinism, and some forms of Calvinism do not depend on it, it can well be incorporated into a moderate Calvinism. Where our view differs from a bare middle-knowledge view is in the "suasive" work God does with respect to humans, subsequent to creation.
- [13]. E.g., Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971); Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine, 1976).
 - [14]. E.g., B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (New York: Macmillan, 1948).

- [1]. Werner Foerster, "κτίζω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3:1029.
 - [2]. Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 48.
 - [3]. Ibid., 58–59.
 - [4]. Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1968), 94–95.
 - [5]. Philip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991).
- [6]. William A. Dembski, *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance through Small Probabilities*, Cambridge Studies in Probability, Induction and Decision Theory (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- [7]. Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1996).
- [8]. Stuart Kauffman, "Intelligent Design, Science or Not?," in *Intelligent Thought: Science versus the Intelligent Design Movement*, ed. John Brockman (New York: Vintage, 2006), 169–78.
- [9]. William A. Dembski, *The Design Revolution: Answering the Tough Questions about Intelligent Design* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 77.
 - [10]. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 12.

- [1]. G. C. Joyce, "Deism," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1955), 4:5–11.
 - [2]. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 74.

- [3]. Jack Cottrell, "The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, ed. Clark Pinnock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).
- [4]. Texts that seem to speak of human working and divine working as more coextensive usually receive scant if any treatment. In Pinnock, *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, e.g., the only reference to Phil. 2:12–13 is a brief statement noting that Calvin appealed to it (Bruce R. Reichenbach, "Freedom, Justice, and Moral Responsibility," 289).
- [5]. John Sanders acknowledges that some may find "that the explanations of various scriptural texts discussed above are strained and unconvincing" (*The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence*, 2nd ed. [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007], 139), but advances them nonetheless. It is advocates of exhaustive foreknowledge that Sanders is referring to, but readers may judge for themselves the adequacy of his explanations.
 - [6]. Ibid., 84–85.
 - [7]. Ibid., 138.
 - [8]. Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 423–25.
 - [9]. Karl Heim, Christian Faith and Natural Science (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 15.
 - [10]. Quoted in Berkouwer, *Providence of God*, 162–63.
- [11]. Patrick Nowell-Smith, "Miracles," in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 245–48.
- [12]. Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 156–61. A simpler explanation is that a miracle of refraction resulted in a prolongation of light.
 - [13]. E.g., David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* 10.1.
 - [14]. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 59–61.

- [1]. David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, part 10.
- [2]. Alvin Plantinga, God, Freedom, and Evil (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 63–64.
- [3]. Gordon H. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961), 221; for Clark's argument see 221–41.
 - [4]. Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics* 1.33.2.
- [5]. Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: Trustees under the will of Mary Baker Eddy, 1934), 348.
 - [6]. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 119–20.

Chapter 16

[1]. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics III/3 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), 369.

- [2]. A. J. Maclean, "Angels," in *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1916), 1:60.
- [3]. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 966.
 - [4]. See also Acts 5:3; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:26.

- [1]. Brendan Lynch, "Man vs. Machine," Boston Herald, October 26, 2011, 4.
- [2]. On behavioristic psychology see, e.g., Paul Young, *Motivation of Behavior: The Fundamental Determinants of Human and Animal Activity* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1936). For a novel depicting an ideal society built on the use of behavioristic conditioning, see B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (New York: Macmillan, 1948).
- [3]. Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Cleveland: World, 1956), 312–15.
- [4]. James W. Murk, "Evidence for a Late Pleistocene Creation of Man," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 17, no. 2 (June 1965): 37–49.

- [1]. Gerhard von Rad, "εἰκών," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:390–92; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 2:122.
 - [2]. Charles Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (London: Epworth, 1956), 29–30, 94–95.
- [3]. Stanley J. Grenz, "The Social God and the Relational Self: Toward a Theology of the *Imago Dei* in the Postmodern Context," in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, ed. Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton, and Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 92.
- [4]. Leonard Verduin, *Somewhat Less Than God: The Biblical View of Man* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 27.
 - [5]. Norman Snaith, "The Image of God," Expository Times 86, no. 1 (October 1974): 24.
 - [<u>6</u>]. Ibid.
 - [7]. Verduin, Somewhat Less Than God, 27.
 - [8]. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:127.
 - [9]. David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), 57.
- [10]. Charles Sherlock contends that the Bible does not tell us so much what the image *is* as what it *involves*: "Thus the image of God can be seen only as we live it out" (*The Doctrine of Humanity* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996], 41).
- [11]. Dorothy Sayers, *The Man Born to Be King* (New York: Harper, 1943), 225; Cairns, *Image of God*, 30.

- [1]. Franz Delitzsch, A System of Biblical Psychology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 116–17.
- [2]. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 191–92.
- [3]. Ibid., 192–95.
- [4]. Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 998–1003, 1015–23.
 - [5]. John A. T. Robinson, *The Body* (London: SCM, 1952).
- [6]. H. Wheeler Robinson, "Hebrew Psychology," in *The People and the Book*, ed. Arthur S. Peake (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925), 362.
 - [7]. Ibid., 366.
- [8]. The most complete recent study combining biblical, philosophical, and scientific considerations in support of what he terms "holistic dualism" is John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). J. P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae examine the case for a dualism similar to what we have described here, and contend that "metaphysics and morality are intimately connected and that our dualist view of the body and soul provides the most compelling account of human personhood and its moral dimension" (*Body and Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], 10). A briefer statement of the same view can be found in J. P. Moreland, "A Defense of a Substance Dualist View of the Soul," in J. P. Moreland and David M. Ciocchi, *Christian Perspectives on Being Human: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Integration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 55–79.

- [1]. Robert H. Schuller, Self-Esteem: The New Reformation (Waco: Word, 1982).
- [2]. On the loss of a sense of guilt, see, e.g., Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?* (New York: Hawthorn, 1973).
 - [3]. James D. G. Dunn, Romans 1–8, Word Biblical Commentary 38 (Waco: Word, 1988), 75.
- [4]. Frederick R. Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), 90–91.
 - [5]. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Scribner, 1941), 1:180–82.
 - [6]. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 2:44.
- [7]. See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973); James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970).
- [8]. See Harrison S. Elliott, *Can Religious Education Be Christian?* (New York: Macmillan, 1940).

- [9]. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Self and the Dramas of History* (London: Faber & Faber, 1956), 35–37.
- [10]. M. G. Kyle, "Temptation, Psychology of," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 5:2944–2944B.

- [1]. Charles Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Sin and of the Ways of God with Sinners* (London: Epworth, 1953), 43.
 - [2]. Nels Ferré, *The Christian Understanding of God* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951), 228.
 - [3]. Smith, *Doctrine of Sin*, 47.
- [4]. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 260. Arminians generally tend to agree with Calvinists, rather than Pelagians, on this point. See H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1958), 1:34–37, 91–95.
- [5]. See Augustine, A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and the Baptism of Infants 1.2.
- [6]. Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 295.
 - [7]. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 258–59.
- [8]. Augustine makes a similar point in distinguishing between being "mortal" and being "subject to death" (*Merits and Forgiveness of Sins* 1.3).

- [1]. See also Ps. 130:3; Eccles. 7:20.
- [2]. Charles Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Sin and of the Ways of God with Sinners* (London: Epworth, 1953), 159–60.
 - [3]. Ibid., 34.
- [4]. Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 637–38; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 246.
 - [5]. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 247.
 - [6]. Strong, Systematic Theology, 640–46.
- [7]. By "original sin" we mean the dimension of sin with which we begin life, or the effect the sin of Adam has on us as a precondition of our lives.
 - [8]. John Ferguson, *Pelagius* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1956), 40.
 - [9]. Ibid., 47.
 - [10]. Robert F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (New York: Seabury, 1968), 82–83.
 - [11]. Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ and on Original Sin* 1.3.
 - [12]. Augustine, *On the Proceedings of Pelagius* 16.

- [13]. The tradition that Arminius was a convinced Calvinist who was assigned to defend the Reformed faith and in the process of "defending" it was converted to the contradictory view is highly suspect. See Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 138–41.
- [14]. H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1958), 2:121–28. The quotation is from 135.
- [15]. Augustine, A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and the Baptism of Infants 1.8–11.

- [1]. Adolf von Harnack, What Is Christianity? (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957), 144.
- [2]. Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teaching* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 114.
- [3]. Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 473.
 - [4]. George E. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 177.
 - [5]. Stein, *Method and Message*, 132.
- [6]. Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Scribner, 1965), 232.
- [7]. William Childs Robinson, "Lord," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 328–29.
 - [8]. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968).
- [9]. Examples are Stephen T. Davis, ed., *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981); *Did the Resurrection Happen? A Conversation with Gary Habermas and Antony Flew*, ed. David Baggett (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009).
- [10]. Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation," in *Revelation as History*, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 134.
 - [11]. Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, 98.
 - [12]. Ibid., 100–101.
 - [13]. Ibid., 89.
 - [14]. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 47.
 - [15]. Athanasius, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia* 16.
 - [16]. Athanasius, Four Discourses against the Arians.
- [17]. E.g., Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

- [1]. Leon Morris, *The Lord from Heaven: A Study of the New Testament Teaching on the Deity and Humanity of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 45.
 - [2]. Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ* 5.
- [3]. J. F. Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine* (London: Methuen, 1903), 80.
 - [4]. J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 291.
 - [5]. Ibid., 292. There is a dispute as to whether Apollinarius was a dichotomist or trichotomist.
 - [6]. Ibid., 293.
 - [7]. Loraine Boettner, *Studies in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 263.
- [8]. Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Man from Nazareth as His Contemporaries Saw Him* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949), 158–60.
- [9]. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.10. Carl F. H. Henry comes close to this position when he says, "It may be admitted, of course, that the Virgin Birth is not flatly identical with the Incarnation, just as the empty tomb is not flatly identical with the Resurrection. The one might be affirmed without the other. Yet the connection is so close, and indeed indispensable, that were the Virgin Birth or the empty tomb denied, it is likely that either the Incarnation or the Resurrection would be called in question, or they would be affirmed in a form very different from that which they have in Scripture and historic teaching. The Virgin Birth might well be described as an essential, historical indication of the Incarnation, bearing not only an analogy to the divine and human natures of the Incarnate, but also bringing out the nature, purpose, and bearing of this work of God to salvation" ("Our Lord's Virgin Birth," *Christianity Today*, December 7, 1959, 20).
- [10]. Hans von Campenhausen, *The Virgin Birth in the Theology of the Ancient Church* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1964), 79–86.
- [11]. Karl Barth appears to have held the position that Jesus took on himself the same fallen nature we now possess; his sinlessness consisted in his never committing actual sin (*Church Dogmatics* I/2 [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956], 151–55).
- [12]. Edward J. Carnell, "The Virgin Birth of Christ," *Christianity Today*, December 7, 1959, 9–10.
- [13]. There are those, of course, who contend that Jesus did sin. Among them is Nels Ferré, who detects in Jesus's behavior a lack of perfect trust in the Father, which constitutes the sin of unbelief. But Ferré's exegesis is faulty, and his view of sin heavily influenced by existential, rather than biblical, concepts. See *Christ and the Christian* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 110–14.
- [14]. This is reminiscent of our discussion of free will—while we are free to choose, God has already rendered our choice certain (see pp. 128–30).
 - [<u>15</u>]. Morris, *Lord from Heaven*, 51–52.

- [1]. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 293.
- [2]. J. F. Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine* (London: Methuen, 1903), 274–75.
- [3]. Friedrich Loofs, *Nestorius and His Place in the History of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Lenox Hill, 1975), 41, 60–61; J. F. Bethune-Baker, *Nestorius and His Teaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), 82–100.
- [4]. A. B. Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ in Its Physical, Ethical, and Official Aspects*, 2nd ed. (New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1892), 50–51.
- [5]. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 262–63.
 - [6]. Robert L. Ottley, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: Methuen, 1896), 2:151–61.
- [7]. Hugh Ross Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* (New York: Scribner, 1914), 463–90.
- [8]. For a twentieth-century form of this view see Donald Baillie, *God Was in Christ* (New York: Scribner, 1948).
 - [9]. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1919), 2:62.

- [1]. Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 703–4.
- [2]. Daniel Fuller, *Easter Faith and History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 181–82; cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 96–97.
- [3]. For a more complete discussion of the resurrection body of Jesus, see Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 565–76. The position taken here is essentially the same as that of James Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), 196–202.
 - [4]. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 2:463.
 - [5]. See George E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 65–67.
 - [6]. Faustus Socinus, *De Jesu Christo servatore* 1.1.
 - [7]. Ibid., 1.3.
- [8]. Hastings Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 26.
- [9]. Hugo Grotius, *A Defense of the Catholic Faith concerning the Satisfaction of Christ against Faustus Socinus* (Andover, MA: Warren F. Draper, 1889), chap. 5.
 - [<u>10</u>]. Ibid., chaps. 2–3.

- [11]. Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 20.
 - [12]. Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 13.28.
 - [13]. Ibid.
 - [14]. Anselm, *Cur Deus homo?* 1.11.
 - [15]. Ibid., 1.13.
 - [16]. Ibid., 2.8.
 - [<u>17</u>]. Ibid., 2.10.

- [1]. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 497–98.
- [2]. R. Laird Harris, "בָּפַר" in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:452–53.
 - [3]. Gustave F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1950), 274.
 - [4]. George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 424.
 - [5]. Ibid., 425.
 - [6]. C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), 94.
- [7]. See Ladd, *Theology*, 429–30. For a more extensive refutation of Dodd's view, see Roger Nicole, "C. H. Dodd and the Doctrine of Propitiation," *Westminster Theological Journal* 17 (1955): 117–57.
- [8]. Gabriel Abe points out that the concept of propitiation is not simply a Western concept, but fits well with African traditional religion, in which "these sacrifices are offered to calm the wrath of divinities and spirits that are angered in order to remove the sins committed, obtain their favour and restore peace between the offender and the divinity" ("Redemption, Reconciliation, Propitiation," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, no. 95 [July 1996]: 7).
- [9]. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 573.
- [10]. G. B. Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 3rd rev. ed. (9th English ed.) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1882), 479.
 - [11]. Peter Abelard, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 5:5.
- [12]. John Murray, *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 34–38.
- [13]. For a concise argument for the biblical basis of the penal-substitutionary view and defense of it against many of the objections, see I. Howard Marshall, "The Theology of the Atonement," in *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of the Atonement*, ed. Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thackeri (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 49–68. For a

more complete statement by Marshall, see his *Aspects of the Atonement: Cross and Resurrection in the Reconciling of God and Humanity* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007).

- [14]. See Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Last Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 182. Whether this is the authors' own criticism of the penal-substitutionary view or their depiction of a caricature of the view has become a matter of some debate.
- [15]. Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1900), 3:473.
- [16]. *Racovian Catechism*, trans. Thomas S. Rees (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818; repr., Lexington: American Theological Library Association, 1962), 5.8.
 - [17]. Faustus Socinus, *De Jesu Christo servatore* 1.1.
- [18]. Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 126–36.
 - [19]. Ibid., 28–29.
 - [<u>20</u>]. Ibid., 153–70.

Chapter 28

[1]. Richard Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 357–61.

- [1]. J. H. Raven claims that the Old Testament references to the "Spirit of God" do not pertain specifically to the Holy Spirit: "There is here no distinction of persons in the Godhead. The Spirit of God in the Old Testament is God himself exercising active influence" (*The History of the Religion of Israel* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 164).
- [2]. For the view that passages like Ps. 104:30 are personal references to the Holy Spirit, see Leon Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 19–20.
- [3]. Eduard Schweizer, *The Holy Spirit*, trans. Reginald H. and Ilse Fuller (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 10–19.
 - [4]. Wood, *Holy Spirit*, 42–43.
 - [5]. Ibid., 41.
- [6]. George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 33–35.
 - [7]. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 95.
 - [8]. Schweizer, *Holy Spirit*, 51.
 - [9]. Dale Moody, *Spirit of the Living God* (Nashville: Broadman, 1976), 40–41.
- [10]. For a discussion of Jesus's words to Nicodemus, see Henry B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament: A Study of Primitive Christian Teaching* (London: Macmillan, 1909), 130–35.
 - [11]. Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 63.

- [12]. Klaude Kendrick, *The Promise Fulfilled: A History of the Modern Pentecostal Movement* (Springfield, MO: Gospel, 1961), 48–49, 52–53.
 - [13]. Ibid., 64–68.
- [14]. Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics: The Origins, Development, and Significance of Neo-Pentecostalism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 4–11.
- [15]. Donald Gee, *The Pentecostal Movement, Including the Story of the War Years* (1940–47), rev. ed. (London: Elim, 1949), 10.
- [16]. Laurence Christenson, *Speaking in Tongues and Its Significance for the Church* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1968), 72–79.
 - [17]. Anthony Hoekema, *What about Tongue-Speaking?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 16–18.
- [18]. The basis of this argument is the distinction in 1 Cor. 13:8 between the verb used with "tongues" and the verb used with "prophecies" and "knowledge." Not only is a totally different word involved, but also the middle voice is used in the former instance and the passive in the latter.
- [19]. Stanley D. Toussaint, "First Corinthians Thirteen and the Tongues Question," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120 (October–December 1963): 311–16; Robert Glenn Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1967), 118–29.
 - [20]. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Miracles: Yesterday and Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 6.
- [21]. William Sargent, "Some Cultural Group Abreactive Techniques and Their Relation to Modern Treatments," in *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* (London: Longmans, Green, 1949), 367–74.
- [22]. William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels: The Religious Language of Pentecostalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), chaps. 4–6.
- [23]. For a more complete treatment, see Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 153–218.

- [1]. Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, rev. ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 257.
 - [2]. Ibid., 76.
 - [3]. Ibid., 320.
- [4]. Jack Deere, Surprised by the Voice of God: How God Speaks Today through Prophecies, Dreams, and Visions (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 120–21.
 - [5]. Ibid., 114–56.
 - [6]. Ibid., 190–216.
 - [7]. Ibid., 114.
- [8]. Amos Yong, "A P(new)matological Paradigm for Christian Mission in a Religiously Plural World," *Missiology: An International Review* 33, no. 2 (April 2005): 176.

```
[9]. Ibid.
[10]. Ibid., 177.
[11]. Ibid.
[12]. Ibid., 178.
[13]. Ibid., 178–79.
[14]. Ibid., 179–80.
[15]. Ibid., 181–82.
[16]. Ibid., 182–83.
```

[<u>17</u>]. Ibid., 188.

- [18]. Clinton Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 27.
 - [19]. Frank E. Peretti, *This Present Darkness* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1986).
- [20]. Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997).
- [21]. C. Peter Wagner, Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996).
- [22]. C. Peter Wagner, ed., *Engaging the Enemy: How to Fight and Defeat Territorial Spirits* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996).
 - [23]. Boyd, *God at War*, 66.
- [24]. Robert A. Guelich, "Spiritual Warfare: Jesus, Paul and Peretti," *The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 40.
 - [25]. Ibid., 61.
 - [26]. Ibid., 63.
- [27]. Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tiénou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 269–78.
- [28]. For a balanced and carefully nuanced statement, see "Deliver Us from Evil—Consultation Statement," by an issues-based gathering on spiritual warfare at Nairobi, Kenya, August 2000, convened by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. Available online at www.lausanne.org/en/documents/all/nairobi-2000/179-overview.html.
 - [29]. C. S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 3.
 - [30]. Guelich, "Spiritual Warfare," 63.

- [1]. Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: Scribner, 1958), 39–40.
- [2]. Ibid., 45.
- [3]. Ibid., 40.
- [4]. Ibid., 19–22.

- [5]. Paul Van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 1–20; Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 3–29.
- [6]. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, enlarged ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 278–80.
 - [7]. See, e.g., John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).
- [8]. Yves Congar, *The Wide World My Parish: Salvation and Its Problems* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), 101–4.
- [9]. "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), 35.
- [10]. Hans Küng, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 222–35, 264–74.
 - [<u>11</u>]. Ibid., 275–84.
 - [12]. Edward J. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 70.
 - [13]. Alexander Ross, *The Epistles of James and John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 54–55.

- [1]. E.g., Benjamin B. Warfield took the position that "'foreordain' and 'predestinate' are exact synonyms, the choice between which can be determined only by taste" ("Predestination," in *Biblical Doctrines* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1929], 4). Warfield uses "election" to designate what we are here labeling "predestination."
- [2]. See, e.g., Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972); Duane Edward Spencer, *TULIP: The Five Points of Calvinism in the Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).
- [3]. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 8th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 61–82.
 - [4]. Benjamin B. Warfield, "Perfectionism," in *Biblical Doctrines*, 62–64.
 - [5]. Ibid., 65.
 - [6]. Ibid., 53–54.
 - [7]. Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 114–15.
 - [8]. Boettner, *Predestination*, 62.
 - [9]. Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 789–90.
- [10]. Samuel Wakefield, *A Complete System of Christian Theology* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1869), 387, 392.
- [11]. Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes; or, A View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1850), 2:377.
 - [12]. H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1958), 2:351.

- [13]. John Wesley, "Free Grace," in Works of John Wesley, 7:376.
- [14]. Wakefield, *Complete System*, 326–35; Wesley, "Free Grace," 376–77.
- [15]. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 394; Paul Jacobs and Hartmut Krienke, "Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 1:692–93.

- [1]. George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 490–91.
- [2]. Charles M. Horne, *Salvation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 55; Fritz Laubach, "Conversion, Penitence, Repentance, Proselyte," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 1:354.
- [3]. W. L. Muncy Jr., *A History of Evangelism in the United States* (Kansas City, KS: Central Seminary, 1945), 86–90.
- [4]. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 636–37.
 - [5]. Ibid., 996–1000.
- [6]. Otto Michel, μεταμέλομαι, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:626.
 - [7]. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 45–47.
- [8]. Rudolf Bultmann, "πιστεύω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:203.
- [9]. G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1937), 361–62.
 - [10]. Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 271–72.
 - [11]. Augustine, *Letter* 137.15; Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 276–77.
 - [12]. Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 290.
 - [13]. Millard J. Erickson, "The New Birth Today," *Christianity Today*, August 16, 1974, 8–10.
 - [14]. Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 826–27.

- [1]. John Murray, Redemption—Accomplished and Applied (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 161.
- [2]. Adolf Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, 2nd ed. (New York: George H. Doran, 1926), 142–57. In its more extreme forms, which Deissmann terms "unio-mysticism," this view verges on pantheism.
- [3]. Eric Mascall, *Christian Theology and Natural Science: Some Questions on Their Relations* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956), 314–16.

- [4]. Murray, *Redemption*, 166.
- [5]. George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 492–93.
- [6]. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 842–43; J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 18.
 - [7]. Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 440.
 - [8]. Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 168.
- [9]. William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 5th ed., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 36.
 - [10]. Vincent Taylor, Forgiveness and Reconciliation (London: Macmillan, 1952), 57.
 - [11]. Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 169.
- [12]. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 422–28.
 - [<u>13</u>]. Ibid.
- [14]. Reginald H. Fuller, "Justification in Recent Pauline Studies," *Anglican Theological Review* 84, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 413–14.
- [15]. Robert H. Gundry, "The Nonimputation of Christ's Righteousness," in *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debate?*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Trier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 18.
- [16]. John Piper, Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness? (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 55n3.
- [17]. Ibid., 63–64. The entire section (53–64) constitutes a thorough exegetical response to the "faith as righteousness" view.
 - [18]. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, 464–65.
- [19]. Paul A. Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation: The Role of Christian Obedience in Justification* (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster, 2005), xvi.
 - [20]. Tom Wright, Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision (London: SPCK, 2009), 160.
- [21]. Ibid., 161–62. For a critique of this view, see John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 100–116.
- [22]. Don Garlington, "Imputation or Union with Christ: A Response to John Piper," *Reformation and Revival* 12, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 76; Brad H. Young, *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 40–42.
 - [23]. Murray, *Redemption*, 132–34.
- [24]. François Kabasélé, "Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother," in *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, ed. Robert J. Schreiter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 116–27.
 - [25]. Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 857.
 - [26]. Charles M. Horne, *Salvation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 76–77.

[27]. Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 493–94.

- [1]. G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1953), 5.
 - [2]. Ibid.
- [3]. Otto Procksch, "ἄγιος, ἀγιάζω, ἀγιασμός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:113.
 - [4]. Ibid., 111.
 - [5]. John Wesley, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection (London: Epworth, 1952), 28.
 - [6]. Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology* (London: William Tegg, 1851), 604–13.
 - [7]. Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 879.
- [8]. James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 629.
 - [9]. Finney, *Lectures*, 611–13.
- [10]. John Murray, *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 155.
- [11]. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 8th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 185.
 - [12]. Strong, Systematic Theology, 882.
- [13]. Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 350–54.
 - [14]. I. Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God* (London: Epworth, 1969), 141.
- [15]. Samuel Wakefield, *A Complete System of Christian Theology* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1869), 463–65.
 - [16]. Ibid., 465–66.
 - [<u>17</u>]. Marshall, *Power of God*, 140–47.
- [18]. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 135–40 (Heb. 6:4–6).
- [19]. Thomas Hewitt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 110. Hewitt refers to the three views as, respectively, the "saved and lost theory," the "non-Christian theory," and the "hypothetical theory." See also Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 165.
 - [20]. Westcott, *Hebrews*, 154, 165.
- [21]. This distinction appears to elude Marshall, who regards the "hypothetical theory" as "a thoroughly sophistical theory which evades the plain meaning of the passage. There is no evidence

whatsoever that the writer was describing an imaginary danger which could not possibly threaten his readers" (*Power of God*, 140).

- [22]. G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Perseverance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 83–124.
- [23]. John Murray restricts glorification to the time of the resurrection; in his view all believers will be glorified together at the return of Christ (*Redemption*, 174–75). Bernard Ramm, however, looks on glorification as occurring in connection with face-to-face knowledge of Christ (*Them He Glorified: A Systematic Study of the Doctrine of Glorification* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963], 65). The issue here is how to define "glorification." What is its extent? To what events does it apply? The answer will depend in part on one's view of the nature of the intermediate state between death and resurrection (see chap. 39).
- [24]. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 458–59.
 - [25]. Ramm, Them He Glorified, 18.
- [26]. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 202–3.
 - [<u>27</u>]. Ramm, *Them He Glorified*, 67–69.
 - [28]. Charles M. Horne, Salvation (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 102–6.
 - [<u>29</u>]. Ramm, *Them He Glorified*, 103.

Chapter 36

- [1]. Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), suggests over one hundred such instances.
 - [2]. Arthur W. Wainwright, The Trinity in the New Testament (London: SPCK, 1962), 256–60.
- [3]. François Kabasélé, "Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother," in *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, ed. Robert J. Schreiter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 116–27.

- [1]. J. C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 1.
- [2]. James E. Carter, *The Mission of the Church* (Nashville: Broadman, 1974), 65–73.
- [3]. Edmund Clowney, "Toward a Biblical Doctrine of the Church," *Westminster Theological Journal* 31, no. 1 (November 1968): 71–72.
- [4]. Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 97–135.
- [5]. Sherwood Wirt, *The Social Conscience of the Evangelical* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 19–26.
- [6]. Robert M. Price, "A Fundamentalist Social Gospel?," *Christian Century* 96, no. 39 (November 28, 1979): 1183–86. Note readers' replies in vol. 97, no. 3 (January 23, 1980): 78–79.

- [7]. Harold Lindsell, "The Missionary Retreat," *Christianity Today*, November 9, 1971, 26–27; William Hordern, *New Directions in Theology Today*, vol. 1, *Introduction* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 75–76. See also Herman C. Weber, ed., *Yearbook of American Churches* (New York: Round Table, 1941), 129–38; Millard J. Erickson, *The Evangelical Left: Encountering Postconservative Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 11–14.
- [8]. Gerhard Friedrich, "εὐαγγελίζομαι," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:710–12, 721–25.
- [9]. F. F. Bruce, *The Defence of the Gospel in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 37–48.
 - [10]. Saul Bellow, *Herzog* (New York: Penguin, 1976), 315.
- [11]. Leon Morris, "Church, Nature and Government of (Episcopalian View)," in *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Gary G. Cohen (Marshalltown, DE: National Foundation for Christian Education, 1968), 2:483.
- [12]. Leon Morris, "Church Government," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 126.
- [13]. R. Laird Harris, "Church, Nature and Government of (Presbyterian View)," in Cohen, *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 2:490–92.
- [14]. *The Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, vol. 2, *Book of Order* (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1967), chap. 9.
 - [15]. Ibid., chap. 11.
 - [16]. Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 588–89.
 - [17]. Charles Hodge, *The Church and Its Polity* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1879), 119.
 - [18]. Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 3:475.
- [19]. Edward T. Hiscox, *The New Directory for Baptist Churches* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1894), 153–59.
- [20]. William Roy McNutt, *Polity and Practice in Baptist Churches* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1935), 21–26.
- [21]. James M. Bulman, "Church, Nature and Government of (Autonomous View)," in Cohen, *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 2:478.
 - [22]. Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1962), 238–57.

- [1]. Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 3:264.
- [2]. Ibid., 3:270.
- [3]. Ibid., 3:275.

```
[4]. Ibid., 3:277.
```

- [5]. Ibid., 2:448–49.
- [6]. Ibid., 3:285.
- [7]. Ibid., 3:256.
- [8]. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 632–33.
- [9]. Ibid., 634.
- [10]. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 3:552–55.
- [11]. H. E. Dana, A Manual of Ecclesiology (Kansas City, KS: Central Seminary, 1944), 281–82.
- [12]. Edward T. Hiscox, *The New Directory for Baptist Churches* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1894), 121.
 - [13]. Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 945.
 - [14]. Ibid., 951.
- [15]. Geoffrey Bromiley, "Baptism, Believers'," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 86.
 - [16]. John C. Wenger, *Introduction to Theology* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1954), 237–40.
- [17]. Paul King Jewett, "Baptism (Baptist View)," in *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Edwin H. Palmer (Marshalltown, DE: National Foundation for Christian Education, 1964), 1:520.
- [18]. Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 215–16. An Anglican, Morris comments on the suggestion that Jesus is referring to Christian baptism: "The weak point is that Nicodemus could not possibly have perceived an allusion to an as yet non-existent sacrament. It is difficult to think that Jesus would have spoken in such a way that His meaning could not possibly be grasped. His purpose was not to mystify but to enlighten. In any case the whole thrust of the passage is to put the emphasis on the activity of the Spirit, not on any rite of the church." See also D. W. Robinson, "Born of Water and Spirit: Does John 3:5 Refer to Baptism?," *Reformed Theological Review* 25, no. 1 (January–April 1966): 15–23.
- [19]. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 1:305–6.
- [20]. Ewald M. Plass, ed., *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 1:57–58; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 4.16.13.
- [21]. Joseph Pohle, *The Sacraments: A Dogmatic Treatise*, ed. Arthur Preuss (St. Louis: Herder, 1942), 2:99.
 - [22]. Ibid., part 3.
 - [23]. Ibid., 2:256–60.
 - [24]. Ibid., 2:252.
 - [25]. Ibid., 2:246–54.

- [26]. Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1943), 140.
 - [27]. Ibid., 161–68.
 - [28]. Ibid., 147.
 - [29]. Calvin, *Institutes* 4.17.12.
 - [30]. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 651.
 - [31]. Hodge, Systematic Theology, 627–28.
 - [32]. Strong, Systematic Theology, 541–43.
 - [<u>33</u>]. Pohle, *Sacraments*, 2:25.
 - [34]. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:345.
 - [35]. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 653–54.
 - [36]. Strong, Systematic Theology, 538–43.
- [37]. Robert H. Stein, "Wine-Drinking in New Testament Times," *Christianity Today*, June 20, 1975, 9–11.

- [1]. Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959).
- [2]. Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square, 1963), 127.
- [3]. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).
- [4]. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 668.
- [5]. Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1907), 982.
- [6]. E.g., Augustine, *Anti-Pelagian Writings*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 5, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Scribner, 1902).
- [7]. James Addison, *Life beyond Death in the Beliefs of Mankind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 202.
 - [8]. Harry E. Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 98–104.
- [9]. Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of the Church*, *Faith*, *and the Consummation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 383–85, 408–14.
- [10]. Seventh-Day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1957), 13.
 - [11]. Anthony Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 345.
- [12]. Joseph Pohle, *Eschatology; or, The Catholic Doctrine of the Last Things: A Dogmatic Treatise* (St. Louis: Herder, 1917), 70.
 - [<u>13</u>]. Ibid., 52–61.
 - [<u>14</u>]. Ibid., 28.
 - [<u>15</u>]. Ibid., 77.
 - [16]. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 4.91.

- [17]. Pohle, Eschatology, 95.
- [18]. Tertullian, *On Monogamy* 10.
- [19]. Augustine, *Confessions* 9.13.
- [20]. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1970), 317–18.
- [21]. Joachim Jeremias, "γέεννα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:657–58.
- [22]. Paul Helm, "A Theory of Disembodied Survival and Re-embodied Existence," *Religious Studies* 14, no. 1 (March 1978): 15–26.
- [23]. Richard L. Purtill, "The Intelligibility of Disembodied Survival," *Christian Scholar's Review* 5, no. 1 (1975): 3–22.

- [1]. George E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 65–70.
- [2]. Let God Be True (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1952), 141.
- [3]. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 706.
- [4]. John F. Walvoord, *The Return of the Lord* (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1955), 52–53.
- [5]. Ladd, *Blessed Hope*, 67.
- [6]. Ibid., 63.
- [7]. Ibid.
- [8]. J. Barton Payne, *The Imminent Appearing of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 86.
- [9]. Ibid., 95–103.
- [10]. Walvoord, *Return of the Lord*, 51.
- [11]. Douglas J. Moo holds this position, quoting the Oxford English Dictionary definition of "imminent" as meaning "impending threateningly, hanging over one's head; ready to befall or overtake one, close at hand at its incidence; coming on shortly" ("Posttribulation Rapture Position," *Three Views on the Rapture* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 207).
- [12]. Gottlob Schrenk, "δικαιοσύνη," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:207.
 - [13]. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 732.
- [14]. Floyd V. Filson, "The Second Epistle to the Corinthians," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 10:332.

- [1]. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 3:800–812.
- [2]. Loraine Boettner, "Postmillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 120–21.

- [3]. Ibid., 132–33.
- [4]. A. J. Visser, "A Bird's-Eye View of Ancient Christian Eschatology," *Numen* 14 (1967): 10–11.
- [5]. George E. Ladd, "Revelation 20 and the Millennium," *Review and Expositor* 57, no. 2 (April 1960): 169.
- [6]. John Walvoord, "Dispensational Premillennialism," *Christianity Today*, September 15, 1958, 11–12.
 - [7]. Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 86–90.
 - [8]. Ibid., 132–55.
 - [9]. Floyd Hamilton, *The Basis of Millennial Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942), 130–31.
- [10]. William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1939), 11–64; Anthony Hoekema, "Amillennialism," in *Meaning of the Millennium*, 156–59.
- [11]. Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Millennium and the Apocalypse," in *Biblical Doctrines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929), 654.
 - [12]. W. J. Grier, "Christian Hope and the Millennium," *Christianity Today*, October 13, 1958, 19.
- [13]. Ray Summers, "Revelation 20: An Interpretation," *Review and Expositor* 57, no. 2 (April 1960): 176.
- [14]. James A. Hughes, "Revelation 20:4–6 and the Question of the Millennium," *Westminster Theological Journal* 35 (1973): 300.
- [15]. Joseph H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1955), 188, 231, 629.
 - [16]. John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1957), 101, 198.
- [17]. Charles L. Feinberg, *Premillennialism or Amillennialism? The Premillennial and Amillennial Systems of Interpretation Analyzed and Compared* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1936), 146.
- [18]. E. Schuyler English, *Re-thinking the Rapture: An Examination of What the Scriptures Teach* as to the Time of the Translation of the Church in Relation to the Tribulation (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1954), 100–101.
 - [<u>19</u>]. Walvoord, *Rapture Question*, 75–82.
- [20]. Gordon Lewis, "Biblical Evidence for Pretribulationism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125 (1968): 216–26.
 - [21]. John F. Walvoord, *The Return of the Lord* (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1955), 51.
 - [22]. George E. Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," in Meaning of the Millennium, 18–27.
 - [23]. George E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 122; Robert H.
- Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 48–49.
 - [24]. Gundry, Church and the Tribulation, 49.
 - [25]. Ibid., 55.

- [<u>26</u>]. Ladd, *Blessed Hope*, 58–59.
- [27]. Gundry, *Church and the Tribulation*, 29–43.
- [<u>28</u>]. Ladd, *Blessed Hope*, 13.
- [29]. James Oliver Buswell Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962–63), 2:445–57; Norman B. Harrison, *The End: Rethinking the Revelation* (Minneapolis: Harrison, 1941), 118.
- [30]. Robert Govett, *The Saints' Rapture to the Presence of the Lord Jesus* (London: Nisbet, 1852), 126–28; George H. Lang, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Select Studies* (London: Oliphant, 1945), 88–89.
 - [31]. J. Barton Payne, *The Imminent Appearing of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).
- [32]. For a more thorough examination of these positions see Millard J. Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology: Making Sense of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 163–81.
- [33]. See, however, George E. Ladd, "The Revelation of Christ's Glory," *Christianity Today*, September 1, 1958, 14.

Chapter 42

- [1]. Helmut Traub, "οὐρανός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:514–20.
 - [2]. Ibid., 5:521–22.
- [3]. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 1030.
 - [4]. Leon Morris, *The Lord from Heaven* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 26–29.
- [5]. Bernard Ramm, *Them He Glorified: A Systematic Study of the Doctrine of Glorification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 104–15.
 - [6]. The word *ouranos* does not actually occur in the Greek text here.
- [7]. We are here assuming that our life in heaven will be the personal, conscious, individual existence that appears to be presupposed in all the biblical references. For the view that our future existence will be merely a living on in God's memory, see David L. Edwards, *The Last Things Now* (London: SCM, 1969), 88–91.
 - [8]. Ulrich Simon, *Heaven in the Christian Tradition* (New York: Harper, 1958), 236.
 - [9]. Morton Kelsey, Afterlife: The Other Side of Dying (New York: Paulist, 1979), 182–83.
- [10]. J. A. Motyer, *After Death: A Sure and Certain Hope?* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 74–76.
- [11]. W. H. Dyson, "Heaven," in *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1924), 1:712.
 - [12]. Alan Richardson, Religion in Contemporary Debate (London: SCM, 1966), 72.
 - [13]. Austin Farrer, *Saving Belief* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1967), 144.

- [<u>14</u>]. Simon, *Heaven*, 217.
- [15]. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 165–66. Lewis uses the term "transsexual" with much the same meaning as we have here attached to "suprasexual."
 - [16]. See, e.g., Lord Alfred Tennyson's poem "Wages."
 - [17]. John Baillie, *And the Life Everlasting* (New York: Scribner, 1933), 281.
 - [<u>18</u>]. Motyer, *After Death*, 87.
- [19]. S. D. F. Salmond, "Heaven," in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1919), 2:324.
- [20]. Nels Ferré, *The Christian Understanding of God* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951), 233–34.
 - [21]. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 3:868.
- [22]. J. A. Motyer, "The Final State: Heaven and Hell," in *Basic Christian Doctrines*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (New York: Holt, Rinehart and & Winston, 1962), 292.
- [23]. Origen, *De principiis* 1.6.2; 3.6.3. For a contemporary statement of universalism, see John A. T. Robinson, *In the End*, *God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 119–33.
- [24]. See Benjamin B. Warfield, "Annihilationism," in *Studies in Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), 447–50.
- [25]. Seventh-Day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1957), 14.
 - [26]. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 28.
 - [27]. Ibid., 127–28.

This abridgment of Millard Erickson's classic Christian Theology gives an overview of the doctrines of revelation, God, creation, providence, humanity, sin, Jesus Christ, atonement and salvation, the church, and eschatology. The third edition, now thoroughly revised throughout, takes into account feedback from professors and students and reflects current theological conversations, with added material on the atonement, justification, and divine foreknowledge.

"Clearly written and well-outlined, this book would serve as an excellent college textbook as well as being accessible to educated laypersons."

-Warren McWilliams, Religious Studies Review

"This is an outstanding introduction to theology that should become a standard undergraduate textbook. It's accessible to all general readers, and I strongly recommend it to all bookstores."

-John Kohlenberger III, Bookstore Journal

"Unhesitatingly recommended for use in Christian colleges."

-Robert A. Pyne and Gary L. Nebeker, Bibliotheca Sacra

"This prominent publication is most worthy of serious study."

- The Baptist Standard

"Erickson's goal was to write a briefer version of his popular Christian Theology with a view to providing a primer of and transition to more extended discussions of theology. As such, Erickson admirably achieved his purposes."

-B. Dale Ellenburg, Mid-America Theological Journal

"Introducing Christian Doctrine is a worthy book on Christian theology to be made a standard textbook for a Bible school or college course on theology."

-Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

Millard J. Erickson (PhD, Northwestern University) has served as a pastor and seminary dean and has taught at several schools, including Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Western Seminary (Portland and San Jose), and Baylor University. He has held numerous visiting professorships and is the author of many books. L. Arnold Hustad (PhD, New York University) is professor of theology and philosophy at Crown College.

Cover design: toblasdesign.com



Table of Contents

<u>Title Page</u>	
<u>Copyright Page</u>	
<u>Dedication</u>	
<u>Contents</u>	
<u>Preface</u>	
Part 1 Introduction	
1. What Is The	<u>ology?</u>
	The Nature of Theology
	The Method of Theology
2. Contextualiz	zing the Christian Message
	The Contemporary Context of Theology
	Approaches to Contextualizing the Christian
	<u>Message</u>
	The Permanent Element in Christianity
	The Nature of Contextualization
	The Criteria of Permanence in Doctrine
Part 2 Revelation	
3. God's Unive	ersal Revelation
	The Nature of Revelation
	The Modes of General Revelation
	Biblical Passages Dealing with General
	Revelation
	<u>Differing Assessments of the Value of</u>
	General Revelation
	General Revelation and Human
	<u>Responsibility</u>
	<u>Implications of General Revelation</u>
4. God's Partic	cular Revelation
	The Definition and Necessity of Special
	Revelation
	The Style of Special Revelation
	The Modes of Special Revelation
	<u>Special Revelation: Propositional or</u>
	Personal?

		<u>Propositions or Narrative?</u>
		Scripture as Revelation
	5. The Preservation	of the Revelation: Inspiration
		<u>Definition of Inspiration</u>
		The Fact of Inspiration
		<u>Theories of Inspiration</u>
		The Extent of Inspiration
		The Intensiveness of Inspiration
		A Model of Inspiration
	6. The Dependabilit	y of God's Word: Inerrancy
	•	<u>Various Conceptions of Inerrancy</u>
		The Importance of Inerrancy
		<u>Inerrancy and Phenomena</u>
		Defining Inerrancy
		Ancillary Issues
	7. The Power of Go	d's Word: Authority
		Religious Authority
		The Internal Working of the Holy Spirit
		Objective and Subjective Components of
		Authority
		The Bible and Reason
		Historical and Normative Authoritativeness
Part 3 Go	<u>d</u>	
	8. The Doctrine of 0	<u>God</u>
		The Immanence and Transcendence of God
		The Nature of Attributes
		Classifications of Attributes
	9. The Greatness of	
		<u>Spirituality</u>
		Life
		<u>Personality</u>
		<u>Infinity</u>
		Constancy
	10. The Goodness of	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
		Moral Qualities
		God's Love and Justice—A Point of Tension?
	11. God's Three-in-	Oneness: The Trinity

The Biblical Teaching **Historical Constructions** Relative Authority of the Three Persons Essential Elements of a Doctrine of the Trinity The Search for Analogies **Key Definitions The Biblical Teaching** The Nature of the Divine Plan Logical Priority: God's Plan or Human Action? A Moderately Calvinistic Model Various Understandings of History 13. God's Originating Work: Creation Reasons for Studying the Doctrine of Creation Elements of the Biblical Teaching on Creation The Theological Meaning of the Doctrine The Creation Doctrine and Its Relation to Science <u>Implications of the Doctrine of Creation</u> 14. God's Continuing Work: Providence Providence as Preservation Providence as Government **Providence and Prayer** Providence and Miracles 15. Evil and God's World: A Special Problem The Nature of the Problem **Types of Solutions** Themes for Dealing with the Problem of Evil

16. God's Special Agents: Angels

12. God's Plan

Good Angels Evil Angels

The Role of the Doctrine of Angels

Part 4 Humanity

17. Introduction to the	<u>Doctrine of Humanity</u>
<u>In</u>	nages of Humankind
<u>T</u>	ne Christian View of Humanity
Th	ne Biblical Account of Human Creation
<u>T</u>	ne Theological Meaning of Human Creation
18. The Image of God	
	ne Relevant Scripture Passages
$\overline{ m Vi}$	ews of the Image
	valuation of the Views
<u>Co</u>	onclusions regarding the Nature of the
	<u>aage</u>
<u>In</u>	plications of the Doctrine
19. The Constitutional	-
<u>Ba</u>	asic Views of the Human Constitution
<u>Bi</u>	<u>blical Considerations</u>
<u>A</u> 1	n Alternative Model: Conditional Unity
<u>In</u>	plications of Conditional Unity
20. The Nature and So	ource of Sin
<u>Th</u>	ne Difficulty of Discussing Sin
<u>Bi</u>	blical Perspectives on the Nature of Sin
<u>Th</u>	ne Source of Sin
21. The Results of Sin	
Re	esults Affecting the Relationship with God
<u>Ef</u>	fects on the Sinner
<u>Ef</u>	fects on the Relationship to Other Humans
22. The Magnitude of	<u>Sin</u>
<u>Th</u>	ne Extent of Sin
<u>Th</u>	ne Intensiveness of Sin
	neories of Original Sin
<u>Oı</u>	riginal Sin: A Biblical and Contemporary
<u>M</u>	<u>odel</u>
Part 5 The Person and Work of C	<u>Christ</u>
23. The Deity of Chris	<u>t</u>
<u>Th</u>	ne Biblical Teaching
<u>Hi</u>	storical Departures from Belief in the Full
	<u>eity of Christ</u>
<u>Fu</u>	<u>ınctional Christology</u>

	<u>Implications of the Deity of Christ</u>
24. The Humanity	<u> </u>
<u>= 11 </u>	The Importance of the Humanity of Christ
	The Biblical Evidence
	Early Heresies regarding the Humanity of
	Jesus
	The Virgin Birth
	The Sinlessness of Jesus
	Implications of the Humanity of Jesus
25. The Unity of th	
<u></u>	The Importance and Difficulty of the Issue
	The Biblical Material
	Early Misunderstandings
	Other Attempts to Solve the Problem
	Basic Tenets of the Doctrine of Two Natures
	<u>in One Person</u>
26. Introduction to	the Work of Christ
	The Stages of Christ's Work
	The Functions of Christ
	The Manifold Theories of the Atonement
27. The Central The	eme of Atonement
	Background Factors
	The New Testament Teaching
	The Basic Meaning of Atonement
	Objections to the Penal-Substitution Theory
	<u>Implications of Substitutionary Atonement</u>
Part 6 The Holy Spirit	
28. The Person of t	
	The Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy
	<u>Spirit</u>
	<u>Difficulties in Understanding the Holy Spirit</u>
	The Nature of the Holy Spirit
	<u>Implications of the Doctrine of the Holy</u>
	<u>Spirit</u>

29. The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

	The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of
	<u>Jesus</u>
	The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the
	Christian
	The Miraculous Gifts Today
	<u>Implications of the Work of the Spirit</u>
30. Recent Issues r	egarding the Holy Spirit
	The Holy Spirit and Prophecy Today
	The Holy Spirit and Other World Religions
	The Holy Spirit and Other "Spirits"
<u>vation</u>	
31. Conceptions of	Salvation
	Details on Which Conceptions of Salvation
	<u>Differ</u>
	Current Conceptions of Salvation
32. The Anteceden	t to Salvation: Predestination
	Differing Views of Predestination
	A Suggested Solution
	<u>Implications of Predestination</u>
33. The Beginning	of Salvation: Subjective Aspects
	Effectual Calling
	<u>Conversion</u>
	<u>Regeneration</u>
	Implications of Effectual Calling, Conversion,
	and Regeneration
34. The Beginning	of Salvation: Objective Aspects
	<u>Union with Christ</u>
	<u>Justification</u>
	Adoption
35. The Continuati	on and Completion of Salvation
	<u>Sanctification</u>
	<u>Perseverance</u>
	<u>Glorification</u>
<u>urch</u>	
36 The Nature of	tho C'hurch

Part 8 Church

Part 7 Salvation

36. The Nature of the Church

The Basic Meaning of the Term "Church"

The Unity of the Church

		Biblical Images of the Church
		<u>Implications</u>
	37. The Role and G	Sovernment of the Church
	<u> </u>	The Functions of the Church
		The Heart of the Ministry of the Church: The
		Gospel
		Forms of Church Government
		A System of Church Government for Today
	38. The Ordinano	es of the Church: Baptism and the Lord's
	Supper Supper	es of the Sharem Baptism and the Bora's
	<u> </u>	Baptism: The Initiatory Rite of the Church
		The Lord's Supper: The Continuing Rite of
		the Church
Part 9 Th	e Last Things	
39. Introductory Matters and Individual Eschatology		atters and Individual Eschatology
	<u> </u>	Introduction to Eschatology
		Death
		The Intermediate State
		Implications of the Doctrines of Death and
		the Intermediate State
	40. The Second Co	ming and Its Consequents
		The Second Coming
		Resurrection
		The Final Judgment
		Implications of the Second Coming and Its
		<u>Consequents</u>
	41. Millennial and	<u>Tribulational Views</u>
		Millennial Views
		<u>Tribulational Views</u>
	42. Final States	
		Final State of the Righteous
		Final State of the Wicked

<u>States</u>

<u>Implications of the Doctrine of the Final</u>

Scripture Index
Name and Subject Index

<u>Notes</u>

Back Cover



Your gateway to knowledge and culture. Accessible for everyone.



z-library.se singlelogin.re go-to-zlibrary.se single-login.ru



Official Telegram channel



Z-Access



https://wikipedia.org/wiki/Z-Library