

BIBLICAL
THEOLOGY
OF THE
NEW
TESTAMENT



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Biblical Theology of the New Testament - Revised Edition

Charles C. Ryrie

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PREFACE

This book is the product of preparing and teaching courses in Biblical theology. When I first began to teach in a department of systematic theology at the seminary level in 1954, I was assigned electives in Biblical theology simply because those were the only electives available to the new teacher in the department. Prior to my coming, only two courses had been offered in Biblical theology—one covering all of Old Testament Biblical theology and the other covering New Testament Biblical theology as a whole. After I came, additional courses were developed and in time I taught all of them.

Who is better qualified to teach and write New Testament Biblical theology: an exegete or a theologian? There is no general answer to that question, for so much depends on the training and qualifications of the individual involved. Biblical theology is related to the disciplines of both. In my graduate studies abroad I took Biblical theology courses taught by a professor of New Testament exegesis. And I taught Biblical theology when I was a professor of systematic theology.

Nevertheless the question prompted a small survey of New Testament Biblical theologies. Older ones seem to be written by theologians (for example, Beyschlag, Weiss, Schmid, Van Oosterzee, and Stevens), while more recent ones seem to be written by New Testament scholars (for example, Kennedy, Moffatt, Stewart, Guthrie, Morris, and the New Testament faculty [with one exclusion] of Dallas Theological Seminary). However, there are exceptions; for example, Stauffer and I, theologians, were among the more recent writers. Two authors were designated professors of Biblical theology: Geerhardus Vos and W. Robert Cook. George E. Ladd is professor of New Testament and theology, perhaps the ideal combination.

My book was first published by Moody Press in 1959, some years before the appearance of a number of works by other evangelicals: for example, McDonald's (1972), Lehman's (1974), Ladd's (1974), Cook's (1979), Guthrie's (1981), Morris's (1986), and Dallas Theological Seminary's (1993). This increased interest is welcome, for Biblical theology furnishes a perspective on the Scriptures that other disciplines do not.

The editor of the original edition of my book was my longtime friend, Dr. Howard F. Vos, who made many helpful suggestions. I am very grateful to ECS Ministries for undertaking the republication of the book. It has only been slightly revised, simply because for the most part my mind has not changed concerning the emphases and interpretations in the original.

Biblical Theology of the New Testament is to be used with a Bible always and with commentaries frequently. My hope is that the book will give the reader a new appreciation of the authors, circumstances, and writings of the New Testament and will help the preacher or teacher present Bible doctrine in a unique and appealing way.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS BIBLICAL THEOLOGY?

The approach of Biblical theology to the Scriptures is unique.

Biblical theology is not systematic theology or exegesis; nor is it merely a different arranging of the same material. Rather it is a combination that is partly historical, partly exegetical, partly critical, partly theological, and thereby totally distinctive. Biblical theology is concerned with the reason something was written as well as with the content of what was written. It not only examines the product, but also investigates the procedures and presuppositions that went into the writing of the Scriptures.

Such a study is rewarding. The Word of God is seen in the manner in which it was revealed—progressively. The whole is traced in the way God gave the Bible—part by part. The perspective is that of the historical setting in which the truth came. The theology of the Bible emerges out of the thoughts of the writers as seen in their writings; it is never superimposed on those writings. Indeed the approach of Biblical theology furnishes the best way to preach and teach doctrine, for through it people will realize that theology is a part of the very fabric of the Bible itself and not something that has been forced upon it or read into it. The reward of studying the progress of revelation part by part will be to see the Scriptures in a detailed naturalness of beauty that Biblical theology alone can bring out.

The term *Biblical theology* then must have a very specific meaning since it stands for such a distinctive method of Bible study. However, the term is not always so understood, for it can also be used in a general way. It could indicate any theology that is based on the Bible. Yet if what has been said above is true, the term must have a more particular meaning. Thus our first task is to formulate an exact definition and understand the concepts involved in that definition of Biblical theology.

I. DEFINITION OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Biblical theology is the branch of theological science that deals systematically with the historically-conditioned progress of the self-revelation of God, as deposited in the Bible. Biblical theology is not always defined thus, nor has it always been applied to the same branch of theological science. In Pietistic circles it denoted a more popular (as opposed to scholastic or ecclesiastical) presentation of the doctrines of Christianity. In other circles the term is taken to mean the early creed of apostolic Christianity in contrast to the later development of doctrine in the history of the church.¹ More recently with the rise of evangelical Bible schools, Biblical theology has come to stand for any theology that claims to be based solely on the Bible. In other words, this popular notion makes Biblical theology that which emphasizes the revelational nature of Christianity while minimizing or ignoring rational or philosophical aspects. Though such a theology may be Biblical, it is not necessarily Biblical theology.

If Biblical theology is the branch of theological science that deals systematically with the historically-conditioned progress of revelation as deposited in the Bible, it has four major characteristics. First, the results of its investigations must be presented in a systematic form. In this, Biblical theology is like any other branch of theological science. However, to say that Biblical theology must be systematized is not to identify it with systematic theology, but it is to say that whatever it is, it is not formulated in an unsystematic manner. This first characteristic, though a necessary one, is not a distinguishing one.

The second feature of Biblical theology does distinguish it from other Biblical studies. Biblical theology pays careful attention to the fact that revelation was embodied in history and communicated through men. It is not, however, merely a historical science, nor are its investigations only of historical circumstances.² Neither is this historical emphasis, major as it is in Biblical theology, a minimizing of the fact that although revelation may have been conditioned by historical circumstances, it is given in words (see 1 Corinthians 2:13). Nevertheless, investigation into the lives of the various writers of Scripture, into the circumstances that compelled them to write, and into the historic situation of the recipients of their letters will aid immeasurably our understanding of the doctrine revealed in the words they

wrote. This study of the historic conditioning of doctrine is a major emphasis of Biblical theology.

The third feature of Biblical theology is also a distinguishing one, for it concerns the progressiveness of revelation. Biblical theology investigates the progress of doctrine not only as it was revealed by various writers of the Bible, but also in its different stages of development. It is obvious but too little recognized that what we now call the completed revelation of the Bible was not given all at once. Neither was it given uniformly, for God chose to give differing amounts to different men in various periods of human history. Revelation was not completed in one act, but was unfolded in a long series of successive acts and through the minds and hands of many men of varying backgrounds. This characteristic of Biblical theology—presenting the progress of doctrine—represents, so to speak, a theistic view of revelation as contrasted with a deistic view, for Biblical theology recognizes the fact that God’s work of revelation was not completed all at once and then left to run its own course. Biblical theology then is a very profitable method of studying the Word of God, for it views the text in the same way in which it was written. Years ago Bernard in his most valuable work, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, emphasized the importance of this approach to the Scriptures. He said:

Into all our parishes and all our missions the thousands of evangelists, pastors, and teachers are sent forth with the Bible placed in their hands, and with solemn charges to draw from its pages the Gospel which they preach. But when those pages are opened, they present, not the exposition of a revelation completed, but the records of a revelation in progress. Its parts and features are seen, not as arranged after their development, but as arranging themselves in the course of their development, and growing, through stages which can be marked, and by accessions which can be measured, into the perfect form which they attain at last.³

The fourth characteristic of Biblical theology is that its source of doctrine is the Bible. This is not to rule out the use of historical facts that may come from other sources, but it is to affirm that the doctrine to be systematized is found in the words of the Bible. Not all writers on this subject accept the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures as well as their authority, as

does the author of this book, but all do recognize that Biblical theology is not concerned with any other means of revelation than that which is found in the Bible.

II. RELATION OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY TO OTHER BIBLICAL STUDIES

The validity of the definition above is further substantiated by comparing Biblical theology with the other branches of theological science.

A. *ITS RELATION TO APOLOGETICS*

Biblical theology assumes the results of the discipline of apologetics and builds upon them. Obviously the kind of results that are assumed will make a great deal of difference. The present writer believes that apologetics has confirmed, among other things, the case for theism; supernatural miracles; and verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.⁴ That is the foundation on which this work builds.

B. *ITS RELATION TO NEW TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION*

As with apologetics, the results of the investigations of New Testament introduction are for the most part merely assumed and not reiterated in a work on Biblical theology. However, since Biblical theology cannot do without the critical investigations of introduction, the latter must precede the former, and to some extent must be included in it. Matters of authorship, date of writing, and destination are of utmost importance to the historical perspective of Biblical theology, and in most instances these matters can be stated in summary fashion on the basis of the results of New Testament introduction.

Occasionally New Testament scholars are in such disagreement concerning certain of these critical matters that the Biblical theologian must concern himself in greater detail with them in order to lay a solid foundation on which to build his theology. For instance it is deemed necessary to deal in detail with the matter of the authorship of the pastoral Epistles before proceeding with Pauline theology, for New Testament scholars are divided on this question. It has to be settled in order to determine the amount of source material that rightfully belongs to Pauline

theology. But in general Biblical theology does not enter into detailed critical investigations, for as Weiss correctly pointed out, “It is only a historico-descriptive, not a historicocritical, science.”⁵

C. ITS RELATION TO EXEGESIS

Biblical theology stands in the closest connection to exegesis, for it builds directly upon it. Exegesis must be grammatical (it must tell us exactly what the author said) and it must be historical (it must tell us what the writer said in the context of his own time). This historico-grammatical interpretation is the basis of all Biblical theology. The careful, thorough Biblical theologian will have included in the preparation for his task an exegesis of all the Biblical material under consideration. It makes some difference to a proper conception of Pauline theology, for instance, whether in Ephesians 5:26 the writer was speaking of sanctification or the rite of baptism or both; therefore a careful exegesis of such a verse is an absolute necessity for accurate theology.

The solution of textual problems, which is a part of the task of exegesis, is also foundational to the science of Biblical theology. One cannot be a theologian without being an exegete, although one can be an exegete without being a theologian. Biblical theology goes beyond exegesis, for it not only presents what the writer said but also seeks to discover the theological pattern in his mind, of which the writing was a reflection.

D. ITS RELATION TO THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Biblical theology has a close connection to certain aspects of historical theology, but it is certainly different from the history of Christian doctrine. The latter science is the study of what the readers of the Bible thought about the Word either individually or collectively in church councils. Biblical theology is the study of what the writers of the Bible thought and said. It studies revelation at its human source, while the history of Christian doctrine studies the interpretation of the church.

E. ITS RELATION TO SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

There is undoubtedly widespread confusion or vagueness concerning the distinction between Biblical theology and systematic theology. This may be

largely due to the fact that there are many similarities between the two sciences. For example both are (or should be) based on the Bible (although systematic theology may include other sources of knowledge). Both are Biblical. Both are systematic. It is far from the truth to think of systematic theology as unbiblical or Biblical theology as unsystematic. Nevertheless there are some basic differences that distinguish these two areas of learning:

1. Precedence. Strictly speaking Biblical theology is foundational to systematic theology. In practice in our educational institutions systematic theology courses are usually prescribed, while Biblical theology courses are generally elective. This would give the false appearance that Biblical theology logically follows the study of systematic theology. Logically and chronologically, Biblical theology should take precedence over systematic theology, for the order of study ought to be introduction, exegesis, historical background, Biblical theology, and finally systematic theology. That is, such an order ought to be followed if we are going to start from scratch. But since we do not, we teach systematic theology in the prescribed courses. Actually this is as it should be, for in the limited scope and time of a theological curriculum, students should reap the benefit of the thought and work of others, as they do in systematic theology courses. Later they can study the method and results of Biblical theology.

2. Purpose. The purpose of Biblical theology is to discover what the writers of Scripture themselves regarded as truth, not only from what they wrote but also from what their writings reflect of their theological thinking. The purpose of systematic theology is to set forth not only the truth, but also why it is truth. In this contrasting frame of reference then, the former is purely historical and the latter is historico-philosophical. By so much it may be said that Biblical theology has no need of systematic theology, but systematic theology has every need of Biblical theology.

3. Perspective. Systematic theology displays Christian thought in one harmonious whole from today's viewpoint. Biblical theology, on the other hand, presents the thought of the leaders of Judaism and Christianity from the historical standpoint of the particular period in which they labored. The perspective of the one is that of today; of the other, that of the Biblical writer.

4. Content. Systematic theology of course, as far as its Biblical sources are concerned, is based on all of the Bible as a whole. Biblical theology investigates particular parts of the Bible, and although the sum of all these parts will be the entire Scriptures, the investigations are divided so that the contents of each particular period or the thought of each particular writer is surveyed separately. Systematic theology is like a blossom, each petal of which Biblical theology has examined separately and in detail.

In conclusion then it is apparent that although Biblical theology sustains relationships to other branches of Biblical study, it nonetheless is a distinct science of its own. The Biblical theologian must know something of the conclusions of apologetics and introduction, he must be a thoroughly qualified exegete, and he must be a competent historian. He is then ready to investigate and systematically set forth the historically-conditioned progress of the self-revelation of God, as deposited in the Bible. The results of his impartial historical inquiry into the original founts of truth will not be a systematic theology but a Biblical theology.⁶

III. METHODOLOGY IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

The method of systematic theology is to systematize all the truth revealed on any given subject under generally accepted and humanly devised categories such as theology proper, anthropology, and soteriology. The method of Biblical theology is to systematize the truth revealed during a given period or through a given author. Generally speaking, Biblical theology of the Old Testament presents the truth as it was progressively revealed in various periods, while Biblical theology of the New Testament systematizes the truth as it was progressively revealed through the various writers of the New Testament. The reason for this is apparent. The doctrine of the Old Testament was revealed throughout many centuries, while that of the New was confined to less than one century. Therefore New Testament Biblical theology, while not unaware of the progression of time involved in the writing of the New Testament, is chiefly concerned with the progress of doctrine as revealed through the various human authors.

Thus the plan of this book on New Testament Biblical theology is to present, in order, the theology of the Synoptics, the theology of Acts, the theology of James, Pauline theology, the theology of Hebrews, the theology

of Peter and Jude, and Johannine theology. Such an arrangement emphasizes the writers involved while also recognizing—in a secondary manner and as much as possible—chronological progression.

Having decided that New Testament Biblical theology should be concerned mainly with development through men rather than periods, the student is faced with another decision of methodology. He must decide what sort of outline to use in his development of the thought of these men. A few have chosen to follow the same outline that is generally used in systematic theology. In other words, all the teaching of an author is merely catalogued under the usual categories. This does show at a glance what the writer taught on each subject, but it tends to be little more than a subdividing of the science of systematic theology and it certainly does nothing toward revealing the theological bent of the mind of the author involved.

Therefore it seems preferable to develop Biblical theology according to the outstanding areas of the thinking of the writer involved or according to the particular distinctiveness of revelation to and through that man or during that period. (Some of these distinctive categories may be the same as the categories used in systematic theology; for example, Christology). This approach will be followed in this book so that the student of Biblical theology will remember that Pauline theology is outstanding for such-and-such doctrines or that the theology of James centers around certain categories of thought. This historical rather than dogmatic approach will also help give to the student an insight into why the theology of James, for instance, has certain doctrines at its core; and it will do this in a way that no mere systematizing of the record into standard categories can possibly do. Sometimes it will also be helpful to summarize certain aspects of a man's theology for the sake of completeness, but in the main the purpose will be to accentuate his emphases and try to account for the principal theological patterns of his mind, as revealed in his writings.²

IV. VALUE OF THE STUDY OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

It should be clear by now that Biblical theology is not a miniature systematic theology subdivided into periods or persons. It is not the mere repetition of dogmas under the accepted systematic outline as those dogmas were stated by a particular writer of Scripture or during a particular period.

It is a fresh approach to the Word of God that is neither entirely exegetical, nor historical, nor theological, nor expository, but a combination of all these approaches. What then in particular is the value of this approach?

A. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY VIEWS DOCTRINE IN ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Failure to view doctrine in its historical context is often a serious weakness of systematic theology, for frequently the theological system determines the meaning of a verse or passage rather than the passage molding the system. Viewing doctrine in its historical context is the best preventive against this misuse of a theological system. For instance a student of mine once concluded that since he could not find sin specifically mentioned in Acts 2, Peter did not preach about sin on the day of Pentecost. His error was simply that he failed to understand the doctrine of repentance (Acts 2:38) in its historical setting in the sermon and against the background of the recent crime of the crucifixion of Christ. The Biblical theology viewpoint guards one against making such mistakes.

B. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY EMPHASIZES THEOLOGICAL SUBSTRUCTURE

Biblical theology relieves the situation wherein fundamental doctrines of the faith seem to depend mainly on the testimony of isolated proof-texts.⁸ The doctrines do not depend on such testimony, but often the presentation of certain doctrines in systematic theology gives the impression that they depend on one or two Biblical texts. The doctrine of inspiration is a good example. Usually two texts are set forth as the New Testament proof of the doctrine (2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21). The impression is sometimes left with the student that these are the only two texts that can be used to demonstrate the inspiration of the Scriptures. There is no better corrective for such a misconception than the study of James from the viewpoint of Biblical theology. Although James does not make any direct statements concerning inspiration, the investigation of the doctrine of the Word in his Epistle reveals beyond any shadow of doubt that there was in his mind a definite substructure of the doctrines of the inspiration and authority of the Word. Theological substructure is just as valid proof of any doctrine as explicit statements, and no discipline in all the realm of theological studies reveals theological substructure as Biblical theology does.

C. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY HELPS GIVE PROPER BALANCE TO THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION

Inspiration may be defined as God's superintending human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs. Such a definition of course includes the ideas of God's superintendence (not dictation) of the entire Bible, verbal inerrancy, and the proper place of the human instrument. In recent times the doctrine of inspiration has suffered at the hands of both friend and foe. Liberal scholarship has virtually denied any divine element in inspiration by redefining inspiration in terms of the author instead of the writing. The liberal critic maintained that insofar as the Bible was true, it was inspired, but it became his task to determine at what points the Bible was true.

In combating this religious-historical approach, conservatives have had to emphasize the divine authorship of the Scriptures. The result of this emphasis has been the accusation by liberals and more recently by neo-orthodox theologians that dictation is the conservative doctrine of inspiration. This is done in spite of the fact that the conservative disavowal has been widely publicized for many years.⁹ Nevertheless it must be admitted that there has been an underemphasis of the human factors in inspiration. This lack of emphasis Biblical theology corrects, for its historical approach looks behind the words of the writings and points up the individual backgrounds, interests, and styles of the authors. Biblical theology emphasizes the part that the writers had in the composition of the Word of God, while of course building on the divine superintendence of the writings.

D. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOSTERS A DEEP APPRECIATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD

The benefit of Biblical theology as stated in the preceding section is realized when the approach is mainly from the viewpoint of the variety of authors. The benefit before us now is realized when the approach is made from the viewpoint of the different periods in revelation. When one studies for instance the theology of the Penta-teuch and then Pauline theology, he cannot help being impressed with the sharp contrast in the content of revelation. This is true of course only if in the study of the theology of the Pentateuch one is careful not to read the New Testament back into the Old;

but if that is not done, one can only stand in amazement at the fullness of the revelation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ in contrast to that which was revealed in the shadows of the Old Testament. Such a contrast can only bring thankfulness and humility to the heart of the one who lives today in the blazing glory of the fullness of revelation, and that contrast is one of the certain products of the study of Biblical theology.

This then is the subject that we investigate in this book. That investigation can be pursued in several ways. Some who use this book may only want to scan it in order to trace the central thoughts in the progress of revelation. Others, and we trust this will be the larger group, will want to study it thoroughly with an open Bible. They should read several times the books of the Bible involved in each theological division and look up each reference mentioned in this text as they study it page by page.

The author has endeavored to hit some sort of balance between tracing the overall movement of thought and the specific development of individual doctrines. This has not always been easy to do, for the temptations to go overboard in both directions have presented themselves many times. The result could undoubtedly be improved upon, but any deficiencies in this matter are not due to a lack of sincere desire to maintain a balance within the work and a reasonable limit to the total work. This has required condensation and outlining in many places, which can be compensated for only by the reader's faithful use of his Bible along with this book. Differing interpretations of some Biblical texts have had to be passed by without much discussion. In such cases the reader should avail himself of commentaries on those passages.

Biblical theology is one approach to the Scriptures. Distinctive as it may be and fruitful as its benefits are, profit and blessing cannot be guaranteed the reader or student apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is He who takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us (John 16:13–15) and unless that ministry is operative in the heart, there can be no benefit from the study. To reap the fullness of His ministry should be the constant concern of every student of the Word of God. May God grant it to all who read this book.

P_{ART} I

THE SYNOPTIC THEOLOGY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

T*he Synoptic theology* is not quite synonymous with *the theology of Jesus*, for the former includes and is larger than the latter. It would be simpler to consider only the teachings of Jesus in this division of the book, for then one would be free from any of the considerations relative to the different authors who recorded the words of Jesus.¹ However, if Biblical theology concerns the progress of the revelation of God as deposited in the Bible, matters relative to the depositing—that is, the emphases and viewpoints of the various writers—must be given consideration even in the Synoptic theology. The reasons behind the selectivity of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are of importance to the Biblical theologian and must be given consideration in a Biblical theology.

This is not to say, however, that in this division we seek only to notice the emphases of the writers. Synoptic theology incorporates the theology of Jesus; therefore, a section on the teachings of our Lord must be included. It is obvious to any reader of the Gospels that Matthew is the most theological Gospel, that Mark is the most chronological, and that Luke is the most personal. Therefore the plan of this division (after considering introductory matters) will include the principal theological themes of Matthew, the teachings of Christ, and the personal additions of Luke. This will be done by interweaving the teachings of Christ and the personal additions of Luke into the doctrinal framework of Matthew.

I. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS ABOUT MATTHEW

A. *P*osition in the *C*anon

Beyond all question, the Gospel of Matthew exerts a major influence simply because it stands first in the New Testament. A reason for its position is that it was thought to have been written first. Whether that be true or not, its primary position is of inestimable help in bridging the gap between the Old Testament hope of the Messianic kingdom and the New Testament church. Without Matthew we would be overwhelmed in a theological morass.

B. AUTHORSHIP

This Gospel does not actually claim to have been written by Matthew, although the early church fathers uniformly ascribed it to him.² That is not to imply, however, that the matter of authorship is based solely on tradition, for although the book does not expressly claim to have been written by Matthew, it clearly testifies to that fact. For instance the feast “in the house” (Matthew 9:10) is said by the other Gospel writers to have been in Matthew’s house (Mark 2:15; Luke 5:29). The silence of Matthew’s account thus points to the Matthean authorship. Furthermore it has often been pointed out that since Matthew was an obscure apostle, there would be no reason for assigning the first Gospel to him unless he truly was the author. A forger would have chosen a more prominent name under which to publish the Gospel.

Little is known directly of this man whose name means “gift of God,” but certain facts can be gleaned from the record. Matthew must have been a Hebrew of the Hebrews and not a Hellenist, for he was well taught in the prophecies of the Old Testament. We know that he was a tax collector, an occupation that caused him to be despised by his fellow Jews, but brought him some degree of wealth. No special incident in the life of Christ is connected with his name, and after the listing of his name among those in the upper room awaiting Pentecost (Acts 1:13) he disappears entirely from the Biblical record. Tradition says that he preached for fifteen years in Palestine and then to Ethiopians, Macedonians, Syrians, and Persians. Eastern church tradition says that he died peacefully, while western church tradition asserts that he was executed.³

Obscurity and lack of prominence, however, do not make Matthew any the less great. Still water, it is said, runs deep, and so it was with Matthew, for to the man of whom both sacred and secular history says so little we are

indebted for some of the most profound theology in all the Bible. Carr wrote:

We may picture Matthew to ourselves as a silent, unobtrusive, contemplative man, “swift to hear and slow to speak,” . . . with a mind teeming with the associations of his nation and deeply conscious of the momentous drama which was being enacted before him of which he felt himself called upon to be the chronicler and interpreter to his own people.⁴

In reading Matthew’s Gospel, one is conscious only of the regal person of Jesus Christ; in studying the Gospel, one also becomes aware of the reverent scholarship of the theologian whose God-given task was to interpret this Person to his readers.

C. DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

Liberals place the date of Matthew after A.D. 70 for two reasons.⁵ First they say that the presence of the trinitarian baptismal formula in the last chapter could not be accounted for otherwise, and secondly they assert that the record of chapters 24 and 25 reflect the destruction of Jerusalem. This of course is based on their absolute disallowance of the possibility of prophetic utterance.

Conservatives are divided on the question of the primacy of Matthew. Some believe that this was the first Gospel written, which would date it around A.D. 50. Those who hold that Mark was written first, date Matthew shortly before A.D. 70. This problem is discussed below more fully.

Probably the best suggestion as to the place of writing is Antioch in Syria.

D. ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

Papias is reported to have said that Matthew’s Gospel was written originally in Aramaic.⁶ Some authorities reject the testimony of Papias since no trace of an Aramaic original has survived. Others hold that although there was originally an Aramaic Gospel, it was Matthew himself who, because of the demand of ever-increasing numbers of Greek churches, composed a Greek edition of the Gospel.

E. THEOLOGICAL PURPOSE

If none of the Gospels gives us a complete picture of the life of Christ and if the emphasis of Matthew is theological, then it may well be asked what particular purpose is distinctive to Matthew. The Gospel answers four questions: (1) Is Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah of the Old Testament? (2) Why did Jesus fail to bring in the promised Messianic kingdom? (3) Will that kingdom ever be brought in? (4) What is God's purpose today? In other words, Matthew is concerned with the King and His kingdom and with the Founder and His church.

Questions one through three above relate to the primary emphasis on the kingdom, and question four relates to the decidedly secondary emphasis on the church. This twofold emphasis is introduced in the very first verse: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." That is, the Gospel concerns Jesus Messiah, the son of David (which relates Him directly to the kingdom promises included in the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7) and Jesus Messiah, the son of Abraham (which links Him to the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 12, which included the whole world).

II. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS ABOUT MARK

A. EMPHASIS

It has already been pointed out that Mark is the chronological Gospel. More than forty times the writer used the word *immediately*, which shows both action and chronological relationship. His readers were mostly Gentile Christians, not Jewish believers. For this reason the genealogy of Christ was not included (for it would have meant little to Gentiles), the Sermon on the Mount was not reported (for it concerned kingdom life in which Jews, not Gentiles, would be primarily interested), and the condemnations of the Jews and their sects received little attention. This attention to the needs of Gentile—doubtless primarily Roman—readers also accounts for the interpretation of Aramaic words in the Gospel (see Mark 3:17; 5:41; 7:34; 9:43; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22, 34). Scroggie commented:

The Gospel . . . must present the character and career of Jesus from the Roman side, or point of view, as answering to the idea of Divine

power, work, law, conquest, and universal sway. To the Roman these are the credentials of Jesus, no less essential than prophecy to the Jew.⁷

B. AUTHORSHIP

The Gospel of Mark stands as a perpetual testimony to the fact that failure does not necessarily mean the end of usefulness. The author was the son of a woman of some means and position in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12) and his friendship with Peter was close (1 Peter 5:13).⁸ As a young man Mark had the rare privilege of serving Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), although he failed to stay with them through the entire journey. The reason for this is not stated, but Paul evidently thought that it was not a valid one (Acts 15:39). Twelve years later, however, Paul acknowledged Mark as a fellow laborer (Colossians 4:10–11) and by the time of Paul's second imprisonment Mark had evidently entirely erased the unfavorable impression left by his earlier desertion (2 Timothy 4:11). He apparently ministered in Rome (1 Peter 5:13; 2 Timothy 4:11) and tradition adds that he founded the church at Alexandria, Egypt, where he died a martyr's death.⁹

C. DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

The matter of the date of Mark depends entirely on one's conclusions relative to the Synoptic problem. If Mark was written first, it may be dated as early as A.D. 50; if not, it may be dated later, though not later than A.D. 70.

The place of writing is usually said to be Rome, a fact that would seem to be true according to references in Eusebius.¹⁰ It was evidently Peter, the close friend of his mother Mary, who took Mark under his wing, rescuing him from uselessness after the incident at Perga, and supplied him with the facts of the life of Christ.

D. THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

In a word the Synoptic problem is, How can we account for the similarities in the Gospels and at the same time preserve the independent character of their witness? Although it is necessary not to ignore the

problem, it is equally essential not to become so occupied with it as to miss the message of the writings.

The facts of the matter are two: (1) only 50–55 verses of Mark are not found in either Matthew or Luke (since 500 of Matthew's 1,068 verses are similar to those found in Mark, and 320 of Luke's 1,149 verses are found in Mark); and (2) there are about 250 verses in Matthew and Luke that show close parallelism and are not found at all in Mark. The first fact seems to point to the conclusion that Mark was written first, and Matthew and Luke had access to it when they wrote. The second fact may suggest that there existed another source that Matthew and Luke used, but Mark did not.

Some have solved the Synoptic problem by suggesting that the similarities in the Gospels can be accounted for when we realize that a great deal of precise and accurate oral tradition about the life and teachings of Christ was common knowledge among the early Christians. Since Matthew, Mark, and Luke would have known this tradition, they would have drawn upon it in their writings. Thus there are similarities even though the writings were published independently and possibly even simultaneously.¹¹

Others (liberals and some conservatives¹²) admit that the two facts above do point definitely to the conclusions suggested; namely, that Mark was written first and was used by Matthew and Luke, and that Matthew and Luke also used another source that is generally called Q because Q is the first letter of the German word for source.¹³

Whichever solution is preferred is of no great moment to the Biblical theology of the Synoptics; only let it be realized that the evangelical doctrine of inspiration is in no way jeopardized if one accepts the idea that Mark was written first and that such a document as Q existed at one time. Sources are no more a problem to the student of the Synoptics than quotations from the Book of Enoch are to the student of Jude, or sources of Moses' information are to the student of the Pentateuch. Inspiration concerns the record, not the sources.

III. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS ABOUT LUKE

Matters concerning Luke himself and his method of research are to be discussed under the division on Acts. However, a few items must necessarily be included here.

A. *SOURCES*

As the brief discussion of the Synoptic problem showed, some conclude that about one-third of Luke was related either to oral tradition or to Mark. Further, the observation that one-sixth of Luke has no relationship to anything in Mark but is similar to material in Matthew, suggests to some that Luke used a source that has been tagged Q. However one accounts for these parts of Luke, there remain other portions that are peculiar to its author.

The material in 9:51–18:14 is distinctive to Luke. The facts included may have been gleaned from one or more of the seventy who were sent out by Christ and whose mission is reported in that section. The so-called doublets that are found in that section (expressions and stories similar to ones found in Matthew and Mark but used under different circumstances) are easily accounted for when we remember that a teacher often uses the same or similar material under different circumstances.

Another major section that is peculiar to Luke is 1:5–2:52, the infancy stories. Some say that it is pure invention, but how could a Greek invent the Hebraistic hymns of Elizabeth and Mary? Others see the section as something added later by an editor. Such views must be rejected. The most likely suggestion as to the source of the information contained in those chapters was made by Ramsay, who submitted that Mary herself told Luke of these intimate matters in the manner in which a woman would be apt to tell a physician.¹⁴

B. *D*_{ATE} AND *P*_{LACE} OF *W*_{RITING}

As in the case of Matthew, liberal writers generally place the date of Luke after A.D. 70 because of their disregard of the prophetic element in the Bible.¹⁵ If, however, the possibility of prediction is not shunned (see especially Luke 21:20–24), the idea of a pre-70 date can be entertained. Nevertheless the possibility of prophecy is not the only argument for an early date; actually the early date for Luke is related to the question of the date of Acts, which will be discussed later. If it may be assumed for the moment that Acts must be dated during the lifetime of Paul, then of course the Gospel of Luke must have been written around A.D. 60.

Suggestions as to the place of writing are in reality little more than guesses. Caesarea seems to be as likely a candidate as any place, or possibly Luke wrote the Gospel in Rome. It might even be that he began it in one place, say Caesarea, and finished it in Rome.

*C. D*ISTINCTIVENESS

The Gospel of Luke is distinctive in a number of ways. For instance Dr. Luke made his interest in medical matters quite obvious.¹⁶ This interest is reflected not only in the use of medical terms (see Luke 4:38; 7:15; 8:55; 14:2; 18:25) but also in the attention to the accounts of healing and the details of diagnoses and cures not recorded by the other Gospel writers (see Luke 4:38; 5:12; 8:55; 22:50). These matters show the professional interest of a physician, not merely the normal vocabulary and concern of an educated Greek.

Closely connected to the medical interest in his Gospel is Luke's recounting of the events surrounding the birth of Christ. He alone recorded those inner thoughts which, as has already been suggested, he may have learned from Mary herself simply because he was a physician. Only Luke recorded the annunciations to Zacharias and Mary, the songs of Elizabeth and Mary, the birth and childhood of John the Baptist, the birth of Jesus and the visit of the shepherds, the circumcision of Jesus and His presentation in the temple, and the few details we have about the childhood of the Lord. Beyond any doubt this is a significant emphasis.

Luke also displayed an uncommon interest in individuals. Nineteen of Christ's parables were reported by Luke only, and many of these concern individuals. For instance it is Luke who preserved the parables of the good Samaritan (10:30–37), the rich fool (12:16–21), the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31), the Pharisee and the publican (18:9–14), and the classic parables of the lost sheep, the lost silver, and the lost son in chapter 15.

The Gospel of Luke is also distinctive in its emphasis on prayer, its teaching concerning the place and work of women, and its interest in poverty and wealth. All of these topics will be dealt with in detail later.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE SYNOPTICS

Theology of the Synoptics, we have said, must include the principal theological themes of Matthew, the teachings of Christ, and the particular emphases of Luke. If it is true that Matthew's Gospel is the theological Gospel, and if it is recognized that the Holy Spirit's superintendence of the writings caused it to be so, then the content of this section ought to interweave the contributions of Mark and Luke into the theological framework of Matthew.

That framework is very simple. It concerns the King and His kingdom. In other words, it concerns Christology and eschatology. Many other doctrines are involved, but they can all be related to those two basic areas of theology, which then become the basic outline for all the Synoptic theology.

I. PRESENTATION OF THE KING

A. *GENEALOGY OF THE KING* (*MATTHEW 1:1–17; LUKE 3:23–38*)

1. Divisions of the genealogy. If the King and the kingdom are the prominent themes of the Synoptics, it is not surprising to find a genealogy at the opening of the record. The genealogy that Matthew presented is not as ordinary as Luke's. It was very obviously adjusted to the author's purpose of arranging the genealogy in three divisions. This arbitrary division required that there be some omissions (compare Matthew 1:8–9 with 1 Chronicles 3:11–12). What is the explanation for this? Lightfoot said it is to be found in the usual Jewish procedure in these matters of genealogies. The Jews often adjusted a genealogy to suit their purposes of

neatness of arrangement. “They do so very much delight in such kind of contents, that they oftentimes screw up the strings beyond the due measure and stretch them till they crack.”¹

Although there is much truth in this statement, it is not the whole explanation. The solution is really to be found in the theological purpose of the Holy Spirit through the human instrument, Matthew. His purpose is to emphasize Jesus as the Son of David and therefore the King of Israel. To do this the first division of the genealogy ends with David and the second begins with his name. Thus the reader’s attention is immediately focused on David, who alone in the genealogy is called the king. This is in line with the writer’s purpose, for his Gospel concerns Jesus Messiah, son of David (Matthew 1:1). The second division ends with the Babylonian captivity, which would be a stinging reminder to the Jews that they were far from realizing the fulfillment of the promises concerning their Messianic kingdom. Thus the divisions of the genealogy emphasize the two aspects of the theological framework of the Gospels—the King and the kingdom.

2. *Distinctiveness of the genealogy.* It has already been noted that the content of Matthew’s genealogy is different from that of Luke’s; the first contains only forty-one names while the second contains seventy-four names. Luke’s arrangement is not artificial as Matthew’s is; and Luke went back to Adam, while Matthew traced the King to Abraham. Of course the fact that Matthew used the expression meaning “the father of” does not indicate that he was giving the names of immediate offspring, for sometimes generations are skipped (see Matthew 1:1 and 2 Chronicles 22:9).

There has been endless discussion about whether or not the two genealogies are distinctive as to the parent of Jesus. Many today say that Matthew’s genealogy is through Joseph, while Luke’s is through Mary. Plummer voiced the major objection to this view:

It is probable that so obvious a solution, as that one was the pedigree of Joseph and the other the pedigree of Mary, would have been very soon advocated, if there had been any reason (excepting the difficulty) for adopting it. But this solution is not suggested by anyone until Annius of Viterbo propounded it, c. A.D. 1490.²

However, Godet argued effectively for Mary's lineage in Luke on the basis of the absence of the article before Joseph (3:23), which links Jesus directly with Heli and seemingly puts Joseph out of the genealogy altogether.³ Many, on the other hand, hold that both genealogies are Joseph's. Various explanations are given for this possibility. One is that Matthan and Matthat are the same person, making Jacob and Heli brothers, and Joseph the son of Heli and nephew of Jacob. If Jacob died without heirs, his nephew Joseph would have become the heir. Or possibly Joseph became the heir of Jacob because Heli (assuming that his own wife was dead) married Jacob's widow according to the custom of levirate marriage.⁴

Whatever be the correct solution to this problem, one thing is quite clear. Both genealogies demonstrate Jesus' right as heir of David. Matthew laid stress on Joseph's being the husband of Mary in order to show that since Joseph recognized his wife's son in a legal sense as his own, Jesus was legally the heir of David. Luke entirely omitted Mary's name and while he was careful to avoid the impression that Jesus might be the natural son of Joseph, he nonetheless disallowed the possibility of slighting Jesus' kingly claims by not linking Him solely to His mother.⁵ Thus the right of the King was carefully guarded and clearly presented. During His lifetime that right to the throne was never contested on the ground that His descent from David was doubtful (see Matthew 12:23; 15:22; 20:30–31; 21:9,15).

3. Doctrines of the genealogy

a. Doctrine of kingship. As mentioned before, the highlighting of David the king and the legality substantiated by the genealogies emphasize the kingly aspect of the genealogy.

b. Doctrine of Gentile salvation. The secondary theme of the Synoptics, that of salvation for Gentiles, is implicit in both genealogies. In Matthew it is seen in the linking of Jesus with Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant, which promised blessings to all nations in the Seed. In Luke it is seen in the tracing of the genealogy back to Adam.

4. Doctrine of grace. It has often been pointed out that Matthew's artificial arrangement of names includes those of four women. Two of them were Gentiles: Rahab and Ruth. And Ruth, being a Moabitess, was expressly cursed (Deuteronomy 23:3). Three of the four women were

wicked sinners—Tamar’s fornication, Rahab’s harlotry, and Bathsheba’s sin being well known. Yet their inclusion in the genealogy of the Messiah is a display of the triumph of the grace of God.

B. BIRTH OF THE KING (MATTHEW 1:18–2:23; LUKE 1:26–2:38)

1. Doctrine of the virgin birth

a. Meaning of the virgin birth. The doctrine of the virgin birth says that the conception of Christ was without a human father and thus contrary to the course of nature. It was not a case of the opening of Mary’s womb, as with Elizabeth, but the activating of it apart from a human male. After the conception took place, the course of pregnancy and birth were normal.

b. Importance of the virgin birth. Some say that this doctrine is not necessary for saving faith. Perhaps that could be granted, but it cannot be granted that it is irrelevant to the facts upon which faith rests. One doubtless can be saved without consciously including the virgin birth in the facts that he believes, but it is incredible to think that one can be saved while knowingly denying the doctrine, for it is vital to the facts of faith.

c. Testimony to the virgin birth. Both Matthew and Luke attested to the fact and manner of the virgin birth. Luke spoke of the manner by simply saying that the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary (Luke 1:34–38). Ultimately a miracle has to be admitted, the result of which was the birth of the sinless Son of God. Matthew attested to the fact of it by his precise use of the feminine singular relative pronoun in 1:16. Had he used a plural, it would have indicated that both Joseph and Mary were the parents of Jesus, but the strict use of the feminine singular attested to the fact that Mary alone was the human parent of Jesus. Matthew’s only comment concerning the method of the virgin birth was his use of *ek* with a genitive of source in 1:18 (indicating that the Holy Spirit was the originating source).

2. Announcement of the King

a. Announcement to Mary (Luke 1:31–33). The announcement of the birth of Messiah was made to Mary in great detail. Gabriel told her that (1) the incarnation would be in a man (see Jeremiah 31:22), (2) His name would be Jesus (a common Jewish name meaning “Jehovah is Savior”), (3)

He would be great in His essential nature, (4) He was the Son of God, and (5) this One would be the fulfiller of the Davidic covenant.

b. Announcement to Joseph (Matthew 1:18–25). When Joseph discovered that his betrothed was with child, he had two courses of action. He could make a public example of Mary; that is, he could summon her before the court and have her condemned and stoned as an adulteress. Or he could divorce her secretly (“put away” in 1:19 is the usual word for divorce). This action would have been a real divorce even though they were not yet married, because the entire year before the marriage was considered a binding period of betrothal and although the betrothed lived in her own home, she in her relationship to the man was considered as if married and thus subject to the divorce law. Joseph’s dilemma was solved by the angelic announcement to him concerning what God was doing.

c. Announcement to the shepherds (Luke 2:8–14). At the time of the birth further angelic announcement was made to the shepherds in the fields. Their message contained three elements: (1) the shepherds need not fear (showing that human nature is not on good terms with Heaven); (2) the Savior would not favor only one nation, but all nations; and (3) He would bring forgiveness of sins.

3. Adoration of the King. The newborn King received adoration from the shepherds. Forty days after His birth Mary presented herself for purification and the baby Jesus received further adoration from Simeon and Anna in the temple (Luke 2:22–38). Their words showed recognition of the Messiah in the person of Jesus, and their pious characters must have been typical of at least some in Israel at the time of our Lord.

The adoration of the wise men (Matthew 2:1–12)⁶ reveals certain points of theological interest: (1) It shows the religious condition of Israel. Even though the shepherds had spread abroad the news, evidently few Jews had paid any attention to it, else the wise men would not have had to inquire so diligently. Even when members of the Sanhedrin repeated the prophecy of Micah, they paid no attention to those who might have led them to the fulfillment of it. (2) It shows the depravity of the human heart as epitomized in Herod and his actions. (3) It shows the religious condition of some Gentiles, for the wise men exhibited great faith in following the star and great perception in acknowledging the baby Jesus as God. (4) It shows God’s providential care. The theological import of the gifts they brought is

simply in their being concrete recognition of the worth of the King to whom they were brought. Their practical import is that they were likely used by Joseph to transport his family to Egypt and sustain them there. The gifts may have been the provision of God for that purpose.

C. THE BOYHOOD OF THE KING (MATTHEW 2:13–23; LUKE 2:39–52)

Very little is said concerning this period of the King's life apart from the sojourn in Egypt and the Passover visit to Jerusalem when He was twelve years old. However, certain relevant facts can be gleaned from the record that we have.

1. Environment of our Lord. The Lord Jesus was reared in a godly family. We know that they went to Jerusalem every year—a journey that must have put a severe strain on the finances of a carpenter. Furthermore Mary went along, and since it was not required by the Law that women go, that shows something of the extreme piety of the family.

The Lord's family was also endowed with great initiative, for in spite of the fact that they were poor and had to work hard for everything, they saw to it that the children were educated. Since we know that the Lord never attended the schools (Mark 6:2; John 7:15), this education must have taken place in the home. We know that it included instruction in reading (Luke 4:16) and writing (John 8:6).

The Lord Jesus was reared in a wicked city. Nazareth, being on the crossroads of trade routes, had nothing but a bad reputation (John 1:46). Yet the boy lived a sinless life in the midst of such surroundings.

2. Example of our Lord. Those years of maturing still stand as an example for all (Hebrews 5:8). He faithfully obeyed the Law (see Deuteronomy 16:1–3). He obeyed His parents (Luke 2:51; this included the time when He was alone in the big city of Jerusalem for three days). And He worshiped God (Luke 2:49). His development during those years was complete—physical, mental, social, and spiritual (Luke 2:52).

D. BAPTISM OF THE KING (MATTHEW 3:13–17; MARK 1:9–11; LUKE 3:21–22)

1. Method of His baptism. Christ was baptized by another man, and it is hard for us to appreciate what this means. We are accustomed to seeing

baptism performed by one man upon another person, but such was not the case in the time of our Lord. Up to that time all baptisms into Judaism were self-administered.⁷ A proselyte into Judaism had to be circumcised, offer a sacrifice, and baptize himself in the presence of the rabbis before he was entitled to the privileges of Judaism. Thus baptism was a well-known, but self-imposed rite.

When John came asking men to be baptized by him, it was the most startling way he could ask them to identify themselves with what he was preaching. He was not asking them to become Jews (they already were). The church had not yet been founded so he was not asking them to join that. He himself was starting no new organization. And he, though of the tribe of Levi (Luke 1:5), was evidently not consecrated a priest. Therefore submitting to baptism at his hand was indisputable testimony to one's identification with John's ministry and message. The method of being baptized by another person, new with John the Baptizer, was the method of Christ's baptism.

2. Meaning of His baptism. Sufficient has been said above to make it clear that the meaning of the Lord's baptism was identification. This is the meaning of all baptisms. The Jewish proselyte identified himself with Judaism when he baptized himself. The Christian identifies himself with Christianity (the message and the group) when he is baptized. Our Lord identified Himself with *righteousness* and the *kingdom* when He was baptized by the one who preached, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matthew 3:2, italics added). Here was the fulfiller of all righteousness and the King of the kingdom identifying Himself thus.

Other views of the meaning of Christ's baptism are frequently advanced. Some conservatives feel that it was the rite of entrance into his priesthood.⁸ However, our Lord was never a priest after the order of Aaron, for He was born in the tribe of Judah. As a priest after the order of Melchizedek, He could never be initiated into the Aaronic priesthood.

Liberals often regard the Lord's baptism as an identification with sinners, and they mean by this that Christ was declaring in His baptism that He was a sinner. Other views are generally little more than variations of these three basic ones.

E. TEMPTATION OF THE KING (MATTHEW 4:1-11; MARK 1:12-13; LUKE 4:1-13)

There remains one final act in the drama of the presentation of the King: His temptation. Mark reported that this occurred immediately after the baptism, and tradition says that it took place in the wilderness near Jericho.

1. *Instigator of the temptation.* All three accounts of the temptation expressly state that the Holy Spirit was the One who led the Lord into the test. This of course was not a solicitation to evil (for God does not do that), but a testing to prove that He was the divine King. The tests were not directed toward evil ends but toward accomplishing legitimate ends by evil means. If they had been used by the Lord, those means would not only have proved Him to be sinful; they would also have proved Him to be the wrong kind of king for Israel—a king of power only and not a suffering servant. To prove Jesus as the rightful king was the purpose behind the instigation of the Spirit of God.

2. *Instrument of the temptation.* Satan was of course the instrument used to accomplish God's purpose in this matter. When the light is the brightest, the shadows are the darkest; thus we find intense activity on the part of Satan during the entire life and ministry of Christ.

3. *Intent of the temptation*

a. On Satan's part. Satan's intent in the temptation was to make Christ sin by taking shortcuts to the accomplishments of His Messianic purposes—that is, by offering Him legitimate ends by illegitimate means. This Satan attempted to do by appealing to the flesh, the pride of life, and the eye. It is obvious that there would have been nothing wrong with Christ's commanding stones to become bread in order to feed Himself, nor with Christ's proving Himself to be supernatural by casting Himself off the pinnacle of the temple, nor with His having the kingdoms of this world, which He will have some day. The evil was not in the ends to which Christ was tempted to go, but in the means of accomplishing those ends, for they were means that did not include the suffering with the glory.

b. On God's part. If the Holy Spirit led our Lord into the testing, then God must have had some purpose in it, and that purpose was to demonstrate the sinlessness of His Son through His complete obedience to the full will

of God. This then was the proof of the fact that Jesus could not sin. It was not merely that He was able not to sin, but that He was unable to sin.

Objections are always raised to this doctrine of the impeccability of Christ, for such a doctrine is supposed to deny the reality of temptation and remove all possibility of genuine sympathy (Hebrews 4:15). It does neither. The reality of any testing does not lie in the moral nature of the one tested, and the possibility of sympathizing does not depend on one-to-one correspondence in the problems that call forth the sympathy.

The test was real, for although the Lord could not have sinned as far as natural ability is concerned (1 John 3:5), He did have the power to turn stones into bread, cast Himself off the pinnacle of the temple unharmed, and take the reins of world government. But to have done so under the circumstances of the test would have been sin; therefore He could not have done those things on that occasion. The realm of testing was different from anything known to human beings, but the reality of testing was actual and sufficient basis for our complete assurance of His sympathizing interest.

II. AUTHENTICATION OF THE KING

A. BY HIS NAMES AND TITLES

The names and titles ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ by those who followed Him comprise the first line of proof for the authentication of His kingship. The proof is built upon the investigation of the various Gospel writers' use of such names as *Jesus*, *Lord*, and *Christ*, and such titles as *Lord*, *Savior*, *Prophet*, *King*, *Son of God*, and *Son of man*.² Mark's contribution to the investigation was minor, for he included no names or titles that do not appear in some other Gospel, and his use of them was the least theological.

The name *Jesus* is almost without exception simply the narrative name for our Lord—that is, the name used in the narration. This is to be expected, for the terminology of our Gospels would largely follow the terminology of the oral and/or written sources that lie behind them; the description of our Lord in the accounts of His ministry would have been under the simple designation *Jesus*. However, there are a few outstanding exceptions, which show that the writers themselves conceived of the name *Jesus* as a title

meaning “Jehovah is salvation.” The clearest examples of this fuller concept are in Luke 1:31; 2:21; Matthew 1:21.

It is Luke who used the simple designation *Jesus* frequently in combinations that exhibit clear Messianic connotations (Luke 8:28; 17:13; 18:38). It would be expected that Luke would take the lead in this because of his personal exposure to Paul’s teaching; and it is normal too to discover similar, though less frequent, usage in Matthew (Matthew 1:1; 16:21). (Mark’s use of combinations is limited to 1:1.) Thus *Jesus* was used by the Gospel writers not merely as a name of a person, but as a title signifying the work of that person as Savior.

Lord is an honorific title of especially high connotation. It was used by those who were outside the circle of Christ’s followers in ways that were both sincere and insincere. Sometimes it was used to mean no more than “teacher,” but sometimes much more (Mark 7:28; Luke 5:8; 6:46; 7:6; 10:17). Although it was a common form of address, it was also clearly used as a synonym for *Adonai* (Mark 2:28; 12:37). Furthermore the fact that *Lord* is used by Luke as an alternative to *Jesus* as a narrative designation shows Luke’s lofty concept of Jesus as deity (7:13,19; 10:1,41; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15; 17:5–6; 18:6; 22:61). Therefore we may conclude that although *Lord* may have a very ordinary significance, it was used of Jesus of Nazareth in a way that authenticated His claims as King.

All the Gospel writers recorded titles of the Lord that are definitely Messianic. He is the *Prophet* (Matthew 13:57; 16:14; 21:11,46; Mark 6:15; 8:28; Luke 7:16,39; 9:8,19; 13:33–34; 24:19). The designation *Savior*, as Luke used it, is linked with the Messianic prophecies (1:47; 2:30; 3:6; 24:46). The use of *Christ* also substantiates His Messianic claims (Matthew 1:17; 11:2; Mark 8:29; 12:35; 13:21; 14:61; 15:32; Luke 2:26; 22:67; 23:39; 24:26,46). Other Messianic titles include King (Matthew 2:2; 27:11; Mark 15:2,26; Luke 23:2), *Shepherd* (Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27), God’s *Chosen One* (Luke 9:35; 23:35), and *Son of David* (Matthew 12:23; 15:22; 20:31). All of these titles of course help authenticate His claims.

Two other important titles remain to be discussed: *Son of God* and *Son of man*. The title *Son of God* is not a subsequent Pauline addition to the claims of Christ. That He was very God was revealed by this title at the beginning of His ministry; namely, at His baptism (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). He did not become the Son of God at that moment, nor was He merely conscious of it from that time on; rather the voice of the Father was

a confirmation of His deity. This is also affirmed by the devil at the temptation, for Satan said, “If You are the Son of God” (Luke 4:3,9). The Greek phrase is a first-class condition, which shows that Satan’s method was not to throw doubt on the fact of Christ’s being the Son of God, but to incite Him to prove the reality of it by exercising the power of God. It may well be translated, “Since You are the Son of God.” By parable the Lord Himself also taught that He was the Son of God (Luke 20:13–14). At His trial all who witnessed understood that He was clearly claiming to be divine (Mark 14:61; Luke 22:67). Thus the Synoptics are filled with proofs of His claims to be God.

The Lord’s own favorite designation of Himself was the title *Son of man*. It is found thirty times in Matthew, fourteen times in Mark, and twenty-five times in Luke, and is used only by the Lord of Himself. This frequent use must have turned the minds of the people back to the prophecy of Daniel (7:13–14), and in so doing it connected Jesus with the setting up of the kingdom. But the Lord’s frequent use of this title also had another purpose, for it emphasized the lowliness and humanity of His person. In this way He endeavored to unite, in the minds of the Jews, the Savior with the kingdom; that is, He tried to get across the idea that the kingdom was to be built on a suffering and humiliated Savior.

Thus the title has both a soteriological and eschatological meaning (see Matthew 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 45, 64; Mark 8:31; Luke 19:10). In all these passages the clear emphasis is on the fact that the human person who was to suffer and die was the same one who would come in great glory to set up the kingdom. Uniformly too the title *Son of man* is somehow linked to the earth, whether it be in reference to the suffering Savior or the reigning King. As the suffering of the Son of man was on earth, so also His kingdom will be on the earth.

His names and titles therefore show our Lord to have been a real man, but not a mere man, for the names and titles are filled with the highest implications. They show that Jesus of Nazareth was an authoritative teacher, the Son of God, the Redeemer, and the Messiah of Israel.

B. BY HIS MIRACLES

A miracle is an extraordinary act in the physical realm, perceptible by the senses and caused by the intervention of a transcendent supernatural power,

generally acting outside the realm of natural causes and effects.

The miracles of Christ had at least two purposes. They displayed the power of God and they demonstrated the precepts of God. In both of these ways the miracles authenticated the claims of the Messiah who performed them. In their demonstrating the power of God they were called *dunameis*, literally “powers” (Matthew 11:20; Mark 6:2; Luke 10:13), for they were evident displays of transcendent power in this lower world of ours. That these displays were distinctly connected with the authentication of the Messianic claims is evident from Matthew 14:2 and Luke 19:37. The display of the power of God in the miracles of Jesus of Nazareth should have proved to all that this was Messiah.

Miracles also taught certain divine precepts that could not be taught by parables or in any other way. Scroggie wrote:

There was nothing miraculous in the parables; all was natural and inevitable: the seed growing, the leaven working, the light shining; but not by parables could He show how the blind might see, the dumb speak, and the deaf hear; miracles had to be performed to teach these lessons.¹⁰

That this was one purpose of the miracles is corroborated in Johannine theology where they are called *semeia*, “signs” (John 4:48)—that is, “deeds that symbolize spiritual truths.” Nevertheless the deed itself as well as the truth was important, for the miracles of healing for instance were cited by the Lord Himself as sufficient and valid proof that He was the Messiah (Matthew 11:4–6).

C. BY HIS PERSON

The Messianic teaching of Judaism was concerned with a person and an era.¹¹ The nature of the person of the Messiah was well defined in the Old Testament under the two concepts of the King and the Servant of Jehovah. The concept of the King was formed on the basis of such passages as Genesis 49:8–12; 2 Samuel 7:11 ff.; Isaiah 7:10–17; 9:6; Jeremiah 23:5; 30:9; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 6:11–13; 9:9. Several important features concerning the Messiah are found in these passages: (1) the permanence and universality of His reign as seen in the Davidic covenant; (2) the

humble origin of Messiah in the Davidic line (Micah 5:2); (3) the fact that He would be a priest as well as a king (Zechariah 6:11); and (4) the prophecy of Isaiah that Messiah would be divine because He would be Immanuel. Thus the Old Testament concept of Messiah as King clearly included the fact that He was to be the Son of God (see Matthew 16:16; 26:63; John 1:34, 49; 11:27).

The Servant-of-Jehovah concept emphasized the suffering of Messiah (Isaiah 41:8; 42:1–7, 19 ff.; 43:10; 44:1 ff., 21; 49:3–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12; Zechariah 3:8). While it is true that the title is sometimes used of the whole nation of Israel and sometimes of the pious remnant, it is equally true that the concept of the Servant of Jehovah culminates in an individual human being who would suffer vicariously for His people. In their desire to be free from the Roman yoke in the time of Christ, the Jews had lost sight of the aspect of suffering; but that was nonetheless a part of the concept of Messiah.

This dual idea of the divine King and human Servant in the concept of the Messiah finds its embodiment in the divine-human Jesus Christ. Therefore all proofs that He was the divine-human One authenticate His claims to be the Messiah.

That He was divine is demonstrated by the names and titles previously discussed, by the fact that divine attributes are ascribed to Him (Matthew 11:27), by the fact that He performed divine acts (John 5:25–29), and by the attestations that He was God by demons (Matthew 8:28–29), angels (Luke 2:9–11), His enemies (Matthew 27:54), His friends (Matthew 16:16), and the Father (Matthew 3:17; 17:5).

That He was human was evident to all. He possessed a true body (Luke 2:52; also see Matthew 26:12,26; Mark 14:8,22,24; Luke 7:44–46; 22:19–20; 24:39). He possessed an immaterial nature (Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34; Luke 23:46). He experienced the normal development and difficulties of life (Luke 2:52; Matthew 8:24). Thus the very presence of Jesus Christ on this earth as a display of the union of a divine and a human nature in one person was a constant authentication of His claim to be the Messiah as promised in the Old Testament Scriptures.

III. REPUDIATION OF THE KING

The repudiation of the King is easily traced throughout Matthew and only the outline of it need be noted:

- The repudiation by the Gadarenes because of the condemnation of their illegal business (8:34).
- The repudiation by the scribes when Christ forgave the sins of the paralytic (9:3).
- The repudiation by the Pharisees who questioned His eating with sinners (9:11).
- The validation by Christ of the repudiation of those who rejected the testimony of John the Baptist (11:2–19).
- The repudiation by all the people of the cities to which His credentials had been presented (11:20–30). In the midst of the condemnation there was issued a word of invitation to individuals (not the nation as a whole) to come to Him.
- The repudiation by the Pharisees (12:1–50). This passage shows the marked contrast between the yoke of the Pharisees and the yoke of Messiah. This was clearly displayed on the occasion of the healing of a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath in violation of Jewish traditions. It was further displayed with a finality in their committing the unpardonable sin, which was unpardonable for the simple reason that these religious leaders should have known the power of the Holy Spirit from their study of the Old Testament and consequently should have recognized Messiah, who was performing His miracles in that power.
- The repudiation by the people of Nazareth (13:53–58).
- The repudiation by Herod in his beheading of John (14:1–14).
- Further rejection by the Pharisees (15:1–20).
- The rejection by the rich young ruler (19:16–26).
- The rejection by the chief priests and elders (21:23–22:14).

- Repudiation by the Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees (22:15–46).
- Full and complete rejection at the crucifixion (26:1–27:50).

IV. MINISTRATION OF THE KING

In the introduction to this division it was pointed out that a Synoptic theology must certainly include a major section on the teachings of Christ. Such a section, however, should not comprise the whole of the division nor obscure the theological pattern in the minds of the writers; therefore it is included here as a major section but within the theological framework of the Synoptics.

A. *THE MANNER OF CHRIST'S TEACHING*

It is very difficult to distinguish between the preaching and teaching of Christ, for all of His preaching was infused with teaching, and His teaching was preached. He was called *Rabbi* not because He came from the schools, but because of the quality of His utterances. Before considering the actual content of His teaching it will be profitable to look at some characteristics of His teaching.

1. Occasional. By this we mean not that He taught infrequently, but that He taught as the occasion arose. He was constantly alive to the opportunities and seized upon a variety of situations. He gladly used the synagogue service as an occasion for teaching (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:21); if an indoor setting was unavailable, He preached outside (Mark 4:1). Ryle wrote:

The servants of Christ should learn a lesson from their Master's conduct. . . . We are not to wait till every little difficulty or obstacle is removed, before we put our hand to the plough, or go forth to sow the seed of the word. Convenient buildings may often be wanting for assembling a company of hearers. Convenient rooms may often not be found for gathering children to school. What, then, are we to do? Shall we sit still and do nothing? God forbid! If we cannot do all we want, let us do what we can.¹²

2. *Unsystematic.* This characteristic of our Lord's teaching is in a sense a result of the occasional nature of it. It is the task of the interpreter to systematize the scattered references to various doctrines in the teaching of Christ.

3. *Illustrated.* This is self-evident from the wide use our Lord made of parables and His frequent use of the natural world to illustrate the spiritual world.

4. *Interrogative.* The method of interrogation was frequently used in controversies with the various sects of Judaism (Matthew 22).

5. *Authoritative.* Perhaps this is the outstanding characteristic of Jesus' teaching manner, and it can be accounted for in several ways. His teaching was authoritative because of the contrast with the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees (Mark 1:22). It was authoritative because it was fresh (Mark 1:27). Furthermore it spoke of reality instead of outward show, and it was related to absolute and maximum standards rather than relative and minimum standards (Matthew 5:20–48).

6. *Subjective.* Teaching generally points to what others say. Shammai and Hillel constantly taught in terms of what people ought to do; our Lord taught subjectively by putting Himself up as the standard to follow.

7. *Attracting.* Although Christ's teaching brought division among the people, it nevertheless drew the attention of crowds of people. On one occasion the people testified that His words were gracious (Luke 4:22). He constantly ministered to all—not simply to those who could do something for Him in return (Mark 4:9,22–23). In addition there is evidence in the record that His messages attracted both men and women. Because both were in His crowds, He suited His teaching to both. The kingdom of Heaven, for instance, was likened to what a man does and what a woman does (Luke 13:19,21). The parable of the lost sheep was followed by the parable of the lost coin—one involves a man, and the other a woman (Luke 15:4,8). When the Lord used the lilies as an object lesson (Matthew 6:28), He chose something that could be related to the activities of both men and women: "They do not toil nor do they spin." When speaking in Matthew

24:40–41 of His return, He spoke of two men in the field and one (*eis*, the male “one”) being taken, and two women at the mill and one (*mia*, the female “one”) being taken.

B. CHRIST'S TEACHING CONCERNING SIN

The determining of Christ's view of sin is of great importance, for on this matter hangs the doctrine of redemption. Fortunately the references to sin are numerous and explicit in the words of our Lord so that we are not left in any doubt as to His ideas on this subject.

1. Universality of sin. Christ did not view sin as something superficial or limited to one portion of the human race. He classified the best of men—His disciples—as evil (Luke 11:13) and He taught them to pray for forgiveness of sin (Matthew 6:12). Furthermore He called to repentance all men without discrimination or distinction (Mark 1:15), which would hardly have been necessary if all men were not sinners. In parable the Lord reiterated this fact of the universality of sin (Matthew 13:47–50; 22:1–14; 25:1–13). This is not to say that the Savior did not recognize distinctions in degrees of sin (compare John 8:34; 19:11; 1:47; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32).

2. Doctrine of depravity. By depravity we mean that man is unable by nature to do anything that would make him acceptable before God. We do not mean that man cannot do anything that is good, but all such goodness is of no avail in gaining eternal life. Our Lord plainly taught that by nature man is evil. The parables of Luke 15 show the lost condition of man, and the encounter with the lawyer is the best example of the true nature of man (Luke 10:25–37). That this sinfulness in man is due to the root of sin within was also clearly a part of Christ's teaching (Mark 7:20–23; Matthew 11:16–19; 12:39; 17:17; 23:1–39). Although all of these facts concerning the depraved nature of man are true, one must never forget the inestimable value placed by the Lord on the soul of man (Matthew 16:26).

3. Forms of sin. The root of sin expresses itself in many ways according to the Lord's teaching:

- Sacrilege (Mark 11:15–21)

- Hypocrisy (Matthew 16:6–12; 23:1–39)
- Covetousness (Luke 12)
- Blasphemy (Matthew 12:22–37)
- Transgression of the law (Matthew 15:3–6; 19:3–12; Mark 2:23–3:5; 7:1–13)
- Pride (Matthew 20:20–28; Mark 10:35–45)
- Disloyalty (Matthew 8:19–22)
- Immorality (Matthew 5:28)
- Useless speaking (Matthew 12:36–37)
- Unfaithfulness (Matthew 15:14–30; Luke 19:12–27)

4. *Forgiveness of sin.* This subject encompasses matters that are yet to be discussed; therefore it is sufficient to note at this point that the Savior based forgiveness on the shedding of His own blood (Matthew 26:28). That this giving of His own life was done in a strictly substitutionary sense is seen by His own statement that it was given as a ransom for (anti, “in the place of”) many (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). The preposition anti cannot be construed in any other way than substitution.¹³ The Lord often related the matter of our forgiving one another to God’s forgiveness of our sins (Mark 11:25–26; Luke 11:4; 17:3–4).

C. CHRIST’S TEACHING CONCERNING SALVATION

1. *Need for salvation.* The need for Christ’s salvation is readily seen in His estimate of the nature of man. He declared that by nature man is evil (Matthew 12:34; Luke 11:13) and capable of great wickedness (Mark 7:20–23). Since this corruption is internal (Matthew 15:11, 17–20), man stands in need of repentance (Matthew 18:3).

2. *Provision of salvation—the death of Christ*

a. Manner of His death. The manner of the death of Christ is clearly predicted in His teachings. It was to be a violent death (Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22), a fact that is also taught in parable (Matthew 21:39). It was to be death by crucifixion (Matthew 20:19; 26:2). His death was to be preceded by betrayal (Matthew 26:21; Mark 14:18). The involvement of the elders, chief priests, scribes, and Gentiles was also predicted (Matthew 16:21; 20:19).

b. Meaning of His death. From our Lord's own teaching there is no doubt as to the meaning of His death for us. It was a voluntary and vicarious giving of His life as a ransom (Matthew 20:28). It was an expiation for sin (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20), and the uniform Scriptural use of blood forbids any interpretation of the Lord's words other than as teaching expiation of sin by death.¹⁴ For Himself, His death would bring exaltation and glory (Luke 24:26).

3. Universality of His salvation. The necessity of faith in relation to salvation is seen in the Synoptics, mainly in incidents of physical healing (Luke 6:10; 7:50; 8:48,50; 17:19; 18:42). The most profound exposition of the way of salvation is John's revelation. However, the revelation of the universality of salvation is primarily Lukan and therefore an important part of the Synoptic teaching. It was announced by the angels (2:10—"for all the people"), confirmed by Simeon (2:32—"to the Gentiles") and John the Baptist (3:6—"all flesh"), and affirmed in Luke's genealogy, which traces Jesus back to Adam.

The universality of salvation is best seen in the parable of the good Samaritan and the incident that provoked it (Luke 10:25-37). The lawyer's motivation was merely discussion and not conviction of heart. Christ's purpose was to lead him to see the bankruptcy of his own heart and thus the need of a Savior. It was the lawyer's attempt at self-justification in asking who his neighbor was that led to the parable of the good Samaritan and the pushing out of the bounds of love beyond the exclusivism of Judaism.

D. CHRIST'S TEACHING CONCERNING ANGELS

1. Satan

a. His existence. Every reference by Christ to the evil one is a proof of Satan's existence. Even though modern theology explains these as

accommodation by the Lord of His language to the ordinary Jewish belief, it must be realized that such accommodation in reality would have invalidated His whole message. J. M. King wrote: “It is impossible to conceive of the Saviour being either mistaken in His view or misleading men in His teaching on such a subject, and yet maintain His infallibility on the one hand, or His moral perfection on the other.”¹⁵

b. His personality. Satan’s personality is demonstrated by references to his intellect (Matthew 4:6), sensibility (Luke 22:31), and will (Matthew 13:39; Luke 13:16). It is further demonstrated by the fact that he is treated as a morally responsible being (Matthew 25:41) and by the fact that personal pronouns are used in speaking of him (Matthew 4:10; 10:25; 16:23).

c. His position. The Lord affirmed the fact that Satan is head of this world system (Matthew 4:8–10; 12:26; John 12:31). The full revelation of the meaning of this is a major part of Johannine theology.

d. His purpose. Satan’s purpose in this age is best seen in the parables of Matthew 13, where his character as deceiver and hinderer of God’s program is clearly taught.

e. His judgment. The Lord also spoke of the certainty of the judgment of Satan (Luke 10:18; John 12:31; 16:11).

2. Angels. In Burntisland, Scotland, stands the first church built after the Reformation and in this church is the following inscription:

Though Gods’ Power Be suffthint to Governe Us Yet for Man’s
Infirmitie He appointeth His Angels To Watch over Us.

The ministry of angels is generally slighted by Protestants, probably because of a fear of going to the extremes that other groups exhibit. Nevertheless angelic agency is important in the providential out-workings of the plan of God, a fact that is seen most clearly in the life and teachings of Christ.

a. Characteristics of angels. According to the Lord’s teaching, angels do not propagate after their kind; therefore their number is fixed (Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:36). In the instances when angels appeared, they were youthful in aspect (Mark 16:5); they appeared as males (Luke 24:4; but see Zechariah 5:9); they appeared as supernatural beings and were

recognized as such (Matthew 28:3–4); their raiment was often white and dazzling (Matthew 28:3; Luke 24:4); and they had unusual strength (Matthew 28:2; also see Mark 16:3–4).

b. Their ministry to Jesus of Nazareth. Angels ministered in connection with the birth of Christ. An angel announced the birth of the forerunner (Luke 1:11). The same angel, Gabriel, who seems to appear on special occasions, announced the birth of Messiah to Mary (Luke 1:26). Angels also made the announcement of the actual birth to the shepherds (Luke 2:9).

Angels are mentioned in connection with the life of Christ on earth. They ministered to Him after His temptation (Matthew 4:11) and an angel strengthened Him in Gethsemane (Luke 22:43). The word translated “strengthening” in Luke 22:43 is used elsewhere only in Acts 9:19, where it indicates bodily strengthening. Evidently angels were always ready to undertake for the Lord any ministry He might have requested (Matthew 26:53).

The ministry of angels is also seen in connection with the resurrection of Christ. An angel rolled away the stone from the tomb so that the witnesses of the resurrection might look in (Matthew 28:2). It was angels too who first announced the resurrection (Luke 24:4–6,23).

Our Lord taught that His return would be in the company of angels (Luke 9:26) and that upon His return at the end of the age the angels would act as reapers separating the wheat from the tares (Matthew 13:39, 41–42, 49–50). They will also be used to gather the elect at His coming (Matthew 24:31).

c. Other ministries of angels. In addition to what has been said, the Lord also revealed two other facts about the angels: (1) They rejoice when a sinner repents (Luke 15:10), for their estimate of the value of a soul is far more accurate than that of the Pharisees to whom the parables of Luke 15 were addressed. (2) In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the Lord incidentally referred to the fact that angels carried Lazarus to Abraham’s bosom (Luke 16:22). What this reference may mean in relation to general procedure is almost impossible to say.

3. Demons

a. Their reality. The reality of demons as actual, substantial beings whose existence is not dependent on man’s being or thinking was everywhere affirmed by Christ. Not all agree to this today, for some have said that the

Lord did not accomplish the healing of those who were believed to be possessed, but that the evangelists erroneously attributed it to Him. Others have said that the Lord went through the form of casting out demons although He knew that there were no demons to be cast out. Still others have declared that He went through the form of casting out demons because He believed that there were demons present, but in that belief He was mistaken and merely shared the erroneous belief of His contemporaries. In other words, these explanations mean either (1) the evangelists lied, or (2) Jesus acted out a lie although He knew better, or (3) Jesus was deceived in His own beliefs.

If true, number (1) opens the door for denying the historicity of all the Scriptures. Number (2) implies deceiving accommodation, unworthy of any great person—certainly unworthy of the Son of God. This explanation goes too far, for the Lord spoke of the reality of demons on occasions when He was teaching His disciples and not accommodating Himself to large audiences (Matthew 10:8,17–18). Number (3) is an outright denial of the deity of Christ. If the authority of Christ is recognized, the reality of demons is certain.

b. Their nature. Demons are spirit beings (Matthew 8:16; 17:18; also see Mark 9:25; Luke 10:17,20). They are unclean (Matthew 10:1; Mark 1:27; 3:11) and some are worse than others (Matthew 12:45). They are organized (Matthew 12:22–30); they recognize the authority of Jesus (Luke 8:28); and they evidently realize that their doom in the abyss is certain (Luke 8:31).

c. Their work. In general the work of demons of course is to promote the purposes of Satan and to hinder the purpose of God. Since Satan is not omnipresent, demons are employed to extend his authority and activity. We know from the Gospel records that they can possess men and animals (Mark 5:8–14), that they lead men into moral impurity (Matthew 10:1;12:43;Mark 1:23–27; 5:12–13; Luke 4:33–36), and that they can inflict physical and mental disease (Matthew 8:28; 9:32–33; Mark 5:5; 9:17–18).

We have discussed the teachings of Christ concerning sin, salvation, and angelic beings. Other subjects such as the Holy Spirit, regeneration, and sanctification belong to Johannine theology and will be discussed later. The teaching concerning the kingdom and the present church age finds its rightful place under the eschatology of the Synoptics. The treatment of other topics such as prayer and discipleship, although valuable and

appropriate, seems out of bounds for a book of this size and can only be recommended to the individual's investigation.

V. CONDEMNATION OF THE KING

The story of the King is a story of loneliness. First He was received and acclaimed; He proved Himself in every way; His teaching was recognized. But then repudiation climaxed in rejection. This clearly is the outline of the Christology of the theology of the Synoptics. Some aspects of the rejection are merely historical and some are theological, but both are essential to a proper understanding of Synoptic theology as seen from the viewpoint of the human writers.

A. *THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE*

In the garden all forsook Him and He was utterly alone. The theological problem connected with the scene is to explain the seemingly ruffled composure of the Lord in His prayer concerning the passing of the cup from Him.

One explanation is that Jesus was afraid to die. Of course if this were true, it would make Him greatly inferior to many of His followers who in later years died fearlessly. Also it would lead logically to the conclusion that Jesus was Himself a sinner.

Another explanation for His actions in the garden is that He was afraid He would die before the proper time of sacrifice on the cross; that is, that Satan would thwart the purpose of the cross by a premature death. But we know that Satan did not have power over Christ in this regard (John 10:18).

A third explanation is that going to the cross would involve a crime against God on the part of man, and Jesus did not want to be involved in such a crime; therefore He prayed that it would not come to pass. But there is no evidence in His thoughts as revealed by His actions in this scene that such an idea existed, for our Lord never associated Himself with His slayers.

The only correct explanation of His behavior is that He was shrinking from the prospect of being the sin-bearer of the world. This involved linking Himself with sin, which in itself is terrible enough to account for the actions in the garden. But that linking with sin also involved being forsaken by the Father, the significance of which is incomprehensible to human

minds. It is true that the struggle was that of the human nature, and in a sense it was the will of Christ that was offered in Gethsemane in this brief prayer.

B. *T_{HE} A_{RREST}*

Immediately after the prayer, the multitude appeared, the betrayer kissed Jesus, the soldiers fell back—evidently because of a flash of His glory (John 18:6)—and Peter (probably missing his aim at the man’s head) cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Our Lord healed the ear, chided the multitude for the display of weapons, and was led away to be tried and condemned.

C. *T_{HE} T_{RIALS}*

1. *The trial before the high priest (Matthew 26:57–68; Mark 14:53–65; Luke 22:54–65; also see John 18:12–27)*

a. *The first phase—the informal trial before Annas.* Jesus was brought first before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. Possibly this was done because the house of Annas was near at hand¹⁶ or, more likely, because Annas was recognized as the legitimate high priest by strict Jews. Caiaphas was the politically expedient high priest set up by the Romans.¹⁷ During this phase of the trial the witnesses were being secured.

b. *The second phase—before Caiaphas with two false witnesses.* Our Lord was next brought before Caiaphas, but no formal charge was made. When witnesses failed to appear, two false ones were produced, but still no formal charge was made.

c. *The third phase—the violence of the high priest and the silence of Christ.* The high priest’s reaction to the testimony of the false witnesses was violence. He arose and demanded an answer from the prisoner, but Jesus held His peace. This silence on the part of the Lord is not to be construed as His consenting to the proceedings; actually His silence is clear proof of His refusal to countenance the illegal trial. It is a vivid picture of royal serenity.

d. *The fourth phase—the placing of Christ under oath.* Finally the high priest put Jesus under formal oath to declare whether or not He was deity. Our Lord’s answer positively affirmed that He was the Son of God and even went a step further, for He added that they would see the Son of man

coming in the clouds of heaven, thereby identifying Himself with the Old Testament prophecy. Upon this testimony He was accused of blasphemy, because they recognized this as a claim of deity.

2. *The first trial before Pilate (Matthew 27:2,11–14; Mark 15:1–5; Luke 23:1–5; also see John 18:28–38).* The trial before Pilate was necessitated by the simple fact that the Jews did not have the authority to put Jesus to death (John 18:31). It was not simply that they were seeking to rid themselves of the matter, for had that been the case, they would have been glad when Pilate found Him innocent.

It is John who presented the most detail concerning this trial, and he began his account by noting the ridiculously inconsistent scrupulousness of the Jews who refused to enter the house of Pilate (a Gentile) lest they be defiled for Passover. The charge that was pressed before the Roman authority was not that of blasphemy but that of sedition. Therefore Pilate's inquiry was "Are You the King of the Jews?" (18:33) The Lord's response (18:34) was to inquire of Pilate whether he was asking the question from the viewpoint of a Roman or a Jew, for the answer would depend on the viewpoint of the questioner. When Pilate declared that his viewpoint certainly was not Jewish (18:35), the Lord replied that His kingdom did not concern worldly kingdoms. Then Pilate inquired if He were a king in any sense (18:37). The Lord said that He was the king of truth, and Pilate's flippant answer was simply "What is truth?" (18:38)

The result of the trial was the pronouncement that Jesus was not dangerous to Rome. The Jews, however, were not satisfied and in their persistence mentioned Galilee, which provided Pilate with an excuse to send Jesus to Herod.

3. *The trial before Herod (Luke 23:6–12).* Herod's actions on this occasion display vividly the effects of sin in hardening the heart. This is the Herod who married his brother Philip's wife and who beheaded John the Baptist. His interest was in seeing a miracle and when that was not forthcoming, he and his men mocked Jesus and sent Him back to Pilate.

4. *The second trial before Pilate (Matthew 27:15–26; Mark 15:6–15; Luke 23:13–25; also see John 18:39–19:16).* If Herod is a picture of hardness of heart, Pilate is a picture of weakness of character. Although he

had found Jesus innocent, he thought to scourge Him before releasing Him. Then he grabbed at the straw of the custom of releasing one prisoner at Passover. The Jews' request for the release of Barabbas shows the success of the propaganda campaign of the priests among the people. Pilate turned Jesus over to the soldiers for scourging, perhaps thinking that this would be sufficient and that he could release Jesus afterward, but the crowd interpreted it as the scourging that preceded crucifixion (John 19:4–5). Pilate again stalled, but when the crowd threatened to go over his head and take the case to Rome, he gave in.

D. *THE DEATH*

Mention has already been made of certain theological aspects of Christ's death in His own teaching. At this point then, consideration needs to be given to the seven words uttered on the cross as revealing the Savior's own thoughts during the crucifixion.

1. “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). This was probably uttered as they nailed Him to the Cross. It is a plea for God to be longsuffering. The people did not know what they were doing because they did not know who it was they were crucifying. These words imply that their ignorance mitigated the criminality of the act, but of course did not exonerate those who committed it (see 1 Corinthians 2:8). In His death, Christ was forgiving.

2. “Today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). The thief to whom this word was spoken probably heard the first prayer for forgiveness and turned in repentance to the Savior. Even on the cross the Lord was winning men to Himself, and His word of assurance presupposes that He would live on in resurrection. The word *Paradise* is used by Christ only here and means the bliss of Heaven itself.¹⁸ It is not some intermediate compartment. In His death Christ saved men.

3. “Woman, behold, your son! . . . Behold your mother!” (John 19:26–27). If it were not that spiritual matters are of utmost importance, the Lord might have committed His mother to James or Jude or one of the other members of His own family, but because His brethren were as yet

unbelievers, He committed her to John. In His death Christ was concerned with things spiritual.

4. “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). The first three sayings were probably all spoken before noon. This one, which is in every way central, was uttered about 3:00 P.M., after three hours of darkness and silence during which the Son of God bore the sin of the world. In that work He had to be forsaken by God, and yet at the same time there was no splitting up of the trinity. All that is involved is inscrutable, but He gave Himself, He was made sin, He bore our sins, and His soul was made an offering for sin. His work was to bear sin.

5. “I am thirsty” (John 19:28). Up to this point our Lord had refused the stupefying drink that was usually given to those who were undergoing the tortures of crucifixion (see Matthew 27:34,48). Now that He had accomplished His work while in full possession of all His faculties, He requested the drink. His work was consciously done.

6. “It is finished!” (John 19:30). This was the cry of victory in the hour of seeming defeat. The plan of salvation stands completed. This involved especially the work of redemption from sin, reconciliation of man, and propitiation of God. His work was completely done.

7. “Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46). This last word reveals clearly the voluntary character of Christ’s death, for it was not until He dismissed His spirit from His body that death occurred. No man took His life from Him; His work was voluntarily done.

Thus the seven sayings of the cross reveal that in His death Christ was forgiving, saving, and concerned with things spiritual; and they reveal that His sacrificial work was to bear sin consciously, completely, and consentaneously. Chafer wrote:

The value of the sacrifice is not to be discovered in the intensity of the Saviour’s anguish but rather in the dignity and infinite worth of the One who suffers. He did not give more or less; He gave *Himself*, He offered Himself, but this self was none other than the Second Person of the Godhead in whom measureless dignity and glory reside.¹⁹

VI. VINDICATION OF THE KING

All the Gospel writers concluded with the account of the resurrection; thus all considered it a vital and necessary part of their theology. Each one seems to have used it for his own peculiar purposes. Matthew emphasized the resurrection as a proof of all that Christ taught (28:6—“just as He said”) and he related it to the power that would be available to His disciples in their carrying out of the commission (28:18). Mark seems to have emphasized the appearances of the risen Lord as proof of His resurrection. After all, no one saw the actual rising, and the witnesses were witnesses to the fact that the tomb was empty and to the fact that they saw the risen Christ. Luke, whose account includes the extended record of the appearance to the two disciples on the Emmaus road, connected the resurrection with new understanding of truth (24:27), with the new work (24:48), and with a new pattern of life (24:44—“while I was still with you” indicates a difference between the Lord’s preresurrection and postresurrection modes of life).

Thus the resurrection is proved (this was Mark’s emphasis); it in turn proves all of Christ’s claims (this was Matthew’s emphasis); and it is the basis of newness of life (this was Luke’s emphasis).

CHAPTER 3

THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE SYNOPTICS

I. THE KINGDOM PROFFERED

It is rightly observed that the theology of the Gospels is an eschatology or it is nothing.¹ As we have seen in the previous section, even the Christology is essentially eschatological, for it concerns the Messiah; therefore it is not surprising to discover that the bulk of the Synoptic teaching concerns the kingdom.

A. *MESSENGERS OF THE KINGDOM*

1. John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1–12). The first messenger of the kingdom was John the Baptist, whose ministry was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Elijah's return before the day of the Lord (Matthew 11:10, 14; 17:12).

2. Jesus (Matthew 4:17). Our Lord also came announcing the kingdom. A comparison of Matthew 4:17 with Mark 1:14 will show that *euaggelion*, "gospel," is not a technical word; it simply means "good news," the content of which must be defined by the context. In this case it was the good news concerning the nearness of the kingdom.

3. The Twelve (Matthew 10:1–11:1). The twelve apostles were also commissioned to preach the good news concerning the kingdom. The extent of their ministry was expressly limited by the Lord to Israelites, and

Israelites must be understood to mean Jews, for the Lord specifically forbade the twelve to go to Gentiles or even to the half-caste Samaritans.

B. MESSAGE OF THE KINGDOM

In the case of each of the messengers, the message was the same: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The kingdom that was being announced and proffered at this time was no new thing to the Jewish people. They had a clear idea of what was meant, and that was the kingdom of David’s son, Messiah. The announcement was that it had drawn near and stood near (perfect tense of “draw near”; compare Matthew 21:1; 11:9–12; 26:45–46; Romans 13:12; James 5:8; 1 Peter 4:7). As a matter of fact it was so near that the people should have seen the evidences and signs of it.

The concept of the kingdom was clear enough, and that the kingdom was near was central in the message. The new and stumbling idea in the message was that repentance was necessary. Actually it was not new, for the Old Testament prophets had often called the people to repentance in connection with their promised blessings, but it was new in the sense that the people of Jesus’ day had expected the kingdom to come in power and without any inward change being required on their part. Many of them did repent as evidenced by the many who received baptism at the hand of John. But most did not. The Lord described what that repentance involved in the sermon on the mount. The people accepted the good news that the kingdom was near, but rejected the requirement of repentance, which would have brought its establishment.

C. MEANING OF THE KINGDOM

This is the crux of the matter, for if the message of the kingdom concerned the church, that is one thing; if the message concerned the earthly Davidic kingdom, that is something else. The amillennialist viewpoint is that the kingdom as announced was not the Davidic kingdom.² According to this viewpoint, the kingdom is the church; and the kingdom of Heaven and the church “are in most respects at least equivalent, and . . . the two institutions are co-existent and largely coextensive.”³ To the amillennialist, the sermon on the mount is the law and standard for the church, the parables of Matthew 13 concern the church and describe it, and

the Olivet discourse merely concerns the end of all time, not the cataclysmic events prior to the setting up of the Davidic kingdom. I reject this viewpoint for reasons stated in *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*.⁴

The premillennial concept of the kingdom does not deny the fact that in some places the word *kingdom* refers to a universal, timeless, and eternal kingdom (Matthew 6:33). Nor does it deny the fact that the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13) concern this present age. But it does affirm that the Messianic, Davidic, earthly, millennial kingdom is that which John the Baptist, the Lord, and the twelve announced; that it was rejected by the Jews and therefore (from man's viewpoint) postponed; and that the promises that necessitate its being set up on the earth will be literally fulfilled at the second coming of Christ.

Whatever the variations may be within the premillennial camp, they must not obscure the fact that the basic difference between premillennialism and amillennialism is that premillennialism regards the Davidic kingdom promises unfulfilled by the church and yet to be fulfilled literally. Amillennialism finds no place for this aspect of the kingdom except in a supposed fulfillment by the church. Thus in the Synoptics, premillennialism recognizes and distinguishes the eternal kingdom, the mystery form of the kingdom, and the Messianic kingdom.

Matthew seems to have emphasized these basic distinctions simply by the space he devoted to (1) the sermon on the mount (which is related to the Messianic kingdom), (2) the parables of the thirteenth chapter (which is related to the mystery form of the kingdom), and (3) the Olivet discourse (which is also related to the future establishment of the Messianic kingdom). In Matthew the eternal kingdom is referred to infrequently (see 6:33; 12:28; 13:38,43; 19:24; 21:31).

However, the question is: Which kingdom was at hand according to the preaching of John the Baptist and Christ? Obviously it was not the eternal kingdom, for that was already in existence. Equally clear is the fact that it was not the mystery form of the kingdom, for that was not revealed until later in our Lord's ministry. Therefore the kingdom that was preached as at hand must have been the Messianic kingdom. This was in exact accord with the concept of the kingdom that the Jews had at the time Christ began His ministry. They were looking for the Messianic kingdom, not anything else, and although the Lord later revealed other things about the concept of the kingdom, He did not then nullify that which He had previously spoken.

The kingdom proffered was the millennial kingdom. It was a genuine offer, which was just as bona fide as the offer of the gospel is today to every non-elect person. Man's reaction or ability to respond does not determine the validity of an offer. When the Jews rejected this offer, it was according to the program of God, and the Messianic kingdom was postponed. This idea of postponement is a concept that many object to, as if it impugned the character of God or the cross of Christ. Let it be recognized that to say the kingdom was postponed is just as proper as to say that God postpones certain blessings in one's life because of unbelief.

To say that a postponed kingdom implies that had it been received, there would have been no cross (and thus the concept involves minimizing the cross) is to err greatly. The cross has always been in the plan of God and it depended on neither the acceptance nor rejection by Israel of the Messianic kingdom. Had the kingdom offer been accepted at the first advent of Christ, the Messiah still would have had to die, for a vicariously suffering Messiah was part and parcel of the kingdom concept of the Old Testament. The fact that the kingdom was rejected and thereby postponed in no way minimizes the cross.

Thus the kingdom proffered was the Messianic, millennial kingdom promised to David and his seed, affirmed everywhere in the teaching of the Old Testament prophets, anticipated with keen expectation by the Jews at the time of Christ, and proclaimed by John the Baptist and Jesus during the early part of the latter's ministry.

II. THE KINGDOM PROCLAIMED

Matthew's Gospel is an orderly theology. Having presented the King through His genealogy, His birth, His being acclaimed by the wise men, His baptism, and His temptation, and having emphasized the preaching of the kingdom as at hand (3:2; 4:17), Matthew then recorded the sermon on the mount. From the very order of the Gospel, one would strongly suspect that the sermon on the mount had something to do with the Messianic kingdom. The parables of the mysteries of the kingdom do not appear until much later, and the revelation of the church to be built in the future appears even later than that. Therefore even though the chronological order of these events and discourses may not be the same, the theological order is clearly set forth by Matthew. Objections that we are seeing too much in Matthew's

order, border on disrespect to the Holy Spirit whose orderly and inspired arrangement this is.

However, before discussing exactly how the sermon relates to the kingdom, it would be well to survey three basic views concerning the interpretation of the passage. The first view regards the sermon as a means of salvation for the world. This is generally the view of the liberal, whether the salvation is individual or cultural. For instance Harnack said that in the sermon Jesus went through “the several departments of human relationships and human failings so as to bring the disposition and intention to light in each case, to judge man’s works by them, and on them to hang heaven and hell.”⁵ Another stated it this way: “In all this it is made clear that what matters is character and conduct. Salvation comes to those who turn with a single mind to worship and obey God, walking in the way that has been opened up by Jesus.”⁶

Several objections must be raised against this view: (1) The sermon was not addressed to the whole world, but to the disciples as representative Jews expecting the Messianic kingdom (Matthew 5:1–2). (2) There are no mentions of redemption, justification, and other basic themes related to spiritual salvation. (3) In order to make this speak of salvation, one would have to show that the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:20; 7:21) means Heaven or the church, and not the Messianic kingdom. This would be difficult if not impossible to do. (4) To make this a way of salvation would be to preach a gospel of works.

The second basic view concerning the interpretation of the sermon on the mount is that the sermon is for the church. Ryle said, “It is the voice of the Chief Shepherd. It is the charge of the great Bishop and Head of the Church.”⁷ Henry said that it is a “statement of the practical way in which *agape* is to work itself out in daily conduct here and now. The sermon expresses therefore the only righteousness acceptable to God in this age or in any.”⁸ Hogg and Watson concluded that “the Sermon on the Mount is intended for the guidance of regenerate persons in an unregenerate world.”⁹ To those who hold this view, any eschatological element in the sermon is definitely secondary to their perceived principal emphasis of the sermon as a code of personal ethics for the church today.

Several objections to this interpretation must be raised. One is that in order to interpret the sermon in relation to the Christian and the church, the

principle of literal interpretation must be abandoned. Miller, who holds this view, said quite clearly:

Many of the sayings of the Sermon are metaphorical or proverbial statements, and are not to be understood in a literal or legal sense. . . . But rather the principles behind the concrete instances are to be sought and applied anew to the life of the present as Jesus applied them to the life of His own time.¹⁰

Any interpretation that must discard literal interpretation ought to be doubted seriously. Another objection is that such an interpretation is contrary to the theological pattern of Matthew. If the Holy Spirit was fulfilling the Savior's promise to teach the disciples as well as to remind them of things (John 14:26), and if Matthew's treatment is a theological setting forth of the meaning of Christ's teachings, then one should not ignore the place Matthew gave to the sermon—a place that definitely relates it to the Messianic kingdom and not to the church.

A further objection is that there is in the sermon a striking and embarrassing absence of church truth as later revealed in the Epistles. It is readily granted that this does not conclusively prove that the sermon is not for the church, but it is admittedly very strange that this most complete of all the teachings of Jesus does not mention the Holy Spirit, or the church *per se*, or prayer in the name of Christ. These things Christ did mention during His ministry (see John 14:16; 16:13, 24; Matthew 16:18). For instance, according to what the Lord later said (John 16:24), the sermon did not reveal the proper basis for prayer, which is a rather important omission from that which is “the rule of daily life for the Christian believer.”¹¹

The usual reply to such an objection is that the sermon has to be supplemented by the teaching of the rest of the New Testament. But that supplementation appears more to involve an essential difference and makes one suspicious of this interpretation. Even Hogg and Watson admitted that “taken alone, beautiful as it is, it were law and not gospel.”¹² Therefore it appears that the additional information supplied by the rest of the New Testament is in reality different information and so essentially different as to raise serious questions about the validity of this interpretation.

The third basic view concerning the interpretation of the sermon on the mount is that it is kingdom truth. To say that it is kingdom truth is not to

deny its relevance to the church. All Scripture is profitable; therefore, whatever be the interpretation of the sermon, it will have application to the church. Even the most ardent dispensationalists teach its application to the church. Chafer wrote, “A secondary application to the church means that lessons and principles may be drawn from it.”¹³

Nevertheless, that the sermon primarily concerns the kingdom—when offered then and in the tribulation period as well as when it is established in the future millennium—is supported (1) by the principle of literal interpretation and (2) by the principle of Biblical theology as displayed in Matthew’s theological Gospel (which is based on John 14:26). The King was presented and He in turn offered Israel her kingdom. It is only logical that He would outline the laws of that kingdom. This is Matthew’s divinely inspired order.

Some, however, say that the sermon is kingdom truth and then proceed to make the kingdom God’s universal rule at all times. In other words, *kingdom* is made synonymous with *church*, and even though they say the sermon is for the kingdom, in reality they mean that it is for the church. But by *kingdom* we mean the Messianic, millennial, Davidic kingdom, offered by Messiah at His first coming, but not to be established until His second coming. The sermon was preached in relation to this concept of the kingdom, and whatever application it may have, it was in a context of Messianic kingdom expectation that it was preached, and that must be its primary interpretation. Most who follow this basic view understand that the sermon relates to the kingdom as it will be established in the future. In this connection then, it is often called the constitution of the kingdom.

Objections may be raised to relating the sermon exclusively to the Messianic kingdom as it will be established in the future millennium. The objections are based on the simple fact that there are some things in the sermon that picture conditions that are entirely different from what is known of the millennial age from other Scriptures. For instance, if the kingdom is established, why pray “Thy kingdom come”? (Matthew 5:10) And if righteousness reigns, why are those who are persecuted called blessed? In order to avoid these objections, it is sometimes said that the sermon refers to the time of the offering of the kingdom (both during the life of Christ and during the tribulation). This answer does not take fully into account that some things in the sermon do picture millennial conditions (see 5:13–16, 39–44; 7:1–6), and it may fail to recognize that even in the

millennium unredeemed people will be in need of the message of repentance.

In light of the foregoing discussion it seems best to this writer to consider the sermon on the mount in a fourfold light. (1) Basically and primarily it is a detailed explanation of what the Lord meant by repentance. It was a call to those who heard it to that inner change which they had dissociated from the requirements for the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. (2) Therefore it has relevance to any time that the kingdom is offered, and that includes the days of the tribulation as well as the days when Christ spoke. (3) But it does picture certain aspects of life in the millennial kingdom and thus in a certain restricted sense is a sort of constitution of the kingdom. (4) However, as all Scripture, it is profitable for any people, and since it is one of the most detailed ethical codes in the Bible, it has a special application to men's lives in any age.

One must avoid relegating it all to the future or all to the time of the offering of the kingdom, and at the same time one must never miss its importance in application to the church today. By interpretation (based on Matthew's use of it) the sermon on the mount explains repentance in detail in relation to citizenship in the kingdom. The phrase *citizenship in the kingdom* will serve to emphasize the three interpretative aspects as outlined above and will in no way contradict the applicative value of the sermon. In summarizing the Lord's teaching, Matthew's record will be followed.

A. *CHARACTERISTICS OF KINGDOM CITIZENSHIP (5:1–16)*

1. *In relation to God (5:3–6).* Four characteristics are required in relation to God: a poverty of spirit that involves a recognition of one's worthlessness before God; godly mourning in the heart as a result of realizing the poverty-stricken condition; meekness (the word means "domesticated"); and hungering and thirsting after righteousness. These are spiritual requirements for entrance into the Messianic kingdom.

2. *In relation to man (5:7–12).* Again there are four characteristics: mercifulness, purity in heart, peacemaking, and suffering persecution. Citizens of the kingdom should expect to be characterized in these ways, and these four, like the first group, primarily concern entrance into the kingdom.

3. In relation to the world (5:13–16). There will be a need for witness during the millennium, which the subjects of the kingdom must fill. They are to be preserving as salt and prominent as a city on a hill. Even though no unredeemed person may enter the millennial kingdom, many redeemed will enter with unglorified bodies to whom children will be born, who will stand in need of this witness.

B. CODE OF KINGDOM CITIZENSHIP (5:17–48)

In this section of the Lord’s sermon there are six laws presented. Each is marked off in the text by words like these: “You have heard that the ancients were told . . . but I say to you” (5:21–22, 27–28, 31–32, 33–34, 38–39, 43–44). As laws they doubtless have special relevance to the standard of conduct expected during the reign of Christ. As authoritative pronouncements (which stood in sharp contrast to the Law and its Pharisaic interpretations) they have relevance to the time of the preaching of the kingdom in that they set forth the requirement of inward righteousness in contrast to the external righteousness of the Pharisees (see 5:20).

1. The law of murder (5:21–26). Although the rabbis were very strict in their teaching against murder, Jesus looked at the causes of murder. Anger starts the process; then follows calling one’s brother *raca* (from a word meaning “to spit out”); finally the brother is accused of being a fool. These are the things that lead to murder. Therefore in order to avoid the consequences, the Lord advised being reconciled to the brother (in religious matters) or settling with an adversary out of court (in secular matters). This law, as all of them, had meaning when Christ announced it to those who were seeking entrance into the kingdom and who needed to examine their hearts, and there is no reason why it will not be in force during the kingdom.

2. The law of adultery (5:27–30). Again the Lord pointed His finger at the heart of man. The rabbis defined adultery as the illicit sexual relationship of a married man and a married woman.¹⁴ The Lord broadened the definition to include anyone who commits the act, regardless of his marital status. But He also went further by pointing out that the seat of sin is in the heart. In rationalizing, the Jews had said that the eye drew them

into adultery. Our Lord said that such an idea is nonsense, for the heart does it. But He used their illogical reasoning and carried it to its logical conclusion. “If it is the eye,” He said in effect, “pluck it out. Or if it is the hand that leads into this sin, cut it off. If, however, it is the heart, change it.” The Lord was not saying that the act is no worse than the look; He was trying to point out the source of the act and what needed to be done to the heart.

3. The law of divorce (5:31–32). It would appear from this law that the Lord allowed divorce in the single instance of adultery. If this be so, then this particular teaching did not rise above that of the school of Shammai. It is true that the school of Hillel allowed divorce for many causes, and on the basis of this some have said that in this declaration the Lord simply restricted divorce to the one proved instance so that women who were divorced for trivial reasons would not be branded as adulteresses. However, such an interpretation does not put the Lord’s teaching above that of the scribes and Pharisees as represented in the school of Shammai.

Because this, as all of the sermon, seems to be of a higher standard than that of the Pharisees, is it possible that the Lord was actually disallowing divorce in all instances? Some liberals think so and view the excepting clause as an interpolation that really altered the sense of the Lord’s original utterance.¹⁵ The conservative of course cannot accept such an explanation, and his usual explanation is that in this one circumstance divorce is allowed. It seems to this author that such an explanation actually contradicts Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18; and 1 Corinthians 7:10. Therefore it is suggested that the Lord was forbidding divorce altogether and that fornication (*porneia*) denotes marital relations within the prohibited relationships of Leviticus 18. In other words, the one who may have married too near a relative should seek annulment, but for all others divorce is disallowed. This follows the meaning of *porneia* in 1 Corinthians 5:1 and Acts 15:29.¹⁶ If this be the true explanation, then our Lord was replacing the Law with God’s ideal of no divorce.

4. The law of oaths (5:33–37). In introducing the Old Testament teaching concerning oaths the Lord summarized requirements set forth in Leviticus 19:12 and Numbers 30:2. Rabbinic interpretation had said that only if the name of God were involved in an oath, was it swearing; thus one could do a

great deal of swearing without breaking their interpretation of the Law. Our Lord showed that even though God's name was not mentioned, God could be involved in oaths by involving His works. A name stands for the person, and the person is revealed by and related to his works; therefore to defame the works is to take the name in vain. To involve Heaven, Jerusalem, or self is to involve God. The Lord added a further thought. He said in effect, "If you need emphasis in your speech, do not resort to oaths; just repeat yourself" (see 5:37).

5. *The law of nonresistance (5:38–42).* The Law said that one could recompense evil with evil (Exodus 21:22–26; Leviticus 24:17–20; Deuteronomy 19:18–21). Christ said, "Do not resist him who is evil" (5:39) and He did not qualify the statement in any way. Rather He explained it and illustrated it in various areas of life (in indignity, 5:39; injustice, 5:40; inconvenience, 5:41; and indigence, 5:42).

6. *The law of love (5:43–48).* In introducing this law the Lord quoted Leviticus 19:18 and summarized the sense of such passages as Deuteronomy 7:2 and 23:3–6. The Lord's new law rules out the hating of one's enemies and substitutes godly love, which displays itself toward all.

C. CONDUCT OF KINGDOM CITIZENSHIP (6:1–7:12)

In this section the King dealt with matters of conduct appropriate for citizens of the kingdom. These matters apply whether the kingdom is about to be established or already established.

1. *Almsgiving (6:1–4).* Giving should be characterized by simplicity and secrecy.

2. *Prayer (6:5–15).* In this section the Lord said that the place of prayer should be a private place where there could be heart-to-heart fellowship and communion with God (6:5–6). (This was in sharp contrast to the practice of the Pharisees, who made a point of being caught in the streets at the time of prayer so that everyone could see how religious they were as they stood there praying.) He also said that the point of prayer is not to besiege God with vain repetitions, but to ask Him for that which He already knows we need (6:7–8). Finally our Lord gave the great pattern prayer (6:9–15).

3. Fasting (6:16–18). The citizen of the kingdom should fast in secret and conduct himself normally otherwise.

4. Money (6:19–24). The citizen of the kingdom should lay up treasure in Heaven.

5. Anxiety (6:25–34). The citizen of the kingdom need never be anxious because (1) the One who gave life in the first place will take care of it (6:25); (2) the God who feeds the birds will surely feed His children (6:26); (3) it is futile to think we can add to the length of our lives (6:27); (4) the God who clothes the lilies will also clothe His children (6:28–30); (5) it is a characteristic of the heathen to worry (6:31–32a); (6) God knows what we need (6:32b); and (7) priority belongs to spiritual things (6:33).

6. Judging (7:1–6). This is a section that undoubtedly has particular applicability when the kingdom is established, for the tenses of the verbs show that judging (present tenses) brings instantaneous punishment (aorist tenses). In relation to its application today this passage is often abused, for some take it to mean that the Lord condemned all judging. The condemnation is only on hypocritical judging; indeed the Lord recommended casting the speck out of the brother's eye if one's own spiritual condition enables one to see clearly (7:5). This is a condemnation of hypocrites, not critics. In the kingdom the way that professing hypocrites judge will evidently reveal their unregenerate condition and result in their condemnation.

7. Prayer (7:7–12). The section closes with an exhortation to ask and a promise of receiving.

D. CAUTIONS CONCERNING KINGDOM CITIZENSHIP (7:13–29)

Following the teaching concerning hypocritical judging, the sermon closes with warnings to prove the reality of one's profession. The Lord spoke of two ways (7:13–14), two kinds of trees (7:15–20), two professions (7:21–23), and two builders (7:24–29). These warnings of course have special pertinence to any time the kingdom is proclaimed, for right

relationship to God is essential for entrance into the Messianic kingdom (see 7:21).

III. THE KINGDOM POSTPONED

Such a title as “The Kingdom Postponed” will immediately raise questions in the minds of some. How can one speak of a postponement of the kingdom when the passage under discussion in this section, Matthew 13, speaks of the kingdom? The answer to that question is of course that postponement is used here in relation to the millennial or Davidic kingdom. Then it will be asked, If the Davidic kingdom had been received by the Jews and not postponed, would it have been unnecessary for the Lord Jesus to be crucified? But the postponement of the kingdom is related primarily to the question of God’s program in this age through the church and not to the necessity of the crucifixion. The crucifixion would have been necessary as foundational to the establishment of the kingdom even if the church age had never been conceived in the purposes of God. The question is not whether the crucifixion would have been avoided, but whether the Davidic kingdom was postponed.

In the divinely-guided theological framework of Matthew there is no better way to express God’s purposes concerning the Messianic kingdom than to use the word *postponed*. It has already been demonstrated that we must recognize divine guidance of the order of the Gospel as well as the facts of it (John 14:26). In that inspired arrangement, Matthew presented Christ as King of the Jews proclaiming the Davidic kingdom as at hand (3:2; 4:17; 10:7). Matthew also showed the distinct line of rejection of the King (see especially chapters 11–12). In many respects there is a climax of that rejection in the committing of the unpardonable sin, although of course the rejection continues throughout the entire account. However, there is no record of the King’s preaching the kingdom as at hand after this climax of rejection in chapter 12. Rather, the mysteries of the kingdom are then introduced by the King.

The word *mystery* is a technical word used to describe a secret that is unknown to one until he is initiated. The kingdom of Heaven as the eternal, timeless reign of God was certainly well known in Jewish theology. The kingdom of Heaven as the Davidic, Messianic, millennial kingdom was likewise well known to the Jews of Christ’s day (see Daniel 7:14).

Therefore the mysteries of the kingdom could not refer to the eternal kingdom or the Messianic kingdom; the meaning of the word *mysteries* requires that they refer to some other aspect of the rule of God that was unknown up to that time. If the reference is not to eternity or the millennium, there is only one other period in the history of the world left: the time between the first and second comings of Christ. Obviously that period includes the time during which Christ is building His church. The mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven have to do with the government of the Head over the church. They concern conditions in the time during which Christ is absent from the earth.

The form of this revelation is parabolic. The word *parable* means “a casting alongside”; thus a parable is the putting side by side of two truths—one truth from the realm of nature and the other from the realm of the supernatural. Parables are vehicles for the conveying of doctrine so that it might be clear and at the same time hidden (Matthew 13:11 ff.). Since they contain truths from the two realms, one will expect to find figurative language in parables, but as in all figures of speech the literal meaning of the figure will be evident. Each parable has to be interpreted as a whole, and one parable must not be used to teach the whole story conveyed by all of them together. It goes without saying that the interpretation of the parables in Matthew 13 must follow the pattern set down by the Lord in His own interpretation of the first two.

To summarize, these parables reveal some of the principal features of the rule of God during the time when Christ is absent from the earth. That there would be such a time was not known previously; therefore these parables concern the mysteries of the kingdom. In the meantime the promised Davidic kingdom is merely postponed.

A. *THE SOWER* (13:1–23)

1. *Identifications.* The sower is Christ; the seeds are persons who have received the Word in some way or other. The Word plays a vital part in the parable, but the seeds are persons who have received that Word. The field into which they are sown is the world.

2. *Interpretation.* During the course of this age many people will receive the Word and become testimonies to the world. Of those who receive the

Word and make some sort of profession, the individuals who do not bear fruit will outnumber the ones that do. Some people hear but do not understand; others hear and have emotional experiences but soon wither; the profession of others is unfruitful because of worldliness; still others are fruitful in varying degrees. All make profession, but only one group bears fruit for the kingdom.

B. THE W_{HEAT} AND THE T_{ARES} (13:24–30,36–43)

1. Identifications. Again the sower is Christ, and the field is the world. The good seed are children of the kingdom, and the tares are children of the devil. The reapers who do their work at the end of the age are angels. All these identifications are certain because it is the Lord who makes them.

2. Interpretation. During the course of this age Satan will plant such good counterfeits among the true followers of Christ that they will be indistinguishable to men and inseparable until separated by angels at the return of Christ.

C. THE M_{USTARD} S_{EED} (13:31–32)

1. Identifications. The sower and the field are doubtless the same as in the preceding parables.

2. Interpretation. The principal point of this parable is the unusual or unexpected growth of Christendom during the course of this age.

D. THE L_{EAVEN} (13:33)

1. Identification. If leaven means the same here as it does everywhere else in the Scripture (and there is no indication in the parable that it does not), it stands for something evil (Exodus 12:15; Leviticus 2:11; 6:17; 10:12; Matthew 16:6; Mark 8:15; 1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9).

2. Interpretation. Obviously the interpretation of this parable hinges entirely on one's identification of the leaven. If it represents evil doctrine, the Lord was saying that this present time will be characterized by evil teaching permeating the truth. If the leaven represents the Gospel, it is

strange to find it hidden rather than published, and the resultant idea of the Gospel leavening the whole world is an outright contradiction of Scripture (1 Timothy 4; 2 Timothy 3:1–7) and of the facts of history.

E. THE HIDDEN TREASURE (13:44)

1. Identifications. Again there is no reason to change the identity of the man from Christ. The Jewish hearers would have thought of the treasure as their own nation (Exodus 19:5; Psalm 135:4).

2. Interpretation. Jews will be a part of the saved multitude of this age, and their salvation, as that of all who are saved, is based on the death of Christ.

F. THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE (13:45–46)

1. Identifications. Still the man is Christ. The identification of the pearl is perhaps more obscure, but to the Jew the pearl was not so precious as it was to Gentiles.

2. Interpretation. This parable evidently teaches that Christ gave Himself also for Gentiles. By Paul this is called a mystery (Ephesians 3:1–6).

G. THE DRAGNET (13:47–50)

1. Identifications. The net is the Word of the kingdom. The fish are those who respond to the Word, and the separation is the judgment at the end of this age.

2. Interpretation. The emphasis of this parable seems to be on the separation, not the gathering into the net. Most particularly then, it describes the separation at the end of the tribulation, which is further described in Matthew 25:31–46.

The introduction of these mysteries concerning God's rule affirms the idea that the Messianic, Davidic kingdom has been postponed. The promises regarding that kingdom have not been abrogated or taken over by the church; they will yet be fulfilled. But in the meantime God is ruling in

other ways, and those ways have been described in these mysteries of the kingdom.

IV. THE KINGDOM PROPHESED

A. *IMPORTANCE OF THE OLIVET DISCOURSE*

Matthew's divinely-ordered theology, we have seen, concerns the King and the kingdom. He used the word *kingdom* primarily in relation to the Messianic, Davidic, millennial kingdom. We have noted the progress of the revelation of the kingdom in Matthew's Gospel: he emphasized the offer of the kingdom in the preaching of John, Christ, and the twelve; he introduced early in his Gospel the detailed message of the kingdom in the sermon on the mount; he then showed how the Lord revealed previously unknown truths concerning the kingdom because of the revelation of the introduction of this age. In view of this doctrinal development there is an obvious question: Are the promises of the Davidic covenant for the earthly, national, Messianic, Davidic kingdom abrogated? The answer of the Synoptic theology is an emphatic no, for the Olivet discourse, which Matthew placed as near the end of his Gospel as possible, contains two passages that concern the millennial kingdom. These words of Christ were spoken after the time during which He introduced the truths concerning the mysteries of the kingdom.

All of the various interpretations of the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21:5–36) need not concern us. Many among both liberal and conservative interpreters believe it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. However, if literal interpretation means anything, such an interpretation must be rejected. This is not to say that the discourse does not include prophecy of that event (actually this is Luke's emphasis particularly), but that which happened in A.D. 70 did not begin to fulfill all that is found in the discourse.

Therefore many other interpreters believe that the Lord made reference also to His second coming, and, strange to say, both amillennialists and premillennialists are found in this group.¹⁷ Even without a detailed exposition of all the words and phrases in the discourse that have a time element in them, it is evident that all of them refer to the great tribulation or to other events connected with the second coming of Christ (see Matthew

24:3, 6–7, 14–15, 21, 29–30, 37, 42, 44; 25:10, 19, 31). If the discourse as a whole refers to the time of the second advent, the two particular passages concerning the Messianic kingdom must also be interpreted as related to that time. Therefore those two passages that speak of the millennial kingdom, the parable of the ten virgins (25:1–13) and the judgment of the Gentiles (25:31–46), demonstrate that the kingdom was in no way abrogated by any other teaching that Christ introduced.

B. DISCIPLES' QUESTIONS (MATTHEW 24:1–3; MARK 13:1–4; LUKE 21:5–7)

Three questions from the disciples provoked the discourse. As the Lord was showing them the temple and predicting its destruction, they asked (1) when that destruction would be, (2) what would be the sign of His coming, and (3) what would be the signs of the end of the age. Obviously in their minds the events would be simultaneous, and in His answer the Lord did not attempt to correct that impression, for this was one of the many things they could not understand until after the resurrection (John 16:12).

C. SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE (MATTHEW 24:4–26)

The answer to the first question concerning the destruction of Jerusalem is not found in Matthew's record, for his concern was with the King and the kingdom, and that which happened in A.D. 70 is related to neither. Matthew immediately launched into the record of what the Lord had to say about the signs of the end of the age, for when they appear, the time of the establishment of the kingdom is near. Signs in the physical realm include the disturbances mentioned in 24:6–7. Outstanding signs in the spiritual realm will be the many false Christs who will appear (24:5), the persecution of the Jews and general disinterest in religion (24:10–12), the appearance of the abomination of desolation with resultant consequences (24:15–22), and the worldwide preaching of the gospel of the kingdom (24:14).

D. SIGN OF CHRIST'S COMING (MATTHEW 24:27–31)

The second advent of Christ will be visible (24:27) and accompanied by a great carnage on earth (24:28). The Lord designated the time of it as “immediately after the tribulation” and stated that unusual physical phenomena will attend it (24:29). Seen at this time will be “the sign of the

Son of Man,” whose appearance will bring mourning to the children of Israel (24:30; also see Zechariah 12:10–12). The final regathering of the Jews from the corners of the earth will be effected at the Lord’s return by angelic agency (Matthew 24:31).

E. ILLUSTRATIONS (MATTHEW 24:32–25:46)

Included in the discourse are a number of illustrations of the return of the Lord. The fig tree (24:32–35) is an illustration of the rapidity with which the age will come to an end and the necessity of being alert to signs that will appear in the world. The reference to the days of Noah (24:36–39) points out the fact that the return of Christ will be unexpected because of the unpreparedness of the people trying to live a normal life in those days. The illustrations of the two men and the two women (24:40–42) and the faithful servant (24:43–51) teach the need for preparedness in view of the separation that the return of Christ will bring.

The illustrations that follow (the ten virgins, 25:1–13; the talents, 25:14–30; the judgment of the Gentiles,¹⁸ 25:31–46) include warnings of the judgment as well as exhortations to preparedness. In each the reward is the kingdom of Heaven and the punishment is Hell. If these words are plainly understood, then they obviously teach that the kingdom of Heaven is yet to be established at the return of Christ. Thus the Davidic kingdom could not have been superseded by the church.

Beyond any question, the Synoptic theology is primarily a theology of the King and His kingdom. This is the divinely guided emphasis of Matthew, which is the theological Gospel of the Synoptics, and it is the key to the interpretation of the meaning of the life of Christ. Without this basic viewpoint, the material becomes a mass of contradictions; with it, the material shows the progressive unfolding of the revelation of the purposes of God in the manner of true Biblical theology.

P_{ART} II

THE THEOLOGY OF ACTS

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

I. THE AUTHOR

Since Biblical theology emphasizes the historical and authorial conditioning of revelation, a word is necessary concerning the author of the Acts of the Apostles. Dr. Luke was evidently a Greek and not a Jew, for in the record of Colossians 4:12–14 he is separated from those who are said to be of the circumcision.¹ Some hold that he was born in Antioch in Syria,² while others suggest Philippi as his hometown.³ Evidently he was a free man, and possibly he was born and reared in Antioch but practiced medicine in Philippi. Where he received his medical training is entirely a matter of conjecture, though of necessity it would have been either in Alexandria, Athens, or Tarsus.

The facts pertaining to his conversion are likewise lacking. The prologue to Luke's Gospel would indicate that he was not an eyewitness of the ministry of Christ. It is possible that he was converted in Antioch through the ministry of those who fled Jerusalem because of persecution. It is equally possible that he was converted through the ministry of Paul during the years that Paul was in Tarsus before being called to the work in Antioch.

In spite of the fact that Luke is usually remembered as a physician, it must be recognized that he was primarily a missionary. Being the author of the third Gospel would qualify him as such; but he also did public, itinerant missionary work. The Macedonian call was answered by Luke as well as Paul (Acts 16:13,17). Luke evidently was left in charge of the work in Philippi for approximately six years. Later he preached in Rome (Philemon 24). The Lord also used him in a personal ministry to the physical needs of

the apostle Paul (Colossians 4:14), and since he was with Paul at the end of his life, perhaps he made arrangements for his burial (2 Timothy 4:11).

II. HIS METHOD OF RESEARCH

Luke's declaration concerning his method of research is found in the prologue to his Gospel and although some of the details in the statement relate primarily to the Gospel rather than to Acts, the general method is applicable to both works.

A. *THE PURPOSE*

The method that Luke used was geared to the writing of a historical, not polemical or apologetic, treatise. If this was his avowed purpose and if his method of research was a valid one, then even apart from the superintending work of the Holy Spirit, there is a strong presupposition in favor of the historical accuracy of the writings.

B. *THE METHOD*

Luke's method of producing these historical books involved investigation of sources and sifting of the evidence.

1. Sources

a. *Personal participation.* In the book of Acts there are two "we" sections (16:9–40; 20:5–28:31). These indicate that Luke was personally involved in the journey from Troas to Philippi (on the second missionary journey of Paul), and (on the third missionary journey of Paul) in the journey from Philippi to Rome, including two years in Caesarea and two years in Rome. For these events he had his personal recollections and possibly written diary-type notes.

b. *Paul.* For five or six years Luke was with Paul before the writing of Acts. This of course provided him with information for the record in Acts 7; 9; 11:25–30; 13:1–16:8; 17:1–20:4. It is remarkable that his association with Paul did not affect his historical purpose by giving it a doctrinal cast.

c. *Other eyewitnesses.* Silas, Timothy, Titus, Aristarchus, James, and Philip and his daughters are among those to whom Luke had access in

gathering material for the Acts (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 21:8–9,18; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24).

In other words, Luke had reliable evidence available from these authentic sources for the majority of the material in Acts.

2. *Sifting.* The other principal characteristic of Luke’s method was the careful sifting of the evidence collected. He declared that he “investigated everything carefully” (Luke 1:3), which means (1) that he sifted the facts before he wrote (the verb is in the perfect tense) and (2) that he made accurate use in his writing of the sifted evidence. The physician’s diagnostic skill was applied to the sifting of the material in thorough preparation for writing.

III. THE DATE

The controversy concerning the date of Acts centers around whether it was written before or after A.D. 70. All agree that Acts was written not long after the Gospel of Luke. Those who use a post-70 date often do so on the grounds that predictive prophecy must be disallowed; therefore Luke 21 has to refer to a past event and thus Luke and Acts are both post-70. Besides this denial of prophecy, there are other serious difficulties with a post-70 date. For instance, why are so many important incidents omitted from Acts if it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem? Surely Luke would have mentioned the burning of Rome, the martyrdom of Paul, and the destruction of Jerusalem itself.⁴ From the ending of Acts as we have it, one would judge that it was written about A.D. 63 in Rome during Paul’s first imprisonment.

IV. AUTHORSHIP

Throughout this brief discussion, the Lukan authorship has been assumed. In brief, the proof of this is usually developed along these lines: (1) the author of Acts was clearly a companion of Paul, for the “we” sections show this; (2) by process of elimination, that companion was Luke; (3) the same man who wrote the “we” sections wrote the rest of the book; and (4) this conclusion is corroborated by the incidence of medical terms found in the work (see 1:3; 3:7 ff.; 9:18,33; 13:11; 28:1–10.)

CHAPTER 2

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PLAN OF ACTS

Any inquiring mind cannot help wondering what motivated Luke in his sifting and selecting of the material that comprises Acts. Why does Paul receive so much prominence? Why is it that the westward progress of the gospel is what is chiefly traced in the historical record? Why are certain incidents on the missionary journeys reported in detail while others are passed over briefly? Like the Gospel of Luke, Acts was planned in an orderly way. The philosophy that motivated the plan of Acts is the subject of this section.

I. BASIC PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

It is quite apparent that the basic purpose of Acts is not much different from that of the Gospel of Luke because both are addressed to the same individual for a similar purpose; namely, to instruct that person about the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The Gospel is the first part of the instruction and is stated to be but a beginning of the story (Acts 1:1); therefore the book of Acts is obviously a continuation of the account of the ministry of Christ. The word “began” in Acts 1:1 not only describes the content of the Gospel but also that of Acts, for it implies that Acts will deal with what Jesus continued to do after His resurrection.

In addition to the word “began” there is another noteworthy feature in the introduction to Acts: the immediate and repeated mention of the Holy Spirit (1:2,4–5,8). The acts of the risen Christ are immediately related to the work of the Holy Spirit; thus this second treatise to Theophilus is a chronicle of

what the risen Christ did through the Holy Spirit. The recording of these acts is the basic purpose of the book.

II. SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

To say that Luke's basic purpose was to record the acts of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit is not to answer any specific questions concerning the selection of material. All of the works of the risen Christ are not included, for there is obviously geographical, chronological, ethnological, and personal selectivity. It is not difficult to distinguish four distinct lines along which the basic plan is developed, and since they are discernible, it is safe to assume that Luke planned it so. The four lines are the great-commission line, the acceptance line, the Pauline line, and the Jewish-rejection line.

A. *THE GREAT-COMMISSION LINE*

The most obvious line of development in the book of Acts is that which follows the great commission. This is the basis for the customary analytical outline of the book.

1. Introduction of the great-commission line. The theme is introduced at the outset (1:6–8) on the occasion of the disciples' questions concerning the Messianic kingdom. In His answer the Lord did not suggest any abrogation of the kingdom promises or any alteration of their literal character. He merely said that the disciples' concept of the timing of the fulfillment of those promises was wrong. They knew what was coming, but they were not to know when. In the meantime Christ introduced a new program and sent new power for the carrying out of it.

2. Evidence of the great-commission line. The selectivity along this line is apparent, for every reader of Acts has noticed that the first seven chapters concern the work in Jerusalem; chapter 8, the work in Samaria; and the remainder of the book, the uttermost part of the earth.¹

3. End of the great-commission line. Rome is clearly the goal toward which the chronicle moves, for the gospel's reaching Rome is the climax of the book. Although this fact may also be related to the acceptance line of

selectivity, it has some bearing here. This would be especially true if Bruce is correct in suggesting that *eōs eschatou tēs gēs*, “to the uttermost part of the earth,” means Rome.² If the basic philosophy of the plan of Acts is built on the continuing acts of the risen Lord through the Holy Spirit, and if the great commission was the last command given in person, then it is apparent why Luke gave such prominence to this line of selectivity.

B. THE ACCEPTANCE LINE

Also discernible is selection of material that demonstrates the fact that the acts of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit were well received by the civil authorities. Indeed there seems to be a deliberate attempt on the part of Luke to mention as often as possible the good relations that the messengers of the gospel enjoyed with the civil authorities. Sometimes the amount of religious opposition recorded in the book tends to obscure the civil approbation, but the student should notice the following passages: 13:7; 16:35; 17:9; 18:12; 19:31, 37; 26:30–32; 28:21.

This evidence, however, must not lead one to the conclusion that Acts was written as a document to be used in Paul’s defense during his trial in Rome. It merely demonstrates another manner in which the basic philosophy of the plan was worked out. Concluding the record in Rome completed the author’s purpose, for he had then demonstrated the acceptance of Christianity in the capital of the empire.

C. THE PAULINE LINE

Another obvious purpose of Luke was to choose to record acts that would show the greatness of the apostle Paul’s character and thus vindicate his apostleship.

1. Reason for the Pauline line. There were certainly other apostles whose lives and works Luke might have reported. Why then did Paul receive the prominence? The reasons are two: (1) It was necessary to establish Paul’s character because of the discrediting of him in Galatian and Corinthian quarters. (2) It was necessary to vindicate the authority of his writings by the record of his labors for the Lord. It would not have been enough simply to say that his writings were inspired, but the historical account of how God used Paul lent support to their authority. We can see

the impact of this even today if we can imagine how the Pauline Epistles would be received if the book of Acts were not included in the New Testament.

2. Evidence of the Pauline line. It appears to be with designed purpose that in the record Paul is promoted along identical lines with Peter. For instance the account includes the healing of a lame man by both (see 3:2 ff.; 14:8 ff.), exorcism by both (see 5:15–16; 16:18), an encounter with a sorcerer for each (see 8:18 ff.; 13:8–11), and the spectacular personal power of both Peter and Paul (see 5:15; 19:11–12). Also there is frequent emphasis on Paul's direct authority from Christ, as if to counter any argument that Paul was not an apostle because he never accompanied with the Lord in the days of His humiliation (see 9:1 ff.; 22:17–21; 26). Thus the promotion of Paul is one of the clear lines of selectivity in the planning of Luke's history.

D. THE JEWISH-REJECTION LINE

The last clear line is that which traces the rejection of Messiah by the Jewish nation. This might be considered as a part of the larger consideration given to the entire matter of Jewish-Gentile relations in the church. However, that larger area is more related to doctrine than planning. To point up the rejection seems to be part of the planned purpose of the book in order to serve as a backdrop for the record of the acts of the risen Christ in relation to Gentiles. The rejection of the kingdom is the obvious point of the detailed record in 3:12–26. The rejection of the King is apparent throughout the early chapters (see 7:51; 9:1), but the principal rejection is the rejection of Christianity itself, and Luke mentioned this repeatedly (9:23; 13:46; 14:19; 15:1; 17:5, 13; 18:14; 21:27; 23:12).

These four selective lines of development appear to be Luke's chosen procedure in exhibiting the acts of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit in his historical record. While we may discern the lines of development and surmise reasons for them, we must never lose sight of the fact that the superintending work of the Holy Spirit in inspiration was guiding and guarding in every detail. Along these lines, distinguishable yet interwoven, the book was developed by the hand of the diligent and precise historian who was its author.

CHAPTER 3

THE THEOLOGY OF ACTS

I. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

A. *GOD*

1. *His existence.* Throughout the book of Acts the existence of God is assumed because of the apostolic preachers' background in the Old Testament. Even among the heathen at Lystra this was so (see Acts 14:15), although at Athens the knowledge of the existence of the true God was not assumed by Paul (17:22 ff.). Generally speaking, however, it is taken for granted as in the Old Testament.

2. *His characteristics.* A number of characteristics of God are rather incidentally mentioned in the book of Acts.

a. He is Creator (14:15; 17:24). This truth about God was particularly affirmed among Gentile audiences. It was well known and acknowledged by the Jews (see 4:24).

b. He is sovereign. The apostles recognized God's sovereignty over themselves when they addressed God as the Master (4:24, *despota*, from which the word "despot" is derived) and perceived that He was in absolute control of events and circumstances (4:28). He was also recognized as the ruler over all nations (17:26) and the God of sovereign election (13:48).

c. He is beneficent. His beneficence is seen particularly in the realm of natural blessings (Acts 14:17) and in the temporary staying of judgment (17:30).

3. His revelation. He appeared and spoke in times past (Acts 7:2, 6, 31) and revealed Himself through providential workings, often employing angels (5:19; 7:53; 8:26; 10:3; 12:7). Probably one of the outstanding features of the apostolic age was that He revealed Himself directly. The naturalness of the supernatural was everywhere apparent. The Lord was seen of Stephen (7:56), Paul (9:5), and Ananias (9:10). God is near to all men (17:27; also see Deuteronomy 4:29; Psalm 145:18) and reveals Himself through the written Word (Acts 4:25).

4. His works. Ultimately all things are of God, but certain particular works are ascribed to Him in Luke's account in Acts:

- Resurrection of Jesus (4:10; 5:30; 13:37)
- Salvation of Gentiles (2:21; 13:47; 26:18; 28:28)
- Rebuilding of the tabernacle of David (15:16)
- Future judgment (17:31)
- Sending of the Spirit (2:17)
- Anointing of Jesus (10:38)
- Exalting of Christ (2:33–35; 4:11)

B. *JESUS CHRIST*

1. Designations and descriptions related to His person

a. He is human. The humanity of Christ is mainly demonstrated in the book of Acts by reference to the historic, human Jesus of Nazareth and by identification of Jesus with the Christ. That Jesus was a real human being is assumed and accepted in Peter's Pentecostal message; that Jesus is the Christ is the point of his message (2:36). References to specific incidents in the earthly life of Christ are few, but those that are mentioned constitute proofs of His humanity (2:23; 8:32; 10:38).

b. He is divine. The principal theological proof of the deity of Christ is in 13:33, where eternal sonship is affirmed. J. A. Alexander said, "To-day [in

13:33] refers to the date of the decree itself . . . but this, as a divine act, was eternal, and so must be the sonship it affirms.”¹ Deity is another point of Peter’s message at Pentecost, for he showed by the resurrection, exaltation, and subsequent sending of the Spirit that Jesus of Nazareth is Lord, thus proving Him to be divine.

c. He is the rejected and suffering Savior. The rejection is the point of Peter’s quoting Psalm 118:22 in Acts 4:11. It is doubtful that the emphasis was on Christ’s being made the cornerstone; it seems rather to have been on His being rejected. Therefore this is not so much a revelation of Christ’s headship over the church as it is an emphasis on His rejection.² The suffering Savior is a recurring theme throughout the book (3:18; 8:32–35; 17:2–3; 26:22–23).

d. He is the resurrected One. This was the keynote theme of apostolic preaching as exemplified in the sermons at Pentecost and at Antioch in Pisidia (2:25–28; 13:32–35). The resurrection is of course closely connected with the ascension (1:9–11) and exaltation (2:33–35).

e. He is the coming One. At the time of the ascension, the promise of Messiah’s return was affirmed to the upward-gazing disciples (1:9–11). It was also reiterated in Peter’s second recorded sermon (3:21).

All of these relatively incidental references to the person of Christ, while not forming any major theological area of the book of Acts, display the lofty, complete, and orthodox concept of Jesus that the apostolic preachers and the chronicler had.

2. His ministry

a. In salvation. In the book of Acts all the Old Testament quotations concerning salvation speak of the universality of the salvation that Messiah would provide. Such inclusiveness is based on the universal promise of the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12:3), which assured that in the Seed would all the families of the earth be blessed (see Acts 2:21; 3:25–26; 10:43; 13:46–47; 26:23; 28:28). However, there is an exclusive aspect to His salvation in that it is provided only through the name of Jesus of Nazareth (2:36; 4:12; 13:39).

b. In teaching. If we consider all that can be found concerning that which our Lord taught His disciples during the forty days between the resurrection

and the ascension (1:3–9; 13:31), we have at best only a sample of the many things He must have said.

On the Emmaus road He attempted to teach the two travelers that their concept of Messiah was greatly warped. This was a concept that was generally shared by all until the coming of the Spirit (Luke 24:26–27).

The Lord taught the apostles that they could have no knowledge of the times and seasons of the long-promised Messianic kingdom (Acts 1:6–7). There was no rebuke on the Savior’s part to their question nor any implication that the kingdom was not to come in literal fulfillment of the promises. The time they could not know about; the kingdom they did know about and no rethinking about it was necessary.³

Although the ministry of the Spirit was well known and perhaps widely experienced in the Old Testament, the Lord taught that the baptism of the Spirit was yet future (Acts 1:5). (Whatever happened as recorded in John 20:22 could not have been the baptism; otherwise the future tense in Acts 1:5 loses all significance.)

The Lord also taught the disciples that their service was to have new power in the person of the Holy Spirit, and a new program in that it would extend to “the remotest part of the earth” (1:8). The motivation of their service was to be love for Himself (John 21).

c. In other ways. The entire book of Acts is the record of Messiah’s work; therefore any list will be incomplete. Nevertheless among the more notable things that He did are the sending of the Spirit (Acts 2:33), the adding of people to the Christian group (2:47; 4:12 ff.), the performing of miracles (4:10; 9:34; 13:11; 16:18; 19:11), and the manifesting of His personal presence (7:56; 9:5,10–11; 18:9).

C. *THE HOLY SPIRIT*

1. His deity. A direct statement of deity is found in the well-known passage in Acts 5 where Peter used “God” and “the Holy Spirit” interchangeably (5:3–4). The Holy Spirit’s coming was an act of sending by the risen Son (2:33).

2. His work in relation to Christ. The Holy Spirit is said to have anointed the Lord during His ministry on earth (10:38). This probably is equivalent to indwelling and occurred at the baptism of Christ. That is not

to say that “baptism” means “anointing,” but just that both things happened at the same time.

3. His work in the future. If one interprets the quotation from Joel 2 in Acts 2 as having a future fulfillment, then the Spirit will someday be poured out on all flesh with certain unusual accompaniments.⁴

4. His work in relation to the church. This is the principal area of the Spirit’s work as far as the record in Acts is concerned. The Spirit baptized (1:5; 11:15–16); the purpose of this ministry was to form the body of Christ. The Spirit governed the early church (13:2–4) and He filled the workers for witness (1:8; 2:4; 4:31; 5:32; 9:11–20). That this should be the case was the normal expectation of the church (6:3–5; 11:24). The Spirit also led the early church leaders. Outstanding illustrations of this are Philip (8:26–30), Peter (10:19–11:18), Paul (16:7; 20:23; 21:4,11), Agabus (11:28), and other prophets (21:4).

Although the reader of Acts is distinctly conscious of the Spirit’s work, it is always, as it should be, the work of promoting the glory of Christ and not Himself. These are the acts of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit as He moved upon men.

5. Note concerning tongues

a. The recorded occurrences of tongues. Tongues were heard at Pentecost (2:6), in Caesarea (10:46), and at Ephesus (19:6). There is no specific mention of tongues in Samaria (8:17), although the verb “saw” in 8:18 may indicate tongues.

*b. The meaning of tongues according to Pentecostalism.*⁵ According to the Pentecostal position, tongues do not mean (1) linguistic ability, (2) Christian eloquence, (3) a temporary gift that was the exclusive possession of the apostolic age, (4) the babblings of fanaticism, or (5) a display of the power of Satan. They are, according to Pentecostalism, (1) the initial physical evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, (2) a devotional gift, and (3) a sign of confirmation and judgment.

c. The meaning of tongues in Acts. The use of tongues (that is, foreign languages, as is clearly stated in 2:6) was God’s way of spreading the gospel quickly to all nations. Tongues were also a sign of confirmation to

the Jewish people of the truth of the Christian message (see Isaiah 28:11 where it was predicted that other tongues would be a sign of confirmation to the Jews). Sometimes the confirmation was to those who stood by and observed (as in Acts 10) and sometimes it was to those who received the gift (as in Acts 19).

From the book of Acts alone, one must admit that it might be difficult to prove that tongues were not the initial evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. But from the viewpoint of systematic theology, it is not difficult, for 1 Corinthians 12:13 and 12:30 say all are baptized by the Spirit, but all do not speak in tongues. Therefore tongues are not the required evidence of the baptism. In order to answer this argument, some Pentecostals attempt to distinguish between the baptism *by* the Spirit (in Corinthians) and the baptism *with* the Spirit (in Acts), but such a distinction is highly artificial (for the same Greek preposition, *en*, is used in Acts 1:5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13).

Regulations concerning the use of tongues belong to Paulinism and not to the theology under discussion.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES

A. *USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*

In the speeches in Acts there are about 110 references taken from eighteen to twenty books of the Old Testament. These quotations are predominantly Messianic passages from Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and Isaiah. As would be expected, there are more quotations from the Old Testament in the earlier speeches in Acts because they were addressed to Jewish audiences; Messianic passages were quoted in order to identify Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ.

A. Rendel Harris and F. F. Bruce⁶ believe that many of these quotations were taken immediately from Books of Testimonies, which were collections of proof texts from the Old Testament on various subjects. These scholars cited the interdependent exegesis of the quotations (as in Acts 2:25 ff. and 13:33 ff.) and the fact that the usual formula “that it might be fulfilled” is missing. Such could easily have been the immediate source, though the ultimate origin is the Old Testament.

B. *INSPIRATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*

That the Old Testament was from God was affirmed by the early church (1:16; 4:25; 28:25). The authority of the Scriptures was also recognized (3:18, 21; 13:46–47; 15:15–18; 26:22–23).

C. *F*ORM OF *Q*UOTATIONS FROM THE *O*LD *T*ESTAMENT

Two problems arise regarding the form of quotations from the Old Testament. One is the use of the Septuagint instead of the Hebrew text (as in Acts 15:13–18). The other is the problem of paraphrases or interpretative changes (as in Acts 26:18 where “from the dominion of Satan to God” is added to the original quotation from Isaiah 42:7, 16).

Any detailed discussion of possible solutions to these problems is beyond the scope of this book, but simply and briefly there are three suggestions pertinent to the solutions. First, in the New Testament, the Septuagint is often used in order to make something clearer than the Hebrew text does. In some instances the Septuagint may even be more accurate.

Second, paraphrases actually are no real problem.² The minds of the writers of the New Testament were filled with Scripture, and they often merely quoted the sense of it even though prefixing the paraphrase with the phrase “the Scripture says.” The word *says* is thus used in a general sense. Since quotation marks were unavailable in the Greek language, such a general sense is not only possible but also quite probable in many cases. It would be like declaring today, “The Scripture says Christians shouldn’t lie to each other.” In such an example the verb *to say* is used in a general sense and in no way indicates or introduces a direct quotation, and yet the sense of the Scripture has been quoted accurately.

Third, any solution must ultimately take into account the superintending work of the Holy Spirit in both Testaments. In reality all quotations in the New Testament of the Old Testament are quotations by the Author of the Author Himself.

III. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

A. *C*ONDITION OF *S*ALVATION

There is only one condition for salvation everywhere stated in the preaching of the early church: namely, faith.

1. *There is a faith that is not unto salvation.* There are two notable examples of the exercise of such faith in the book of Acts: Simon (8:13) and Agrippa (26:27). For faith to be saving faith, it must be rightly placed, and the faith of these two was not directed toward Jesus of Nazareth.

2. *Saving faith must be in Jesus Christ.* This idea is the most often repeated statement in Acts concerning salvation (10:43; 11:17, 21; 14:23; 16:31; 18:8). On occasion the record says that saving faith is directed toward God, but in such instances a knowledge of Jesus is presupposed, so that the faith is toward God as revealed in His Son (for an example see 16:34).

3. *The message of faith is made known through God's messengers.* It is through men that God delivers His message both by word of mouth (15:7) and by deed and life (13:12).

4. *The act of believing is rooted in the eternal counsels of God.* Belief, though a human act, is nonetheless accomplished through the grace of God (18:27). Those who believe have already been enrolled or set in the ranks of those having eternal life (13:48). It is somewhat surprising to find in a historical book this emphasis on divine sovereignty in the matter of salvation, but the emphasis shows that the doctrine was a fixed part of the theological substructure of Luke's thinking.

5. *A synonym for "faith" is "repentance."* Often the idea of believing is expressed by the word *repent* (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). Like faith, repentance is the human requirement for salvation and yet it is the gift of God (5:31; 11:18). Both Peter and Paul preached repentance, which means that it cannot be assigned to Petrine theology. The word means "to change one's mind" and as it is used in the book of Acts it means to change one's mind about Jesus of Nazareth being the Messiah. This involved no longer thinking of Him as merely the carpenter's son of Nazareth, an impostor, but now receiving Him as both Lord and Messiah. Thus repentance as preached by the apostles was not a prerequisite to nor a consequence of salvation, but was actually the act of faith in Jesus Christ that brought salvation to the one who repented.

6. Faith alone is sufficient. A deviation from the belief in the sufficiency of faith appeared early in the church. Some of the brethren of the circumcision tried to make circumcision an additional condition for salvation (15:5). The reason that this deviation arose was that some considered Christianity merely a group within Judaism. Therefore when Gentiles came into the church, some Jews thought those Gentiles should come as Jewish proselytes and be circumcised.

The question came to a head when a church council was called in Jerusalem to settle it. Because of the other decrees of the council suggesting the limiting of certain liberties, we sometimes overlook the decision that was made concerning the all-important question of whether circumcision was necessary in addition to faith for salvation. The decision is clearly stated in 15:19: “Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles.”

B. CONSEQUENCES OF SALVATION

The consequences of salvation are eternal life (13:48), justification (13:39), and remission of sins (2:38; 10:43; 22:16). Justification, the declaration that the sinner is righteous, was something that the Mosaic law could not do.

C. CONSTRAINTS OF SALVATION

1. Constrained to be baptized. In every recorded instance, immediately upon receiving Jesus as Savior, believers were baptized.

a. *Kind of baptism.* Baptism in the book of Acts was in the name of Jesus, and this was different from the baptism of John the Baptist (see 13:24; 19:4).

b. *Meaning of baptism.* Baptism always means identification. Jewish proselyte baptism (which was practiced in Christ’s time)⁸ meant the identification of the Gentile proselyte with Judaism. Baptism into the mystery religions had the same significance. John’s baptism identified the people with his message. Likewise Christian baptism was an act of identification with the Christian message and with the Christian group.

c. *Method of baptism.* Even nonimmersionists admit that immersion was the common practice of apostolic times and that there were sufficient pools in Jerusalem to permit the immersion of three thousand converts on the day

of Pentecost.⁹ The mode of Jewish proselyte baptism, which was a similar and contemporary rite, was clearly and invariably immersion,¹⁰ and it is difficult to imagine a different mode being practiced by the Christian church.

d. Basis of baptism. In every instance the reason for being baptized was that salvation had already been experienced. Baptism was not unto salvation but on the basis of salvation.¹¹

2. *Constrained to testify of Christ.* This seemed to be a natural and normal consequence of salvation, and as a result others were saved daily (2:47; 8:4; 9:20; 18:5, 26; 26:19–20).

3. *Constrained to help one another.* The new community brought strange people together, but their new relationship was one of love and mutual help (2:44; 11:27–30; 15:36; 18:23; 21:20–26).

4. *Constrained to restrict their liberty.* When Gentile believers were made aware of the offensiveness of certain practices to fellow Jewish believers, they gladly restricted their liberty in Christ for the sake of their brethren (15:19–29). It was not a question of being restricted because of the whims of a few but because of the large number of Jews who needed to be won to the new faith.

IV. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

However limited the treatment of the theology of Acts may be in standard Biblical theologies, ecclesiology always receives some attention, for as G. B. Stevens said, “The picture which the Acts furnishes of the life of the primitive Christian community is an interesting and graphic one.”¹²

A. *BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH*

The church is Christ’s (Matthew 16:18). He chose and trained its first leaders during His earthly lifetime. Some of His teaching was in anticipation of the formation of the church. His death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation were the necessary foundation on which the church was to be built. But although the Lord is the founder of the church and the One who laid the groundwork during His earthly life, the church did

not come into functional existence until the day of Pentecost. There are a number of considerations that prove this.

The chief argument relates to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Just before His ascension the Lord had spoken of this work of the Spirit as being yet future and unlike anything His disciples had previously experienced (Acts 1:5). Although it is not expressly recorded in Acts 2 that the baptism of the Spirit occurred on the day of Pentecost, it is said in Acts 11:15–16 that it did happen then in fulfillment of the promise of the Lord. It was Paul who explained that this baptism places people in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). In other words, on the day of Pentecost men were first put into the body of Christ. Since the church is the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18), the church could not have begun until Pentecost and had to begin on that day.

A second argument concerns the exaltation of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). It is obvious that Peter's emphasis would be incongruent with the idea that the church began some years after Pentecost as well as with the idea that it began before Pentecost, for it is dependent on the resurrected and ascended Lord (see Ephesians 4:8–12).

A third argument is that from Pentecost on there is a new distinctiveness. The day itself was certainly unlike other pentecosts before it, and the group that was formed was immediately distinctive. The converts' submission to water baptism marked that large group off from other Jews immediately. Even though the word *church* does not appear in Acts until 5:11, and even though there was a certain intermixture with Judaism, there was a distinguishably new group after Pentecost (2:38).

A fourth argument is that Peter called Pentecost "the beginning" (11:15). This beginning could not be put sometime after Pentecost, for Peter associated the beginning with the Lord's promise concerning the baptism of the Spirit that the Lord had said would be fulfilled "not many days from now" (1:5).

Note on ultradispensationalism. The Bullinger or more extreme form of ultradispensationalism usually places the church entirely after the book of Acts, while the more moderate form represented by O'Hair places it within the book of Acts either at 18:6 or 13:46 or sometimes, more rarely, at the conversion of Paul in Acts 9. In either form of ultradispensationalism two

things are clear: the church did not begin on the day of Pentecost, but when it did begin is indeterminable.¹³

The principal arguments for placing the beginning of the church after Pentecost are two: (1) Since Pentecost was a Jewish feast and since the church is unrelated to Judaism and the Old Testament, the church could not have begun on Pentecost. (2) Since Peter applied Joel's prophecy to Pentecost, the implications of Pentecost must be Jewish and not Christian. The ultradispensationalists' first argument overlooks the validity of types and would run into difficulty with Passover and the feast of firstfruits being used as types of the work of Christ. Their second argument shows misunderstanding of how Peter used Joel's prophecy on Pentecost, for Peter did not say that the prophecy was then being fulfilled.¹⁴

B. ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

1. Apostles. In the earliest days of the church when all its members were in Jerusalem, the apostles assumed the places of leadership. The apostles guided the doctrine of the new group, which was a factor in binding the church together (Acts 2:42).

2. Elders. When Luke first mentioned the elders, he introduced them without preface as though they were to be regarded as a matter of course (11:30). We are to understand from this that the elders were adopted by the Christian church from the Jewish synagogue organization (see 4:5; 6:12; 25:15). Evidently elders as an organized group antedate the deacons, and elders bore the same relation to groups elsewhere as the apostles first bore to the church in Jerusalem. Paul's appointing of elders to take the leadership of churches he founded would bear this out. It also seems that there were several elders over each congregation (14:23; 15:2, 4; 21:18) and that their responsibilities extended to both spiritual and temporal matters (11:30; 14:23).

3. Deacons. As far as the record in Acts is concerned the word *deacon* seems to be used entirely in an unofficial sense. That is not to say that the office of deacon was not recognized during the Acts period (see Philippians 1:1), but that the word was used in Acts in the general sense of "those who serve" (1:17,25; 6:1,2,4; 11:29; 12:25; 19:22; 20:24; 21:19). Those who

were chosen in Acts 6 as a result of the dispute about the widows should probably be termed “helpers” rather than “deacons,” for theirs was a distinctly subordinate function and not an office in the church.¹⁵ The development of the office probably took place in the following way:

There were subordinate duties to be fulfilled toward the Christian society as a society, not easily included under *episkopē* —“superintendence,”—and those who performed these habitually came to be charged with them. In the course of a generation the performance of the duty hardens into a distinct office.¹⁶

C. *LIFE OF THE CHURCH*

The life of the early community involved many things:

1. Doctrine (2:42). The apostles had a huge job on their hands instructing the multitudes who came to Christ. The content of their teaching was the facts and meaning of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Teaching was combined with preaching (4:2; 5:21, 25, 28, 42; 28:31), but doctrine had a prominent place in the life of the early groups (11:26; 15:35; 18:11, 25; 20:20).

2. Fellowship. The presence of the definite article in 2:42 probably points to the spiritual fellowship that bound the Christians together. The group also shared in material things (4:32). It is ridiculous to call this action Christian communism, for any sale was voluntary (4:34; 5:4) and the right of private possession was never abolished. The group controlled only that which was given to it, and distribution was not equal, but according to need. This was Christian fellowship in action, for the principal means of expressing fellowship is through the giving of material things.

3. The Lord's supper. In Jerusalem the Lord's supper was observed daily (2:42,46), though doubtless we are not to understand daily in each house but daily as far as some place in Jerusalem is concerned. Weekly observance seemed to become the customary procedure as time went on, and when Paul visited Troas he was included with the local believers in the memorial supper (20:6–11).

4. Prayers. Prayer permeated the life of the church, and just as it is the most important aspect of any work for the Lord, it was the secret of the success of the early church. There were prayers on regular occasions and prayers for special needs (1:24; 3:1; 4:23–31; 6:4, 6; 9:40; 10:4, 31; 12:5,12; 13:3; 14:23; 16:13, 16; 20:36; 28:8).

5. Persecution. The life of the early church was filled with persecution (4; 5; 7; 8; 12; 15; 21). Persecution was either by heretics (like the Judaistic legalizers) or by the political rulers. (Herod's persecution in Acts 12 was essentially religious and not political, for he was acting to please the Jews and not the Romans.)

6. Discipline. The notable example of discipline in the life of the church is the case of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1–11). In some instances subtraction is not retrogression.

In summary, these are the outstanding features of the ecclesiology of Acts: The Christian church was a new group with a distinctly recognizable beginning. It was not a purely democratic group, but from the beginning had regularly constituted leadership charged with the oversight of its affairs. The basis of the life of the church was the love-bond that welded individual believers into a community. In other words, the fellowship was the basis of church life. It accounted for the interest in doctrine, the sharing of material goods, the frequent remembrance of the Lord in the supper, the emphasis on prayers, the persecution from the religious leaders, and the necessity for discipline within its own circle.

V. MISSIONS

A. *P* R I N C I P L E S O F *M* I S S I O N S I N T H E *B* O O K O F *A* C T S

In a history of the missionary work of the church one would expect that the Holy Spirit would reveal certain principles that could serve as guides for missionary work today.

1. Groundwork principle. The basis of all missions is the individual disciple. Our Lord had set the pattern for the groundwork in the great commission in which He commanded His disciples to make disciples. The work, according to Matthew 28:18–20, involves baptizing and teaching. In

other words, laying the groundwork involves more than evangelism; it also includes teaching the new converts. This is what the early church did and the historical record bears that out, for the chief designation Luke used for the early Christians was the word *disciple* (Acts 6:1, 2, 7; 9:1, 19, 25–26, 38; 11:26; 13:52; 14:22, 28; 18:23, 27; 19:9; 20:1, 30; 21:4, 16).

2. Geographic principle. In relation to geography the disciples were commanded to go everywhere, and this they did, although not always voluntarily. Providentially on the day of Pentecost there were assembled men from many nations who carried the message back home. On another occasion God used persecution to scatter the seed (8:1,4). The extension of missionary work to unreached areas soon became a normal desire and purpose of the church (13:1–3; 15:40). The aim was to reach those who were unreached (see Romans 15:20,24).

In applying the geographic principle today three cautions should be observed: (1) missionary work must not be done to the neglect of the work at home (note Paul's continuous interest in the collection for the church in Jerusalem); (2) it must not be done spasmodically (see Acts 18:11; 19:10); and (3) there should not be a loss of interest in works with which one was associated in the past (see 2 Corinthians 11:28).

3. Group principle. The ultimate goal of laying the groundwork of individual disciples in every place was the establishing of local churches. This came about spontaneously because individuals who were converted and taught saw the need for the group activity. The disciples did not go to a community and announce that they were going to establish a church; that developed spontaneously. Neither did they go into a city and make converts without establishing a church (Acts 14:23). The main goal of missionary work is the establishment of the local, organized church. The New Testament Epistles addressed to churches attest the validity and success of the principle.

B. PROCEDURES OF MISSIONS IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Basically the procedure was to preach and teach the Word continually. However, there were particular ways in which this was done:

1. Itineration. The missionaries were always on the move, not spasmodically but systematically (11:22–26; 15:36). Even the settled pastor is told to itinerate (2 Timothy 4:5).¹⁷

2. Attacking strategic centers. Beginning in Jerusalem, spreading to Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Athens, and Corinth, and ending in Rome, the message was brought to the centers of population first. From there it radiated to the surrounding areas (Acts 19:10; also see 1 Thessalonians 1:8).

3. Oral preaching. This is undoubtedly the principal method of missions. Whatever other aids to witness may be given, there can be no substitute for oral preaching (Acts 2:40; 5:42; 8:4–5, 35, 40; 13:5; 28:31). Preaching was done in the synagogues (9:20; 13:14; 14:1; 17:1–3, 10; 18:4; 19:8), in houses (10:34), in the church (13:1), by a riverbank (16:13), in jail (16:25), in street meetings (17:22), and at work (18:2–3).

4. Literature. The existence of the book of Acts itself, to say nothing of the Epistles, is evidence of the importance placed on the written ministry in instructing believers.

5. Training national workers. This is an outcome of making disciples. Sometimes such training was related to groups such as the elders (14:23; 19:9; also see 1 Thessalonians 5:12) and in other cases it was related to individuals (Acts 16:1; 18:26). This procedure made for multiplication of the missionary effort rather than mere addition.

VI. ESCHATOLOGY

A. *THE KINGDOM OF GOD WAS THE SUBJECT OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING*

Throughout the record it is reported that the early evangelists preached the kingdom (8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23). In these references the phrase “kingdom of God” has various shades of meaning. In two instances it is linked with the phrase name of Jesus (8:12; 28:31). In one place “kingdom” is used as a synonym for the gospel of the grace of God (20:25). It is preached to both Jewish and Gentile audiences (see 19:8–10; 28:23–31) and there is an element of future realization in the concept (14:22). Chiefly, however, the basic idea of the kingdom seems to be the sovereign ruling

power of God. Thus the phrase “the kingdom of God” as used in the apostolic preaching means the things concerning the power and plan of God working through Jesus the Messiah to bring salvation, which will consummate in future glory. It is closely akin to the Jewish idea of the universal kingdom.¹⁸

B. THE PROMISE OF THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM WAS REAFFIRMED

Mention has already been made of Jesus’ reaffirmation of the Messianic kingdom promises (1:6–7), but Peter also confirmed these promises (3:12–26). The occasion was the healing of a lame man, but the theme of Peter’s message to the crowd that gathered was similar to that which he had preached on Pentecost: Jesus, whom you killed, is Messiah. Then after the appeal for repentance he promised forgiveness of sins and the “times of refreshing” associated with the coming of Messiah (3:19). Although the phrase “times of refreshing” is found only here in the New Testament, it evidently is synonymous with “restoration of all things” in 3:21 and thus refers to the millennial kingdom (see 1:6; Luke 2:25). Thus Israel’s hope was in no way abrogated, but rather was reaffirmed even after the beginning of the church. Just as in the Synoptics, in Acts the meaning of the word *kingdom* must be determined by its usage.

C. THE PROGRAM OF THE AGES WAS OUTLINED (ACTS 15:13–18)

As a preface to summing up the decision of the Jerusalem council, James (after reviewing the fact that through Peter’s ministry God first visited the Gentiles) quoted a prophecy from Amos 9:11–12 (see Acts 15:15–17). If it be admitted that “after these things,” which is not a part of the Amos passage, is a deliberate change made by James under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, then there is set up an order of events that clearly outlines God’s program of the ages. The order is as follows: (1) God visits Gentiles; (2) after this Christ will return; (3) the millennial kingdom will be established and in it Gentiles will return to the Lord.

Those who object to seeing an order of events in this passage generally hold either that the church is now fulfilling the prophecy of Amos entirely¹⁹ or that there is a partial fulfillment now in the church and another fulfillment during the millennium.²⁰ The latter of course allows for a

premillennial scheme, while the former is a tenet of amillennialism. However, it appears that the change in the Amos quotation is intentional and that an order is deliberately set up. This is entirely consistent with the confirmations of the millennial promises found elsewhere in the book of Acts and discussed above.

This then is a survey of the theology of Acts. In relation to the scheme and purpose of Biblical theology it is of the greatest importance, for it traces the history and expansion of the infant church against the background of Judaism. As Stevens so aptly said, “The wonder is not that the Church’s progress was slow and gradual, but that it was so sure and continuous.”²¹

In Luke’s careful planning and developing of the record, certain features stand out in the progressive revelation of doctrine. (1) Primarily it is the new entity, the church, which is the outstanding aspect of the progress of New Testament revelation as revealed in the theology of Acts. This includes the fact of the existence of the church and the new bond and resultant life that is a vital part of it. The missionary enterprise too must be included in this new concept. (2) Also paramount in the theology of Acts is the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah for all men regardless of national background. The annulling of all ritual requirements, such as circumcision, is an important step in progressive revelation. (3) This new program, however, does not abrogate or replace God’s purpose in the Davidic, Messianic kingdom. This is reaffirmed in Luke’s account.

P_{ART} III

THE THEOLOGY OF JAMES

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

I. AUTHOR OF JAMES

The author of this Epistle styled himself as the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Four men named James are mentioned in the New Testament: James the father of Judas not Iscariot (Luke 6:16), James the son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21), James the son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3), and James the half-brother of the Lord (Matthew 13:55; Galatians 1:19). The first two mentioned are not possible candidates for author of the Epistle. Some identify the last two as the same person by making Clopas (John 19:25) the same as Alphaeus, thereby making Mary the wife of Clopas the same person as Mary the mother of Jesus and James the less (Mark 15:40,47; 16:1; Luke 24:10). This would mean that those who are called the brothers of the Lord were actually cousins (Mark 6:3). The chief difficulty with this view is simply that it ends in a contradiction: James the son of Alphaeus was one of the twelve disciples (Acts 1:13) and a believer; yet those who are called the Lord's brothers (who according to this view included James the son of Alphaeus) were unbelievers.¹

Eusebius and many others after him have identified the author with the brother of the Lord. It has been shown that this could not mean cousin. It could mean step-brother in the sense of a son of Joseph by a previous marriage, if Mary had no other children besides Jesus. Or it could mean half brother in the sense of a natural son of Joseph and Mary after the birth of Jesus. The former view was held in the second to fourth centuries, while the latter gained prominence after that time and is supported by the "until" of Matthew 1:25.

Accepting the view that the author was the half-brother of Jesus, we can know certain facts about his life. His childhood was spent in the Nazareth home of Joseph and Mary with Jesus, and undoubtedly many things to which James was exposed in those early days came back to him with new meaning after his conversion. That pious Jewish home also contributed to his knowledge of and reverence for the Old Testament, which are often displayed in the Epistle. During the ministry of Jesus there was evidently not much contact with the home or family, for He separated Himself from them at the very beginning (John 2:12) and was rejected by his townspeople shortly thereafter (Luke 4:16–31). All of this time His brethren remained unbelievers (note the imperfect tense in John 7:5).

In the upper room after the ascension James suddenly appeared on the scene as a converted man (Acts 1:14). Paul filled in the gap by telling us that the risen Lord had appeared to him (1 Corinthians 15:7). Very quickly James was not only received by the Christian group, but was also recognized as the head of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13–21; 21:18; Galatians 2:9), a position which he held until his death.

Eusebius said James was a Nazarite and an ascetic who used no wine, no meat, no razor. But he did use his knees, for according to tradition he was found so often in the temple praying for the sins of his Jewish people that his knees became as hard as camels' knees. It is said that his death occurred at the hands of the scribes and Pharisees, who took him to the pinnacle of the temple and flung him down. The fall did not kill him and as they were stoning him to death, James—like his Lord—prayed for their forgiveness.

From a life like this, what kind of theology could be expected? One would expect it to be centered in the Word, for the godly Jewish background would certainly affect it in this respect. One would also expect a very practical theology—one that lives out that Word. Moreover one would expect to find evidences of James' making up for lost time, so to speak, in saturating himself with the words of Christ. These too would then become part of his concept of the Word, being put on an equal plane with the words of the Old Testament. And this is what we find, for James' theology is pre-eminently a theology of the Word. It reveals a reverence for the Old Testament, a knowledge of the teachings of the Lord, and a relevance of both to the problems of everyday life.

II. DATE AND READERS OF THE EPISTLE

The Epistle of James is addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad (1:1), but this must be understood to be limited to believing Jews (2:1,7; 5:7). No other limitation is necessary, though some have limited it to the churches in Judea or the eastern dispersion. The address can be taken as widely as James made it. The letter was written to all his brothers in the flesh who had become Christians.

The background gleaned from the Epistle itself shows a very early kind of persecution of believers, of such a type as was found in Palestine only before A.D. 70.² The use of the word *synagogue* (literal translation of 2:2) also attests to a very early date for the letter. There is no reference to the controversy that was settled at the Jerusalem council in A.D. 49, but 2:15–16 may be a reference to the famine mentioned in Acts 11:27–30. This would put the writing of the Epistle between A.D. 44 and 50.

III. CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CHURCHES

In writing to the scattered groups of Jewish believers, James drew on scenes from his own experience in Judea and used them as warnings and examples. From this we can paint a fairly complete picture of the conditions and circumstances of those early groups of believers.

Evidently most of James' readers were from the lower and poorer classes of society (2:5). Being in the employ of their richer fellow countrymen they were subjected to all sorts of oppression and injustice (2:6; 5:4). It is not surprising to find that in such a situation the Christians were courting the favor of the rich and treating them with special partiality when they came into the assembly of believers. This James denounced in no uncertain terms.

Within the church itself there were abuses. Apparently there was little organization of assemblies at this time and some of the believers, taking advantage of the situation, displayed an excessive eagerness to become teachers. This led to an overemphasis on speaking and hearing rather than practicing (1:22; 3:1). Sometimes it ministered to pride and contention (4:1). Evidently many of the Christians had never yet fully dedicated themselves to the Lord, but were still running their affairs according to their own plans (4:7–15).

The Epistle is a picture of conditions in the church throughout all its history, including today, but it is a picture that we do not usually associate

with the first half of the first century. James quickly dispelled in this letter the auroral glow of spiritual perfectness that we generally associate with the first-century church.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEOLOGY OF THE EPISTLE

I. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

The theology of James is closely akin to Old Testament theology. This is clearly seen in the doctrine of God. James' designations of God include "the Lord" (4:15; 5:11), which is definitely after the manner of Old Testament expression; "Father" (1:17,27; 3:9); and "Lord of Sabaoth" (5:4).

James' characterizations of God also reflect the Old Testament ideas of jealousy and judgment. His Spirit who dwells within us is envious, desiring to have full control (4:5); therefore whoever is a friend of the world constitutes himself an enemy of God (4:4). Wrathful judgment is also assured on those who oppress unjustly (5:1–6). At the same time God is also pictured as the giver of wisdom (1:5) and of good gifts (1:17) and as merciful toward the humble (5:11). This undoubtedly reflects the Lord's teaching (see Matthew 5:43–48; Mark 10:18), for in James' total presentation of God, as G. B. Stevens said, "we see the God of the Old Covenant clothed in the qualities which distinguish Jesus' conception of the Father in heaven."¹

The other persons of the godhead receive scant mention in the Epistle. By name, Christ is mentioned in only two places (1:1; 2:1; also see 1:7; 5:8–9) and yet that is no measure of the importance James placed on the person of the Lord. He is indispensable to faith (2:1) and therefore is in the substructure of several important passages in the Epistle concerning salvation (1:18; 2:14–26). The Holy Spirit is mentioned only once (4:5) as the One who indwells believers and demands undivided allegiance.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD

Although the Epistle of James is intensely practical, the central theological doctrine is undoubtedly that of the Word. If Synoptic theology is eschatological and Johannine theology is theological, James' theology is bibliological. This centrality of the Word certainly stems from James' Jewish background and rearing in a godly Hebrew home. The godliness of his mother is fully displayed in Luke 1:46–55 and the naturalness of her use of the Old Testament Scriptures showed how deeply embedded the Word was in her heart and mind. Plummer observed:

From childhood the Jews knew many of the Old Testament lyrics by heart; and, just as our own poor, who know no literature but the Bible, easily fall into biblical language in times of special joy or sorrow, so Mary would naturally fall back on the familiar expressions of Jewish Scripture in this moment of intense exultation.²

There are fifteen discernible quotations from the Old Testament in the Magnificat. This is the well from which James drank deeply in his childhood and youth.

A. *EMPLOYMENT OF THE WORD*

The Epistle of James contains 108 verses in its five chapters. In that brief space the author referred or alluded to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 Kings, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Zechariah, and Malachi.³ This is nothing short of remarkable. By doing this James obviated the need for any formal statement of inspiration; he merely assumed it, as most of the writers of Scripture did. He did speak specifically of the authority of the Scriptures in 4:5–6 and had no hesitation about citing Scripture to prove his point.

In addition to making extensive use of the Old Testament, the book of James reflects the teachings of Jesus more than any other book in the New Testament, apart from the record of His teachings in the Gospels.⁴ Referring to the sermon on the mount alone as a conveniently compact presentation of the Lord's teachings, one will find in James at least fifteen allusions to

those teachings. Again this is a remarkable fact. As far as James is concerned, it shows how he must have sought out and pored over the words of Christ after his own conversion and how enthralled he was with them. As far as the words of Christ are concerned, James' intermixture of them with the Old Testament places them in the same category as the inspired, authoritative Word of God. The Epistle is saturated with the Word and bespeaks for its author his high view of that Word and the deep foundational place it held in his own theological thinking.

B. *E*_{PITHETS OF THE} *W*_{ORD}

James' view of the Word is also clearly seen by the epithets he employed to describe it.

1. *The Word of truth (1:18).* The Word of truth is the Word of God used in the regeneration of spiritually dead men. It is the Word that conveys truth—thus “the Word of truth” is practically equivalent to “the gospel.”

2. *The Scripture (2:8,23; 4:5–6).* In the time of Christ this was a designation used of the Old Testament and withheld from other Jewish literature.⁵ Therefore when James used this title, he was using it in that sense and assigning to the Old Testament all the inspiration and authority current in the belief of the times. To quote the Scripture was to end all argument (4:5–6).

3. *The perfect law of liberty (1:25; 2:8).* This is one of the most difficult phrases in the book of James, and yet it seems to be James' regular way of designating the Word of God. Obviously we cannot say that the law of liberty is the entire Bible, for it was not yet complete when James used the phrase. Just as obvious is the fact that the law of liberty includes the Old Testament (2:8) and yet is not coextensive with the Old Testament (1:25–27). From what has already been said about James' use of the Old Testament and the teachings of Christ, it would seem best to define the law of liberty as the Word of God revealed in the Old Testament and brought to fruition in the teachings of Christ.

C. *E*_{FFECTS OF THE} *W*_{ORD}

As would be expected in this Epistle, James assigned some practical benefits to the Word. First, the Word is a means of regeneration (1:18); it is implanted to save the soul (1:21). Second, it is a mirror reflecting the defects of a man (1:23–25). Consequently, it is to be carefully gazed at (1:25) and carried out with diligence (1:22). It is significant that James made this particularly applicable to men (see 1:23 where *aner*, “male,” not *anthropos*, “person,” is used) as if to point out the fact that men, more than women, need to be careful to be sensitive to respond to what they see in the Word. Third, it is a guide for Christian living (2:8). Fourth, in the day of judgment it will serve as a standard for judgment (2:12).

That upon which the Word has effect relates to soteriology, anthropology, hamartiology, Christian living, and eschatology. This shows how basic the doctrine was in the thinking of James.

III. THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH

A. *BACKGROUND OF THE DOCTRINE*

James’ teaching about faith finds its background in Pharisaism, not Paulinism. Alford explained this clearly:

The Jewish Pharisaic notions were being carried into the adopted belief in Christianity, and the danger was not, as afterwards, of a Jewish law-righteousness being set up, but of a Jewish reliance on exclusive purity of faith superseding the necessity of a holy life, which is inseparably bound up with any worthy holding of the Christian faith.⁶

As the Pharisees trusted outward observances, so the Jewish believers stood in danger of trusting an outward creed without the inward heart reaction that would produce good works.

James’ teaching is not in conflict with Paulinism. The idea is an anachronism and theologically insupportable. It is obvious that James wrote before Paul and that he spoke of the works of faith, not the works of the law against which Paul later wrote.

B. *JAMES’ USE OF “PISTIS” (FAITH)*

It is far from the truth to say that the concept of faith is lacking in the Epistle, for its pre-eminence is implied from the very first (see 1:3 ff.). James conceived of it as an active principle (1:6; 5:15) based on real trust in Christ, who is its object (2:1). Certainly James' purpose was not to eliminate faith as a leading principle of the Christian life, but to guard against the danger of thinking faith to be only an intellectual assent to a creed that is never activated to produce good works. The difference between James and Paul is not that of faith versus works, but a difference of relationship. James emphasized the works of believers in relation to faith, and Paul emphasized the work of Christ in relation to faith.

C. CENTRAL PASSAGE (2:14–26)

Even in the central passage, the contrast is not between faith and works, but between a dead faith (2:14–20) and a living faith (2:21–26). Dead faith, James emphatically said, cannot save (2:14). It is extremely important to the argument to remember that the question of whether faith can save is confined by the hypothesis that it is to be understood in relationship to a man who says he has faith but produces no works. The question is not whether faith can save but whether such faith—that is, dead faith—can save. That this is dead faith which James cited is clearly shown by the lack of response to almsgiving, a matter of great importance to Jews. Thus it can only be concluded that such nonworking faith, even though it be related to an orthodox creed (2:19), is dead (2:17) and void of quality (2:20).

Living faith, on the other hand, is illustrated by Abraham and Rahab, who out of their works showed their faith. Paul later used Abraham as an illustration of the saving efficacy of faith apart from circumcision, while James used him for an entirely different purpose—proving by his works the living character of his faith. A working faith is a living faith, as vividly illustrated in the final picture of the relationship of body and spirit (2:26); just as they are inseparable, so are faith and works.

IV. THE DOCTRINES OF MAN, SIN, AND SATAN

For a short Epistle, the author had a good deal to say about these subjects. He believed in the creation of man by God (3:9) as a being composed of material and immaterial parts (2:26). Some of the likeness of the original creation is retained in spite of the ravages of sin (3:9) and this is

the basis for guarding what is said about one's fellow man. The author set forth no real theory as to the origin of sin, but he stated details that show his belief in the universality of sin among all men (3:2) and the inherent nature of sin in man (1:14–15; 2:1 ff.; 3:1 ff.; 4:1 ff.).

Although sin is described specifically as trespass (2:9,11), offense (2:10), an active principle (2:9; 5:15), and lacking the good (4:17), James' principal emphasis was to relate sin to the nature of God. Thus sin is defined as that which is against a righteous God (5:9; 4:5) as well as that which is against the revelation of God in law (2:9–11). The ramifications of James' lofty concept of God and His Word are clearly seen in his definition of sin.

Some of the areas in which man may sin are thought (4:8), word (3:1 ff.), deeds of omission (4:17), deeds of commission (5:1–6), and attitude (4:12–17). Some of the results of sin mentioned are sickness (5:15), unanswered prayer (4:2), lack of blessing (1:25), increased judgment (2:13), and spiritual death (2:14–26; 5:20). Specific sins that were prevalent in the groups to which the Epistle was written were the sin of partiality (2:1–3), sins of the tongue (3:1–12; 5:12), the sin of contention (4:1–3,11–12), and the sin of worldliness (4:4–5).

Everywhere in the Epistle the existence of a personal devil is assumed. His relation to the sin of man is most clearly seen in 4:1–7 where the Christian is exhorted to resist the devil in order to have victory over worldliness. The same passage also relates Satan to the cosmos.

V. THE DOCTRINES RELATED TO SPIRITUAL LIFE

As far as quantity of material is concerned, the doctrines related to the spiritual life receive the most attention in the Epistle. To speak of the theology of James as bibliological is not a contradiction, for the Word is foundational in the theological substructure of the writer. There is a connection between the two ideas, for the author's treatment of the specifics of the spiritual life is related to and based on the Word as epitomized in the law of liberty.

A. *DOCTRINE OF DEDICATION*

Dedication is an urgent matter. This is seen from the condition of the churches to which James was writing and it is also implied in the ten verbs in the aorist tense used in 4:7–10. That tense further signifies that

dedication should be a settled matter in the life of the believer.² The idea is to have done those things that are involved in dedication. Dedication, as James conceived of it in this passage, is not a piecemeal thing but a complete and settled action that includes several factors:

1. Submission (4:7). To his proud readers James said first that it is necessary to put oneself under God.

2. Selection (4:7). Dedication involves deciding whether one is on God's side or the devil's. James did not say that the believer is to keep on drawing near to God, but that he is to decide whose side he is on and take his firm and fixed stand there.

3. Separation (4:8). Hand and heart (external and internal) must be cleansed in order to live a dedicated life.

4. Seriousness (4:9). One who turns to God will also turn from the sin of the past. Very strong language is used here to describe the reaction a believer should have to the kind of life he used to live as an undedicated and worldly Christian. A proper sense of shame concerning the past will reflect itself in a sober and serious outlook toward the future. Dedication is a serious matter.

5. Subjection (4:10). If God's will be chosen, then self is denied. And yet the paradox is that it is the one who abases himself who is ultimately exalted by God.

This kind of dedication is the basis of spiritual living and was the urgent need of the groups addressed in this Epistle.

B. DOCTRINE OF DEPENDENCE

The continuing effects of dedication depend on the maintaining of a proper attitude of dependence on God in all matters of everyday living. The two ideas of dedication and dependence were closely associated in James' mind (4:7–10,13–17). Evidently in his thinking the brother who makes his own plans for the morrow (4:13) is an example of an undedicated Christian. Two ideas run through this passage (4:13 – 17): (1) There should never be

presumption on the part of the believer, although there should be planning. (2) There always should be a realization of the transitory nature of life and a complete resignation to the perfect will of God.

C. *DOCTRINE OF PRAYER*

One would expect to find the man who was known as “camel-knees” writing a lot about prayer. In his Epistle there are three major sections dealing with prayer (1:5–8; 4:2–3; 5:13–20) and scattered references elsewhere.

1. Requirements of prayer. Prayer involves five essentials: the realization that one is asking from a superior (4:3 where *aiteo*, which has that meaning, is used); the realization of a personal need (4:2; 5:16 where *deesis* is used); the presence of working faith in the life of the one who prays (5:16); complete unselfishness on the part of the petitioner (4:3); and, on the basis of promises, asking in faith and without doubting or disputing with oneself (1:6). Lack of any of these requirements would constitute a hindrance to prayer.

2. Objects of prayer. Although many things are mentioned in the Epistle as specific and proper objects of prayer, all can be catalogued in three groups: physical needs, mental needs, and spiritual needs.

Regulations for prayer for physical afflictions are found in 5:13–20. Although this is a difficult passage to interpret, it is clear that prayer is a necessary part of the procedure in a case of healing the sickness of one involved in sin. Confession, sacramental anointing, presence of the elders, and prayer must all be involved in such a case if the affliction is to be relieved.

Mental problems can also be solved by prayer (1:5–8). God will always answer the prayer for wisdom with liberality (or better, simplicity) and without upbraiding; thus in answering our prayers God is never involved in secondary motives or in complaint on account of favors unreturned. Our part, however, is to pray with unwavering faith.

Personal and corporate spiritual needs also find their supply in answer to prayer (4:1–3). The background of this passage has already been discussed; the principal point to notice in connection with prayer is the necessity for completely unselfish praying if spiritual problems are to be solved.

D. DOCTRINE OF SPEECH

1. Misuse of the tongue means a dwarfed life (3:1–5). James put the utmost importance on proper speech for a truly spiritual life, for he said that although we all oftentimes offend in many ways, the most frequent offense comes from the tongue. Therefore one who is victorious over the sins of the tongue may be said to be a mature man, and contrariwise, he who sins in speech is dwarfed in his spiritual development (see Matthew 5:34–37,48). Control of speech will include control of the entire body, just as bits control horses, rudders control ships, and small sparks start forest fires.

2. Misuse of the tongue means a defiled life (James 3:6–8). The misused tongue will reveal inner defilement and foulness.

3. Misuse of the tongue means a deceitful life (3:9–12). The words *deceit* and *hypocrisy* are not too strong to describe what James exposed when he wrote about the tongue that blesses God, but curses man.

E. DOCTRINE OF WISDOM

In 3:15–18 James gave the antidote to all the sins of the Christian life. It is simply the use of right wisdom. Worldly wisdom is not from above, but is earthbound, sensual, and devilish; it can only produce jealousy, factions, confusion, and vile deeds. Heavenly wisdom comes from God (1:5; 3:17); is displayed in good works and meekness; and is characterized as pure, peaceable, forbearing, easily entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, and without hypocrisy. If used, it would give victory over the sins that plagued the groups to which James wrote.

VI. ECCLESIOLOGY

As noted in the section on historical background, in James' day the organization of the church was not very developed. Religion was more personal than corporate, for distinctive Christian groups were not yet recognized by those to whom his Epistle was addressed. Thus James described true religion as that which is concerned with widows and orphans and a separated life. Both duties are individual and more private than public. In ministering to widows and orphans one does not expect

recognition from the crowd or return from those ministered to. This is the most unselfish kind of love and, coupled with the unspotted life of separation from the world, constitutes true religion.

Church organization had evidently not developed to the point of including officers other than elders (5:14) and these undoubtedly were a carryover from the synagogue organization (see 2:2) rather than a distinctively Christian innovation. Some Christian groups were still meeting in synagogues and had not yet been forced to separate themselves.

The principal ecclesiastical problem (apart from individual worldliness, which of course had corporate ramifications) was the partiality displayed in the assemblies of believers (2:1–11). The very people who were oppressing Christians (5:1–6) were being courted and favored by being given the chief places in the church meetings, while those who were poor were despised by the believers. It is the perpetual problem of respecting the outward appearance of man and paying court to those who we think can help us in return.

James' condemnation of this prevalent sin was severe for seven reasons: partiality touches the heart of the Christian faith, for if God had dealt with us in respect of persons, where would any of us be? (2:1, 4a); it causes one to set himself up as a judge (2:4b); it degrades those whom Christ honors—that is, the poor of this world (2:5); it honors those who have shown themselves unworthy of honor by their actions (2:6); it is plainly sin even though it seems to be a trivial matter and one practiced everywhere (2:9); it breaks the Law (2:10; also see Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17; 16; 19); and it will bring severe judgment on those who practice it (James 2:13).

In trying to summarize the theology of James, one is tempted to say that it is intensely practical, but this would leave a misimpression. His system is intensely theological, being rooted in the teachings of the Old Testament and molded by the teachings of Jesus. The chief point of the book, as Schmid noted, is that “Christianity is principally an energetic moral life, which has its principle in the word of truth, by which the Christian is newly begotten by God.”⁸ The principal substructure is bibliological, for it is the Word of truth that begets us unto the new life, and it is by the royal law of liberty that that life is to be governed. The main emphasis of the Epistle is devoted to the exposition of the aspect of salvation that is practical, energetic, Christian life. This is the heart of the theology of James.

P_{ART} IV

THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL

CHAPTER 1

PREPARATORY QUESTIONS

I. WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL?

The life of Paul is well known. Born in Tarsus with Roman citizenship, he was educated in the ways of Judaism in the family circle first and then in the school of Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). Whether or not Paul ever attended the rhetorical schools of Tarsus is an open question.¹

After his conversion the apostle spent three years in Arabia (Galatians 1:17) where his theological system was shaped. He returned to Damascus, but soon had to escape over the city wall in a basket (Acts 9:23–25). After visiting in Jerusalem he returned to his hometown of Tarsus where, as far as the record states, he was unoccupied with any public ministry for five or six years. He responded to the call of Barnabas to help with the work at Antioch, from which city he departed on the first missionary journey. The important events in the remainder of his ministry are listed on page 128 in a brief chronology of Paul's life.²

The life of Paul is of particular importance for at least three reasons: (1) His personal conversion is one of the strongest apologetics for the truth of the Christian message. The power of a risen Savior to transform an imperfect and rebellious human life is probably nowhere more clearly seen than in the life of Paul. (2) His academic activity is of the utmost importance to the doctrinal foundations of Christianity. The years he spent in rabbinical training, the Arabian years of solitude, the revelations he received, and the letters he wrote were all used by the Lord in the shaping of the doctrine of the Christian church for all time. (3) His missionary activity extended throughout practically the entire civilized world. Paul was always reaching out to unreached places (Romans 15:24) and, being

particularly the missionary to the Gentiles, he touched the untouchables for the Savior (Ephesians 2:14). He defined his convictions sharply, cherished them intensely, and carried them out consistently.

<i>A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF PAUL'S LIFE</i>		
DATE	EVENT	CHAPTER REFERENCE IN ACTS
30 A.D.	Death and resurrection of Christ	1
30	Pentecost	2
33	Conversion of Paul	9
35–37	Paul in Damascus, Arabia, Damascus	9
37–43	Paul in Tarsus	9
47–48	First missionary journey	13–14
49	Writing of Galatians	
49	Church council at Jerusalem	15
49–52	Second missionary journey	16–18
51	Writing of 1 and 2 Thessalonians from Corinth	
55	Writing of 1 Corinthians from Ephesus	
56	Writing of 2 Corinthians from Ephesus	
56–58	Third missionary journey	18–21
57–58	Writing of Romans from Corinth	
58	Journey to and arrest in Jerusalem	21–23
58–60	Paul in prison in Caesarea	24–26
59–61	Paul sent to Rome and imprisoned there for two years	27–28
61–63	Writing of Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians	
63–66	Writing of 1 Timothy and Titus from Macedonia	
66–67	Second imprisonment of Paul in Rome	
67	Writing of 2 Timothy	
67	Death of Paul	

The secret of these things that make Paul distinctive is found on the Damascus road where he said, “What shall I do, Lord?” (Acts 22:10) The obedience of faith effected his conversion, and the obedience of yieldedness affected the remainder of his life. Paul’s unreserved “what” (notice that he did not proposition the Lord with “which”) made him willing to spend time in solitary study as well as to be busy writing in the midst of an already crowded schedule of missionary activity.

The continuing character of Paul's dedication accounts for his ceaseless missionary activity. This activity included the time of testing when Paul had to return home and live as a Christian among those of his family and friends who had seen him leave Tarsus to become a rabbi. It also included the hardships and privations described by the apostle in 2 Corinthians 11:23–28. Later there were doubtless temptations to settle down in one of the many churches he had founded instead of reaching out to unreached places (see Acts 16:6–13), but Paul's dedication continued until his life finally ended in a martyr's death. And yet the distinctively important ministry of Paul did not end with his death, for every believer since has benefited from the life and ministry of this man who said, "What shall I do, Lord?" and lived to the fullest that complete dedication.³

II. WHAT WAS THE INFLUENCE OF JUDAISM ON PAUL?

If Paul was an educated Jew, what effect did this have on his life? To think about a question like this is not to intimate any minimizing of the supernatural changes that the Lord wrought in Paul's life. Paul was a trained Jew by race and rearing even after his conversion, and certain things in that background were carried over into his Christian life and activity, although other things were changed or rejected.

A. *P*_{AUL} *W*_{ASA} *H*_{EBREW} *P*_{ATRIOT}

Glimpses of Paul's patriotism are frequently seen in his writings (Acts 22:3; 26:4; Romans 3:1; 9:1–3; 2 Corinthians 11:22; Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:4–6). Paul owed his ability to make tents to the patriotism of his father, who carried out the injunction of the Talmud to teach his son a trade. Paul's early instruction in the Law can also be traced to the work of his father. At least these two things, his trade and his training in the Law, were carried over into Paul's Christian life.

B. *P*_{AUL} *W*_{ASA} *P*_{HARISEE}

As a Pharisee of the Pharisees (Philippians 3:5) Paul undoubtedly exhibited the characteristics of Pharisees that are found in the New Testament. He would have considered himself righteous (Matthew 5:20); he knew the Scriptures (Matthew 23:2); he obeyed the Pharisaic interpretation

of the Law (Mark 2:24; Acts 26:5); he tithed (Luke 18:12); he fasted (Matthew 9:14); and he was diligent in prayers (Mark 12:40; Luke 18:11). In his unconverted days he was, as the name *Pharisee* connotes, a separatist. Certain of these traits, such as praying, undoubtedly carried over into Paul's Christian life; but his basic attitude toward Pharisaism was radically changed when he became a believer. One needs only to look at Paul at the council in Jerusalem or read his letter to the Galatians to see how basically his Pharisaic attitudes had changed. Pharisaism gave Paul habits of discipline for his life as a Christian, and Christianity gave him freedom from the legality of his life as a Pharisee.

C. PAUL WAS A STUDENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

To his training under Gamaliel Paul owed much of his knowledge of the Old Testament. This is of course displayed everywhere in his writings in the extensive use of Old Testament quotations. Paul also studied Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament, but at best these were insufficient until he came to recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah. As a Pharisee Paul's hope for the Messiah burned brightly; as a student he investigated it; as a Christian he realized it.

D. PAUL WAS A MISSIONARY

The school of Hillel, to which Paul belonged as a pupil of Gamaliel, welcomed proselytes (Matthew 23:15). Its goal was at least one proselyte per year per Jew, and Paul was beyond question active in this regard in the practice of his Jewish religion. His mind was schooled to think "missions," and his activity was geared to that end even before he came to the Savior.

Paul's ancestral faith was unquestionably part of God's preparation for the man who became the great leader of Christianity, but it was only preparation. By no means are we to understand that Paul the Christian was merely a revamped Jewish Paul. Although there were carry-overs from one to the other, there were also radical changes. Actually it can be said that all Paul was as a Hebrew was transformed by Christ. His intense Hebrew patriotism gave place to an interest in and concern for all men; indeed this patriot was the apostle to the Gentiles. His Pharisaic separatism was replaced by a separation unto Christ. All of Paul's studies in the Old Testament were suddenly enlightened by the revelation that he discovered

in Christ. Unguessed meanings leaped out of the pages of the Old Testament (see 2 Corinthians 3:1–14). The missionary of the school of Hillel became the zealous propagator of the gospel of God’s grace in Christ.

To be sure, there was a natural preparation in Paul’s Hebrew background that can be seen in his later life, but this in no way implies that his theology was a natural outgrowth of Judaism. The total man—his life, his thinking, his theology—was supernaturally transformed that day when he recognized Jesus the Savior on the Damascus road.

III. WHAT WAS THE INFLUENCE OF HELLENISM ON PAUL?

A. *T*_{ARSUS}

Geography affects all men. As a country boy is different from a city boy, so, for instance, John the Baptist was different from Paul. Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, was a key city in the east-west trade routes of the day. It was situated on the Cydnus river, which flowed into a lake south of Tarsus. This protected harbor made Tarsus a convenient transshipping point for overland trade to and from Asia Minor. The mountains to the north of the city, broken only by the Cilician Gates, gave Tarsus the protection of a natural fortress. The fact that Paul learned a trade was due to Judaism, but the particular trade he learned is traceable to the city in which he was reared, for Tarsus was a tentmaking center, since the raw material grew nearby.

The city, boasting a population of nearly half a million, was a center of learning. Even though it is debatable whether Paul ever attended the university of Tarsus, it is clear that cosmopolitan Tarsus left its mark on the boy. Paul’s Roman citizenship was a result of the environment in which he was born, and as a Roman citizen Paul was a citizen of the world. Too, he was every whit a gentleman, as witnessed by his bearing before governors and kings. Undoubtedly Paul’s cosmopolitan interests were cultivated early in Tarsus. His knowledge of the Greek language came from the same source. In the right sense he was a man of the world, and much of this he owed to the influence of the city of Tarsus.

B. *M*_{YSTERY} *R*_{ELIGIONS}

In a very real sense the mystery religions were rivals to Christianity, for, appealing to the masses, they offered the average person salvation from

fate. It is inconceivable that Paul was not acquainted with these movements that were active all around him. It is an easily proved fact that “in all the main centers of his missionary operations the Apostle Paul must have been brought into constant touch with the influences of the Mystery-Religions.”⁴

It is apparent that some of the terms that were used in the mystery religions are found in the basic doctrines of Pauline theology. The word *mystery* itself, which is almost exclusively a Pauline word in the New Testament, is a good example. *Gnosis*, “knowledge,” *sophia*, “wisdom,” *teleios*, “mature,” and *pneuma*, “spirit,” are other examples. But, as Kennedy showed, for Paul these concepts had their roots not in the mystery religions, but in the Old Testament. Paul’s readers, however, were “able to catch the meaning of a more or less technical terminology, due not merely to a course of instruction in the Old Testament, but to their acquaintance with a religious vocabulary already current among the Mystery associations.”⁵ Although Paul may have shown acquaintance with mystery terminology and may even have used some of those terms in a deliberate attempt to interest Greek readers in the gospel of God’s salvation, this by no means proves that Paul’s theology was in any way derived from or dependent on the theology of those cults.

The essential difference between the teachings of the mystery religions and those of Paul is very evident in some of the central concepts of the mystery religions. For instance, the salvation that these groups offered was a salvation from the tyranny of an omnipotent Fate, and although Paul’s concept of salvation may be said to be many-sided, it is primarily a salvation from sin. Or again, although some have attempted to show a dependence of the ordinances of Christianity on those of these cults, Kennedy has proved that it is “vain to endeavour to find points of contact between Paul and the Mystery-cults on the side of ritual.”⁶ The conclusion is evident: Paul’s acquaintance with the mystery religions does not admit of recognizing any dependence on them.

C. *STOICISM*

There is no doubt that certain resemblances can be found between some of the teachings of stoicism and Paulinism. Comparisons can be made with the stoic doctrines of (1) the world soul, (2) natural law, (3) conscience, and (4) world citizenship. Traces of similarities in Paul’s writings might be seen

in such passages as (1) Acts 17:28; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; (2) Romans 2:14; (3) Romans 2:15; 1 Corinthians 10:25; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 4:2; 5:11; (4) Acts 17:26. However real some might make these similarities, the study and comparison of stoicism and Paulinism make it apparent that there was a vast difference between these and all doctrines of the two systems.

The stoic concept of a governing force (the world soul) has no relation to the Christian doctrine of a God who can be known and fellowshiped with through Jesus Christ.

The stoic concept of natural law is that of an internal thing something like an inner light. Paul did speak of natural law, but a natural law that came from God and is external to man. No man, according to Paulinism, can act acceptably before God because of his fallen nature.

If there is any relationship between stoicism and Paulinism, it could only possibly be in the teaching on conscience. But again there are vast differences in the concepts because for the stoic, conscience merely led a person to a belief in fatalism, while Paul clearly taught that conscience obeyed would lead to penitence. The stoic did not believe he needed outside help since human virtue was all-sufficient. The Christian concept of the doctrine of conscience would bring one to the realization of his need before a personal God.

The brotherhood of Christianity is based not on world citizenship, but on the death of Christ.

Paul's theology in no way shows dependence on the teachings of stoicism. Theologically and philosophically the two systems are diametrically opposed. Paul did not build on the stoic system; rather he tried to win men out of it (Acts 17:18). Stewart wrote:

Tens of thousands of souls were seeking release and self-conquest and victory over the world, but Paul could see with piercing clearness that the line which the Stoic quest for these things was following could never by any possibility lead to the peace and freedom which he himself had actually found in Christ. It was on a wrong track altogether: and was Paul, realizing this, likely to borrow much? What could the religion of frustration give to the religion of fulfillment? Across the pages of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius the shadow lies. Beneath their bravest words the feeling of

futility lurks. What is God, after all, but just Fate—*heimarmene*? And what can man do, caught in the toils of a harsh determinism, but bow his head and submit? Nor can he look forward with any life of the heart to what may come hereafter, for immortality too has slipped away; and Epictetus could only bid a father kissing his child remember that it was a mortal thing he loved, and whisper while he kissed “To-morrow thou wilt die.” This was the direction in which Stoicism had its face; and the road led—as Paul saw—straight out towards unyielding despair.²

IV. WHAT WAS INVOLVED IN PAUL’S CONVERSION?

The conversion of the apostle Paul has been the subject of almost endless discussion. In his own writings Paul made reference to it only a few times. He described it as seeing the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:1); he related it to the supernatural elective purposes of God (Galatians 1:15); he spoke of the suddenness of it (1 Corinthians 15:8; Philippians 3:12); he testified to the fact that it was an act of new creation by God and not merely a change of habits of life (2 Corinthians 4:6; 5:17); and he acknowledged the merciful character of it (1 Timothy 1:13). In addition Luke recorded Paul’s conversion and testimony of it in three places in the Acts. This record of Luke furnishes the principal facts on which to base conclusions concerning the nature of Paul’s conversion.

A. *C*ONVICTION

Conviction preceded the conversion of Paul. The Lord Himself reminded Paul that it had been difficult for him “to kick against the goads” (Acts 26:14). Many suggestions have been offered as to what specific things had been goading Paul and bringing conviction to his heart. Probably the principal goad was the martyrdom of Stephen. Again and again Paul’s mind would have recalled Stephen’s last words testifying to the fact that Christ was risen. Stephen saw the Son of man and spoke to Him with his dying breath. He also evinced the same spirit as Jesus when he said, “Do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:60).

The lives and testimonies of the Christians was another thing Paul had to reckon with. Stewart wrote: “Paul certainly had no intention of being infected with the new heresy; but that, in Tertullian’s words, he was ‘struck

with an inward misgiving,' unconfessed probably even to himself, in witnessing the lives which its protagonists led, seems beyond doubt."⁸ Paul did not persecute them because he was impressed; but he could not help being impressed when he persecuted them.

A third goad was Paul's knowledge of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. Whether or not Paul ever saw Jesus in person in the days of his earthly life is unimportant to this point; he did know of the claims of Jesus, for he had talked to those who had seen and heard Him (see Acts 20:35; Galatians 1:18). Informed by associates in Pharisaism, Paul's keen mind had analyzed this new faith that posed a serious threat to Judaism. But all his intellectual conviction of the wrongness of Jesus' claims, coupled with intense persecution of those who believed them, could not remove the goad that the knowledge of the historic Jesus was in Paul's life.

B. *CONVERSION*

The conversion of Paul has had many explanations. Enemies of Paulinism in the early church propagated the idea that Paul purposely acted out a fraud by pretending to be a Christian in order to take revenge on the Jews because he had been jilted in love.⁹ The modern counterpart of this ancient view proposes that Paul feigned revelations in order to give vent to irregularities of action and lawlessness. It is difficult to imagine how Paul convinced his missionary companions to play along with him, and this explanation cannot be reconciled with Paul's positive gospel message.

Rationalistic attempts have also been made to explain Paul's conversion by attributing it to a combination of physical weakness, a violent storm, and delirium caused by the burning Syrian heat.¹⁰ A fanciful explanation at best, it in no way coincides with the historical record of the Acts and Paul's Epistles.

Perhaps the most popular nonconservative view of Paul's conversion is that which may be called the subjective vision hypothesis. This supposes that Paul's conversion was a natural psychological process that started with a gradually developing intellectual conviction that the Christian way might be the right way; the process climaxed on the Damascus road in a subjective visionary experience in the soul and mind of Paul. In one form or another the view has had many able exponents. D. F. Strauss, Baur,¹¹ the Tübingen school, Schmiedel,¹² B. W. Bacon, and McGiffert have all advocated it.

However, the explanation is contrary to the facts of Scripture and must assume the unreliability of those records. It, like Renan's view (see note 10), pictures Paul as a physically weak person (Paul's health will be discussed more fully below). It also ignores the fact that all of Paul's struggles in Judaism were driving him to greater zeal in his own religion and not developing within him a maturing appreciation of Christianity. Although it is true that there were things goading Paul before his conversion, he may have been entirely unaware of them until the risen Lord revealed them on the Damascus road. The subjective vision theory supposes that Paul was completely aware of these and other things and was consciously wrestling with them before his conversion. Gradual maturing, not sudden conversion, is the explanation offered.

Both the rationalistic and subjective explanations assume to some extent the fact that Paul was a constitutionally weak person. The illness frequently suggested is epileptic insanity. If such be the explanation for Paul's revelations, including that which accompanied his conversion, "it affects," as Ramsay correctly observed, "the very foundations on which rests our right to accept as in any degree valuable Paul's belief in the truth and power of his own personal experiences."¹³ Ramsay has ably shown that epilepsy could not have been Paul's thorn in the flesh; and he has concluded that such a theory could only have been advanced "by persons who knew nothing about neurology."¹⁴ In Paul's day there was no known way of controlling epileptic fits, so one would have to assume that the disease would have taken its normal course, which inevitably results in deterioration and damage to brain and body. But there is no evidence of such in his Epistles.¹⁵

No matter what explanations one might wish to accept, the Biblical theologian must let Paul speak for himself. To him the experience was one of actually seeing the Lord, who identified Himself as Jesus of Nazareth and who spoke in clear words revealing His plan for the apostle. It was no experience of self-delusion, for throughout his entire life Paul based his ministry on it and persuaded others of the reality of it. Paul's conversion was not the result of evolution, but of revolution. It was not even in the manner in which people are ordinarily converted; that is, by man's preaching of the gospel. Nor was it merely a supernatural interposition of God intended to produce belief in the fact of resurrection.¹⁶ It was a personal

encounter with the risen Christ; and only this can suffice to explain fully the transformation of Saul of Tarsus.

V. WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF PAULINE THEOLOGY?

The sources of Pauline theology are Acts, the missionary Epistles (1 and 2 Thessalonians), the doctrinal Epistles (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians), the prison Epistles, and the pastoral Epistles. It is only concerning the inclusion of the pastoral Epistles that there is important debate. Although the Epistles may be classified as above, this does not imply that there was development in the sense of change in Paul's theology. The earliest Epistles may be simple, but they are not rudimentary. We may notice change of emphases in his Epistles, but not change of doctrine. Before Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, he had known the Lord for about fifteen years. Three of those fifteen were years of revelation and meditation in Arabia; therefore his theology was fully developed from the time of the first stroke of his pen.

Should the Pastorals be included in the sources of Pauline theology? Those who do not hold to the full Pauline authorship of these books either hold that the letters are pseudonymous and to be dated in the first half of the second century or that they are amplifications by a Paulinist of genuine Pauline fragments of the same era. The arguments of P. N. Harrison against the Pauline authorship have carried the most weight.¹⁷ His principal arguments are linguistic and historical.¹⁸

The linguistic argument is dazzling. The statistics and charts are almost overwhelming, but even Harrison was forced to admit that the linguistic argument alone is inconclusive, for Paul, he recognized, might have written in a different style and with unusual vocabulary in treating the subjects of the Pastorals.¹⁹ One wonders why a forger or a devout Paulinist would not make every attempt to imitate Paul rather than being so dissimilar. Since the Pastorals cover only 17 of 128 pages of Paul's writings (in Westcott and Hort's Greek Testament), one is suspicious that Harrison's linguistic argument is in the nature of comparing the merchandise of a specialty shop with that of a large department store and assuring the public on the basis of the comparison, which shows the stock to be different, that the two stores could not possibly be owned by the same man or corporation.

The historical argument is that since the Pastorals cannot be fitted into the life of Paul as recorded in Acts, they could not have been written by Paul. This assumes that Acts brings us to the end of Paul's life and that he did not experience two imprisonments in Rome. An array of debatable evidence from the church fathers is cited by Harrison as proof of this. That Paul died in Rome is a fact (2 Timothy 4:6); the question is, Does Acts 28 record that time? If so, it would be difficult to fit the Pastorals into the chronology of Acts. If not, they could easily have been written by Paul. The citations from the fathers at best give only uncertain and debatable support to the theory of one imprisonment, but other light that Ramsay has thrown on the matter, in my mind, completely answers Harrison's argument.²⁰

Ramsay pictured the situation at the close of Acts as follows: Paul of course had to be detained in Rome until his prosecutors appeared, for the trial could not begin until the accusers came to state the complaint against him. Evidently the Jewish accusers did not appear, for they probably realized that their case was too weak to gain a conviction. Had not Agrippa said so (Acts 26:31–32)? Recognizing this, they then seemed to employ delaying tactics. If they could not convict Paul, they would keep him out of circulation (but not silent) for as long as the law allowed. And the law considered any man innocent against whom a charge had not been brought after eighteen months. When this legal term elapsed, Paul was processed for release and the two years of Acts 28:30 were fulfilled. It was acquittal by default.²¹

Such a picture answers Harrison's historical argument and supports the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals. Thus they must be considered as a valid source of Pauline theology.

CHAPTER 2

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Basic to Pauline theology is the concept of God. Although in some respects this doctrine is incidentally developed, it nonetheless permeated Paul's thought. That God exists, that He has revealed Himself, and that He is the sovereign ruler of the universe—these truths are the foundation on which Paul built. The existence of God is everywhere assumed (a carry-over from Judaism) and Paul always started from this principle.

I. NATURE OF GOD

Paul mentioned a number of the attributes of God. He is the only wise God (1 Timothy 1:17), whose omniscience will be displayed in the day of judgment (Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 4:5). His quality of love was uniquely proved in the sending of Christ (Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4). He is the One who is able to do above all things, as well as above those things that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20), and this sovereign power of God was primary in Paul's thought (Romans 9). In addition God is omnipresent (Romans 10:6–7; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19), true (Romans 3:4), just (Romans 3:26), and merciful (Ephesians 2:4).

However, it is the living nature of God that assumed particular importance in Pauline thought. That idea is found in his preaching to the heathen, for it is the living God who saves men (Acts 14:15; 17:24–29; 1 Timothy 4:10). Paul's converts were distinguished as those who had turned to the living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). It is the living God who is the cause of sanctification (2 Corinthians 3:3), the comfort of the believer in times of distress (1 Timothy 4:10), and the object of Christian service (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

II. REVELATION OF GOD

A. *M*EANS OF *R*EVELATION

Paul spoke of a number of ways in which the living God has revealed Himself:

- God has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 3:16; also see Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 1:19–20; 2 Timothy 1:10).
- God reveals Himself to all men through nature (Romans 1:20).
- The Scriptures reveal the salvation of God (Romans 3:21; 16:26; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4; 2 Timothy 3:15–16).
- The providential guiding of history should lead one to seek God (Acts 17:26–27).
- The constitutional nature of man reveals the living character of his Creator (Acts 17:28–29).
- Children of God reveal their Father as they live among men (Romans 10:14; 2 Corinthians 3:2).
- The Mosaic Law was a means of revelation to the Jewish people (Romans 2:12; 9:4).

B. *C*ONTENT OF *R*EVELATION

In Christ all the attributes of God can be seen by man. From nature man can learn of God's eternal power and godhood. All can reason to things invisible from things visible, and although the revelation of God in nature is not sufficient for salvation, it is sufficient and just grounds for condemnation if rejected. Through God's dealings with man in the course of history His goodness and longsuffering are revealed (Romans 2:4). The law of Moses brought specific and detailed revelation of the mind of God for the Jewish people and with that privilege came special responsibility (Romans 2:17–29).

C. *I*NTENT OF *R*EVELATION

Not only for the Jew but for all men, revelation brings responsibility. A man's reaction to that which God has revealed, whatever be the means or content, will determine His acceptance or rejection by God (Romans 1:21–32; 2:7–8). To the Christian, knowledge of the truth of God as it is revealed by the Holy Spirit brings responsibility to become mature and not to live carnally (1 Corinthians 2:10–3:2). Being confronted with God automatically brings responsibility, and all men have been confronted to some extent.

III. SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD¹

The Old Testament, which says much concerning this doctrine, was the legacy that Paul received as a Jew. He would also have come in contact with this doctrine as he acquired a knowledge of the teachings of Christ (see John 6:37,44; 10:27–29; 17:11). However, it fell to him to develop the doctrine fully and systematically.

A. *T*ERMINOLOGY

In his Epistles Paul used at least eight different words to convey the concept of sovereignty:

Proorizō, which is never found in the Septuagint or classical Greek and only in Acts 4:28 outside of Paul's writings, means "a marking off beforehand" (Romans 8:29–30; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5,11). Paul always spoke of what this means in terms of the ultimate destiny of those so marked off.

Proginōskō, "to foreknow" (Acts 2:23; 26:5; Romans 8:29; 11:2; also see 1 Peter 1:2,20 and 2 Peter 3:17), emphasizes not mere foresight but an active relationship between the One who foreknows and those who are foreknown.

Eklegō, "to choose," as used by Paul emphasizes the idea of free choice. Indeed when Paul used the verb in describing God's action, he used the middle voice, indicating that God's choosing was done freely and for Himself (1 Corinthians 1:27–28; Ephesians 1:4).

Klētos, "called" (Romans 1:1,7; 8:28; 1 Corinthians 1:1,2,24).

Protithēmi, “to purpose” (Romans 1:13; 3:25; Ephesians 1:9).

Boulē, “will” (Acts 13:36; 20:27; Ephesians 1:11).

Thelēma, “will” (Ephesians 1:11).

Eudokia, “good pleasure” (Ephesians 1:5,9; Philippians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:11).

Thus the concepts involved in this doctrine are obviously not built on a single word or a few scattered passages.

B. *P*_{RINCIPAL} *P*_{ASSAGES}

There are three chief passages where Paul expounded his fundamental teaching concerning predestination: Romans 8:28–30; Romans 9–11; and Ephesians 1:1–12.

1. Romans 8:28–30. This is a passage of encouragement. All things work together for good because God has purposed that His own should be conformed to the image of His Son. This assured result is traceable to God’s entering into a relationship with the elect in foreknowledge, effecting its outworking through calling and justifying, and guaranteeing its consummation in the predestined conformity to Christ. This ultimate glorification rests on God’s foreknowledge, which must be understood in the positive and active sense of entering into a relationship with the elect. To hang the sense of the passage on the mere contemplative foresight of God (which is the usual connotation given to foreknowledge) would be, in Warfield’s words, “little short of absurd.”²

2. Romans 9–11. This more famous passage on predestination is not a parenthetical section, for it grows directly out of Paul’s fundamental doctrine of justification by faith. If all are sinners and if there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, what is to become of the special privileges of Israel? Paul’s answer begins by demonstrating that the source of all of Israel’s blessings is the sovereignty of God. These blessings were undeserved in the first place and they were subsequently forfeited by unbelief; nevertheless in God’s merciful sovereignty He will fulfill all that He promised (11:26–36). God’s choices, Paul declared, are not necessarily based on natural generation (9:6–9) or human merit (9:10–13), but on the

exercise of sovereign mercy (9:14–24). If God could not have retreated into His own sovereignty and chosen a people, He would have been obliged to condemn every member of the human race because of sin. It is sovereign grace that blesses anybody.

3. *Ephesians 1:1–12.* If possible, an even higher note is struck in this passage. The time of choosing is expressly stated to have been before the foundation of the world (1:4). The basis of the choice was God’s own good pleasure (1:5,11). Paul used the three terms *boulē* (“purpose”), *eudokia* (“good pleasure”), and *thelēma* (“will”) in stating the origin of predestination. The purpose of predestination is the glorification of God (1:12) and herein lies the only possible solution to questions that arise from the doctrine. If God in decreeing acted in perfect harmony with all of His attributes, there is nothing to fear in the outworking of that decree and there is every assurance that in the end it will glorify Him more than any other plan could.

C. *D*_{OCTRINE}

The roots of Paul’s doctrine of sovereignty are to be found in his theism. It is because Paul was a firm believer in a living God who is the author of all that is, that he was a predestinarian. The effects of his doctrine are best seen in his own life, for it was the deep consciousness of God’s choosing and guiding him that motivated his missionary activity (Galatians 1:15–16). The viewpoint of Paul’s doctrine is always one of amazement that God deals with any man in grace. His doctrine is not founded on the question, Why are some lost? While all the questions one might like to have answered are not necessarily dealt with, the main outlines of Paul’s concept are apparent.

1. *The ultimate source of predestination is the absolute sovereignty of God.* It is God who is sovereign in all the affairs of men, and predestination finds its source in that immutable characteristic of God. However, sovereignty is not to be understood as naked, unrestrained volition, but the action of the most self-obligated being in the universe, who, when He acts, has to act righteously, lovingly, justly, and in complete accord with His full personality. Warfield wrote:

No man ever had an intenser or more vital sense of God,—the eternal (Rom. 16:26) and incorruptible (1:23) One, the only wise One (16:27), who does all things according to His good pleasure (1 Cor. 15:38; 12:18; Col. 1:19, 15), and whose ways are past tracing out (Rom. 11:33); before whom men should therefore bow in the humility of absolute dependence, recognizing in Him the one moulding power as well in history as in the life of the individual (Rom. 9). Of Him and through Him and unto Him, he fervently exclaims, are all things (Rom. 11:36; cf. 1 Cor. 8:6); He is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:6; cf. Col. 1:16); He worketh all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11): all that is, in a word, owes its existence and persistence and its action and issue to Him.³

The starting point of the doctrine then is God who is sovereign, and there was no question in Paul's mind that election rests solely upon Him.

2. *The purpose of predestination is salvation, and the issue of it is service.* It is to be expected that the soteriological ramifications of this doctrine would claim the attention of the great missionary. The whole history of salvation is recorded in the great passage on election in Ephesians 1:1–12. Romans 8:28–30 has been called the most daring passage in the Bible, for it says that those who were foreknown are already glorified, so certain is the outcome of God's elective program. But Paul, the servant of the Lord, also emphasized that this salvation issues in service (Ephesians 2:10). He used his own life to illustrate the point (Galatians 1:15–16), and his converts emulated him (1 Thessalonians 1:4,8–10). The doctrine is thus lifted completely out of the realm of the speculative and contemplative and placed at the heart of the missionary enterprise of the church.

3. *Predestination does not override human responsibility.* Paul's Epistles are replete with lengthy sections devoted to moral exhortation. The single preposition *en* in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, "through [*en*] sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth," shows how closely associated in his mind were God's part and man's part in salvation. Grace received always brings added responsibility. While it is true that Paul never allowed the so-called rights of man to challenge the sovereign though mysterious ways of

God, he firmly held to the responsibility of man (see 1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 6:1).

4. In relation to the destiny of the wicked, the doctrine of predestination includes the idea of reprobation. The very idea of election incorporates the idea of the greater number out of which some have been chosen to eternal life. Although Paul was definite in saying that election is pretemporal and predetermined before birth, he never suggested that there is a similar decree of election unto damnation. Paul seems to have been content to let this remain a mystery. When he did employ terms that indicate reprobation, Paul indicated that reprobation is in the nature of God's abandoning man to his evil deeds and just deserts. The most direct statements of reprobation are found in Romans 9:18, 21.

One might say that in the Pauline writings there is a doctrine of reprobation, but not a decree of damnation. There is preterition, non-election, God's passing some by, but never is there any inference that God delights in the destiny of the wicked, that they are driven against their wills, that election nullifies a "whosoever" gospel, or that any individual can consider himself nonelect and thereby excuse himself in his rejection of Christ. However, the doctrine of reprobation is definitely a part of Pauline theology.

5. Predestination glorifies God. "To the praise of His glory" rings throughout the passage in Ephesians 1:1–12. The ultimate purpose of all of God's doings is the glorification of Himself. In such a belief is the only possible resolution of the problems of the doctrine, and with such a belief one can only bow in worship and awe before the One who has devised that infinitely wise plan. Hear Paul as he concluded his discussion of this doctrine in Romans 11:33–36:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

IV. THE SON

Paul's Christology originated on the Damascus road. His exposition of this doctrine is generally unsystematic and is found "in solution" with other arguments and teachings. Nevertheless the treatment is thorough, so there is no doubt as to Paul's thought on these matters.

A. *HUMANITY OF CHRIST*

1. *Birth of Christ.* Paul mentioned both the background and actual birth of the Lord. He was a descendant of Abraham and David (Romans 9:3–5; Galatians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:8). Although there is reasonable doubt that Galatians 4:4 refers specifically to the virgin birth, it says nothing inconsistent with the doctrine. That He was of the seed of David (Romans 1:3) established His right to the Davidic throne.

2. *Life of Christ.* Even though Paul may never have seen Jesus in the days of His humiliation, he spoke of a number of events in His life. Paul appealed to the gentleness, meekness, and generally lowly character of Jesus' life (2 Corinthians 10:1; Philippians 2:1–8). The Lord's sinlessness is affirmed (2 Corinthians 5:21). But references to facts relating to the death of Christ appear more frequently in Paul's writings (Romans 6:1–10; 1 Corinthians 2:8; 5:7; 11:23–25; 15:1–3; Galatians 2:20; 3:13). Paul's use of these facts is not in the manner of a mere rehearsal of them, but is usually in connection with doctrinal teaching.

3. *Human nature of Christ.* Paul's statements in this connection are very cautious in order to keep the sinlessness of Christ before the minds of his readers. Thus Paul spoke of the Christ being made in the likeness of sinful men (Romans 8:3; Philippians 2:7). The humanity was real (1 Timothy 3:16), but without sin. Unlike John, Paul did not use the humanity of the Lord as a pattern for Christian conduct. In Johannine thought it is the earthly life of Christ which motivates holy living (1 John 2:6); in Paul the emphasis is on the risen Lord to whom believers are joined (Romans 6:1–10).

4. *Second or last Adam.* This Pauline concept of Christ as the second or last Adam (Romans 5:15,19; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 45, 47, 49) has an unemphasized suggestion of the earthly life of Christ in it. However, as the

last Adam, Christ not only undoes what Adam did (Romans 5), but also founds an entirely new humanity based on resurrection (1 Corinthians 15).

B. *DEITY OF CHRIST*

1. Pre-existence of Christ. The preincarnate existence of the Lord was mentioned by Paul often (Philippians 2:5–8; also see Romans 8:3; 1 Corinthians 15:47; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 4:4). Preincarnate activity is also ascribed to Him (Colossians 1:16).

2. Deity of Christ. Paul went a step beyond pre-existence in asserting the full and undiminished deity of Christ. He was not only made the Son of God, but also declared so by raising dead people (*nekrōn*) from the dead (Romans 1:3–4). He was always God, for the divine nature dwells in Christ (Colossians 2:9). However, the strongest single passage supporting the deity of Christ is Philippians 2:6: “Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.” Although it is sometimes claimed that this does not refer to the divine nature, parallelism and exegesis and logic invalidate that position.

Parallelism would suggest that if the form of the servant was real, the form of God must be equally genuine. Exegesis, according to Lightfoot, shows that *morphē* (“form”) “implies not external accidents but the essential attributes.”⁴ Reason teaches that the verse is asserting the deity of Christ, for as Ellicott wrote, “Surely it is logically accurate to say that Christ did not grasp to Himself, and covet to retain, a state that was then His own.”⁵ Philippians 2:6 is a strong statement of the deity of Christ.⁶

C. *LORDSHIP OF CHRIST*

The designation *Jesus* was rarely used by Paul (see Romans 8:11; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5,11,14; 11:4; Galatians 6:17). Altogether it is found in only eight undisputed references. The title *Lord* occurs at least 144 times plus 95 more times in connection with the proper name *Jesus Christ*. Lordship obviously loomed large in Paul’s thought.

1. Ground of lordship. Christ is Lord, not by acquisition but by inherent right (Colossians 2:9). Even in the days of His flesh He was Lord (1 Corinthians 2:8). Lordship will be exercised primarily after the resurrection

(Philippians 2:9; Romans 14:9), but it is a quality eternally inherent in His nature.

2. Meaning of lordship. Sometimes Paul used the term *kurioi* (“lords”) as an equivalent for human masters (Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1). In other instances the designation *Lord* is especially related to Christ’s work as mediator between God and man; in this use there is an idea of subordination to the Father (1 Corinthians 11:3; 15:27–28; also see 1 Timothy 2:5). But *Lord* is also a trinitarian designation (1 Corinthians 8:6; also see 1 Corinthians 12:4–6; 2 Corinthians 13:14). In these verses both equality and distinction of the persons of the godhead are clearly seen.

In summary it may be said that Pauline Christology received on the Damascus road (1) did not slight the humanity of Jesus, (2) included strong emphasis on the full deity, and (3) stressed the inherent majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. THE SPIRIT

Like the teaching concerning Christ, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was not systematically presented by Paul. However, he said a great deal about the Spirit, which shows that His person and work occupied a large place in Paul’s thought. The revelation of almost all of the specific ministries of the Spirit in the New Testament is Pauline.

Concerning the person of the Spirit, Paul affirmed in incidental references His personality and deity. The Spirit exhibits the attributes of personality with intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10–11), sensibility (Ephesians 4:30), and will (1 Corinthians 12:11; 1 Timothy 4:1). His many and varied ministries, yet to be discussed, also show personality. Deity is proved by assigning to the Spirit attributes and actions that could only be true of God (1 Corinthians 2:10–11; Romans 8:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; compare Romans 8:26–27 with 8:34). Further the Spirit is distinguished from God and from Christ (1 Corinthians 12:4–6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4–6). It is the Spirit who specifically works in believers as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11). His distinct ministries to the Christian can only be properly construed if based on the view that the Spirit is a person distinct from God and from Christ.

Paul's principal contribution to pneumatology is in the area of the work of the Spirit. Although he mentioned the Spirit's work in relation to salvation (Galatians 3:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13), it is His ministry to the Christian that is Paul's special contribution. He baptizes into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13) and gives gifts to the members of that body (1 Corinthians 12:4 ff.). The one aim of these gifts is to minister to the unity of the body, for unity is wrought through diversity. Paul's teaching about these spiritual gifts is intensely practical, for each is to use his gifts for the benefit of all. Each person has his own place and work. Each has his special endowment to be used for the general good. That is why for instance the gift of tongues must be so carefully regulated and why the gift of prophecy is to be preferred. Utility is the test.

Another Pauline emphasis in pneumatology is within the sphere of ethics. The Spirit is Himself holy and His work is holiness or sanctification (1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 5:25). The body itself is the temple of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). The inner conflict of life is between the flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:16–26), and only by reliance on the power of that indwelling Spirit can victory be gained (Romans 8:13).

In the everyday exercise of the spiritual life, the Holy Spirit must be given pre-eminence, for He is the One who teaches the Christian the truth of God (1 Corinthians 2:13), who enables in prayer (Romans 8:26), and who leads and guides (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18). It is no wonder that the apostolic command is "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18), for every phase of the Christian life is related to His ministry. Even the virtues that men need for everyday life are the product of His work, for "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23). Stevens wrote:

Not devout fervors alone, not dreams of far-off ideals alone, but the every-day qualities which one needs most in his commonplace life, are the Spirit's work. . . . When the religious ideas of the apostolic age are considered, this correlation of the Spirit with man's ethical and practical life seems to be Paul's greatest contribution to the doctrine under consideration.²

The references to the Spirit may be scattered, but they are profuse in all the Pauline Epistles and clearly demonstrate the substructural importance of

the doctrine in the apostle's thinking.

CHAPTER 3

SIN AND SALVATION

I. THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

A. *MEANING OF SIN*

Paul's concept of sin was Hebraistic, not Hellenistic. The Greek idea was that sin was undeveloped good and a necessary stage in the upward progress of man toward God. A mistake was, in the final analysis, intellectual, not moral. To the Greek, then, sin was an unfortunate but temporary episode in man's advance in true wisdom and knowledge. To Paul, sin was anything but that. It was a matter of the will, a deliberate declension on the part of man alienating him from God. Further it was a matter of moral depravity, for Paul considered sin a state as well as an act.

The meanings of the many Greek words that Paul used for sin elaborate his concept. Sin is missing the mark (Romans 5:12–6:1, 15), which involves not only missing the right mark, but also hitting the wrong mark. Missing the mark is not only a negative concept of omission, but also a positive act of commission. Sin is trespass, which is willful disobedience (Romans 2:23; Galatians 3:19; 1 Timothy 2:14). Sin is a falling away or deviation from the truth (Romans 5:15,17–18). Sin is a disregard of the truth, an unwillingness to hear (Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 10:6). Sin is unrighteousness (Romans 1:18; Colossians 3:25), ungodliness (Romans 1:18; Titus 2:12), lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:3; Titus 2:14), ignorance (Ephesians 4:18), defeat or loss (Romans 11:12; 1 Corinthians 6:7), and grievous wickedness (Romans 1:29–31; 1 Corinthians 5:8).

From Paul's usage it is evident that (1) the concept of sin is so well defined that in every instance it is clear what kind of sin is in view; (2) the

concept is many-sided; and (3) most of the words for sin appear in Romans.

B. *UNIVERSALITY OF SIN*

Paul's systematic presentation of the universality of sin is found in the first division of the Roman Epistle. The heathen are first condemned for their sin, which is primarily against the revelation of God in nature (1:18–32). The cause of their condemnation is their own willful ignorance of the light of nature (1:18–23). As a consequence God completely abandons them (1:24–32).

The moralist comes under Paul's attention in 2:1–16 (even though the section has primary reference to the Jew, its application is to anyone who excludes himself from the condemnation of chapter 1). He is condemned by the truth (2:1–5), by his deeds (2:6–11), and by the gospel (2:12–16).

Paul then turned directly to the Jew and showed that he was justly condemned because he did not keep the law of God (2:17–29) and because he did not believe the promises of God (3:1–8).

As a climax to the entire section, Paul wrote in sweeping terms of the condemnation of all men (3:9–20). In this concluding paragraph Paul's method was to state the proposition and then substantiate it by linking together various passages of Scripture in order to prove that all men are sinners and that men are wholly sinners. Man's character (3:9–12) and man's conduct (3:12–18) show both his sinful nature and sinful acts.

C. *ORIGIN OF SIN*

With respect to the origin of sin in the human race Paul taught that it began with Adam's transgression (Romans 5:12–21). Eve was deceived by Satan (2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14), Adam was the gateway through which sin entered the race (Romans 5:12a), and "all sinned" (Romans 5:12b). It is the meaning of the phrase "all sinned" that is of primary importance to an understanding of the origin of sin. No one questions that through Adam sin came into the experience of the race, but whether or not this was by the race's being in Adam is questioned.

Finney for instance said that Adam as the head of the race merely influenced his posterity by exposing them to aggravated temptation; constitutional sinfulness he stoutly denied.¹ Others argue that being "in Adam" means being affected by Adam's sin, but not participating in it.

Sanday and Headlam wrote: “If they sinned, their sin was due in part to tendencies inherited from Adam. . . . The Fall gave the predisposition to sin.”² Barthianism, while stressing the solidarity of sin in the human race, denies that sin originated in Adam, for the account of Genesis 3 belongs to a realm of history that is not historiographical. Brunner declared that original sin is read into the account.³

The only proper explanation of Paul’s thought on the matter is that when Adam sinned, the entire race sinned in him because, as Stevens explained, “all individuals were seminally in Adam, and actually participated in his sin.”⁴ It is not that Pauline theology assigns this idea of imputed sin as the only basis for condemnation, for in other places Paul recognized that inherited sin and personal transgression also bring condemnation. But this idea of imputation based on actual participation in the sin of Adam is a clear part of Pauline teaching.

D. EFFECTS OF SIN

1. Sin brings death. Paul traced both physical and spiritual death to sin. In Romans 5:14 the reign of physical death during the time from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the same manner as Adam did, proves that all sinned in Adam (see 1 Corinthians 15:21). In the same passage Paul wrote of the sentence of spiritual death passing upon all men through Adam (Romans 5:12). The proof of the fact that all are separated from God by spiritual death is the universal slavery of man to sin (Romans 6:16,23).

2. Sin causes corruption of character. Because man is a sinner he sins. Basic character is affected to the extent that there is none that really seeks God or does that which can make him acceptable to God (Romans 3:9–12). Such character breeds corrupted conduct, which exhibits itself in corrupting, deceitful, uncharitable, blasphemous works and murderous, oppressive, quarrelsome, impious deeds (Romans 3:15– 18).

3. Sin affected creation (Romans 8:18–25). In speaking of the expectation of the Christian, Paul somewhat incidentally remarked that creation too awaits release from bondage to which it was subjected unwillingly. God was obliged to subject the earth to ineffectiveness because

of the sin of Adam. Since in the fall man lost the dominion he had originally been given over the earth, the earth had to be cursed so that fallen man would not be left living on an unfallen earth. Thus unwillingly, because of man's sin, the earth was put in subjection.

4. *Sin is the reason Christ had to die.* In all of Paul's Epistles there is repeated emphasis on the truth that Christ died because of sin (Romans 8:2–3; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 1:7; Philippians 3:9; Colossians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:9–10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14; 1 Timothy 2:5–6; 2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 2:14).

E. RELATIONSHIPS OF SIN

Paul dealt with sin in relation to two other important concepts: the flesh and the law. Although Paul used the word *flesh* to designate the material of the body (1 Corinthians 15:50; Ephesians 5:30; 6:12) and as a synonym for the whole of man (Romans 3:20; 1 Corinthians 1:29), his principal use was an ethical one. Flesh stands for that which is sinful (Romans 7:18,25; 8:1–9,12–16). It is the human nature of man that is governed by sin. The flesh in that sense motivates the entire life of the unredeemed man and it can only lead to spiritual death, for it stands in enmity with God (Romans 8:5–8). The Christian's basis of victory depends on a once-for-all crucifixion of the flesh (Galatians 5:24) and a constant controlling of it by the Spirit (Galatians 5:17–23).

The relationship between sin and the law is fully developed by Paul in Romans 7:7–25. Paul made it clear that the law is not to be equated with sin, but that the law reveals certain things about sin. It reveals the fact of sin (and it is the Mosaic law that is in view here, for Paul specifically mentioned the tenth commandment in 7:7); it provides sin with a base of operations (7:8); it reveals the power of sin (7:9); it reveals the deceitfulness of sin (7:10–11), for instead of directing Paul to life, the law showed him the way of death by revealing the deceitfulness of sin; and it reveals the sinfulness of sin (7:12–13). The law, which in itself is holy, just, and good, becomes the instrument to reveal sin, the agent of evil. How evil then by comparison must sin be, for it works the greatest evil through the law, which was in reality a preparation for righteousness.

Although the law shows these things about sin, it cannot empower the believer to give him victory over sin (Romans 7:14–25). The law does not provide the proper motivation, for it says “have to” while grace says “want to.” The law can never empower unto sanctification. Legalism is sanctification’s chief enemy; to connect the law with the Christian’s sanctification is to defeat him before he starts.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION

Not from Judaism did Paul receive his teaching on redemption, for the idea of a suffering Messiah was repugnant to the Jews. It was on the Damascus road that he became convinced that Jesus was Messiah and that the Messianic concept involved the death of Messiah. The conclusion that death was included as the culmination of Messiah’s work was urged in the early preaching of the other apostles as well as by Paul.

A. *NATURE OF REDEMPTION*

Paul conceived of redemption in its broadest terms. It was a purchase (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). It included an irrevocable deliverance (Galatians 3:13; 4:4–5) and it guaranteed release on payment of ransom (Titus 2:14; Romans 3:24; 8:23; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7, 14; 4:30; Colossians 1:14). The idea of ransom does not make the concept of redemption entirely commercial, for redemption is also vicarious. Substitution is seen in Romans 3:24, and Paul’s use of *huper*, “in place of,” also requires the vicarious idea (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; also see Philemon 13).

B. *MEANS OF REDEMPTION*

Redemption has its ultimate source in God (Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30). It involves the payment of a ransom price (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23) and this was done by the God-man (Galatians 4:4–5). However, it is not the life of Christ that redeems, but his death (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; blood stands for death—see Romans 5:9–10). Thus redemption was accomplished through the one righteous act of the Son of God giving His life as a ransom (Romans 3:24; 5:18).

C. *SCOPE OF REDEMPTION*

Redemption is for all (Romans 3:23–25). It delivers from iniquity (Titus 2:14) and from the law (Galatians 3:13) with the result that those redeemed are adopted as adult sons (Galatians 4:5). Eventually it will include the resurrection of the body (Romans 8:23).

D. RESULTS OF REDEMPTION

In relation to sins, redemption includes forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7) and thus becomes the basis for justification (Romans 3:24). In relation to law, redemption provides freedom and release. Because the Redeemer came under the law, those who believe can be redeemed from its curse and received as sons. In relation to ethics, redemption by its very nature means that the one redeemed owes something to the One who redeemed him (1 Corinthians 6:20; Titus 2:14). Although God’s emphasis to the believer is the appeal to be His slave, it is nevertheless a reasonable requirement by the very nature of redemption.

III. THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

A. MEANING OF JUSTIFICATION

Justification is a legal term that means “to announce a favorable verdict, to acquit, to vindicate, to declare righteous” (see Deuteronomy 25:1). Paul himself distinguished justification from forgiveness, although forgiveness is necessarily included in it (Acts 13:39). He also made the lack of justification synonymous with condemnation and since the latter is a sentence of disapproval, the former must be a sentence of approval (Romans 5:16; 8:33–34). Thus it is a forensic act of the pronouncing of a judgment rather than the moral process of making one just through the infusion of righteousness.

B. MEANS OF JUSTIFICATION

Faith, righteousness, grace, and redemption in Christ are all related to justification (Romans 3:21–26). It is an act of grace on God’s part. It is made possible on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ. The human requirement is faith, which brings imputed righteousness to the believer.

The fact that the believer is righteous in Christ is the basis of the announcement that is justification or declaration of righteousness. This righteousness is obtained by being placed in Christ. McNeile wrote:

God does not merely acquit, or impute righteousness to, a man though he is guilty; that is not even human justice, much less divine. The Christian, as we have seen, is “translated” from the old condition in which righteousness was impossible into the new condition of oneness with Christ. Christ is perfectly righteous, and *in Him* the Christian is . . . righteous.⁵

However, people are not translated into the kingdom of Christ either against their own will, or indiscriminately, or automatically. Faith is the necessary condition (Ephesians 2:8–9)—such faith means an abandonment to God so that He might do what we cannot do for ourselves. In Romans 4 Paul illustrated from the life of Abraham that all a man must do is believe in order to gain God’s righteousness. The apostle made three points about the sufficiency of faith: justification did not come to Abraham by faith plus circumcision (4:9–12); justification did not come to Abraham by faith plus law (4:13–17); and justification comes to anyone by faith alone (4:18–25).

C. RESULTS OF JUSTIFICATION

Justification brings peace (Romans 5:1) and practical holiness (Romans 6–8). The Pauline logic is simple: because we are righteous in Christ (which is the basis of justification) we should live righteously in this world (see Colossians 3:1). Paul’s soteriology is everywhere ethical in its ramifications.

CHAPTER 4

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

The concept of the church looms large in Paul's thought for at least two reasons: (1) his relation to the revelation of the mystery of the body, which accounts for his concept of the church universal; (2) his desire to organize his converts into self-governing and self-propagating groups, which accounts for his emphasis on the local church. Paul used the word *ekklēsia* ("church") sixty-two times in his Epistles to indicate a local group (1 Corinthians 1:2) as well as the entire body of believers (1 Corinthians 12:28; Colossians 1:18), but his thought as a whole contains certain basic avowals that taken together set forth his doctrine of the church.

I. THE CHURCH IS A MYSTERY

The first of these avowals concerns the mystery character of the church, the body of Christ. The word *musterion* ("mystery") of course does not mean something difficult to understand, but something imparted to the initiated only.¹ It occurs in the Septuagint only in Daniel 2 in reference to the secrets of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In the New Testament the word appears twenty-seven times, including the twenty times in the writings of Paul.

Paul used the word in reference to the basic features of the church. The fact that he used it in other connections (Ephesians 6:19) does not mean that the church is not a mystery; it simply means that these other facts were also unknown in Old Testament times.

The fact that there would be both Jews and Gentiles in one body in the church is called a mystery (Ephesians 3:1–12). Paul referred to this one body as a "new man," not a made-over Israel (Ephesians 2:15). The living, organic nature of the people of God, the church, is also called a mystery

(Colossians 1:24–27; 2:10–19; 3:4, 11). The relationship of the church as the bride of Christ is characterized by the same word (Ephesians 5:22–32), as is the fact that some who belong to this body will not have to die but will be translated (1 Corinthians 15:51–57). Thus Paul considered these truths concerning the body of Christ—the church, the new people of God—to be mysteries unknown before New Testament times. His own definition of *mystery* in Romans 16:25 is borne out by this usage.

Does this mean that Paul believed that the church was completely hidden in the Old Testament? What he wrote in Colossians 1:25–26 would so indicate, and it is not mitigated by the “as” in Ephesians 3:5. All Paul was saying in the latter passage is that even though it was known in the Old Testament that Jews and Gentiles would both share in blessings, it was not known how that would be brought to pass within the one body of Christ.² His use of the word “mystery” (Ephesians 3:3–4) plus direct statements such as Colossians 1:25–26 indicate that in his mind the mystery of the church was completely unknown in Old Testament times.

Did Paul claim to be the sole recipient of the revelation of the mystery? On theological grounds it could not be so, for the church was known and recognized before Paul’s time (Acts 8:1–3; Philippians 3:6; Galatians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 15:9). James’ speech before the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) also shows prior understanding of the fact that in this age Jews and Gentiles would be on the same basis.

Further, in his own testimony in the principal passage on the matter, Paul disavowed any claim to being the sole recipient or agent of the revelation of the mystery (Ephesians 3:1–12). All he said in this passage is that generally speaking the mystery was unknown before he revealed it; clearly he recognized that God had revealed it to the other apostles and prophets as well as to himself (3:5). This was done by the Holy Spirit, not by Paul; thus Paul was neither the first nor the only agency of this revelation. Even when he spoke of himself as the agent, he was not at all emphatic about his position (note the unemphatic *emoi*, “to me,” not standing at the beginning of the sentence in 3:3). Thus he made no claim that the revelation of the mystery was only to him.

By contrast, when Paul spoke of the proclamation of the mystery (3:8), he did claim that that was his principal responsibility. To say, as Paul did in this passage, that he received something from God, was not to say that God had not also given it to others, as indeed He had to the apostles and

prophets. Nevertheless, although it cannot be said that Paul was the sole recipient of the revelation of the mystery, he was the principal agent of the revelation of it to others. It is largely to his theology that we owe our knowledge of the church as a mystery.

A corollary to the mystery character of the church is the distinction of the church as belonging to this age. An affirmation of this truth is seen in what Paul had to say about the beginning and the end of the church. Concerning the former, Paul's thought is emphatic in placing stress on the necessary relation of the church to the resurrection and ascension of Christ. It is built upon His resurrection (Ephesians 1:19–20; Colossians 3:1) and its functioning is dependent on the giving of gifts to individual members—gifts that are dependent on the ascension of Christ (Ephesians 4:7–12). If by some stretch of the imagination the body of Christ could be said to have been in existence before the ascension of Christ, it would have to be concluded that it was an inoperative body. In Paul's mind the church is built on the resurrection and ascension, and this makes it distinctive to this age.

In writing of the end of the church when the saints will be translated and resurrected, Paul used the phrase “dead in Christ” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This seems to distinguish those who have died in this age from believers who died before Christ's first advent, thus marking the church off as distinct to this age and a mystery hidden in Old Testament times, but now revealed.

II. THE CHURCH IS AN ORGANISM

The church as an organism is the complex structure of the body of Christ which carries on living activities by means of the individual believers, who are distinct in function but mutually dependent on and governed by their relation to Christ, the Head. Thus it is natural to find the Pauline revelation of the church as an organism chiefly pictured under the figure of the church as the body. Related in a secondary way are two other figures: the church as a building (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20) and the church as a bride (Ephesians 5:22–32). But the principal revelation is found under the figure of the body.

A. *E*_{NTRANCE INTO THE} *O*_{RGANISM}

The fact that there is a definite act and time of entering the body is affirmed throughout the Pauline writings (1 Corinthians 6:15; Ephesians

5:30; Colossians 2:19). The means of entrance is stated clearly as the work of the Holy Spirit in baptizing believers into the body (1 Corinthians 12:13). He baptizes or introduces all who believe into the new element of the sphere of resurrection life in the body. The context makes it clear that the Spirit's work is not restricted to a certain group of believers, for there were all kinds in the church at Corinth and Paul declared that all had been baptized into the body. Faith is of course the human requirement, but it is faith in Christ as Savior. The baptizing of the Spirit automatically and simultaneously follows, placing all believers in that body.

The principal ramification of our entrance into the organism is summarized in the Pauline doctrine of union. This union involves union with Christ as the Head of the body and union with all other believers as fellow members of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12–31; Romans 12:4–5).

B. DIRECTION OF THE ORGANISM

As in other organisms, in the body of Christ the direction comes from the Head. Paul taught the headship of Christ over principalities and powers (Colossians 2:10), over all men (1 Corinthians 11:3), and in particular over the church (Ephesians 1:22;4:15;Colossians 1:18;2:19). The basis of Christ's headship over the church, though related to and presupposed by His universal headship over all men, is particularly His work of redemption (Ephesians 5:22–32). In other words, the rights of redemption result in the prerogatives of headship.

Specific ideas that are involved in the direction of the body by the Head are discernible in Paul's thought. First, headship involves subordination (1 Corinthians 11:2–16). In this passage Paul clearly taught a ranking order of relationships. The head of Christ is God; the head of man is Christ; and the head of woman is man. Thus the order is God, Christ, man, and woman. This does not imply inferiority, for that would be incompatible with Paul's doctrine of the full deity of Christ taught elsewhere (Colossians 2:9), but it does teach subordination. Thus the headship of Christ over the church is intended to convey the idea of the subordination of the church to the directions of Christ (Ephesians 5:24).

Second, headship involves interdependence (Colossians 2:19; Ephesians 5:30; 4:15). The Head is dependent on the members to carry out His directions and in turn the members are dependent on that Head for

leadership and on each other for cooperation in carrying out the functions of the body. The body is a living organism.

Third, headship involves inseparable union. If this were not so, then we would have to be able to conceive of a maimed body of Christ, which idea is nowhere suggested in the Scripture. Indeed in the illustration Paul used of marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church, there is no hint that divorce is possible in this relationship (Ephesians 5:22–32). This was of course not true in the relationship between God and Israel.

Fourth, headship means loving direction. As Head, Christ is no autocratic or blind ruler. His direction is saturated with love for His bride, for whom He gave His life (Ephesians 5:25).

C. *N*URTURE OF THE *O*RGANISM

It almost goes without saying that the body is nurtured by the Head (Colossians 2:19; Philippians 4:13). Christ does this by nourishing and cherishing the body (Ephesians 5:29; also see Ephesians 6:4 and 1 Thessalonians 2:7). The sufficiency of the body is from the Head.

D. *G*IFTS TO THE *O*RGANISM

1. Definition of gifts. Except for one reference in 1 Peter 4:10, Paul is the only New Testament writer to use the word for grace-gift, *charisma*. His usage is wide, ranging from references to the gift of salvation (Romans 6:23) to references to God's providential care (2 Corinthians 1:11). However, the most frequent usage is in reference to special gifts or abilities given to men by God. Thus a *charisma* in this sense is a God-given ability for service.

2. Description of gifts. This distinctively Pauline revelation is found in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. (The only non-Pauline reference is in 1 Peter 4:10.)

a. Apostleship (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28). *Apostle* has both a general and specific meaning. In the general sense it means "messenger" and is used for instance of Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25). In the specialized sense it refers to the twelve and a few others (for example Barnabas, Acts 14:14) to whom the gift was given and who were accredited by special signs.

b. Prophecy (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 14; Ephesians 4:11). The exercise of the gift of prophecy included receiving a message from God by special revelation, being guided in declaring it, and having it authenticated by God Himself. It may have been rather widely distributed in New Testament times, although the record only mentions a few prophets specifically (Acts 11:27; 13:1; 21:9). The Corinthian church evidently had prophets in it (1 Corinthians 14).

c. Miracles (1 Corinthians 12:28). When Paul arranges the gifts in order of their relative importance, this one appears as the first of the lesser ones.

d. Healing (1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30). Evidently this gift is a specific form of the gift of miracles.

e. Tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10). This was a God-given ability to speak in another language—either a foreign human language or an unknown ecstatic utterance. Abuse of this gift led Paul to list certain specific regulations to govern its exercise in the church. It was to be used only for edifying, only by two or three in a single meeting (and then only if an interpreter was present), and never in preference to prophecy (1 Corinthians 14). The gift of interpretation is a corollary gift to this one.

f. Evangelism (Ephesians 4:11). This gift involves two ideas: the kind of message preached and the places where it is preached. The message is the good news of salvation, and an evangelist's ministry is an itinerant one. For Paul the length of stay in one place on his itinerary sometimes was as much as two years (Acts 19:10). Paul evidently thought that one may do the work of an evangelist even if he does not possess the gift (2 Timothy 4:5).

g. Pastor (Ephesians 4:11). A pastor is one who leads, provides for, cares for, and protects the flock of God. The full exercise of this gift will also include ruling and teaching.

h. Ministering (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28). This is the gift of helping in the broadest sense of the word. It especially includes ministering to physical and bodily needs of others.

i. Teaching (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11). This is a gift that can be given alone or in connection with that of pastor. It concerns the imparting of truth to others.

j. Faith (1 Corinthians 12:9). This is the God-given ability to believe God's power to supply and guide.

k. Exhortation (Romans 12:8). This is the talent to encourage, comfort, admonish, and entreat people.

l. Discerning spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). This is the ability to distinguish between true and false sources of supernatural revelation given in oral form.

m. Showing mercy (Romans 12:8). This is akin to the gift of ministering, for it involves succoring those who are sick and afflicted.

n. Giving (Romans 12:8). The gift of giving concerns distributing one's own money to others. It is to be done with simplicity; that is, with no thought of return or gain for self in any way.

o. Administration (Romans 12:8; 1 Corinthians 12:28). This is the ability to rule in the church.

3. Design of gifts. The giving of grace-gifts is with a view to fulfilling particular purposes:

a. To promote the unity of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12–26). Unity of the organism (not the organization) is accomplished as every part is functioning properly.

b. To promote the growth of the body (Ephesians 4:12–16). Gifts, according to this passage, are given to equip the saints so that they in turn may give themselves to the work of ministering so that the body will be built up. This involves both quantity and quality (see Luke 6:40).

4. Development of gifts. Although gifts are supernaturally bestowed, Paul indicated that they may be developed by the person to whom they are given. After listing some of the gifts in their order of importance he said that believers should covet the best gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31). This means that an individual may be ambitious to exercise certain gifts; such ambition can only be fulfilled by study and work. Paul himself, even though he was reared on the Old Testament, needed three years in Arabia to develop his gift of teaching.

In Romans 1:11 Paul indicated that he hoped to have a part in developing the gifts in the churches in Rome (see 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). Quite clearly others may have a part in bringing gifts to maturity and full use (see Ephesians 4:7–12). Thus gifts may be developed as one is ambitious in relation to self and attentive to others.

Nowhere did Paul suggest that gifts are to be attached to a designated place. For instance Paul did not equate the gift of pastor with the pastorate

(as is commonly done today). A pastor is one who shepherds; his gift may or may not be exercised in connection with the office of pastor. The gift is different from the office.

Neither did Paul suggest that there are special gifts for specific age groups. There is no gift of young people's work—all ages need teachers, pastors, helpers, and so on (see Titus 2:1–8). A gift is an ability, according to Paul's thinking, and not a place or age group in which that ability is used.

Paul's doctrine of the church as an organism contains the true idea of ecumenicity. His view of the oneness of all believers was deeply rooted and that view brought with it a firm sense of the necessity of the interdependence of Christians. Much of the functioning of the organism is done through the visible organization, for organism and organization are interrelated ideas. For instance gifts are exercised within the organization of the local assembly; nevertheless in setting forth the doctrine Paul kept the organism paramount, for the gifts are given to the body for the upbuilding of that body. The church as an organism, then, is basic to all that Paul said about the church as an organization.

III. THE CHURCH IS AN ORGANIZATION

Paul's letters were written in the heat of the battle. Therefore it is not surprising to discover that for every single time he used the word *church* in relation to the organism, he used it six times in relation to the organization. This is not to say that he thought the organization was six times more important than the organism, but it is to say that the church organization occupied a large place in his writing. In the theological substructure of his thinking, the large place he gave to the organism just discussed and the importance he placed on the revelation of the mystery of the body can only lead to the conclusion that the organism occupied the basic place in his thinking. The organization occupied a large place in his writing simply because the majority of his writings were to local congregations. The two concepts do not stand in opposition to each other, for the organism properly functioning will express itself in local organizations.

A. OFFICIALS IN THE CHURCH

1. Elders. Elders (sometimes referred to as “overseers”) were taken over into the church from the synagogue organization (see Acts 11:30). They

were considered essential for the proper functioning of a local testimony, so much so that Paul saw to it that they were appointed in the churches he had established before returning to Antioch (Acts 14:23).³ He recommended to Titus that they be appointed in the churches in Crete (Titus 1:5). Their principal duties involved ruling (1 Timothy 5:17), guarding the truth (Titus 1:9), and the general oversight of the church (1 Timothy 3:1). Some elders were also gifted in teaching (1 Timothy 5:17), but this was not a necessary *function* of an elder (although the *ability* to teach was a qualification).

In his Epistles Paul usually mentioned elders in the plural (Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5), but in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 the elder is spoken of in the singular (note that deacons in the same chapter are spoken of in the plural, 3:8–13). This may indicate that as time went on, a single elder led the congregation as a kind of pastor. The qualifications for elders are clearly specified by Paul in two passages (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:6–9). Nothing is said about removing an elder from office once he has been chosen, although one might infer that if he ceases to qualify, he should cease to function.

2. Deacons. The origin of deacons is not so clear as that of elders. They were probably an innovation of the Christian church, being at first helpers of the elders—performing functions that did not involve superintendence. The deacons were unofficial servants, some of whom in process of time became the officially recognized diaconate. The general sense of deacon as servant is found in the later of Paul’s Epistles (Colossians 4:17; 1 Timothy 4:6), while in the same group of Epistles the specific office is mentioned (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8–10).

The standard of qualification for deacons (1 Timothy 3:8–10) indicates that they performed a spiritual ministry, so the distinction between elders and deacons was not that the elders had to do with spiritual things while the deacons concerned themselves with material matters (see Acts 11:30). Rather the distinction was that the deacons were the subordinates functioning under the general oversight of the elders. Paul said nothing about the appointment of deacons, although the general indication of history is that the elders chose them.

Did Paul recognize the office of deaconess? Phoebe’s name is used in connection with the word “deacon” or “servant” (*diakonon*, Romans 16:1) and certain women are mentioned together with the deacons in the passage concerning their qualifications (1 Timothy 3:11). Whether these were

official deaconesses or merely women servants (if the word *deacon* was being used in the unofficial sense) is a question that perhaps can never be settled conclusively. It seems doubtful to this writer that Paul was using the word officially. Phoebe was a helper of the church, but not a member of an order of deaconesses. The women mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:11 were probably the wives of deacons who helped them in their duties. Paul recognized the necessity for women helpers in the church, but that does not mean that there was an order of deaconesses.⁴

B. ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

1. Baptism. References to baptism are rare in the Pauline writings. We know that Paul was himself baptized (Acts 9:18) and that he baptized others (1 Corinthians 1:15 ff.). He evidently considered it an important ordinance to be experienced by every believer (Acts 16:31 ff.; Ephesians 5:26) and yet he clearly distinguished it from the gospel itself (1 Corinthians 1:17, the *alla*, “but,” in the verse showing strong contrast). He practiced in one instance the rebaptism of those who had not yet received Christian baptism (Acts 19:1–7).

Undoubtedly there was a close connection in his mind between the baptism of the Spirit and baptism with water. This is most clearly seen in Romans 6:1–10 where the accomplishments described can only be the work of the Spirit, but where the background of the passage is clearly the ordinance and what it pictures. To rule the ordinance out of this passage is to be unrealistic in discerning both Paul’s thought and that which would be conveyed to his readers. For Paul the ordinance apparently pictured the believer’s association with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection.

2. Lord’s supper. The supper was for Paul primarily a memorial of the sacrificial death of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:23–24); the observance of the ordinance involved a remembrance of love (11:24–25), a reiteration of the gospel (11:26a),⁵ and a renewal of hope (11:26b). The observance must be preceded by a self-examination. Failure to do that had resulted in the sickness and death of some of the Corinthian believers.

For Paul the Lord’s supper also had other significances. He called it a *koinonia*, a sharing fellowship (1 Corinthians 10:16). Thus spiritual fellowship with Christ is also part of the supper. Too, the ordinance reminds

all believers of their oneness in Christ (1 Corinthians 10:17). We are bound together because we are bound to Christ.

C. ORDER OF THE CHURCH

Detailed directions regarding the order and conduct of the meetings of the church are surprisingly few. Specific regulations concerning the use of the gift of tongues have been referred to. In general Paul urged the importance of reverence and proper decorum in the meetings of the congregation, especially in the observance of the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11). He also expected the churches to exercise their work of disciplining wayward members (1 Corinthians 5).

Leadership in the church was definitely placed in the hands of men. Paul's view about women in the church was that they should be subordinate and silent. Their subordination, which is based on the natural facts of creation, was to be exhibited in the church by the wearing of veils. It was a matter of teaching a relationship that God established in creation and not a matter of custom or local Corinthian peculiarity. In both 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2 Paul related the subordination of women to the accounts of creation. This makes it a matter of doctrine and not custom.

Silence is also enjoined upon women by Paul (1 Corinthians 11:5, 13; 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12). They must not teach or speak in the public assembly of the church or even ask questions. Some have held that 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 11:13 merely forbid women to pray or prophesy without veils. This could not have been Paul's meaning, for in the next section of the same Epistle, where he dealt more specifically with the conduct of public worship, he expressly forbade all speaking by women in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34). He could hardly have intended such a deliberate contradiction, which is the only conclusion to be drawn if 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 11:13 mean that women may pray *and* prophesy when wearing veils (for the one cannot be permitted without the other). Stevens has correctly noted in regard to 1 Corinthians 11:5,13 and 14:34:

We observe that in the former passages Paul says nothing of how women may, *with propriety*, speak in public, but is merely denouncing the obvious impropriety of speaking without the veil. It is quite certain, as appears later when Paul takes up the subject of

women's speaking in general, that for his mind the requirement to appear in the assembly only with veiled head would preclude, by its very significance, the public speaking in question.⁶

Again we notice that Paul's views are related to his literal interpretation of the accounts of creation in Genesis. They were not restricted to a particular situation in a local church in the first century. This was part of his theology.

In all of his teaching relative to the church, Paul's chief emphasis was on the unity of the Spirit, which binds every believer to the Head and to other believers. The primitive church experienced its problems and divisions, but for all his teaching on church organization, Paul never campaigned for organizational unity. He firmly believed that the true unity of the church was not outward but inward, and this is the spirit that permeates his ecclesiology.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Even the most casual reader of the Pauline Epistles realizes that the truth concerning the Christian life occupies a large place in those writings. This has led writers on Pauline theology to assert that Paul's doctrine of "in Christ" is his central one.¹ The case for such a conclusion is substantial, for many other doctrines are related to being in Christ; for example, justification (Romans 8:1), sanctification (Romans 6:1–10), ethics (Colossians 3:1), and eschatology (1 Thessalonians 4:14–15). Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the doctrine of God is the central doctrine of Pauline theology and that the doctrine of being in Christ is the focal point of all the teachings concerning the Christian life.

I. FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

Paul was the chief exponent of the concept of being in Christ, as far as making it normative in Christian thought and experience. The idea is found in the teaching of the Lord (John 14:20; 15:4), but generally speaking the Synoptics emphasize being "with [*meta*] Christ" while Paul speaks of being "in [*en*] Christ."

The term is far-reaching. The heavenly calling of Christians is in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14; also see 2 Timothy 1:9). Their election is in Him (Ephesians 1:4). Forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7; 4:32; Colossians 1:14), redemption (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14), freedom from condemnation (Romans 8:1), freedom from the law (Galatians 2:4), justification (Galatians 2:17), and life (Romans 6:11, 23; 8:2) are all in Christ. Sanctification and Christian living are also related to being in Christ. In Him Christians are sanctified (1 Corinthians 1:2), rooted and built up (Colossians 2:7), taught (Ephesians 4:21), guarded (Philippians 4:7), and

led in triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14). In Christ believers—both Jew and Gentile—are one body (Romans 12:5; Ephesians 2:13–22) and in Him they have boldness and access to God (Ephesians 3:12). Bodily resurrection is also related to being in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Although Paul used the term in many other passages with less doctrinal precision, considering all usages, we can define the term thus: “in Christ” is the redeemed man’s new environment in the sphere of resurrection life. Stewart said of the Christian, “He has been transplanted into a new soil and a new climate, and both soil and climate are Christ.”²

Certain important distinctions are apparent in the concept. (1) This union with Christ is a gift of God and involves the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. (2) The doctrine invalidates the idea that Jesus is merely an example. (3) The idea is mystical, but it is a mysticism of intimate communion with Christ open to all believers. (4) It is the basis for Christian ethics and the answer to the antinomian charge.

If a Christian is really united to Christ, He is identified with Christ’s attitude toward sin, and this is the strongest reason for living the Christian life. This union also provides the power to live. Every indicative is a veiled imperative: you are a new man in Christ, so live like one. This is the heart of all of Paul’s teaching about the Christian life.

II. PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING—SANCTIFICATION

Although Paul recognized the positional aspect of sanctification (1 Corinthians 6:11), it is the progressive aspect of practical sanctification that is the subject of this section.

A. *THE DIVINE WORK IN SANCTIFICATION*

God’s work in practical sanctification involves placing the believer in Christ, the meaning of which has just been discussed. The means by which this is done is the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). Everywhere Paul’s emphasis relative to the divine work in sanctification is on the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life. The appeal to carnal believers is to recognize the indwelling of the Spirit and then to live as purchased ones (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). The fruit of the Holy Spirit is genuine sanctification, for it is He who empowers the believer to live (Galatians 5:16–26). All of the ministries of the Spirit mentioned under the

doctrine of God demonstrate how vital His work is in producing a truly sanctified life.

B. THE HUMAN WORK IN SANCTIFICATION

Paul did not neglect to mention that there is a work to be done by the believer in sanctification. Presentation of the life is the starting point of all human effort (Romans 12:1). This is a once-for-all offering of one's self without reservation. The corollary of that positive presentation is the negative breaking with sin (Romans 6:1–13). It is a break that is based on the believer's realizing or reckoning that because of his union with Christ, he has already crucified the flesh (see Galatians 5:24). The aorist tenses in Romans 6:1–10 and Galatians 5:24 conclusively show that the work of crucifixion of the flesh has been done completely for the Christian once for all. It is up to the individual to realize it and on the basis of that reckoning to make a presentation of himself. Prayer will have a large place in this, for it is through prayer that we learn what has been accomplished on our behalf (Ephesians 1:15–22; Philippians 1:9–11; Colossians 1:9–11), and it is on the basis of knowledge that an intelligent reckoning can be made (Romans 6:1–13).

However, the victory is not won by an initial presentation and break with sin. There is a battle to be fought, and Paul gives directions concerning that also. The battle to believe the truth concerning what God has declared to be true about the crucifixion of the flesh is a continuous one (Ephesians 6:13; Romans 8:13; 1 Timothy 6:12). The battle includes a fleeing from sin and sinful situations (Romans 13:14; 1 Corinthians 10:14; 2 Timothy 2:22) and a following after good ideals in the company of good companions (1 Corinthians 15:33; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22). For all the emphasis Paul placed on the work of God in sanctification, he did not neglect to spell out the human responsibility as well. Both aspects are necessary in victorious living.

III. PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING—SEPARATION

Being in Christ is the basis of sanctification. Sanctification in its outworking is separation from sin and unto Christ in all the relationships of life. It is living one's position in everything.

A. *I_N RELATION TO S_{ELF}*

The practice of sanctification in relation to self means discipline (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). Discipline is required by the character of the enemies that the Christian faces in his race. The believer must live in the world without abusing it (1 Corinthians 7:31). The flesh, though crucified, is not eradicated and the devil and his hosts are constant and powerful foes in the Christian's warfare (Ephesians 6:12–18). The rules to be followed in self-discipline are: condition the body (1 Corinthians 9:24), control the body (1 Corinthians 6:12; 9:26), and capture the body (1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Timothy 2:5). The reward is approval by Christ at His judgment seat (1 Corinthians 3:14; 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Discipline is a good illustration of the combination of the divine and human in sanctification, for while it is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23), it is also the fruit of human effort.

B. *I_N RELATION TO THE F_{AMILY}*

Order is the key thought in Paul's teaching concerning family relationships.

1. Marriage. Paul affirmed that marriage is to be entered into only with believers (2 Corinthians 6:14). In 1 Corinthians 7 he seems definitely to give the preference to celibacy for two reasons: the Lord's coming is near; and the nature of Christian work demands one's full attention—something that cannot be given by a married person. The first reason can be called an interim ethic, but the second cannot and is just as valid a reason for not preferring marriage today as it was in Paul's time. This preference of Paul's does not indicate that he considered marriage wrong; rather he made it an individual matter (1 Corinthians 7:7).

2. Divorce. Once marriage had been contracted between believers, Paul allowed no divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10–11). In this he considered that he was following the Lord's teaching. In some circumstances when two unbelievers had married and one of them subsequently became a Christian, a divorce was allowed (1 Corinthians 7:12–15).

3. Home. Paul assigned the leadership of the Christian home to the husband (Ephesians 5:22–33). The husband’s headship involves loving his wife with a divine love, expressing his love for his family by nourishing them into a maturing Christian experience, disciplining the children (Ephesians 6:4), providing for the home (1 Timothy 5:8), and in general being the presiding leader in the home (1 Timothy 3:4). The wife is to work at home (Titus 2:4–5), have a part in the rearing of the children (Ephesians 6:1), and be in subjection to her husband (Ephesians 5:23). Children should expect to be governed (Ephesians 6:1–4; 1 Timothy 3:4); they should be grave in deportment (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6) and godly in conduct (1 Timothy 5:4). If the circumstances require it, they should care for the material needs of a widowed mother or grandmother (1 Timothy 5:4). This evidently is a responsibility that a person has as long as he has a living parent.

C. IN RELATION TO GOVERNMENT

The proper function of government is to promote good in order that peaceable and godly lives may be lived (1 Timothy 2:2; Romans 13:3). For this reason believers should pray faithfully for those who rule (1 Timothy 2:2) and be submissive to rulers (Romans 13:1–7). Submission is required for four reasons: (1) government is ordained of God; (2) any resistance to government is in reality resistance to God; (3) government is for the good; and (4) the conscience demands it. Submission will manifest itself in paying dues and custom taxes and in fear and honor of the rulers. Godet wrote:

There is nothing to show that the submission required by Paul includes active co-operation; it may even show itself in the form of passive resistance, and it does not at all exclude protestation in word and even resistance in deed, provided that to this latter there be joined calm acceptance of the punishment inflicted.³

Paul did not equate government and the world, for although there may be similarities, they belong to different realms of authority. Paul also declared that the courts of government should not be used by Christians for settling their disputes (1 Corinthians 6:1–8).

D. IN RELATION TO WORK

A Christian should not be a reactionary as far as his position in life is concerned (1 Corinthians 7:20–22). Performance of his work should be as unto the Lord and not unto men (Ephesians 6:5–9; Colossians 3:22–25). For employees this means doing the job in fear and trembling as doing the will of God, and for employers it means impartiality and just treatment of workers. Paul seemed to think that converted slaves could well be emancipated, though he did not crusade for it (Philemon 8–21).

E. IN RELATION TO THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF OTHERS

Paul always recognized and practiced the principle that the only thing that can benefit the lost man is salvation; therefore the Christian life should be lived in relation to unsaved men so as to win them to Christ (Colossians 4:5). This involved for Paul great strictness and discipline in living (1 Corinthians 9:19–27). Such evangelistic living is motivated at least in part by the fear of the Lord and by the hope of reward (2 Corinthians 5:10–11; 1 Thessalonians 2:19–20).

The Christian's relation to other believers should always be such as will help build them up in the faith. In principle it is simple; in practice it is complicated. The principle is ethical living. It can be simply stated as follows: Do nothing that will put a cause for stumbling in the path of another Christian (see 1 Corinthians 8:13). The liberty that a stronger brother may have should always be exercised in love, and love often brings restriction of liberty. There are limits—not because the stronger brother thinks something is wrong, but because the weaker brother thinks something is wrong. Thus the restricting is out of love for the weaker brother (Romans 14:13–19). Fear also motivates restricted living (Romans 14:20–23), for Paul said it should be considered a little thing to give up something in the light of the awful consequences of offending a weaker brother.

When there is honest disagreement between believers, the Pauline dictum is mutual consideration of one another (Romans 14:1–12). Weaker and stronger brother alike should remember that God has received both (14:1–3), that both are the servants of God and not of one another (14:4), that there can be conscientious differences (14:5–6), that all are under the lordship of Christ (14:7–9), and that each will have to render an account to

God in the judgment (14:10–12). For these reasons there should be mutual consideration between brethren who may honestly disagree about the propriety of certain actions in the Christian life.

The all-encompassing principle that guides all relationships of life is the imitation of Christ. Paul's starting point was not the imitation of the earthly life of Jesus, but the glory of God. Since the glory of God is the manifestation of His attributes, and since Jesus of Nazareth perfectly showed forth the Father, glorifying God will imitate Christ. He is our pattern in matters of conduct (Romans 15:1–3), and conforming to that pattern is the only way to glorify God in eating or drinking or whatsoever we do (1 Corinthians 10:31). This should be the aim of all Christian living.

Such considerate conduct assumes of course that the disagreeing parties are both attempting to do God's will. If there is any doubt, one should give Christ the benefit of the doubt and not participate in a questionable activity. Self-discipline is also involved in our relation to others (1 Corinthians 9:19–21), and Christian liberty should never cater to license (Romans 6:1).

CHAPTER 6

ESCHATOLOGY

I. THE FUTURE FOR THE CHURCH

We have already noticed that the doctrine of the church occupies a major place in Pauline theology; therefore it is not surprising to discover that the eschatology of the church is also a prominent theme in Paul's teaching concerning future things.

A. *LAST DAYS*

In two places the apostle gave detailed characteristics of the last days for the church: 1 Timothy 4:1–3 and 2 Timothy 3:1–5. Paul told Timothy that there will be declension in sound doctrine and in godly living and an increased interest in religion.

1. Declension in sound doctrine. Before the church is raptured, there will be an increasing denial of sound doctrine so that men will depart from the faith and be led away into demonism (1 Timothy 4:1). They will have no conscience for the truth. The specific form of the error, misrepresentation of the person of Christ, is the subject of Johannine revelation.

2. Declension in godly living. This characteristic will take two forms: false asceticism and licentious living. The asceticism will forbid marriage and the eating of meats (1 Timothy 4:3), and the licentiousness will take many forms (2 Timothy 3:1–4). Briefly stated, God will be replaced by self so that love of self and love of money will become the principal motivations of life. This will bring with it pride, blasphemy, filial disobedience,

thanklessness, unholiness, perversion, enmity, slandering, lack of self-control, savagery, opposition to all that is good, treachery, recklessness, highmindedness, and the love of pleasure. Even those who may want to resist will be swept along in the tide of gross sin in the last days.

3. Increase in religion. Along with such declension will come an increase in religious interest, but the interest will be in a religion that is powerless (2 Timothy 3:5).

Although these characteristics have been found in the church throughout its history, they will increase in intensity as the age draws to a close. Thus Paul would say that we may expect to see an increase in religious interest and powerless preaching with its attendant loose living as the church completes her mission on earth.

B. TRANSLATION OF THE CHURCH

In two places Paul spoke of the taking up of the church into Heaven: 1 Corinthians 15:51–57 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. It is an event that will involve the descent of the Lord from Heaven, the resurrection of the “dead in Christ” (1 Thessalonians 4:16), the translation of the living who are in Christ, and the meeting of these two groups with the Lord in the air. The aspect involving the change of the living believers, Paul called a mystery (1 Corinthians 15:51). The truth of resurrection was a subject of Old Testament revelation, but that there would be a group who would not see death was unknown until New Testament times.

This truth of the rapture of the church had many practical ramifications for Paul. The fact that he believed it to be imminent affected the apostle’s teaching concerning marriage (1 Corinthians 7:29–31). He believed even in his own day that the time was short; therefore he not only gave the preference to celibacy, but also exhorted those who were married to work for the Lord as if they did not have the responsibilities of marriage.

The doctrine was also a source of comfort and assurance (1 Thessalonians 4:18). The believers at Thessalonica had begun to wonder if their brethren who had died before the Lord’s coming would be able to take part in the kingdom-reign of Christ. Paul assured them that Christ would include them: “God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in

Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 4:14). They would be raised from the dead before the kingdom was ushered in.

Paul also made this teaching of the rapture a basis for steadfastness in the Lord’s service (1 Corinthians 15:58). The truth of judgment to follow the Lord’s return becomes an added incentive for faithfulness in living now (1 Corinthians 3:11–15; 2 Corinthians 5:10–11).

C. *JUDGMENT OF BELIEVERS*

The place of judgment of individuals in the church was pictured by Paul as the *bema* (2 Corinthians 5:10). The basis of the judgment is the quality of works performed since conversion (1 Corinthians 3:11–13). Although there may be many varieties of works, there are only two basic kinds: those that will pass the test of fire and those that will not. Works that are qualified will be rewarded. In no case will an individual’s salvation be in question, for even if his works are burned, “he himself shall be saved” (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Paul described the rewards with the figure of crowns. Specifically crowns will be given for converts (1 Thessalonians 2:19) and for loving the appearing of the Lord (2 Timothy 4:8). Other writers mentioned additional crowns, so this is not an exclusive Pauline revelation (see James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10).

II. THE FUTURE FOR ISRAEL

In the classic section in Romans (9–11) Paul dealt with God’s relationship to his kinsmen according to the flesh, the Jews. His discussion in chapter 9 proved that God was perfectly free as Creator to reject Israel. Even though He had elected them, He did not lose the right to take severe measures against them. God did not reject them unjustly; Paul showed that there was moral necessity for it. In the discussion in Romans 11 Paul returned to the original question: “God has not rejected His people, has He?” (11:1) The apostle answered with an emphatic no.

This answer is confirmed by two considerations: (1) the extent of Israel’s rejection is only partial (11:1–10) and (2) the duration of it is only temporary (11:25–32). (The intervening verses, 11:11–24, show the relation of Israel’s rejection to the Gentiles.) The partial nature of the rejection is illustrated by Paul’s own case, which proves that an individual Israelite can

be saved. The gracious action of God in preserving to Himself a remnant is further proof that God has not cast away His people. Even though Paul later showed that Israel's future involves national restoration, these individual examples introduced at the beginning of the discussion are illustrations of the fact that rejection is only partial.

In the illustration of the olive tree Paul warned Gentiles against being proud of their present position. The olive tree represents the place of privilege that Israel first occupied. Then those natural branches were broken off and unnatural branches, Gentiles, were grafted into the root that remained. "The rich root" (Romans 11:17) is a reference to the Abrahamic covenant, which promised blessing both to the nation Israel and to all nations. Paul admonished Gentiles to learn the lessons of history and not to be boastful and proud of their present position, for God will not spare them if they act as the Jews did. God can easily graft in again the natural branches. Thus Paul made it clear that the future restoration of the Jews is more probable than the salvation of Gentiles had been.

Not only is that restoration highly probable; it is certain, for Israel's rejection is not permanent (Romans 11:25–32). It is temporary because it is only "until" a certain event (11:25). Since there is no other possible way to understand "until," it is clear that the rejection must end eventually. The event that marks the end of Israel's rejection is the coming in of "the fulness of the Gentiles." This, which is a mystery and not the subject of Old Testament revelation, means the completion of the full number of Gentiles who are to be saved in this age. It goes without saying that individual Jews are also being saved today, but the church is predominately called from among Gentiles (Acts 15:14). Therefore Paul's point is that when the church is complete, God will again begin to deal with the nation Israel.

Israel's rejection is not permanent for another reason: Romans 11:26 says, "All Israel will be saved." Amillennialists are divided on the meaning of "Israel" in this verse, some holding that it refers to the church and others that it means Jews who are individually saved today. Premillennialists believe that it refers to Jews who will be saved when the Redeemer comes out of Zion—that is, at the second coming of Christ. Any interpretation that makes "Israel" mean "Jews" clearly shows that their rejection cannot be permanent, since salvation will come to them at the return of Christ. At that same time the new covenant will be established (11:27) and God will have

mercy on His people (11:31–32). Thus Israel’s future rests securely on the promises and nature of God.

III. THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD

The eschatology of Paul is, comparatively speaking, lacking in much detail with respect to this topic, which is primarily a subject of Johannine theology. What Paul did reveal can be summed up in the word *judgment*. Judgment upon the world at the return of Christ will be “in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thessalonians 1:7–8). The result of this is the everlasting destruction of unbelievers “away from the presence of the Lord” (1:9). The practical ramification of the assured fact that judgment will come is the encouragement of believers who are patient in the midst of persecution now. Believers who were suffering then were assured that the wicked at whose hands the persecutions came would some day be punished at the coming of the Lord.

The last days of the history of the world before the coming of Christ will see the rise of the great deceiver, “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). His appearance was associated with “the day of the Lord” (2:2). Paul had explicitly taught the Thessalonians that as believers they were not appointed unto the wrath of that day (1 Thessalonians 5:1–10), but some had been deceived into thinking that because they were experiencing personal persecution, they were already in the day of the Lord. Paul said that this could not be, for the day of the Lord will not come until first there be an *apostasia* (“a falling away” or “departure”)¹ and the revelation of the man of lawlessness.

The revelation of the man of lawlessness is further dependent on the removal of “he who now restrains” (2 Thessalonians 2:7). When the restrainer is removed, the man of lawlessness will be revealed.² His coming is after the working of Satan with all power, signs, lying wonders, and deceit. Among other things he will sit in the temple of God and demand to be worshiped. But his doom is sure, for the Lord’s coming in judgment will include the destruction of this archenemy of God. Further judgment will fall on unbelievers during the reign of the man of lawlessness in that God will send them “a deluding influence” so that they will not believe the truth (2:11–12).

It is remarkable that whether Paul was speaking of the return of the Lord for the church or for judgment on the world, the ethical values of the doctrines were constantly being reiterated. Undoubtedly the nearness of the coming of Christ was, as Kennedy wrote, “one of the most momentous and inspiring influences for holiness in the primitive Church. It was a call to watchfulness and prayer, a call to strenuous effort and solemn preparation.”³

Too, it preserved the elasticity of Christianity, for the apostles, under the influence of the doctrine, “never realized that they were building up a Church to last through the ages.” Sanday and Headlam continued, “They never wrote or legislated except so far as existing needs demanded... They never administered or planned with a view to the remote future.”⁴ The eschatology of the early church, especially as reflected in the writings of Paul, did more than any other doctrine in giving impulse and vitality to the life of the primitive community.

IV. THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN BODY

As Kennedy put it, “No other conception of his Eschatology has received such elaborate treatment at the hands of St. Paul as that of the Resurrection.”⁵

Because of Platonic influences the concept of life after death was not new to the educated Greek mind, and by the middle of the first century the idea had filtered down to the lower classes. However, the Greek concept of life after death or immortality was not the same as the Christian doctrine of resurrection. Immortality was a spiritual thing, for there was no place for the idea of a bodily resurrection in Greek thought. To the Greek, matter was essentially evil; thus physical death, which released a man from his body, was a liberation, and resurrection of the body would be a return to bondage. Those who accepted the bodily resurrection of Christ considered it an abnormal case and in no way a pattern for the Christian. Even in Judaism the doctrine of resurrection was not clearly defined, though it is stated in the Old Testament.⁶ Thus Paul’s teaching was far advanced over anything in Judaism and distinctive from anything in Hellenism.

In the classic passage on resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15, Paul wrote of the meaning of resurrection (15:1–34) and the manner of it (15:35–58). Christ’s resurrection, he wrote, was no abnormal exception, but is the basis of the gospel and the assurance of all resurrection. Christ’s resurrection was

testified to by many witnesses including Paul himself, who saw Jesus alive on the Damascus road. If Christ arose, he argued, how can there be those who deny the fact of the resurrection of the dead? Conversely if the dead do not rise, Christ did not rise (15:13); the apostles were false witnesses of God (15:15); faith is fruitless (15:17); we are still in our sins (15:17); those who have died in the faith have perished, for they too are yet in their sins (15:18); and there is not even any hope in this life (15:19).

Resurrection must mean the same for both Christ and the Christian: if Christ arose, the Christian's resurrection is also assured; and if there is no resurrection for the Christian, Christ could not have been raised. Resurrection cannot mean one thing in the case of Christ and another in the case of the Christian.

In describing the manner of the resurrection of the body, Paul characteristically dwelled on some points that we might pass over and scarcely touched others that would appeal to us. He began with the well-known analogy of sowing seed, a popular symbol in the mystery religions and in stoicism.² This is an analogy and must not be unduly pressed; nevertheless even though the seed does not actually die, the living stalk will not be put forth by the seed until its present existence dissolves or disappears. The seed must die to its existing condition in order for life to burst forth. All this is accomplished by the power of God. Thus in the illustration of the seed Paul taught correspondence between the present life and the resurrection life, for the harvested grain, although not identical with the grain sown, is of the same kind. In other words, the resurrection must be bodily, for "God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own" (1 Corinthians 15:38).

A second illustration emphasizes difference in the resurrection body. Just as there are different kinds of flesh and differences between terrestrial and celestial bodies, so the resurrection body is different from the earthly one. It is "spiritual" in contrast to "natural" (15:44). A spiritual body is not a disembodied spirit, but a new kind of humanity. Even in our earthly frame of reference we realize that the word body is not restricted to one kind of body. In our concept of the resurrection body we must incorporate the idea of a spiritual body so that it means neither a disembodied spirit nor flesh and blood. It is in reality a body, but of a different kind, for flesh and blood as we know it on earth "cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (15:50). This

kind of body is characterized as incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual, and heavenly.

In concluding this discussion Paul showed that there are two routes to obtaining this resurrection body. The one is the route of death—the perishable putting on the imperishable. The other is the route of translation—mortality putting on immortality (15:53–54). Those who perish are those who die, and those who are mortal are those who are alive. Both groups are changed instantly at the Lord’s coming and receive resurrection bodies. Then is death “swallowed up in victory” (15:54). The fact that all will not die and experience corruption—that there will be a group who will be living at the Lord’s coming to be changed from mortality to immortality—was a mystery (15:51). Therefore Paul could not have been speaking of the second advent and the general resurrection, for those things were not unknown in Old Testament times and therefore were not mysteries. He must have been speaking of the rapture of the church, a mystery unknown to Old Testament saints.

Whatever questions Paul left unanswered, one fact is outstanding in his teaching on resurrection: He believed most emphatically in a bodily resurrection. It is the body that is sown in death and—like the seed that brings forth that which corresponds to what was sown—it is a body that God gives that is raised. It is a spiritual body to be sure, but nonetheless an actual entity, just as real as the body in which our Lord was raised (see Philippians 3:21). If He was seen after His resurrection, so will we be, and this could only be true of bodily resurrection. This clearly is Paul’s concept of the resurrection.

Like all of Paul’s theology, his eschatology is theocentric. The entire Pauline system seems to be rooted and grounded in the apostle’s concept of God. The future for the church is in the hands of her sovereign Head, who will return personally to take her to be with Himself. That Israel will have a future is guaranteed by “the gifts and the calling of God [which] are irrevocable” (Romans 11:29). The world will be judged because “it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you” (2 Thessalonians 1:6). The assurance of resurrection rests on the power of God who gives the body and who according to His mighty power raised Jesus from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:38; Ephesians 1:19–20). In every area of eschatology Paul’s thought reflects his basic concept of the sovereign God. The consummation of all things depends on this God who in the forging of His majestic plan

made no miscalculations and who in the execution of it leaves no gaps or imperfections.

In surveying the major themes of Pauline theology, one is constrained to draw the conclusion along with Ramsay that as far as the fundamental principle in the thought of Paul is concerned, “his whole mind was built on the foundation: *God is.*”⁸ God was to Paul an absolute sovereign, who in the revelation of Himself has revealed the nature of man. In Pauline theology man’s sinful nature, his need of salvation, and God’s provision of redemption all stem from the fact that God has chosen in His grace to reveal these things and send the Savior. The church is governed by that Redeemer, and the Christian life is the ethical outworking in every area of living of the change that God has worked in the believer’s heart. The features of the final consummation are also related to the purposes of God. The motif by which this foundational principle is displayed is christological. It is Jesus Christ who is the epitome of the revelation of God; it is Christ who became the Redeemer from sin; it is He who is the Head of the church and the Judge of the endtimes.

Paul’s thought pattern in which his theology was expressed has several apparent features. The mystical element is prominent. The race condemned in Adam, the believer’s position in Christ, and the identification of the believer with Christ’s death and resurrection all illustrate the mode of thought that may be called mystical. Paul’s thought often also moved in the sphere of legal relations (Romans 3:21–26; 7:1–6; Galatians 4:1–7; also see Romans 8:15–17). Parallelism too found an important place in the apostle’s mode of thinking and expression. Notable examples are found in Romans (1:18–3:20; 5:12–21) and 1 Corinthians (15:35–49).

However, the outstanding feature is the vibrantly ethical character of all his thought and writing. His letters throb with apostolic commands, missionary zeal, pastoral counsel and comfort, earnest Christian morality, and the sublimest heights of inspiring expression. Whatever be the means—righteous anger, suppressed pain, wounded love, fatherly pleading, or soft entreaty—Paul’s end was the same: that his readers would practice their position in Christ. The foundation of Pauline theology is God; the motif is Christ; but the expression is the great heart of the apostle himself.

P_{ART} V

THE THEOLOGY OF HEBREWS

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There are unusual problems peculiar to the book of Hebrews. Some of them will never be solved, but all of them need to be thought about. The mental exercise of considering the various pros and cons of the problems connected with the book will contribute to the total picture the student has as he comes to study its theology. Whether solutions are found or not, there is no substitute for the benefit derived from giving consideration to the questions.

I. NATURE OF THE BOOK

The first problem concerns whether the book of Hebrews is an essay or a letter. In favor of the former is the lack of a particular address at the opening of the book and the general plan of the body of the text. It appears to be more homiletical than epistolary (see Hebrews 7). However, it can be pointed out that other books in the New Testament that are definitely letters have no address (1 John for example). And even though the plan of Hebrews appears to be sermonic, it is a sermon with a particular group or community in mind. The book is definitely not a theoretical essay to be read just anywhere; it is addressed to a particular community of people. Westcott noted that while “the subjects themselves are of universal interest, the discussion is directed by special circumstances.”¹ Therefore I prefer to say that we are dealing with a letter.

II. DESTINATION OF THE LETTER

Scholars are much divided on this question and it probably can never be decided with certainty. The less traditional view is that Rome was the

original destination of the letter. It was first quoted explicitly by Clement of Rome (about A.D. 95).

“Those from Italy” (Hebrews 13:24) does not really help solve the problem, for it can also be translated “those of Italy” or “those in Italy.” “Those in Italy” would mean the writer was there too. “Those from Italy” could refer to those who were with the writer elsewhere and were sending their greetings back home.

The more traditional view assigns Jerusalem or Palestine as the destination. This view is not without difficulties: (1) the use of the Septuagint in Old Testament quotations hardly seems consistent with Hebrew readers; (2) the readers of this Epistle were not poor (Hebrews 6:10; 10:34) as the saints in Jerusalem were.

All things considered, I lean toward Rome as the destination, but whichever it was, the author of Hebrews definitely had a specific church or several house churches in mind when he wrote.

III. CHARACTER OF THE RECIPIENTS

Two problems arise in this connection: (1) What was the racial background of the recipients? (2) What was their spiritual condition?

A. *RACIAL BACKGROUND*

Were the readers Jewish or Gentile or a mixture of both? Some hold that they were of Gentile background because of the quotations from the Septuagint and the reference in 6:1–2 to things taught that Jews would have had no need to learn.² A less common view is that the readers were a group of Jews and Gentiles, neither group being predominant. If this were the case, one might expect to find more mention of relationships between the two groups.

The traditional view holds that the readers were predominantly Jewish in their background.³ The title of the Epistle, the references to the prophets and angels as active agents in God’s dealings with Israel, and the numerous references in the present tense to Levitical worship support this view. Indeed, as Filson observed, “Not a word suggests any alternative to Christianity except the ancestral faith of Israel.”⁴

B. *SPIRITUAL CONDITION*

Because of the nature of the warnings in the Epistle, some hold that the readers were professors and not possessors of Christianity.⁵ One sometimes wonders if this view is an expediency for interpretation of one passage, 6:4–6, and not the result of the picture given by the entire book. The readers are called “holy brethren” (3:1) who have suffered for their faith (10:32), some of them even being in bonds (13:3). Undoubtedly, as in every church group, there were some merely professing Christians, but the group viewed as a whole was certainly considered by the writer of Hebrews to be composed of those who had believed unto salvation. Their problem was not caused by mere profession, but by declension from the truth possessed.

IV. AUTHOR

The history of discussion of the problem of authorship is lengthy and involved. There are admittedly many resemblances between the theology and style of Paul and that of Hebrews. There are also many dissimilarities. Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Aquila, and Priscilla have also been named as candidates for author, and the arguments pro and con can be found in the commentaries. The only sure conclusion is that spoken by Origen: “Who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, the truth of the matter God only knows.” Yet what Smith and von Soden noted is equally true:

In spite of its divergences from the standard of Pauline authorship, the book has manifest Pauline affinities, and can hardly have originated beyond the Pauline circle, to which it is referred, not only by the author’s friendship with Timothy (xiii. 23), but also by many unquestionable echoes of the Pauline theology.⁶

V. DATE

The traditional date (and more recent scholarship is returning to this view) is early—between A.D. 64 and 67. The lack of mention of the destruction of Jerusalem in the book and the fact that it is quoted authoritatively by Clement of Rome in A.D. 95 argue against a late date. There is an interesting conjecture based on Hebrews 3 and Psalm 95; it draws an analogy between the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness

for forty years and the status of the Hebrews who were approaching the fortieth anniversary of the death of Christ. This of course supports a date just prior to A.D. 70.

A. GENERAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Although a great deal is revealed about the historical, physical, and spiritual circumstances of the Hebrews, it is their doctrinal situation that forms a vital part of the background for the study of the theology of the book. We know for instance that these people were in a position to be generous (Hebrews 6:10), that some of them had been exposed to persecution (10:32; 12:3; 13:3), that they were second-generation Christians (2:3; 13:7), and that they had failed to grow spiritually in proportion to the time that they had been believers (5:12; 6:1; 10:25).

B. SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES

The doctrinal circumstance in which these people found themselves was one of religious drift. They had made their confession of Christ; now they were drifting from those moorings and were being exhorted to hold fast to their original confession. This circumstance of drifting is vividly underscored by the writer's use of nautical terms in the Epistle. In 2:1 he exhorted them to be careful lest they loose their moorings and drift out to sea. In 3:6 he encouraged them to "hold fast" or be firmly moored. In 6:19 he declared that our hope is an anchor for the soul, "sure and steadfast." In 10:38 the readers are warned against drawing back—literally shortening their sail. In 11:27 Moses is held up as an example of one who endured or who held steadily on course. In 13:9 is the warning against being carried away or swept about with the current or tide. Spiritually these people were at ebb tide; it was going out away from Christ and carrying them along with it. Against this they were warned.

C. CAUSES AND CURES

With equal clarity the author sets forth the reasons for this drifting:

1. Formalism. There is always present in religious life the danger of regarding religion as the performance of certain outward acts. This the

Hebrews had done, dwelling in the shadows rather than upon the substance (10:1–4). The cure for this is the realization that the essence of worship is meeting with God directly.

2. *Familiarity.* These people were evidently Christians of long standing, but spiritually and intellectually they had grown sluggish (2:3; 5:11–12; 6:12). They had lost their first love, and familiarity with their faith was breeding contempt. The cure for this is to see the splendor and grandeur of one's faith. It involves taking earnest heed of the things once known (2:1) and pondering daily the wonders of the Savior (12:3). The romance of orthodoxy is cultivated only by going to Bethlehem, Calvary, and the tomb. Stagnation is overcome only by pressing on, for there is no such thing on earth as a finished Christian. Knowing Christ is not a finished proposition like knowing a geometric theorem.

3. *Persecution.* Some of the readers had evidently been subjected to persecution and this had dulled the zeal of others. The Epistle was written about the same time as thousands of Christians were perishing under Nero's persecution, and even though the readers had not yet themselves been persecuted unto death, the increasing danger was hindering their spiritual growth. For this the writer prescribed patience (12:1,13)—the kind that is produced by remembering their own past (6:10; 10:32; 13:7), by remembering the examples of faith in the Old Testament (11), and by remembering the sufferings of their Lord (12:2; 13:12).

4. *Compromise.* Into the lives of some had crept the subtlety of compromise. For some it meant dabbling in strange doctrines (13:9), while for others it was not a matter of doctrines but of lowering the ethical standard (12:15–16; 13:4). They needed to remember that the truth remains the same (13:8), yet never becomes monotonous.

If we were to seek in the Epistle a summary statement of the cure for religious drift, we would find it in the writer's summons to a renewed commitment in 13:13: "Let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing his reproach." Outside the camp means not only outside Judaism's ritual, but also outside Judaism's safety. The camp in the wilderness was an oasis of safety, while the way to Canaan was full of unknown and dangerous pitfalls. Some wanted to stay in the camp instead of proceeding to the

promised land. So it was with God's people under the new covenant. Remaining inside a static camp is more attractive than moving out into the world, calling others to follow Him, and moving on in one's own spiritual life and growth. The call is to an aggressive and advancing faith in the midst of a Christ-rejecting world.

Drifting was the peril in which these people were engulfed. The causes are all too commonly prevalent in the life of the church in every day and country, but the cure is just as effective now as it was then.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGY PROPER AND CHRISTOLOGY

One's concept of God will color his entire theology. Undoubtedly the Christology of Hebrews is one of the central theological themes of the book. But before looking at the author's development of that doctrine, we must first examine briefly what he said about the other persons of the godhead.

I. THE IDEA OF GOD

A. *H_E I_SA L_IVING G_{OD}* (3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22)

The construction in all four references is anarthrous, emphasizing the character of God as One who is living. People may back off from Him, serve Him, fall into His hands, or come unto His city.

B. *H_E I_S E_NTHRONED IN THE H_IGHEST* (1:3; 8:1)

In both references "Majesty" seems to be synonymous with "God," and as such He is enthroned in Heaven.

C. *H_E I_S H_OLY E_NERGY* (12:29; 4:12–13; 12:14)

Fire is not used in the figure in 12:29 as a picture of the way God manifests Himself, but to describe His very nature. As such He burns up all that is unworthy in those who serve Him.

D. *H_E I_S L_ORD* (8:2, 11)

The Old Testament idea expressed by *Adonai*, a possessive plural, is reiterated here. Majesty and ownership are the two ideas conveyed by this word.

E. H_E I_S A_{BSOLUTELY} R_{IGHTEOUS}

This concept, as the writer to the Hebrews employed it, includes the ideas of punishment (2:2), reward (6:7,10), and faithfulness (10:23; 11:11).

The foregoing all express Old Testament concepts of God and show how deeply the writer's own idea was rooted there.

F. H_E I_S A G_{OD OF} P_{EACE} (13:20)

He becomes the author and giver of peace when the way of access to Him is opened through the blood. The unapproachable God—generally speaking—of the Old Testament has opened the way through the gift of His Son and brought peace to man.

G. H_E I_S L_{OVE} (12:5 ff.)

This aspect of God's character is spoken of in connection with the believer's chastening.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. H_{IS} D_{EITY}

The deity of the Holy Spirit is seen in the following ways: First, He is called God. The words attributed to God in 4:4 ff. are the same words ascribed to the Spirit in 3:7 ff. Thus the Holy Spirit must be God. Second, He performs the works of God. The Spirit was the One who gave the Scriptures (3:7; 9:8; 10:15) and He indwells believers (6:4). Third, it is possible to blaspheme the Spirit (10:29).

B. H_{IS} W_{ORK}

1. He gives gifts (2:4). First-generation Christians were given gifts from the Holy Spirit (this is a subjective genitive) that enabled them to perform

extraordinary acts.

2. He is the author of Scripture (3:7; 9:8; 10:15). This is the most frequently mentioned work of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews, and it is characteristic of the book that the origin of Scripture is ascribed to the divine author and not the human authors.

3. He indwells believers (6:4). Since the word translated “partakers” in 6:4 is the same word used in 12:8, it means more than simply “going along with.” Westcott indicated that it “marks more than the simple fact of participation (c. vii. 13; 1 Cor. x. 17). It brings out the fact of a personal character gained; and that gained in a vital development.”¹ To partake of the Spirit is to possess Him.

4. He gives grace (10:29). Grace finds expression through the Spirit.²

Certain general observations may be made concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. (1) Quite obviously, since there are only seven references to Him in the entire book, the Holy Spirit is in the background in Hebrews, and the Son is in the foreground. (2) Conviction of sin, which elsewhere in the New Testament is particularly ascribed to the Spirit, is in Hebrews made a matter of relationship of the sinner to a living God. This is true of both unbelievers (3:12; 10:31) and believers (9:14; 12:22). (3) Sanctification, which is generally thought of in relation to the Spirit, is in Hebrews primarily the separation unto God effected by the death of Christ (10:10,14; 13:12).

III. CHRISTOLOGY OF HEBREWS

The Christology of Hebrews—one of the central themes of the book—is more incidentally than systematically developed as a result of the warning against drifting and the statement of the glories of the new covenant. The writer’s concern about his readers drifting from Christ, the mediator of the new covenant, would naturally bring into his message a thorough, even if unsystematic, statement of the doctrine of Christ.

A. NAMES AND TITLES OF CHRIST

1. Names. The most frequently used name of the Lord in Hebrews (as in Paul's writings) is *Christ*. When used without the article it is a proper name (3:6; 9:11, 24), while the presence of the article in the Greek generally incorporates the idea of His office as Messiah (3:14; 5:5; 6:1; 9:14, 28; 11:26).

The human name, *Jesus*, is used eight times in the Epistle (2:9; 3:1; 6:20; 7:22; 10:19; 12:2, 24; 13:12) and in each case it furnishes the key to the argument of the passage in which it stands. For instance in 2:9 ff. we are told that man's lost dominion will be regained in Jesus the Son of man. In other instances it is related to His priesthood and the necessity for perfect and glorified humanity.

Other names of Christ used in Hebrews in common with the rest of the New Testament are *Jesus our Lord* (13:20), *Jesus Christ* (10:10; 13:8,21), *Jesus the Son of God* (4:14), and *Lord* (2:3; 7:14).

Son, Son of God, Priest, and High Priest are names of Christ especially distinctive of this Epistle. *Son* occurs in 1:2, 5, 8; 3:6; 5:5, 8; 7:28. With the exception of 1:8, the word in the Greek is always without the article in order to fix the reader's attention on the nature, not the personality, of the Son. The writer was displaying One whose character is a Son. *Son of God* (6:6; 7:3; 10:29) is a formal designation of the second person of the godhead. *Priest* and *High Priest* occur in 5:6; 7:3, 11, 17, 21; 8:4; 10:21; 2:17; 3:1; 4:14, 15; 5:10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11. The frequency of these names stems from the systematic treatment of the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ.

2. Titles. The distinctive titles of Hebrews are all soteriological. They are: mediator of the new covenant (8:6; 9:15; 12:24); source of eternal salvation (5:9); author of salvation (2:10); forerunner (6:20); apostle and high priest of our confession (3:1); great shepherd of the sheep (13:20); and firstborn (1:6).

B. *P*_{RE-EXISTENCE OF} *C*_{HRIST}

The doctrine of pre-existence is related to that of the deity of Christ, which in turn is vitally connected with the doctrine of priesthood, which is so important in this Epistle. Therefore the proof of pre-existence finds an important place in the writer's theology.

1. Proved by Christ's works. Before the incarnation, Christ was working; therefore He was pre-existent. He was the One who made the ages (1:2) and who is the continuous support of all things (1:3).

2. Proved by Christ's heavenly origin (10:5–7). The passage makes little sense unless it is a pre-existent One who came into the world and for whom a body was prepared.

C. DEITY OF CHRIST

If pre-existence is the first step, deity is the second step that leads to the important doctrine of the priesthood of Christ. The proofs for Christ's deity are incidentally rather than systematically presented, but the overwhelming number of them shows how deeply rooted was the concept in the writer's mind.

1. Proved by His names. These names have already been discussed, but it must be remembered that they constitute a proof of deity. Notice especially the names *Son of God*, *Firstborn*, *Lord*, *Author of eternal salvation*, and *great Shepherd of the sheep*.

2. Proved by His attributes and characteristics

a. Radiance of glory (1:3). The Son is said to be in His essential nature the brightness of God, not in the sense of a reflection but in the sense of a shining forth, which means that He has it within Himself to shine forth. The glory of God is the manifestation of God's attributes and since Christ manifests them in and of Himself, He must be God.

b. Image (1:3). The Son is the express image of God's essence; thus He is God.

c. Omnipotence (1:3,13). All things are supported by Him—something no mere man can do.

d. Impeccability (4:15; 7:26). Christ was holy, sinless, stainless, and separate from contact with sinners. He had no sin nature (4:15—"yet without sin") and in that He possessed a human nature different from what we possess. That does not mean His temptations were unreal. Indeed they were more real; for instance He could have turned stones into bread, which is something we cannot do. He was tempted because of His likeness to us in

becoming flesh, but not in every particular way in which we are tested. In the things of Christ's humanity where He seems to be closest to us, He is actually farthest from us. In things of Christ's deity, where He seems to be farthest from us, He is closest to us. He was absolutely holy and thus incapable of sin.

e. Immutability and eternity (1:12; 13:8). All change, but He is the same forever.

3. Proved by His works. Works that can only be done by God are attributed to the Son; therefore He must be God. For instance He is the Creator (1:2,10; 11:3) and upholder of all things (1:3,12); He is the Author of salvation for men (2:10; 5:9; 7:25; 9:12); He is the Deliverer from the power of death (2:14–15); He overcame the devil (2:14–15); and He is the One who sanctifies (2:11; 9:13–14; 13:12).

4. Proved by the worship given to Him. Both men and angels worship the Son (1:6; 13:20–21), proving He is God.

Some observations should be made concerning these proofs of the deity of the Son. (1) They are inclusive in their number. All the standard proofs are found in the book of Hebrews. (2) They are conclusive because they are based on many references that state things that can only be true of God. (3) They are scattered throughout the entire book. Therefore these facts show not only the deity of Christ, but also the primary place that the doctrine had in the mind of the writer.

D. HUMANITY OF JESUS

Hebrews is generally thought of as stressing the deity of Christ, but the book says a great deal about His humanity. It is interesting to note (especially if the writer was not an eyewitness) how many references there are in the Epistle to events in the earthly life of Christ. His incarnation (2:14,17), ancestry (7:14), persecution (12:3), agony in Gethsemane (5:7), crucifixion (13:12), resurrection (13:20), and ascension (1:2–3) are all referred to.

1. His human nature was real. The reality of the humanity of Christ was displayed by the author in his many references to human traits that were

exhibited in Christ. Christ was dependent on God (2:13); He exhibited mercy and faithfulness (2:17); He was humble (5:5); He was reverent (5:7); He prayed in dependence on God (5:7); He was obedient (5:8; 10:7); He developed into maturity (5:8); He partook of flesh and blood (2:14); and He was the epitome of the life of faith (12:2). In all of these characteristics Christ reflected real humanity.

2. His human nature was shared in common with man. Because He was human, He shared certain things with all of mankind. Our frail nature He took upon Himself (4:15). This subjected Him to sufferings (5:8; 12:3; 13:12), sorrow (5:7; 4:15; 12:2), temptations (2:18; 4:15), and death (2:14). Only grace can account for His taking the nature of man and sharing the resultant consequences.

3. His human nature was perfect. Christ was human, but not as we are, for His humanity was perfect. The writer was careful to state this and relate it to His essential nature (7:26; 4:15). Furthermore the perfection of the Lord's human nature was demonstrated through His suffering and discipline (2:10; 5:7; 7:28).

E. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST

Kennedy stated, "All that the author says about Christ has as its presupposition His Divine Sonship."³ The author underscored this by showing His specific superiority, which is a necessary part of the argument for the superiority of the better covenant, since the supremacy of the covenant involved the supremacy of its Mediator. Kennedy also noted:

The author, however, is not content with a general exhibition of Christ's sovereignty as Revealer of God. For his concern is to show how the later revelation overshadows and antiquates the earlier. Therefore he draws a contrast in detail between the new and final Mediator between God and men, and those temporary mediators to whom his readers were inclined to attach undue importance.⁴

The writer of Hebrews contrasted Christ with prophets, angels, Moses, and priests. First, he showed how Christ is superior to the prophets of the Old Testament (1:1–3). It is not that they are deprecated, for God did speak

through them, but there were two defects: revelation through the prophets was neither final (for it was always progressing throughout the periods of Israel's history) nor full (for only Christ is the effulgence of God's glory).

Second, he showed the superiority of the Son over angels (1:4–2:18). Again there is no disparagement of angels, but the writer simply pointed out the differences. Angels will worship the Son (1:5–6); therefore He must be superior. Angels were concerned with the giving of the law, but Christ brought grace to men (2:1–4). Angels could never bring to men, as the Son did, the new relationship of brethren (2:5–8), the new release from the fear of death (2:14–16), or the new redemption from sin (2:17–18).

Third, he showed the superiority of Christ to Moses (3:1–4:13). The difference is the difference between building and Builder, servant and Son, member and Master, the provisional and the permanent. High honor is accorded to Moses, but he is thrown into the shadows by the light of the Son.

Finally, the author contrasted Christ with the priests of the Old Testament (7:11, 17, 24, 28; 10:11–12, 19–21). Again he did not minimize their valuable function, but they too were deficient in comparison with God's Priest after the order of Melchizedek. They were mortal and sinful, their sanctuary was inadequate, and their sacrifices were insufficient.

In all of these contrasts the writer was seeking to fortify his readers' loyalty to Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant.

F. OFFICES OF CHRIST

The principal attention of the book of Hebrews is given to the priestly office of Christ, which will be discussed in full later. The prophetic and kingly offices are mentioned but briefly. As prophet (1:2) the Son speaks in this present period of history. As King He will be worshiped by the angels when He comes again (1:6).

G. EXALTATION OF CHRIST

Again the chief emphasis of the Epistle in this area is related to the priesthood of Christ. The writer of Hebrews placed stress on the present session of the Lord at the right hand of God (1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). The resurrection is mentioned specifically in only one place (13:20), although it is obviously implied in all the passages dealing with the present session of

the Lord. The ascension is mentioned with some frequency because it is the gateway to the present high priestly ministry (4:14; 6:20; 9:11, 24). It involved passing through the lower heavens into Heaven itself (4:14).

Since Biblical theology is concerned with discovering the thought of the writer concerned, we note that the writer of Hebrews held the same “higher Christology”—as it has been called—as Paul and John. That is, he believed that the Lord was both human and divine and he had no hesitancy about applying the titles *God* and *Lord* to Jesus—titles that were perfectly familiar to him as designations of deity. Others may attempt to do away with this conclusion,⁵ but this was the evident thought of the author; and to discover that, not the opinion of interpreters, is the task of Biblical theology.

CHAPTER 3

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

The doctrines of Christology and high priesthood are vitally interrelated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Nowhere else in the New Testament is the title *priest* or *high priest* applied to Christ (though the idea is certainly present in such passages as John 17 and Revelation 1). The doctrine of the priesthood of Christ is the outstanding doctrine of the Epistle and it is undoubtedly that which most people reading the book think of first.

In the historical circumstances that called forth the book of Hebrews, the priesthood of Christ was its most important doctrine, for this truth was unrealized by, if not new to, the believers to whom the author wrote. Although they had trusted the atoning work of Christ, the full realization of the priestly nature of that work and of the present ministry of the Priest had not dawned on their consciences. This is almost a paradox, for it is this aspect of the truth of the work of Jesus Christ that should have appealed to these believers particularly, inasmuch as their Old Testament background had accustomed them to think of priesthood and priestly functions. And yet these were the very things that they had failed to see in their Savior.

Although references to His work are scattered throughout the whole Epistle, the teaching concerning the person of the High Priest is found mainly in the section from 4:14 to 7:28. In this entire section it is obvious that the Jewish sacrificial arrangements furnish the background for the presentation of the work of Christ. Stevens noted:

The Jewish sacrificial system belonged to the world of picture and symbol; Christ's sacrifice belongs to the world of eternal spiritual reality. The words by which it is described are Jewish, but the writer takes all possible pains to make his readers understand that they are used in a higher than the Jewish meaning. He sees in the death of

Christ a wealth of divine truth at which the Old Testament sacrifices could only vaguely hint.¹

I. THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF HIGH PRIEST (5:1–10)

A. *H_E H_{AD TO} B_{E A} M_{AN} (5:1)*

Christ's incarnation qualified Him to serve, for in it He took upon Himself the nature of man.

B. *H_E H_{AD TO} B_E C_{OMPASSIONATE} (5:2)*

Although the Mosaic law did not specifically state this qualification, it is inherent in the priest's duty to judge the people in matters concerning sin. In this the priest had to have gentle consideration because he was compassed about with weakness.

C. *H_E H_{AD TO} B_E C_{HOSEN BY} G_{OD} (5:4–6)*

Written in the days when the high priests were chosen carelessly for political considerations, Hebrews 5:4–6 was a striking statement. Christ qualified because the God who eternally begat Him also chose Him to be "a priest forever." The quotation from Psalm 2 attests to the authority, not to the time, of the calling by God of Christ to be a priest.

D. *H_E H_{AD TO} B_E P_{REPARED} (5:7–8)*

Since men suffer, they need a sympathizing high priest, and since sympathy can only be genuinely exercised by one who has suffered himself, our Lord had to learn of suffering and obedience. There is no record of Christ ever laughing, though in these verses is one of the several mentions of His weeping.

II. THE ORDER OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

A. *T_{HE} P_{OINT OF THE} M_{ELCHIZEDEKAN} P_{RIESTHOOD}*

The point is simply that this priesthood of Christ is Melchizedekan, not Aaronic. The writer of Hebrews offered no proof for this except the quotation of Psalm 110 in Hebrews 7:17. (This shows again the high concept he had of the inspiration and authority of the Word.) For these Jewish readers this was sufficient evidence. This fact enabled him to say that Christ is another kind of priest (7:15). The emphasis is on the personality of the priest and not on the functions performed.

This revelation of a different order of priesthood has two ramifications: (1) it explains why only certain things are said about Melchizedek—that is, so that Christ could be compared accurately to him; and (2) it obliterates the artificial distinctions usually raised concerning the Aaronic and Melchizedekan priesthoods. It is not that Christ was a priest in His person after the order of Melchizedek and in His work after the order of Aaron. He was never a priest in any sense after the Aaronic order, nor could He be. Some of the things He did were foreshadowed in the Aaronic arrangements, so that some of the features of the Aaronic order are legitimate types of the priestly functions of Christ, but that is quite a different thing from saying that Christ is a priest after the order of Aaron.

B. THE PORTRAITURE OF MELCHIZEDEK (7:1–3; GENESIS 14)

The writer sets forth certain facts concerning Melchizedek's life and then said that he was "made like the Son of God" (Hebrews 7:3). The grammatical form of "made like" is not an adjective, as if Melchizedek were like Christ in His being (which would lend support to the idea that he was a theophany), but a participle, which means that the likeness is in the Biblical writer's statement. The comparison is between Christ and the limited revelation given concerning Melchizedek, the specifics of which concern the manner of Melchizedek's appearing in the priesthood and not the manner or nature of his birth or life. The portraiture is a limited one in order that the resemblance may be extensive.

C. THE PARTICULARS OF THE MELCHIZEDEKAN PRIESTHOOD

In the likening of Melchizedek to Christ, certain particulars concerning the Melchizedekan priesthood stand out.

1. It was royal. The line of priests that came from Aaron were only priests, but Melchizedek was a king as well as a priest.

2. It was individual. As far as the record goes, Melchizedek appeared without mention of father and mother. Ancestry was unnecessary to justify his claims to be a priest, for his appointment was independent of human relationships. It was not so with the Aaronic priests, who rested on their ancestry (Ezra 2:61 ff.; Nehemiah 7:64).

3. It was timeless. Making no mention of the beginning or end of Melchizedek's life, the record previews Him who abideth a priest continually after the order of Melchizedek.

4. It was inclusive. Melchizedek was a "priest of the Most High God" (Hebrews 7:1), a name of God that associates Him with all peoples. Evidently he was one of the last such priests, for he was a contemporary of Abraham, who fathered the exclusive Aaronic priesthood, which ministered to one nation only.

In all these particulars Jesus is also a priest, for He too is a king, His priesthood stands on His individual merits, it is eternal, and it affects all who will come unto God by Him.

D. THE PRE-EMINENCE OF THE MELCHIZEDEKAN PRIESTHOOD

Having established the order to which Christ belongs, the writer proceeded to prove that the Melchizedekan priesthood is the superior order.

1. Proof of superiority. The proof is twofold. First, because Melchizedek blessed Abraham, he assumed the part of the superior (7:7). It is noteworthy that this happened at the height of Abraham's career. Second, because Melchizedek took tithes from Abraham, his priesthood is superior to that of the Aaronic order. Milligan described the remarkable picture of superiority that the author of Hebrews must have had in his mind:

He beholds generation after generation of the Levitical priests during the whole period of the Mosaic economy passing before him, and exercising the privileges of their divinely-appointed order. Each

generation is maintained by its tithes; and as, man after man, each member of the priesthood dies, another steps into his place, claims his rights, and is honoured with the cheerful submission of the people to his claims. But in the midst of all this change, exalted above all this frailty, he beholds another figure, a venerable priest of an altogether different kind . . . the Melchizedek who is the shadow of the coming High-priest of God's final dispensation of grace, floating as it were in a heavenly, not an earthly, atmosphere, and receiving tithes from the father of the faithful of all ages.²

2. Points of superiority.

a. The priesthood is new and better (7:11–16; also see 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6). If the writer could make his readers see this, he could then make them see the change that has been wrought in the Mosaic law.

b. The priesthood is indissoluble (7:16). The Mosaic priesthood depended on natural fleshly generation to sustain it; the Melchizedekan priesthood of Christ is based on an indissoluble life.

c. The priesthood is inviolable (7:24). No one can step across into Christ's priesthood. Because He is complete in Himself, He is also able to save completely (7:25).

d. The priesthood is eternal (7:20–28). With an oath God has affirmed it (7:20–22) and by the resurrection God has assured it (7:23–24).

e. The priesthood is based on a better covenant (8:6; 6:13). The Aaronic priesthood was related to a covenant dependent on conditions; the work of Christ is unconditional.

f. The priesthood is related to a better realm. The Old Testament and all of its services belonged to the realm of the typical; the New Testament with its High Priest belongs to the realm of reality (2:10; 4:14; 6:20; 8:1–5). The Aaronic priests ministered in an earthly sanctuary; Christ ministers in the heavenly sanctuary.

III. THE NEW COVENANT

The idea of covenant is frequently mentioned in the Epistle. The old covenant with Israel, the Mosaic law, figures in the discussion concerning the tabernacle (9:1–10). The new covenant with Israel, prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31–34, is prominent in the discussion of Hebrews 8. A better

covenant is spoken of in 8:6 and 7:22 and the everlasting covenant in 13:20. Of the new covenant Jesus is the mediator (9:15; 12:24) because of the shedding of His blood, by which He ratified it (9:16–20).

The principal point of the writer is plain: these Jewish believers were to look no longer to the Mosaic covenant with its services and priesthood, for now they had something better in Christ. What the old had to do repeatedly and could never do finally, Jesus had done once and for all. His death, the necessary basis for the establishing of the new covenant, had brought in better promises than they had ever had in Judaism.

That much is clear. What is debated is the author's purpose in quoting Jeremiah 31 in Hebrews 8. The amillennialist says that this proves that he expected the church to fulfill these promises made originally to Israel, thereby obviating the need for a future millennial age. Some premillennialists see the church entering into the blessings of the new covenant with Israel. Other premillennialists say that there is only one new covenant and it is with Israel; the church's promises are based on the blood of the new covenant, but do not fulfill the new covenant itself. Another premillennial interpretation recognizes a new covenant with Israel that will yet have its fulfillment in the millennium and a new covenant with the church, both of which are based on the sacrifice of Christ. The new covenant with the church is that better covenant of which the author of Hebrews spoke.

In any case, the prophecy of Jeremiah is quoted in Hebrews 8 in order to emphasize that even the Old Testament predicted the end of the Mosaic covenant. The author's point of quoting is plainly stated in his conclusion: "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete" (8:13). In the fact that God through Jeremiah had said that a new covenant was coming, He made the Mosaic law old even before the time of Christ.³

IV. THE HIGH PRIESTLY WORK OF CHRIST

It has already been pointed out that Christ, being a priest after the order of Melchizedek, could never be related to the Aaronic order. Even that which He did was done as a Melchizedekan priest. Nevertheless, priestly functions of the Aaronic order could and do foreshadow in type those things that Christ, the Melchizedekan priest, also performed. Christ can and does fulfill Aaronic types, but He as fulfiller has no other relationship to that

order. Even in fulfilling the typical features of the work of the Aaronic priests, Christ's work was different, for He did not offer anything for Himself and His offering of Himself was once for all.

A. BACKGROUND OF THE HIGH PRIESTLY WORK

In the background of Hebrews 8:1–9:18 the writer viewed the Jewish high priest at the moment of his greatest glory when he appeared for all the people on the day of atonement. This day was accompanied by the only fast prescribed by law for Israel. And on this day a certain ritual was carefully followed, as set down in the Old Testament and added to somewhat by traditions practiced at the time of Christ (Leviticus 16).

In the ritual as practiced then, the high priest began his rites of personal purification and preparation seven days before the day of atonement. Twice during that period he was sprinkled with the ashes of the red heifer (see Hebrews 9:13). On the great day he donned his white linen garments as he approached the presence of God in the holiest place. Then followed the ritual of killing a bullock for his own sins and those of all the priests; sprinkling incense to save himself from death; sprinkling the blood on and before the mercy seat; killing a goat for the people and sprinkling its blood as before; confessing sin over the head of a live goat, which was then sent into the wilderness; and offering the burnt offerings for himself and all the people.⁴

This is the background against which this section of Hebrews stands. Glorious as the day of atonement was in the lives of God's ancient people, that glory had faded in the light of the better covenant founded on better promises and mediated by a better sacrifice.

B. BASE OF THE HIGH PRIESTLY WORK

The work of the Aaronic priest was carried on in the old tabernacle (9:1–5) in which there was inadequate access, for the veil shut God in and the people out. Separation and limitation were the writer's chief points as he mentioned the furniture of the tabernacle in this passage. The arrangement under the old covenant even shut out the Lord Himself, for His tribe disqualified Him (7:11–14). If the Mosaic law were in force today, Jesus Christ would not be our high priest (8:4–5). His base of operations has to be in another place and under another covenant.

Our Lord ministers in the new tabernacle (8:1–5). This concept of the heavenly tabernacle is difficult to grasp, since our minds are limited by concepts of time and space. The true tabernacle is real and perfect—Heaven itself—and that in which Christ ministers today. Reality must be divorced from materiality in this concept.

C. BASIS OF THE HIGH PRIESTLY WORK

The high priestly work of Christ is based on His death.

1. Relation of the death of Christ to His present work. The writer of Hebrews reiterated the completed once-for-all character of the death of Christ (7:27; 9:12, 25–26; 10:12) and declared this to be the basis of the present ministry (8:3–5). Christ’s offering was made once at Calvary (note the aorist in 8:3) and on the basis of that He exercises His present ministry in Heaven.

Milligan erroneously insisted that Christ continues to present His life to the Father and explained that the reason the offering can never be repeated is simply that it has never come to an end. His reasoning was based on a misconception of the offering, for it was an offering of death, not an offering of His life. *Blood* does not refer to the offering of the life of the victim, but focuses on the violent death of that victim (as in 9:12–14). Christ’s work—as Melchizedekian priest—of offering Himself was completed when He died, although it is true that His work of sustaining His people continues in Heaven today.⁵

2. Relation of the blood of Christ to His sacrifice. The sacrifice was a sacrifice of blood (9:7,12), which was shed at Calvary and not taken into Heaven. Westcott wrote:

The use of *dia* [in 9:12] as marking the means but not defining the mode (*meta*) is significant when taken in connection with v. 7 (*ou choris*). The earthly High-priest took with him the material blood: Christ “through His own blood” entered into the Presence of God, but we are not justified in introducing any material interpretations of the manner in which He made it efficacious.⁶

3. Relation of the body of Christ to His sacrifice. The body that the Lord took was the instrument for fulfilling God's will (10:5–10). The action on His part was that of a voluntary slave.

D. BENEFITS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST

Throughout the book of Hebrews are scattered references to the benefits of the work of Christ:

- He delivers from an evil conscience (10:22).
- He purifies from the stains of guilt (9:22; 10:22).
- He sanctifies (10:10, 14; 13:12).
- He perfects (10:14; 11:39–40; 12:23). When the writer declared that the Christian is perfect, he was expressing the Pauline idea of being righteous in Christ. Westcott explained: "He who is *teleios* [perfect] has reached the end which is in each case set before him, maturity of growth, complete development of powers, full enjoyment of privileges, perfect possession of knowledge."²
- He gives the privilege of access (4:16; 7:25; 10:19–20; 11:6).
- He enables us to serve (9:14).
- He enables us to worship (13:15–16).

The priesthood of Christ is the central doctrine of Hebrews. The Christology is basic and preparatory. The doctrine of the Christian life is a result of the work of the Priest in bringing believers into the relationships of the better covenant. The apprehension of the truth of a High Priest whose one sacrifice and continuing ministry are the essence of Christianity was the necessary antidote for the ills of these readers.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

A distinguishing characteristic of Hebrews is the prominence that it gives to the Christian life as a practical outworking of the better covenant relationship. Indeed the writer himself described the entire book as an exhortation (13:22). The work of the High Priest as mediator of the new covenant should issue in a Christian walk that is characterized by certain distinctives.

I. IT IS A LIFE OF FAITH (11:1–40)

A. *DESCRIPTION OF FAITH (11:1)*

Faith, as described by the author of Hebrews, gives substance to things hoped for and demonstrably provable reality to things unseen. Faith does not create things in the unseen world of experience, but faith assures the reality of their existence. The Christian life is lived in the assurance of the reality of even those things that are outside the range of the believer's present experience.

B. *DIFFERENT KINDS OF FAITH*

The author spoke of different kinds of faith or of faith that effects different results.

1. Intellectual faith (11:6). Faith in the existence of God is basic to everything else. Without this no one can go on to experience the accomplishments of faith.

2. Saving faith. Saving faith was illustrated by the writer in the actions of Abel (11:4), Abraham (11:8), Rahab (11:31), and Moses (11:28). Today it is effected by the proper relationship to Christ (3:1; 5:9; 10:23). The writer made *disobedience* and *unbelief* synonymous in the Epistle (3:12, 18–19; 4:6, 11; 5:9; 10:26).

3. Ethical faith. Saving faith results in proper ethical conduct in the Christian's life. This is illustrated by most of Hebrews 11, and those who serve as illustrations show clearly that such faith produces actions of a solid character, that such faith is costly (see 13:13), and that such faith is the essence of the Christian life. Growing unto perfection must involve becoming more childlike in faith.

Faith is the path that leads to a life of rest (3:7–4:13), for the believing Christian is the yielded Christian, and the yielded life is the restful life. Only the sin of unbelief can rob of rest.

II. IT IS A LIFE OF GROWTH

Attention has already been drawn to the teaching of the Epistle against drifting in general. In addition the writer spoke of specific things that are to be left behind and certain things that are to be gained in the process of normal Christian growth.

A. THINGS TO BE LEFT BEHIND (6:1–3)

In the process of growth it is not a question of forgetting certain things, but of assuming them to be settled and then going on. Rudiments are not to be despised, but there must be a progressive building on those rudiments. The author mentioned six things specifically that are rudimentary: repentance, faith, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection, and eternal judgment. Important as these doctrines are, they are part of the foundation of the Christian life, and one takes the foundation for granted after it has been laid and does not keep going back to relay it again and again.

B. THINGS TO BE GAINED (5:11–14)

As his spiritual life grows, the believer should develop his sense of hearing so that he can listen with understanding to explanations of things that are difficult to interpret (5:11). Too, he should show ability in teaching instead of having to be taught all the time (5:12). He should display skill in discussing the larger problems of Christian thought (5:13). This maturity should manifest itself in the proper use of all of the believer's faculties—especially the ability to discriminate between that which is good and that which is evil for the soul (5:13–14). These are the marks of progress.

III. IT IS A LIFE OF NO RETREAT (6:4–6)

It is not the task of Biblical theology to state all the views of a given passage, but to endeavor to express the thought of the author. If the background of the Epistle is as has been suggested, the author was speaking to Jewish believers. There may have been a few merely professing people in the group or groups, but they were the exception, for the great majority were apparently true believers.

The author certainly was not telling them that a person can be saved, lost, and saved again. If one could be lost, it would be impossible for him to be saved again. That is clear. Neither was the author speaking hypothetically; this passage is a severe warning concerning a very real danger. The author, writing to believers who were drifting, was arguing that in view of their spiritual position and privilege, in the event a lapse could occur, renewal would be impossible for the reasons stated. In other words, he was warning these people that they must go on in the Christian life because they could not retreat. If you cannot go back, you must go on. Let us examine the argument further to see why retreat is impossible.

A. *BECAUSE OF THE SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGES YOU HAVE*

The spiritual position of these Hebrews is described in clear terms. They had been once for all “enlightened” (6:4; also see 10:32 where the same word is used). The use of *hapax* (“once”) and the aorist tense both point to a time of conversion and not merely to being under the influence of the gospel. They had “tasted” of the heavenly gift (6:4; also see 2:9 where the same word is used of Christ's tasting, not nibbling, death). They had been “partakers” of the Holy Spirit (6:4; also see 12:8 where the same word is used of experiencing, not just going along with, chastisement). They had

tasted of the Word of God and the knowledge of things to come. The writer was addressing Christians, and because they had embraced Christianity, it was impossible for them to go back.

B. BECAUSE YOU CANNOT FALL AWAY

The participle “fallen away” is unqualified in 6:6, but it is undoubtedly conditional (as Matthew 16:26 and Luke 9:25). Although this passage, strictly speaking, does not say anything about the possibility of falling away, the author made it clear elsewhere in the Epistle that it is an impossibility (see for example 7:25). You cannot fall away; starting over is impossible; therefore “let us press on to maturity” (6:1).

C. BECAUSE YOU CANNOT RECRUCIFY CHRIST

There is no second cross or second cross-experience, for that would mean that Christ could be recrucified, which is impossible. There is no such thing as being saved a second time (although it might be convenient sometimes!); therefore you cannot go back, so you must go forward.

Each of these three reasons for the impossibility of retreat point to the solemn conclusion that progress must be displayed in the believer’s life. The warning is a sober one: If it were possible to fall away (which it is not), you could not possibly start the Christian life over; therefore be cautioned as to how you are presently living it, for you must go on if you cannot retreat.

IV. IT IS A LIFE OF TRAINING (12:3–13)

Christian experience includes discipline—child training—as a normal accompaniment.

A. REASONS FOR DISCIPLINE

Discipline is necessary for maturing, and since the normal Christian life is a life of growth, discipline must be involved. Further, discipline is a proof of a normal Christian relationship, showing that God our Father loves us.

B. RESULTS OF DISCIPLINE

The writer of Hebrews listed two things that should result from discipline properly received: reverence (12:9) and righteousness (12:11).

C. REACTIONS TO DISCIPLINE

The author warned against fainting under discipline, against forgetting the necessity of it, and against despising it, and he exhorted the believer to be exercised by it. Only that will make a real Christian leader (12:12–13). The Hebrew Christians to whom the author wrote had too long been followers.

V. IT IS A LIFE OF SANCTIFICATION

In this Epistle sanctification is related to the work of Christ primarily, and not to the Holy Spirit (10:10,14; 13:12). Sanctification is a lifetime practice of personal holiness. It is a requirement of a true Christian life (12:14–17) and in order to effect that kind of life the writer delineated certain standards.

A. RUNNING AWAY FROM CERTAIN THINGS (12:14–17)

The practice of sanctification includes running from backsliding, bitterness, fornication, and a flippant attitude toward spiritual blessings.

B. PUTTING OFF ENCUMBRANCES (12:1)

An encumbrance is anything superfluous that hinders the running of the Christian race. It is not necessarily wrong in itself, but it becomes wrong because it hinders. “Lay [it] aside” is the exhortation of the writer.

C. PUTTING OFF UNBELIEF (12:1)

Again the importance of faith is emphasized when unbelief is pictured as an engulfing, entangling hindrance to progress in the Christian life. It is a single basic sin, although it may express itself in many ways.

D. LOOKING AT EXAMPLES OF FAITH (11:1–40)

Practical sanctification is encouraged by observing others whose lives pleased God. Young, old, those whose circumstances were for them, and those whose circumstances were against them—all are found in Hebrews 11, and all conquered by faith.

VI. IT IS A LIFE OF SERVICE

Service is one of the reasons God saves men; therefore the believer serves (9:14; 12:28). The writer of Hebrews, like the apostle John, saw service as the exercise and exhibition of love.

A. *SOCIAL DUTIES* (13:1–6)

The serving believer will show brother love (13:1), stranger love (13:2), compassionate love with those in bonds (13:3), faithful love in marriage (13:4), and contented love for the Lord who will never leave him (13:5–6).

B. Religious Duties (13:7–19)

The loving servant will occupy himself with the person and work of Christ as he is led into that occupation through the ministry of church leaders (13:7–9). He will follow Christ to the place of separation without the camp (13:10–14). He will offer sacrifices of praise and money (13:15–16). He will pray for the servants of the Lord (13:18–19).

VII. IT IS A LIFE OF CORPORATE FELLOWSHIP IN THE CHURCH

The doctrine of the church is developed in the Epistle along practical rather than didactic lines. Believers are exhorted not to forget the importance of their regular meetings (10:25), for the need for mutual support will increase as the end approaches. This idea of corporate fellowship is also expressed in the figure that the writer employs in 3:6 of the house over which Christ is the head. Clearly, however, the author conceived of different offices within the fellowship, for he spoke of those who rule and those who are ruled (13:17). Even those who led the church in days past are still to be revered (13:7).

Nothing is said concerning the Lord's supper, although baptism was evidently a prerequisite to membership in the group (3:1; 4:14; 6:1; 10:23).¹

The future hope of the church is in Heaven, where evidently she will be distinguishable from other groups that will be there too (12:23).

In conclusion one observes that the theology of Hebrews is essentially the theology of the priesthood of Christ in relation to the better covenantal promises for the Christian in this age. The writer's hope for his readers was that an understanding of the truth of what they had in Christ would be the tonic that would cure their ills and stop their drifting course of life.

The logical order of the development of the theology is very convincing. First the writer introduced Christ in all the essential dignity of His person that overshadows all others. Then he developed the theme of His priesthood. Finally he showed the ethical and moral implications of the work of Christ as they should be displayed in the lives of believers. The Christology of Hebrews is preparatory; the priesthood is central; the Christian life is consequent.

P_{ART} VI

THE THEOLOGY OF PETER AND
JUDE

CHAPTER 1

THE THEOLOGY OF PETER

I. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

A. SOURCES OF *P*ETRINE *T*HEOLOGY

Petrine theology finds source material in many places in the New Testament. Although Peter's activity began when he was called to follow the Lord, Petrine theology did not begin to be revealed until after Pentecost. Therefore speeches and remarks of Peter in the Gospels do not contribute to the source material of his theology.

Any discussion of the theology of Peter must include references to the Petrine discourses in Acts. All of these occur in the first half of that book and are to be dated in the first half of the first century.

The two letters of Peter are the primary source material. Whatever interrelation there may be between 2 Peter and Jude, they must not be considered together in a Biblical theology study, for they do not represent the doctrine of the same author. It is generally considered that the Gospel of Mark reflects the teaching of Peter; however, that Gospel belongs to the Synoptic theology and not to this division.

Biblical theology can have several emphases. It may emphasize the chronological development of doctrinal revelation, or it may emphasize the theological pattern of thought in the minds of various writers of Scripture. To substantiate a chronological development in Petrine theology would necessitate showing differences between the speeches of Peter found in Acts (spoken early in his ministry) and the writings in the Epistles (written late in his ministry). This is impossible to do, for there is no such

development. Therefore it is the viewpoint of the man that should have our attention.

If this be so, the Epistles will have to be the basis for Petrine theology, simply because Peter's speeches in Acts were recorded by another who had his own theological purpose in mind in the selection of the material. While we should freely use the relevant material in Acts, it is supplementary to the source material of the Epistles.

B. INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLES

The genuineness and authority of the first Epistle was universally recognized by the early church.¹ It was obviously written by an eyewitness to the earthly life of Christ (2:19–24; 3:18; 4:1,14; 5:1). Even those who do not accept the genuineness of the second Epistle admit that its testimony (3:1) dates the first Epistle very early (probably A.D. 63–64).

The matter of the place of writing of the first Epistle is not so simple. Although it is said to be Babylon (5:13), the meaning of “Babylon” is not clear. Since it really makes very little difference to Petrine theology, the various views need only be mentioned. Some hold “Babylon” to refer to the city of that name in Egypt, but the view lacks positive evidence to support it. Others hold that it refers to Babylon on the Euphrates.² This is the most natural way to take the word, and it is known that it was an important center of Jewish dispersion and a center plagued by persecution. There is no evidence, however, to connect Peter with this city, although it is certainly possible that he may have gone there.

Still others hold that the reference in 1 Peter 5:13 is to mystical Babylon—that is, Rome.³ This view is supported by tradition⁴ and was universally held until the time of the Reformation. There is a great deal of strong evidence that Peter was in Rome,⁵ which may give weight to this view, although it in no way supports the claims of the Roman Catholic Church concerning the papacy. It is argued too that within the verse itself there is evidence for assuming the mystical sense of “Babylon.” “She who is . . . chosen together with you” is claimed to be a metaphorical expression referring to the church. “My son, Mark” is undoubtedly a reference to the well-known Mark who was to Peter a spiritual son. Since two expressions in the verse are figurative, why should not “Babylon” be also?

The authenticity of the second Epistle is widely disputed. The external evidence in support of the Petrine authorship leaves much to be desired, but even those fathers who expressed doubts about it did so with less frequency and vehemence than the modern critics do.⁶

Internal evidence is likewise controverted; nevertheless certain internal considerations support the Petrine authorship strongly. For instance the use of the name “Simon” in 2 Peter 1:1 would hardly have been a wise choice for a forger who would want to imitate 1 Peter 1:1 as closely as possible. If the Epistle were a forgery, what motivated the forger would be an unanswerable question. It contains no heresy, tells nothing new about Peter, contains no anachronisms, and puts nothing into his mouth that is contrary to history (as the noncanonical works about Peter do). If it is a forgery, it is one without an object, without the customary marks of a forgery, and without resemblance to undoubted forgeries.⁷ We accept it as a genuine work of the apostle Peter written in A.D. 66 or 67.

C. T_{HE} A_{POSTLE} P_{ETER}

It is always important in Biblical theology to review something of the life of the writer involved. Peter was the son of Jonah (Matthew 16:17) and brother of Andrew, their home being in Capernaum. Though married at the time (Mark 1:30), Peter was called by Jesus to be a disciple (Mark 1:16; Luke 5:1–11). About six months later a second call to apostleship came (Mark 3:14).

Clement of Alexandria called Peter one of “the elect of the elect” because he belonged to the innermost circle of three and witnessed events the others did not, such as the raising of Jairus’s daughter, the transfiguration, Gethsemane, and the empty tomb. Peter was the leader of the twelve, acting continually as their spokesman. He took the place of leadership after the ascension of Christ by presiding at the choosing of Judas’s successor, by preaching at Pentecost, and by being the focal point of the Jewish leaders’ attack. Peter attended the council in Jerusalem in A.D. 49, went to Antioch (Galatians 2:11), and visited other places, including perhaps Rome. Before Pentecost he was like a pendulum, always swinging from one extreme to another; after Pentecost he was *Peter*, “a rock.”

D. P_{ERSECUTION IN THE} F_{IRST} E_{PISTLE}

Prominent in the background of 1 Peter is the thought of persecution and trial (1:6–7; 2:11–20; 3:13–17; 4:3–5, 12–19; 5:8–10). Some believe that this was official persecution of the Roman empire against the Christians⁸ and it is certainly true that the church was never free of such until the time of Constantine. However, the persecution of Nero, which would have to be in the background of 1 Peter if it refers to official persecution, was largely confined to the city of Rome itself and could hardly qualify as that which plagued the believers of the dispersion.⁹ Official persecution was an isolated matter at that time.

From the Epistle itself we glean certain information about the kind of persecution the Christians were undergoing. For one thing, it was characterized as “various trials” (1:6). That phrase lends little support to the idea of an official persecution by edict of Rome. Again, Peter said that the believers should silence the opposition by their good deeds (2:15), which indicates a more personal kind of persecution. The picture in the book itself seems to be of sporadic, unofficial, social persecution incident to the normal practices of Christianity.

E. CHARACTERISTICS OF P_{ETRINE} T_{HEOLOGY}

Petrine theology is fundamentally christological. This exhibits itself in two principal ways: it is didactically and experientially christological.

In the area of teaching, Peter reflected in many instances the Lord’s own teaching. Plumptre compiled a list of cross-references that show the extent of this.¹⁰ Many of these echoes are from the ministry of Christ during His earthly life and came to Peter in the normal course of his association with his Lord.

One basic doctrine in Petrine theology, however, did not come from the period of humiliation. Peter beheld the Lord repeatedly after the resurrection: he saw the empty tomb; he gazed on the scars of Calvary; and he witnessed the ascension into Heaven. From this postresurrection association came the emphasis on the resurrection in Peter’s theology.

Petrine theology is also experientially christological. That is, it is a theology of practical exhortation and comfort for the daily needs of believers. This also stems from Peter’s background, for was he not the one who from the highest place of spiritual privilege fell so miserably that upon

his restoration he could strengthen his brethren? He also had witnessed the life of his Master who “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). Peter’s walk with that One who gave comfort, help, healing, and hope to people is sharply reflected in the experiential side of his christologically-centered theology.

Let it not be assumed that the didactic and experiential are unrelated in Peter’s thought. For example the doctrine of the fatherhood of God should produce holy living (1 Peter 1:14–16). The facts of the life of Christ should serve as an example of patience in times of trial (2:21–25). The doctrine of future rewards should constrain leaders of the church to govern properly (5:1–4). The areas of doctrine and practice are inseparably interrelated, their focal point being the teaching and life of the One in whom Peter’s thought centered.

II. DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

To say that Petrine theology is christocentric does not mean that his writings contain nothing about the Father or the Holy Spirit. But since the primary emphasis is on the revelation of God through the Son, the doctrine of Christ must be given prominence in the development of the theology of Peter. Further, in order to try to catch Peter’s perspective, it seems natural to include the saving work of Christ in this section rather than in a separate division on soteriology.

A. *CHRIST’S NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS*

1. Jesus. In the early days of his ministry Peter frequently used the name *Jesus* or *Jesus of Nazareth* (Acts 1:16; 2:22, 32, 36; 3:13; 10:38) simply because he desired to identify Jesus with the Old Testament concept of Messiah. The theme of his early sermons was that Jesus, whom they knew, was the Messiah of Israel (Acts 2:36; 3:18). Peter also identified Jesus as the Lord early in his ministry (Acts 1:21; 2:36; 10:36; 11:17). So we may say that whatever else Peter had to learn later, he had from the very beginning an exalted view of the person of Jesus Christ.

2. Christ. The principal designation of the Lord in the first Epistle is the simple *Christ* (1:11, 19; 2:21; 3:15–16, 18; 4:1, 13–14; 5:1, 10, 14). Next most frequently used is the simplest of the solemn compound names, *Jesus*

Christ (1:1–3, 7, 13; 2:5; 3:21; 4:11). The second Epistle is lacking in these simple designations; in that letter Peter preferred to use compound names of the Lord (1:8, 14, 16; 2:20; 3:18). Again this shows the high estimate that Peter, the companion of the Lord, put on His person. He was to Peter the divine Son of God. Warfield observed:

So far as appears it did not occur to anyone in the primitive Christian community to put a lower estimate upon His personality than that; and writer vies with writer only in his attempt to give his faith in his divine Redeemer clear and emphatic expression.¹¹

3. *Spotless and pre-existent lamb (1 Peter 1:19–20).* In 1:19 Peter designated the Lord as the lamb without spot (inherent blame) and blemish (external defilement). The apostle also predicated His existence before the foundation of the world (1:20). This must be real pre-existence because of the presence of the participle “appeared” in the same verse. The pre-existence and appearance are of the same subject, and if the latter is real and not ideal, so is the former.¹²

4. *Precious cornerstone (1 Peter 2:6–7).* Peter seems to have learned well the lesson of the difference between Judaism and Christianity, for he used Psalm 118:22 not only here, but also in the message recorded in Acts 4:11. Jesus, whom the Jews had rejected, was now the precious cornerstone of the church.

5. *Rock of stumbling (1 Peter 2:8).* To those who did not receive Him, Jesus of Nazareth was “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” In God’s wise purposes He so ordained it that Jesus would be put in the way, though God assumes no responsibility for anyone falling over Him.

6. *Shepherd and guardian of our souls (1 Peter 2:25).* After speaking of the sufferings that a believer may have to endure, Peter concluded with this title of comfort. Being called unto Christ means being called unto One who cares for and sustains His sheep in every trial.

In Peter’s use of names and designations for Christ, one thing is outstanding: the thought with which his mind was saturated throughout all his ministry was that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. The use of the

names *Jesus*, *Christ*, and their compounds shows that. In addition the descriptive phrases just cited—lamb, cornerstone, shepherd—are from an Old Testament mold. The Messianic teaching was deeply rooted in Peter’s thinking, and this Jesus was that Messiah.

B. *C*_{HRIST}’ *S* *M*_{ESSIAHSHIP}

Gray noted, “Peter is unique in his Messianic teaching.”¹³ The manifestation of this we have seen in the preceding section, but the basis of that which is displayed in his Epistles is found in Peter’s early sermons in Acts. (Since these sermons have been discussed under the theology of Acts, only the principal points will be listed here.)

1. *Messiah must be raised from the dead.* This point (which necessarily includes the fact that He would have to die) is the principal contribution to Peter’s Messianic doctrine from the sermon preached on Pentecost (Acts 2:14–36). A risen Messiah meant a crucified Messiah, and that Messiah is Jesus.

2. *The fulfillment of Israel’s promises awaits the personal return of Messiah, which awaits the national repentance of Israel.* This is the substance of the sermon Peter preached after the healing of the lame man at the temple (Acts 3:12–26). When Israel repents, the Lord will return and fulfill all of God’s promises concerning the millennial times of refreshing. This is still a true statement today, although when Peter preached it was as if he were putting the Stone of stumbling in the way of the entire nation, which stumbled and became disobedient—all in perfect accord with the eternal purposes of God.

C. *C*_{HRIST}’ *S* *L*_{IFE}

1. *An example (1 Peter 2:21–23).* In holding up the life of Christ as an example for believers, Peter stressed the patient endurance that He exhibited throughout His life (note the imperfects in 2:23). All attacks on Him were undeserved, for He did not commit even one act of sin (note the aorist in 2:22). The Christian is called to this kind of patient endurance even when suffering wrongfully, for in this context Peter was especially speaking

to Christian slaves who were finding it difficult to work for unbelieving masters.

2. A confirmation (2 Peter 1:15–19). To confirm the truth of the everlasting kingdom that the Christian will enter (1:11), Peter referred to the transfiguration, an incident in the life of Christ of which he was an eyewitness. The result of that event is that prophecy concerning the kingdom is “made more sure,” and the effect of it should be that we “pay attention” in our hearts (1:19).

D. CHRIST'S PREINCARNATE ACTIVITY (1 PETER 3:18–22)

There are four principal views concerning this passage: (1) Christ preaches now through apostles and prophets to sinners who are imprisoned; (2) Christ descended into Hades between His death and resurrection to offer a second chance to those imprisoned there; (3) Christ descended into Hades to make a judicial declaration of His victory on the cross to wicked angels confined there or to spirits of wicked dead men; (4) Christ preached by the Spirit to the men of Noah's day and because they were disobedient to His message, they are now imprisoned spirits awaiting judgment.¹⁴ It is the last view that I prefer and that justifies the title of this section.

While all the arguments pro and con for each view cannot be presented, it may be noted briefly that the first necessitates too figurative an interpretation, the second involves the unscriptural idea of a second chance, and the third has little point and is open to the charge that Christ was taunting those in Hades, but the fourth satisfies grammar and context (see Hebrews 12:23, where “spirits” is used of men). Undoubtedly the Lord preached in the Spirit in other periods of Old Testament history, but the days of Noah are cited because of their extreme wickedness and similarity to the times of persecution that the believers of Peter's day were experiencing. If this be the true meaning of the passage, the Lord is seen to be active in His preincarnate days.

E. CHRIST'S SALVATION

Although soteriology might well be made an entirely separate division of Petrine theology, it is placed under Christology in order to reflect better the Petrine thought pattern.

1. The person. The Savior was the spotless, undefiled One (1 Peter 1:19) who could not have died for His own sins since He, being the Just One, did not commit sin (1 Peter 2:22; 3:18). As shown previously, He was the divine One who died for sins.

2. The preplanning. Salvation was not an afterthought, but a forethought in the mind of God. The aim of the diligent, searching study of the prophets was that they might know at what season and with what characteristics Christ would come (1 Peter 1:10–12). The entire program was foreordained by God before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20).

3. The purpose. *Christ's death was truly substitutionary.* This is seen in (a) the use of the figure of a lamb (1 Peter 1:19), which would bring to the readers' minds the substitutionary aspect of the Levitical sacrifices; (b) the direct statement of 1 Peter 2:24, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross"; and (c) the use of *huper* ("the just *for* the unjust," italics added) in 1 Peter 3:18, where it means "in place of," as it does in Philemon 13, a nonatonement passage.

Further, Christ's substitutionary death was conclusive, for He died "once for all" (1 Peter 3:18, *hapax*, not *pote*, which means "once" or "formerly").

Christ's substitutionary death was also effective, for it brought redemption (1 Peter 1:18). Here "redeemed" is a translation of *lutroō*, which means "to set free by payment of a ransom."¹⁵ Thus Christ's work on the cross was completely effective in setting the sinner free.

4. The proofs. The proofs of the efficacy of the work of Christ on the cross are the resurrection of Christ (1 Peter 1:3, 21; Acts 2:32) and the exaltation of Christ to glory (1 Peter 1:21; Acts 2:33).

A possible third proof is based on a difficult passage, 1 Peter 3:18. Usually this is taken as a reference to Christ being made alive by the Spirit in resurrection. The difficulty with this view is Peter's use of the aorist participle "having been . . . made alive." Unless this is an exception, the aorist participle does not express time subsequent to that of the main verb "died." Therefore Peter did not seem to be speaking of the resurrection subsequent to Christ's death. If one does not make a grammatical exception here, the reference seems to be to an exaltation on the cross. Probably it can be linked with the cry of victory—"It is finished!"—uttered when Christ

died (John 19:30). If so, then this too is a proof of the efficacy of the work of the Son on the cross.

5. *The provisions.* First Peter was written so that believers might know the “true grace of God” (5:12), and in this letter Peter mentioned many of the benefits of that knowledge of personal salvation. For instance he said it brings hope of Heaven, which is described in three negatives: imperishable, undefiled, and unfading (1:3–4). This inheritance has already been put in safekeeping for the Christian and it continues there (“reserved” in 1:4 is a perfect passive participle). Salvation also provides safekeeping for the inheritor (1:5). Faith on man’s part is necessary in order to be conscious of the power of God, but being “protected” (present tense) is ultimately and continuously the work of God’s power.

Further, salvation brings rejoicing even in the midst of persecution and trial (1:6). Actually the basis of salvation, the suffering of Christ, is to be the believer’s example in persecution (1:6–7; 2:20–25; 4:1–13). Salvation also provides a new position (2:9–10). Whereas the former position was one in which we “had not received mercy” and “were not a people,” the new position is one in which we “are the people of God,” particularly possessed by Him.¹⁶ Finally, being saved is made the incentive for holy living (1 Peter 1:14–18; 2:24).

6. *The people.* The lesson about who could be saved was one that Peter learned on Simon’s housetop (Acts 10). The apostle had learned well the fact that God intended to bring Gentiles as well as Jews to Himself. Peter’s understanding of this fact is evinced by what he had to say about it at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:11; also see 2 Peter 1:1).

7. *The possession.* Salvation is possessed by faith (1 Peter 1:5, 9, 21; 2:7; 2 Peter 1:5; Acts 10:43; 15:9).

III. DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES

Although the central feature of Petrine theology is the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of the Scriptures also plays an important role. Gray said, “Considering their limitations as to space, Peter’s Epistles are notable for the emphasis they lay upon the character and authority of the Holy Scriptures.”¹⁷

A. APPELLATIONS

Peter used a number of descriptive phrases that show something of his estimation of the Scriptures.

1. Prophetic word (2 Peter 1:19). The attributive position of the adjective makes the translation “prophetic word” preferable to “word of prophecy”¹⁸ and conveys the idea that Peter was describing the entire Old Testament as prophetic. The reason for this description is Peter’s emphasis on Christ; or as Lillie put it, “This, on account of the unity of its origin and its one all-pervading theme—Christ’s sufferings and glories (1 Peter 1:11)—is spoken of as one word, one scheme or body of prophecy.”¹⁹

2. Living and abiding Word of God (1 Peter 1:23–25). In this appellation we discover several things about Peter’s conception of the Word. It finds its origin in God. Its living character gives it animation, but that animation resides in the message preached (note *rhema*, which means “spoken word,” in 1:25) rather than in the letters and words on the page (though they are indispensable for the accurate conveying of the message). The Word also has eternal character, for it abides forever.

3. Pure milk (1 Peter 2:2). Although there is no specific word or phrase for the Word in this verse, obviously the Scriptures are thought of here as pure milk. Peter was not calling part of the Word *milk* in contrast to meat, as Paul did in 1 Corinthians 3:2. Peter was saying that all of the Word should be as pure milk that appeals to the reason. This involves putting away the things mentioned in 1 Peter 2:1. Thus to Peter the Word was pure and authoritative.

4. Scripture. Peter used this appellation in three places: Acts 1:16; 1 Peter 2:6; 2 Peter 1:20. He evidently understood and used it in the sense commonly understood by Jews at that time; that is, as standing for the very Word of God, His decrees to or from which no one would dare add or subtract and for which one would willingly die.²⁰

B. REVELATION

Peter mentioned several means of revelation, God's ways of communicating to man.

1. Prophecy. This was the primary channel of revelation (1 Peter 1:11)—God revealed things before they happened. Note that these prophecies were written, not spoken.

2. History. Historical portions of the Old Testament taught Peter about God's dealings with man and therefore about His purposes in the future (2 Peter 2:4–9).

3. Life of Christ. This too was a source of the revelation of God (Acts 2:22, 32; 1 Peter 1:3; 3:18–22; 2 Peter 1:15–18).

4. New Testament. Peter apparently gained knowledge of the mind of God through the writings of Paul (2 Peter 3:15–16).

5. Direct guidance. As all authors of Scripture, Peter was himself a channel of revelation as he wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Peter 1:21; 3:1–2).

C. *INSPIRATION*

1. Agent of inspiration. Early in his ministry Peter expressed the generally held concept that the Holy Spirit was the One who inspired the writers of the Old Testament (Acts 1:16). That this was an apostolic concept is affirmed in Acts 4:24–25.

2. Means of inspiration. Peter's chief contribution to the doctrine of inspiration is the classic passage in 2 Peter 1:20–21. These verses teach that God originated Scripture, for "no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will." However, God did not dictate the Scriptures, for *men* spoke as they were *borne along* by the Spirit. The Word is a divine-human production. The human part in the production is also emphasized in 1 Peter 1:10–11 where the searching and inquiring imply a good deal of hard work on the part of the prophets.

3. Extent of inspiration. It has already been shown that Peter looked on all of the Old Testament as inspired. Further he included the Pauline Epistles as Scripture. Peter's use of the word "Scriptures" with the meaning that it had at that time could only indicate that he considered Paul's writings to be inspired like the Old Testament (2 Peter 3:16). Other New Testament writings are not mentioned by name, but there is specific reference to the words of other apostles as being on the same plane of authority as the words of Old Testament prophets (2 Peter 3:2).

Though not systematically presented, Peter's doctrine of inspiration is one of the most completely presented doctrines in the New Testament. It goes without saying that his high view of inspiration carried with it a correspondingly high esteem for the authority of the Scriptures. Remarkably developed as this doctrine is, it nevertheless seems to stand in a secondary relationship to Christology, and in many respects Peter's presentation of the doctrine of the Scriptures may be viewed as an offshoot of his central doctrine of Christ. The origin of Peter's doctrine of inspiration is undoubtedly related to his background in Judaism, but its presentation is a product of his Christology.

IV. CHRISTIAN LIFE

Much of what Peter had to say in his Epistles concerns Christian living. This too is a direct result of his Christology, for every major passage in the Epistles concerning the Christian life is based on the sacrifice of Christ (1 Peter 1; 2:21; 3; 4:1; also see 2:18 ff.; 5:5–11; 2 Peter 1). Peter's thought runs like this: because we have a Savior who has done everything for us in His sacrifice, we should respond with a walk that is pleasing to Him in all the relationships of life.

Three of these specific relationships can be summed up in the single word *obedience*. Christians should obey governments, servants should obey masters, and wives should obey their husbands (1 Peter 2:13, 18; 3:1).

A. *THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOVERNMENTS (1 PETER 2:13–17)*

In relation to governments, obedience is a voluntary matter based on one's position as a servant of God (2:16). It should extend to every ordinance of man (2:13). The reasons for obedience are three: first, rulers are the God-appointed method of governing human affairs; second, it is the

will of God that we obey in order to muzzle the blameworthy ignorance of men who would malign Christianity if we did not obey; and third, the Lord's own example was one of obedience during His life.

Peter also allowed for an exception to the general rule of obedience. It is bound up in the words "bondslaves of God" (2:16). Primarily and fundamentally the Christian is God's servant and should a governmental decree come between God and His servant, the relationship to God supersedes the relationship to man (see Acts 4:20). But normally the believer is responsible to obey.

B. THE RELATIONSHIP OF SERVANTS AND MASTERS (1 PETER 2:18–25)

Again the principle is obedience on the part of servants in relation to their masters. This includes both good and perverse masters, for obedience finds favor with God. In case this seemed grievous to his readers, Peter reminded them of the example of Christ who, when He was buffeted (compare 2:20 with Matthew 26:67 and Mark 14:65), suffered without complaint. The follower of Christ should, like his Lord, commit his case to the One who judges righteously.

C. THE RELATIONSHIP OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES (1 PETER 3:1–7)

1. Principles (3:1–2,7). For the wife the principle is again obedience. This should be coupled with purity and respect (3:2). For the husband the principle is honor ("likewise" in 3:7 refers to 2:17). This is based on the fact that although both husband and wife are weak, the wife is the weaker person (physically). Such a relationship of honor brings with it a life of answered prayer as the two who sustain this close relationship agree in their prayer life.

2. Purpose (3:1–2). One would gather from this passage that the greater number of spiritually mixed marriages in New Testament times involved an unsaved husband rather than an unsaved wife. It is also evident that the proper relationship in such cases was considered highly important, considering how much space is devoted to it by several New Testament writers. Christian wives should be obedient to their unsaved husbands in order to win them to the Savior. It is the obedience that is to be the winsome testimony, not a vocal witness (note the literal translation of 3:1: "They also

may without a word be won by the manner of life of the wives”). Unbelieving husbands, Peter said, do not need more preaching from their wives; they need to see Christianity lived through the obedience of the wife.

3. Procedure (3:3–4). Carrying out these ideas of obedience, subjection, and reverence will involve the outward appearance as well as the inner character of the woman. Undoubtedly the stress is on the inner nature being characterized by meekness and quietness, but outward appearance is also involved. Braiding of the hair in elaborate knots, undue use of gold ornaments, and excessive display of clothing are inconsistent with a meek and quiet spirit. Since Peter was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it must be recognized that this is still God’s procedure for winning the unsaved partner.

4. Pattern (3:5–6). The pattern of conduct for Christian women is found in the women of the Old Testament. They were separated unto God, found their hope in Him, and, like Sarah, were submissive to their husbands. God’s ideals for women were the same in both Testaments, and they remain unchanged today.

D. THE CHRISTIAN’S RELATIONSHIP TO PERSECUTION

Mention has already been made of the fact that the persecution in the background of the Petrine writings is not official, but personal and social. In such trials the believer’s reaction could be such as to bring disgrace on the name of Christ. If the Christian suffers as an evildoer, thereby bringing shame on himself and dishonor to Christ (1 Peter 4:15), he deserves the unbeliever’s accusations (2:12). In such cases judgment needs to come to the house of God (4:17). However, the believer’s reaction should be that which honors Christ. Such conduct involves committing oneself to God (4:19), patient endurance (2:20), remembering the example of Christ (2:23), and exuberant rejoicing (1:6; 4:13). This is acceptable with God.

The result of suffering is twofold. First, it brings a partnership with the sufferings of Christ (4:13–14)—not the vicarious atoning sufferings, but the trials that came to Him as the holy One who lived in a sinful world that hated Him. So the believer living a holy life will be despised by the world and thus share in the sufferings of Christ. Second, suffering brings a

proving of the faith of the Christian (1:7). It shows that a believer can be trusted, and this brings glory to God.

E. THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO ALL MANNER OF LIVING

1. Adversaries in Christian living. The antagonism of the world in its hatred for the believer is patent in Peter's Epistles. The flesh too wars against the soul in its endeavor to live for Christ (1 Peter 2:11). The devil is specifically called an "adversary" (5:8) and his tactics involve stalking the Christian in order to swallow his testimony. Against him the believer must be sober and alert in his resistance.

2. Aim of all Christian living. The single aim of the Christian life is holiness (1:14–16). The standard or pattern is God Himself; the extent is all manner of life; and the requirement is being unfashionable in respect to the old life.

3. Attitudes in Christian living. Basic to all successful Christian living must be the attitude of yieldedness or dedication of life. A concrete proof that the life has been dedicated will be persecution by the world (4:1). Also essential are humility (5:5–6) and sobriety (1:13; 5:8). Constant watchfulness in an alert but unexcited state is also necessary for victorious living.

4. Actions of Christian living. In relation to self, growth is the keynote of Christian living (2 Peter 1:5–11; 3:18). At least seven virtues are to be added to faith as evidence of progress in the Christian life. They are temperance, virtue, knowledge, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. The end of such constant growth is an abundant entrance into the kingdom; that is, an entrance with rewards.

In relation to fellow believers, certain actions are becoming to the Christian life. They should be characterized by love (1 Peter 4:8), sympathy (3:8), tenderheartedness (3:8), humblemindedness (3:8), and hospitality (4:9). Christian love should be fervent (at a high pitch, 4:8), sincere (without unreal pretense, 1:22), and from the heart (1:22). Christian love is affection without affectation.

The word that summarizes the believer's relation to all men is "honor" (2:17).

This gives some idea of the areas of thought and lines of development in Petrine theology concerning the Christian life. Again let it be emphasized that all this teaching was definitely associated in Peter's mind with Christology, for every major passage concerning the Christian life is based on the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ.

V. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

It is surprising to learn that the word *church* does not appear anywhere in Peter's Epistles or in his discourses in Acts; nevertheless certain features of ecclesiology are clearly present.

A. *THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH*

The church conceived of as the universal body of Christ is discernible in Peter's thought. Peter learned the lesson of the unity of all believers—whether Jew or Gentile (Acts 10; 15)—in the universal church. His figurative titles (1 Peter 2:5,9) also support the doctrine of the universal church. Wuest wrote, "This spiritual house is not the local church nor even a group of saints, but the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church Universal, for Peter is addressing believers in five Roman provinces."²¹ Likewise when Peter spoke of the gifts given to all Christians to be exercised among the saints, he did not limit the giving or the exercise to any one local group (4:10–11, the only place *charisma*, "gift", is used outside the Pauline Epistles).

B. *THE LOCAL CHURCH*

1. Government. Little is said about the organization of the local church. The elders were evidently the most prominent group of officials in the church (1 Peter 5:1–4). Their duties were to tend, feed, guide, and guard the flock in the spirit of being examples, not lords. Thus two principles are quite clear: elders are not to lord, and laymen are not to lead. If all would recognize and fulfill their duties, there would be no disputes. Elders apparently received some pay for their work (5:2), although their greater reward will be the crown of glory that the Lord will give (5:4).

A group that are called “younger” were also mentioned by Peter (5:5). These may simply be younger people or they could conceivably be organizations of youth.²² In either case they are to be in subjection to the elders.

In his Epistles, Peter did not refer to an official group of deacons in the church. However, he did use the verb *diakoneō* in the nontechnical sense of ministering or serving (1:12; 4:10–11). Even though some churches did at that time have official groups of deacons (see Philippians 1:1), evidently not all did.

2. Ordinances. The ordinance of baptism was recognized and practiced by Peter as an important feature of church life. The record of its prominence in the early chapters of Acts has already been discussed. That this importance did not lessen as time went on is evident from 1 Peter 3:21. Although Peter stated that there is no saving efficacy to baptism, he was speaking of water baptism as the sign of the resurrection life received in the heart by faith.²³

The love feasts that accompanied the Lord’s supper are mentioned in 2 Peter 2:13 without elaboration. Extrabiblical evidence pictures them as a time when the Christian group gathered for prayer, Scripture reading, the fellowship meal, a collection for widows and orphans, the reading and writing of communications with other churches, and the observance of the Lord’s supper.²⁴

VI. ESCHATOLOGY

A. *C*OMING OF *C*HRI^ST

There is a distinction in Peter’s thought relative to the events involved in the coming of Christ, but he did not speak in terms of rapture and return, although that is what the distinction amounts to. The first Epistle emphasizes the coming of Christ in relation to His own (the rapture), and the second Epistle emphasizes the coming of Christ in relation to the wicked (the return).

Although Peter did not call it the rapture, he spoke of accompaniments of that event when Christ will come for His own. For instance it is then that believers will be rewarded (1 Peter 1:7). Salvation will be consummated

and God glorified in His saints (1:12; 2:12; 5:1). In light of that event Christians are to have a sense of urgency in Christian service (4:7).

Rewards are also associated with the coming of Christ for His saints. Individual rewards will be given for steadfastness of faith (1:7). The coming of Christ will consummate salvation, which in itself is a reward as the full revelation of the grace of God is seen (1:13). Faithful elders are particularly promised a crown of glory at His coming (5:1) and all believers will of course be rewarded by being able to see Him whom they love (1:8).

In relation to Christ's second advent, which particularly concerns the wicked, Peter spoke at greater length. He was emphatic about the certainty of His coming; that certainty was based on the confirmatory experience of being an eyewitness of the transfiguration (2 Peter 1:16–18). Peter's own assurance stands in sharp contrast to the scoffers' willful ignorance of the fact of His coming (3:1–7). Peter also associated judgment with His coming (2:1,3–4; 3:7). In his early messages recorded in Acts he also connected the kingdom promises to Israel with the coming of Christ (Acts 3:17–26).

B. FALSE TEACHERS (2 PETER 2:1–22)

The burden of Peter in his second Epistle concerns apostasy in the church. In some respects this is related to ecclesiology and in other respects to eschatology. Peter's word is predictive, while Jude's is historical.

In conduct (2:1–3) the apostates will be secretive, heretical, Christ-denying, infectious, lascivious, blasphemous, covetous, and self-seeking. Their condemnation (2:4–9) is certain, for God will long before have placed them in the category of being under judgment. It is assured by historical examples of past judgments of God on sin.

The characteristics of the false teachers (2:10–22) include licentiousness, haughtiness, brutishness, recklessness, sensuality, hypocrisy, infamy, emptiness, instability, boastfulness, seductiveness, deceit, powerlessness, and ignorance. From the picture Peter drew we can gather that these teachers will clothe their false teaching with sound words, combining truth with their error so as to engender disbelief of the truth. Discrediting the redemptive work of Christ is also part of their program, which brings with it the inevitable consequences of immoral, sinful lives (2:10,14,18). Peter held out no hope that the presence of false teachers in the church can be avoided. They will come and be active until destroyed by the judgment of God. In

the meantime believers are to be warned against the dangers of their teaching.

C. *D_{AY OF THE LORD}*

Peter introduced the day of the Lord without any preliminaries or defining phrases because it was unnecessary to explain the concept to his readers. Their understanding of the meaning of the day of the Lord associated it with the coming and reign of Messiah²⁵ and since Peter did not qualify the term in any way, that is undoubtedly the meaning he intended to attach to it.

Although a study of what the entire Bible has to say about the day of the Lord would yield a much longer list, Peter only picked out two events in connection with that day: the coming of Christ and the destruction of the heavens and earth. He implied that these events will be separated by some time, for the destruction will occur within the period of the day of the Lord (note “in which” in 2 Peter 3:10). Specific mention of the millennium is not found here although it is allowed for by the “in which.”

D. *D_{AY OF GOD}*

Many understand no difference between the day of the Lord and the day of God because apparently Peter connected the destruction of the earth with either phrase (2 Peter 3:12).²⁶ However, a better translation of verse 12 will bring out the force of the preposition *dia*, “on account of.” The meaning is that the coming of the day of God is on account of the dissolution of the elements. Thus the destruction, which is in the day of the Lord, is a preparation for the day of God, which follows. In other words, the day of God is the eternal state (see 3:18 where the equivalent phrase “day of eternity” is used). The chief characteristic of the day of God is that righteousness “dwells” (makes its home) in it (3:13). For this the believer looks and longs.

It is not difficult to see how Peter’s eschatology is also christological. The coming of Christ, the nonredemptive teaching of the false teachers, the day of the Lord, and the day of God all focus on the Savior. Peter’s last exhortation links eschatology with Christology, for he said that knowing

these future things ought to cause one to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is typical of all Petrine theology.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEOLOGY OF JUDE

Chronology and subject matter link Peter's second Epistle and the book of Jude. Authorship distinguishes them. From the viewpoint of progress of doctrine, then, the theology of Peter and Jude must be treated as a unit; from the viewpoint of agent of revelation, there must be some distinction. Therefore we have placed the theology of Peter and Jude under the same division but separated them within that division.

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Little is known of the writer of this short Epistle. He was the brother of James, half-brother of our Lord, and an unbeliever until after the resurrection (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; John 7:5; Acts 1:14). The home of Joseph and Mary would have surrounded Jude with a pious atmosphere in which God was feared and His Word studied. Jude's relationship to Jesus gave him some advantage when he finally believed.

There is no clue in the Epistle of Jude itself about to whom it was particularly directed. It is not unlikely that the readers were Palestinian Christians, both Jewish and Gentile. The peril of false teachers of which Peter had spoken was an actuality when Jude wrote, and his urgent letter was written in light of that crisis. Apostate conditions were evidently much more serious when Jude wrote, making it more probable that 2 Peter was written before Jude. Jude seems to have assumed the writing of Peter in verses 17–18. The interrelationship of the two letters is apparent but more easily accounted for if Jude, the shorter Epistle by a less well-known person, was written after 2 Peter.¹

II. LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Even though the contents of Jude principally concern the false teachers, one agrees with Stevens, who said that the doctrine of the lordship of Christ is “the principal doctrinal assumption of the letter.”² Concerning this, Jude had certain basic ideas in the theological substructure of his thinking:

A. *CHRIST IS GOD AND ABSOLUTE MASTER (JUDE 4)*

Although there is dispute among commentators concerning whether “Master” refers here to God or to Christ, there is no question as to the meaning of *despotēs*, the word translated “Master.” It means one who has absolute, unrestricted authority. Probably Trench was correct in saying that it “is to Christ, but to Christ as God, that the title is ascribed.”³ Jesus Christ is a despot—that is, One who possesses absolute and unlimited authority. This was basic to Jude’s theology.

B. *SINCE CHRIST IS MASTER, THE CHRISTIAN IS HIS SLAVE (JUDE 1)*

Doulos, “slave,” is the strictly correlative idea to *despotēs*, “Master.” Trench said, “He who addresses another as *despota* puts an emphasis of submission into his speech which *kurie* would not have possessed.”⁴ If Christ is Master, there is no other position for a Christian to take than that of slave.

C. *CHRIST IS ALSO LORD (JUDE 21)*

Kurios, “Lord,” is a less authoritarian word than *despotēs*. In a Greek household the man was a despot in respect to his slaves and a *kurios* in respect to his wife and children. Thus *kurios* includes the idea of desiring the good of his subjects. A despot may do that too, but it is not inherent in the meaning of the word. Notice that Jude’s use of “Lord” is in connection with His mercy.

III. SALVATION OF CHRIST

For a short letter there seems to be a remarkable emphasis on salvation, especially when the purpose of the letter relates to another subject. And yet

it is not so remarkable, for to write about the “common salvation” was the original intention of Jude (Jude 3).

A. *THE PAST ASPECT*

Concerning that which is related to the past aspect of salvation, Jude spoke of election, retribution, human responsibility, and faith. Election is referred to in verses 1, 4, and 5. Retribution is seen in the fact that the apostates were “beforehand marked out” for judgment (Jude 4). The writing in which they were marked out may be the prophecy of Enoch, and even though there is no direct reference to a decree, there is no doubt in Jude’s mind that the apostates on the scene in his day were foreordained to doom. Human responsibility is exemplified in the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness and in the ungodly apostates in the church of Jude’s time. Faith as the foundation on which the Christian life is built is spoken of in Jude 20. Stevens took the “faith” of Jude 3 as the subjective human experience,⁵ but it is probably a reference to the objective body of truth.

B. *THE PRESENT ASPECT*

Even though the Christian is kept by God (Jude 1), he is to keep himself in the Christian life. This involves the continuous doing of three things: “building . . . praying . . . waiting” (Jude 20–21 where the three present participles explain the single command “keep”). Christian growth, Spirit-directed prayer, and an expectant attitude toward Christ’s coming are the essentials of the present experience of salvation.

C. *THE FUTURE ASPECT*

What God has begun He will also consummate (Jude 24). He will keep us from stumbling and present us faultless in respect to His own glory with an exulting joy. The glory of God is the absolute standard for our future glorification, and its attainment is certain through the power of God.

IV. THE LIBERTINES

A. *THEIR IDENTIFICATION*

“Libertines” is a good name for the apostates whom Jude described as invading the church, for they were evidently people who were more interested in living false doctrine than in teaching it. They had turned the grace of God into a shocking, unbridled lust in their lives. Their denial of the Lord was more in life than in doctrine, and as far as Jude’s opinion was concerned, they were not saved people (Jude 19).

B. THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

It is most remarkable to find these unbelievers actually associating themselves with the church in their love feasts (Jude 12). They stood apart, however, from the rest of the group and refused to place themselves under the leadership of the recognized shepherds. Defiance was their keynote; their own lusts, their motivation; their own advantage, their goal (Jude 8,16).

C. THE CHRISTIAN’S REACTION TO THEM

Although the text is somewhat uncertain in Jude 22–23, it seems as if there are three possible attitudes a believer may have toward libertines, depending on the circumstances. On those who separate themselves, the believer is to have mercy, for in their wavering they need to be treated with great kindness. Others are to be snatched from the fire of the situation in which they are presently living. To still others who have evidently gone much deeper into sin, the Christian is to show fearful mercy, lest he should be led to think too lightly of the sin from which he is trying to snatch them. The remarkable thing about this advice is that Jude did not recommend denunciation in any of these instances. Plummer wrote:

After all the strong language which he has used in describing the wickedness of those who are corrupt in the Christian community, [Jude] does *not*, in this advice as to different methods which are to be used in dealing with those who are going or have gone astray, recommend denunciation.⁶

Sometimes it may be necessary, but often it does more harm than good.

D. THEIR JUDGMENT

Judgment is certain. Enoch prophesied it (Jude 14–15), and what came upon unbelieving Israelites, angels who sinned, and Sodom and Gomorrah assures it (Jude 5–7). The pattern of past judgments affirms that the judgment on the libertines will be “eternal fire” (Jude 7). Jude emphasized again and again that it is deserved judgment (Jude 15).

V. BIBLIOLOGY

The problem of Jude’s quotation of noncanonical sources has often obscured his references to canonical books. In his short Epistle he referred to five or six incidents recorded in the Old Testament. These are the exodus from Egypt, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the story of Cain, the account of Balaam, and the rebellion of Korah (Jude 5, 7, 11). The account of the angels who did not keep their first estate (Jude 6) may be a sixth reference (Genesis 6:1–4). These references show the influence of a godly Jewish home where the children were taught the Old Testament Scriptures. In this respect James and Jude are similar.

Jude also included references and allusions to the noncanonical books, Assumption of Moses and the Book of Enoch (Jude 6, 9, 13–15). This too shows the influence of Jude’s Jewish background, for these books were a valued part of the Hebrew literary inheritance and undoubtedly Jude was brought up to respect them. Sometimes it is assumed from these quotations that the entire doctrine of the inspiration of the canonical Old Testament books is undermined; but, as Moorehead wrote, Jude’s quoting

does not warrant us to affirm that he indorsed the book. Paul cites from three Greek poets: from Aratus (Acts 17:28), from Menander (1 Cor. 15:33) . . . and from Epimenides (Titus 1:12). Does anyone imagine that Paul indorses all that these poets wrote? . . . So Jude cites a passage from a non-canonical book, not because he accepts the whole book as true, but this particular prediction he receives as from God.⁷

VI. DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

Again, for a short letter it is surprising to find so much said about the angels, though most of the references are incidental to the purpose. It is

apparent that Jude everywhere assumed the existence of all classes of angels—the good angels, the evil angels, an archangel, and Satan. He implied that Satan is the highest of God’s creatures, for Michael the archangel had to resort to the Lord to rebuke Satan.

In the case of the death of Moses, angels were concerned about his body (compare Jude 9 and Luke 16:22). It is also clear that Jude had the same idea as Paul about the respect due to angels who are present in the assembly of believers (Jude 8; also see 1 Corinthians 11:10). Jude used an *a fortiori* argument in verses 8–9: the libertines have an attitude toward good angels, against whom they use language that Michael the archangel would not dare use of evil angels. Jude also affirmed that angels will accompany the Lord at His coming (Jude 14).

The principal reference to angels, however, is to those “who did not keep their own domain” (Jude 6). The verse is reminiscent of an account in the Book of Enoch that is an expansion of the story in Genesis 6:1–4. Satan evidently persuaded some of the angels who originally fell with him to cohabit with women on the earth, and these God confined immediately because of the gross nature of that sin. The other fallen angels who did not participate in this sin are still free to roam the earth as demons carrying out Satan’s designs. The Septuagint has the word “angels” in Genesis 6, and this was the uniform interpretation of Judaism and the early church (with the exception of Julius Africanus in the entire ante-Nicene period).

The Lord’s word concerning angels neither marrying nor being given in marriage in the resurrection (Matthew 22:30) does not contradict this interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4, for the Lord’s point was simply that with resurrection bodies there will be no procreation of human babies, just as angels cannot produce angelic offspring. But He did not say that angels could not have cohabited with women to produce abnormal, yet human offspring. At any rate, the angel interpretation of Genesis 6 would undoubtedly be the only one Jude knew, and since we are studying the theology of Jude, it must be admitted that the reference in his Epistle is to that event. This natural emphasis on angelology again reflects the background of the author.

In summary the theology of Jude may be said to be simple like James’ and saturated with a knowledge of the Old Testament. It emphasizes the lordship of Christ with its concomitant, proper Christian conduct. All the

elements of apostolic theology are present even in the short example of Jude's theology that we have: the principles of grace and faith, salvation through Christ, holy Christian living, the coming of Christ, and judgment. The letter was born in the midst of trouble in the church, but not the theology, for that was evidently fixed in the writer's mind long before the letter was written.

P_{ART} VII

THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Biblical theology investigates the historically conditioned progress of revelation. As previously pointed out, this means that the study is concerned with the people through whom revelation was given (the historical conditioning) and with the periods in which it came (progress of doctrine). In Old Testament Biblical theology the periods are generally more prominent, while in New Testament Biblical theology the people are. In the case of Johannine theology there is a remarkable combination of the two factors, for we are dealing with a distinctive person¹ whose character stamped his writings, which were written during the last period in the progress of revelation. Van Oosterzee wrote:

The doctrinal teaching of John, the Apostle of Love, occupies not merely the last but also the highest place in the succession of Apostolic testimonies . . . As in the natural, so also in the spiritual domain, that which is noblest comes most slowly to perfection. Already have Peter and Paul deposed their written testimony, and left the scene of their earthly activity, before the testimony of John is heard. . . . No wonder that the Church of all ages has attached the highest value to the testimony of the bosom friend of the Lord, the venerable and profound Apostle John. While the Petrine bears a Jewish-Christian, the Pauline a Gentile-Christian character, we here see the whole opposition between the Gospel and Judaism on the one hand, and heathenism on the other, recede entirely into the background; and Christianity is regarded, in the fullest sense of the word, as the absolute religion. Thus, the highest point is attained; and, at the same time, the future development of Church and theology is sketched in broad outlines. The Petrine type is regarded

by preference in the Roman Catholic, the Pauline in the Protestant development of Church and doctrine; the Johannine theology seems emphatically destined to become the theology of the future.²

There are two principal ways of treating Johannine theology. One considers all of John's writings as a unit;³ the other separates the Gospel and deals with it from the viewpoint of the theology of Jesus rather than the theology of John.⁴ This latter course is preferable if one's basic concept of New Testament Biblical theology is that the teachings of Jesus are its focal point from which other types of apostolic teaching emanate and evolve. To treat all of John's writings as a unit is more desirable if one prefers to emphasize the individuality of the Johannine type of thought; and even Stevens in his *The Theology of the New Testament*, which does not follow this method of treatment, admitted that "the whole Gospel, as truly as the first Epistle, embodies the theology of John and exemplifies the Johannine style, terminology, and mode of conceiving Christian truth."⁵

Undoubtedly there are advantages and disadvantages to either plan, and one must choose according to his basic concept of Biblical theology. To me it seems best to treat Johannine theology as a distinctive and climactic unit, making it necessary to consider all of his writings together. The chief disadvantage of this method is that it excludes Johannine christological discourses from the theology of Jesus, but since, as we have already seen in the Synoptic theology, the theology of Jesus was preserved in the historically conditioned writings of men, this is not a serious disadvantage. The advantages are considerable and the result of the application of this method should best set forth the historically conditioned progress of revelation as deposited in the Bible.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL BACKGROUND

A discussion of certain introductory matters is always necessary in every section of Biblical theology. Some are historical and furnish the background picture for the writings involved, while others are critical. To these matters we now turn our attention.

I. LIFE OF JOHN

To understand the theology one must know something of the human instrument through whom it came. The life of John naturally divides itself into two periods. The first period concludes with his departure from Jerusalem sometime after the ascension of Christ, and the second continues from that time to his death. The source material for the facts for the first period is Biblical and for the second is extrabiblical.

Nothing definite is known about the birth of John except that he was evidently much younger than Jesus and that he may have been born in Bethsaida (John 1:44). He was the son of Zebedee and Salome and had a younger brother James. John evidently came from a fairly well-to-do family, for they had servants (Mark 1:20), his mother helped support Christ and his band (Mark 15:40–41), and John himself was personally acquainted with the high priest, who was always chosen from the upper classes (John 18:15). John's home environment in Galilee would have given him a Greek mixture in his outlook. Probably he never attended rabbinical schools (Acts 4:13), but he would have had the thorough religious training of a Jewish household that observed the liturgical ritual of Judaism. At least he showed detailed acquaintance with it in his writings.

Although artists have generally pictured John as an effeminate person, his character was much different from that. Galileans were by nature hardy, industrious men of action (see John 6:14–15). John, who was known as a son of thunder (Mark 3:17), was no exception. Glimpses of him in the other Gospels reveal him acting in bigotry (Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49), vindictiveness (Luke 9:54), and intrigue (Matthew 20:20; Mark 9:34–35). The power of Christ made John over as much as it did Peter; by nature John was a typical Galilean, but by new nature he became the apostle of love.

How long John remained in Jerusalem after Pentecost is not known. He went to Samaria after Philip preached there, but John evidently was not in Jerusalem when Paul first visited the city after his conversion (Galatians 1:18–19), though he may have been there later as one of the apostles at the council (Acts 15:6). The reliable evidence of tradition is that eventually John went to Ephesus. The tradition is also supported by the Apocalypse, from which we infer that it was written by someone who was a leader in Asia Minor and specifically Ephesus, the first church mentioned. Extrabiblical literature is replete with accounts of John's activities, the most famous stories being about Cerinthus in the bathhouse, the young lad who became a bandit, and the repeated admonition to love one another.¹

As the apostle of love, John is well-known, but he was also a man who even in his later years was sternly intolerant of heresy. Both aspects of the man—the love and the sternness—are seen in the same Epistle, 1 John for instance. Perhaps the best way to describe his character would be to use the word *intense*. In actions, in love for the brethren, and in condemnation of Christ-rejectors, he was the apostle of intensity. This was the instrument through which Johannine theology came.

II. GOSPEL AND EPISTLES

Certain matters of introduction must be touched upon in Biblical theology. For instance, if one does not divorce the sayings of Christ as recorded in the fourth Gospel from Johannine theology, the problem of the authorship of the Gospel becomes important. For fuller treatment of these matters the student should consult the literature of New Testament introduction.

A. AUTHORSHIP OF THE GOSPEL

Older liberalism held that the Gospel of John was spurious, being a product of a Hellenizing type of thought and belonging to the second century. More recent liberalism holds that the Gospel was an edition of genuine memoranda of John by some unknown editor or disciple of John.² Neo-orthodoxy thinks that John did not write it, though the truths contained are of the most vital kind. Conservatism has held that the Gospel was written by John the son of Zebedee.

External evidence for the Johannine authorship is abundant and uniform after A.D. 170. Before that time allusions are more scarce, but not entirely absent. An unusual source of external evidence in the case of John's Gospel comes from the early heretical sects. After citing this evidence Lightfoot concluded:

Differing in almost every other particular, heterodoxy unites in bearing testimony to St. John's Gospel. . . . More than enough of the unorthodox literature can be tested to throw back the date of the general acceptance outside the church of St. John's Gospel as genuine to a very early period in the second century.³

The argument for the Johannine authorship based on internal evidence of the Gospel itself is standard and well known. It is like three concentric circles. The largest circle proves that the author was a Palestinian Jew. This is shown by his use of the Old Testament (see John 6:45; 13:18; 19:37); by his knowledge of Jewish ideas, traditions, and expectations (see John 1:19–49; 2:6, 13; 3:25; 4:25; 5:1; 6:14–15; 7:26 ff.; 10:22; 11:55; 12:13; 13:1; 18:28; 19:31, 42); and by his knowledge of Palestine (1:44, 46; 2:1; 4:47; 5:2; 9:7; 10:23; 11:54).

The middle circle proves that the author was an eyewitness. This is shown by the exactness of details of time, place, and incident in the Gospel (see John 1:29, 35, 43; 2:6; 4:40, 43; 5:5; 12:1, 6, 12; 13:26; 19:14, 20, 23, 34, 39; 20:7; 21:6) and by the character sketches that are distinctive to John (for example Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Nathanael, the woman of Samaria, Nicodemus).

The third circle proves that the author was John. This is shown first by the process of eliminating the others who belonged to the inner circle of disciples and then by the citation of confirmatory evidence.

However, the question is raised as to whether the John who wrote both the Gospel and Epistles was John the son of Zebedee or John the elder of Ephesus. Early church literature mentions a presbyter John in Ephesus, which has led some to conclude that John the son of Zebedee was a different person from the John of Ephesus and that it was the latter who wrote these books.⁴ The arguments for the common authorship of the Gospel and Epistles of John are conclusive⁵ and any inevitable and expected differences are swallowed up by the overwhelming number of resemblances. Therefore the question is, Was the author John the apostle or John the elder?

The reasons for not identifying John the apostle with John the elder include the following: (1) an “uneducated” man (Acts 4:13) could not have written anything so profound as the fourth Gospel; (2) a fisherman’s son would not have known the high priest; (3) an apostle would not designate himself as an elder, as the writer of the Epistles does; (4) since the writer of the fourth Gospel used Mark, it could not have been John because an apostle would not use the work of one who was not an apostle.

Answers to these arguments are not difficult to find. (1) The meaning of “uneducated” is understood from the viewpoint of formal training in rabbinic schools and does not mean “unlearned.” (2) All fishermen cannot be assumed to be from the lower classes. (3) The apostle Peter called himself an “elder” (1 Peter 5:1), so why should not John? (4) Matthew, an apostle, used Mark, according to the critics, but that is never used as an argument against the Matthean authorship of the first Gospel.

Furthermore if John the elder is the author of the Gospel and therefore the beloved disciple, it becomes very difficult to explain why such an important person as the son of Zebedee is never mentioned in that Gospel. Taken at face value, the evidence points to one writer of both the Gospel and the Epistles: John the apostle, the son of Zebedee, who is one and the same as John the elder, who spent his later years in Ephesus.

B. DATE AND PLACE OF THE WRITING OF THE GOSPEL

Tradition is unanimous in assigning Ephesus as the place of the writing of the Gospel. The elders of the Asian churches probably requested that the things that John had been giving them orally be put in writing before he died. It is evident in the book that the author was looking back (7:39; 21:19)

and it is not unlikely that it was published between A.D. 85 and 90 (though the writing may have been done before that time).⁶

C. DATE AND PLACE OF THE WRITING OF THE FIRST EPISTLE

The message of 1 John seems to presuppose a knowledge of the contents of the Gospel and since there is no mention of the persecution under Domitian in A.D. 95, it was probably written about A.D. 90. The lack of an address or salutation in 1 John points to its being a homily rather than a personal letter. Probably it was written from Ephesus to all the churches in Asia Minor.

D. THE SECOND EPISTLE

Again the student is referred to other books whose province it is to discuss these matters fully.⁷ But for the sake of this Biblical theology, the position is taken that the second Epistle was written very shortly after the first and that 2 John was written to an unknown lady and her children who resided in the neighborhood of Ephesus.

E. THE THIRD EPISTLE

This Epistle can also be dated at about the same time as the others; that is, A.D. 90. Undoubtedly it was written from Ephesus (for it “has the tone of being written from head-quarters”⁸) to a church under John’s supervision.

III. EPHEBUS

No historical background for Johannine theology would be complete without a picture of Ephesus.

A. THE CITY OF EPHEBUS

Ephesus lay advantageously in the midst of a fertile plain near the mouth of the Cayster river. It was a center of trade both of the eastern Aegean area and that commerce which passed through Ephesus from the east. Marseilles, Corinth, Ephesus, and Tarsus were principal centers of trade in that day. The city of Ephesus was the capital of the province of Asia Minor

and the Roman proconsul resided there. The people had a measure of self-government, for they were allowed to have assemblies (Acts 19:39).

B. THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS

As far as the Biblical record reveals, the church at Ephesus was founded by Paul about A.D. 55. It received from him a circular letter about eight years later. For some time Timothy was the pastor of the congregation (1 Timothy 1:3). Actually before John came to Ephesus, many had labored there (Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18:18–19; Paul, Acts 19:8–10; Trophimus, Acts 21:29; the family of Onesiphorus, 2 Timothy 1:16–18; and Timothy, 1 Timothy 1:3).

It is quite likely that after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 many Christians fled to Ephesus; so of the time between the fall of Jerusalem and the rise of Rome, it may be said that Ephesus was the center of the Christian world. To touch Ephesus was to touch the world.

C. THE MORALS OF EPHESUS

1. Diana worship. The temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was like a magnet drawing people to a cesspool in Ephesus. Its reputation for magnificence was deserved, for it was built with 127 columns 60 feet high, surrounding an area 425 by 220 feet (about the size of a football field enlarged both ways by one-third). The wealthy vied to lavish gifts on the temple, so much treasure was kept there.

The temple was also a house of prostitution operated in the name of religion. Yet in spite of the iniquitous idolatry of the place, it was a Mecca or Rome of religious worship, and the people of the city itself delighted to call themselves temple-sweepers of the great Diana (Acts 19:35).

2. Magic. Superstition invariably accompanies idolatry and so it was in Ephesus. Around the statue of Diana were written unintelligible sayings that were supposed to be magical in their effect. Magic charms and books of magic sayings were made and sold to the worshipers. So universal was the grip of this idea of magic that even the Christians banked on its powers after they were converted (Acts 19:13–20; 1 John 5:21). The sale of horoscopes and lucky charms in our day only feebly compares to the traffic in magic in Ephesus.

D. THE GNOSTICISM OF EPHESUS

Gnosticism is in reality a philosophy of existence or being. It involves speculations concerning the origin of matter with resultant ideas about how human beings can be free from matter. *Gnōsis* was considered superior to the *philosophia* of the heathen, and it stood in sharp contrast with *the pistis* (“faith”) of the Christian. Most of gnosticism’s elements were Greek, though they were mixed with Oriental dualism too. The intellect was supreme; faith and conduct were definitely inferior and secondary considerations. This is what John battled against in the first Epistle.

In particular, gnosticism held that knowledge was superior to virtue, that the facts of Scripture should not be treated literally and in this nonliteral sense could only be understood by a select few, that evil in the world makes it impossible for God to be its creator, that the incarnation is incredible because deity could not unite itself with material body, and that there was no resurrection of the flesh.

Such doctrine resulted in docetism, asceticism, and antinomianism. Extreme docetism held that Jesus was not human at all—He was merely a prolonged theophany—while moderate docetism considered Jesus the natural son of Joseph and Mary upon whom the Christ came at His baptism. Both forms were attacked by John (1 John 2:22; 4:2–3; 5:5–6). Asceticism was practiced by some gnostics because they considered matter evil. Antinomianism was practiced by other gnostics who thought knowledge was superior to virtue (see 1 John 1:8; 4:20).

John’s answer to gnosticism was the incarnation. An actual incarnation gives a real example (1 John 2:6) that should result in proper ethical conduct. Philosophic arrogance (as in liberalism), any attempt to disentangle eternal truth from its historical shell (as in Barthianism), and neglect of the Jesus of history and His example (as sometimes in fundamentalism) are all echoes of contemporary gnosticism. They make the study of Johannine theology particularly relevant in our day.

IV. OUTSTANDING FEATURES OF JOHANNINE THEOLOGY

When one thinks of Pauline theology, certain things such as his doctrine of “in Christ,” naturally stand out. The theology of James brings to mind

either justification and works or the doctrine of the Word. Likewise, Johannine theology has certain distinctive and distinguishing features:

A. ITS ANTECEDENT IS PAULINISM

Usually we do not think of a relationship between John and Paul and yet chronologically and theologically Paul was antecedent to John. Geographically too there is relationship, for John labored in the same territory where Paul had laid foundations. It is not difficult to discover that some of the principal features of Paulinism are taken up by John, not in the sense of borrowing, but in the sense of building on them as the historical antecedents that they were.

For instance John carried forth the Pauline contrast between Moses and Christ (John 1:17; 10:34; 15:25), and the fourth Gospel is the only one that does not contain discourses forecasting the future for the Jews. John also gave large place to faith (what new Christian has not been exhorted to count the occurrences of “believe” in the Gospel?). Again, although 1 Corinthians 13 is always thought of as the love chapter, why should not John 13 or the entire first Epistle of John be so considered also? Paul’s great mystical theme of being “in Christ” finds correspondence in John (John 14:20; 1 John 3:24).

Thus although there is no personal antecedence in the sense of borrowing from Paul, there is historical antecedence. Whatever John learned from Paul came through his own mind bearing a distinctively Johannine stamp.

B. IT HAS ITS FOUNDATIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This involves a paradox, for while John showed his love for the Old Testament and used it to point to Christ, at the same time he displayed open hostility toward Judaism. Of course the hostility was because the Jews rejected that to which their own Scriptures should have led them. Thus John’s use of the Old Testament in the Gospel (for there is only one direct reference in his Epistles) is to draw from it types and prophecies of Messiah.

There are general statements referring to the Old Testament that should point a man to Christ (John 1:45; 4:22; 5:39,46). There are direct references to the Old Testament that show John’s belief in it as the inspired Word of God (Abraham, John 8:56; serpent, 3:14; bridegroom, 3:29; manna 6:49;

lamb, 1:29; 19:36; the Psalms, John 2:17; 10:34; 13:18; 19:24, 36; prophets, 6:45; Isaiah, John 12:38–40; Zechariah, John 12:15; 19:37; Micah, John 7:42). Mention is also made of events in the life of Christ that fulfill Old Testament prophecies (John 12:14–15; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36–37; 20:9). Westcott remarked, “Without the basis of the Old Testament, without the fullest acceptance of the unchanging divinity of the Old Testament, the Gospel of St. John is an insoluble riddle.”⁹

C. It Is ETHICAL

This trait of Johannine theology is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the first Epistle. Since the details will be dealt with later, suffice it to mention only certain general features of John’s emphasis on ethics: (1) Proper ethical conduct is based on the pattern of the earthly life of Christ (1 John 2:6). (2) This is in turn related to the doctrine of the incarnation (4:1 ff.). If the incarnation is not real, then there is no real basis for ethics. (3) Proper Christian conduct is primarily demonstrated by love for other believers (2:7–11; 4:11–12). (4) The result is a life of habitual righteousness (3:4–18). One may say even more summarily that John’s thesis concerning ethics has two main points: ethical conduct is based on sound doctrine and results in the imitation of Christ.

D. It Is ANTITHETICAL

Antithesis is another characteristic of Johannine theology—not antithesis in the sense of contradictions, but in the sense of contrasts.

1. The antithesis of the Christian and the world. Undoubtedly this is one of the most pronounced antitheses in John’s thought. The world and the Christian stand apart from each other, not in any metaphysical dualistic sense, but more in an ethical sense. Such statements as those in John 3:16 and 1 John 2:2 guard against the idea that the world is intrinsically evil. Nevertheless the cosmos hated Christ and His disciples, the cosmos is under the headship of the devil, and the cosmos is transient (John 7:7; 8:23; 14:17, 30; 15:19; 17:14; 1 John 3:13; 5:19); therefore it must not receive the love of the Christian (1 John 2:15–16).

2. *The antithesis of light and darkness.* John used both light and darkness as symbols for knowledge, but these symbols are antithetical in two areas. They are used to express the idea of God Himself (1 John 1:5) and they are used to represent spheres of life (1:7). This latter idea is associated with love and hatred of the brethren (2:10–11).

3. *The antithesis of death and life.* This is much the same as the preceding contrast, for John associated life with fullness of right ethical action, and death with the lack of it (1 John 3:14; John 8:51).

4. *The antithesis of belief and unbelief.* Unbelief is rejection of Christ and His claims (John 3:36; 5:46–47).

5. *The antithesis of love and hate.* This is especially prominent in John's letters, although the contrast also appears in the Gospel (John 3:19; 1 John 1:6–7; 2:9–11). Obeying proves one's love for the Lord, while hating brothers shows the absence of the new life (1 John 2:9–11; 4:7–12; 2 John 6).

E. It Is Contemplative

John was not an apologete or a polemicist; he was more of a mystic in the proper Christian sense. In his writings, the truths of Christianity were set forth in their own beauty so that others might see and believe. Even in proving that Jesus is the Messiah, he employed miracle-signs (John 2:11; 4:54), and throughout his writings his use of symbols was graphic (10:1; 15:1). Plummer, although referring to the fourth Gospel only, observed characteristics that apply equally well to all of Johannine theology:

These characteristics combined form a book [or, just as well, a theology] which stands alone in Christian literature, as its author stands alone among Christian teachers; the work of one who for threescore years and ten laboured as an Apostle. Called to follow the Baptist when only a lad, and by him soon transferred to the Christ, he may be said to have been the first who from his youth up was a Christian. Who, therefore, could so fitly grasp and state in their true proportions and with fitting impressiveness the great verities of the Christian faith? He had had no deep-seated prejudices to uproot, like

his friend Peter and others who were called late in life. He had had no sudden wrench to make from the past, like Paul. He had not had the trying excitement of wandering abroad over the face of the earth, like most of the Twelve. He had remained at his post at Ephesus, directing, teaching, meditating; until at last when the fruit was ripe it was given to the Church in the fulness of beauty which it is still our privilege to possess and learn to love.¹⁰

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGY PROPER

Johannine theology, unlike Pauline theology, can be cataloged under relatively few categories. Except in the Apocalypse, John's thought focused on two principal themes—God and salvation—and most Biblical theologies, with slight variations, deal with the Johannine system along those lines. When the Revelation is included, a third category—eschatology—must of course be added.

As the viewpoint of Matthew's theology may be characterized as theocratic, James's bibliological, and Paul's doxological, so John's viewpoint may be said to be christological. Schmid explained:

He takes the principle of all life as his groundwork, and then descends to all the matters presented to him by experience. But in his view the theological standpoint is identical with the Christological, because this very principle of life is in Christ, and the Father is known through the Son. . . . The divine nature as it is in Christ is not, in the first place, considered in its communication to men; but eternal life in Christ is first regarded *per se*, although he goes on to represent its communication to the world.¹

Life *per se* is the first main section of Johannine theology—the doctrine of God. The second is the communication of the life—the doctrine of salvation. And to these may be added the judgments revealed by the One who is life. In these three principal areas, all of Johannine theology is found. We will consider the doctrine of God in this chapter; salvation and eschatology will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

I. DOCTRINE OF GOD

A. *NATURE OF GOD*

For the most part, John, like the other writers of Scripture, left the reader to draw his own conclusions as to the nature of God from statements made concerning God's actions. However, John, unlike the other writers of Scripture, did speak of God's nature in three statements: he said, "God is spirit," "God is light," and "God is love." These assertions do not reflect properties of God (that is, God is spiritual or loving), but set forth essential aspects of His nature.

1. His metaphysical nature—"God is spirit" (John 4:24). The statement of the Lord to the Samaritan woman does not refer to personality. And the text does not say that God is *a* spirit; it says that He is spirit. It does not refer to the spirit of God, but to God's own nature.

The statement of the Lord in John 4:24 includes several definite ideas: (1) God is not limited to space, for spirit is not confined. This was of course the question that the Lord was discussing with the Samaritan woman. She was concerned about place, but in His answer the Lord pointed out that since God is not limited to space, He can be worshiped anywhere. (2) God is not limited to time, for since spirit is not material, it cannot be subject to the restrictions of time. (3) God is understood by a spiritual and inward perception, not by a carnal and outward one. The Jews thought they knew God through their forms of religious worship. However, He is revealed in a spiritual manner and even the revelation of God through Christ must be spiritually perceived.

The principal resultant idea from this revelation of the nature of God is related to worship. Since God is spirit, man must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Such worship rules out local claims (John 4:21) concerning places and forms, and it sets aside the ritualistic worship of Judaism as well as the false worship of the Samaritans. Worshipers who worship in spirit and in truth are sought by the God whose nature is spirit.

2. His moral nature—"God is light" (1 John 1:5). Again, John was not speaking of personality, but of essential nature. (In each of these statements—"God is spirit," "God is light," "God is love"—the construction is anarthrous.) The idea in 1 John 1:5 is that God is such a One who is light. The statement could not be more simple or more profound. It is not that God is *a* light, but that He is light in His being.

The statement “God is light” includes the ideas of holiness, illumination, and infinitude—holiness because in Him is no darkness; illumination because when the light shines, there can be no shadows; and infinitude because light is not bound except by darkness and in God there is no darkness.

The principal resultant idea is related to ethics. God’s being light is made the basis for Christian ethics in the first Epistle of John. The believer is not expected to become light, for then he would be as God, but he is exhorted to walk in the light; that is, to respond to its revelations with conduct pleasing to God. God is light, but we are to walk in the light.

3. His personal nature—“God is love” (1 John 4:8). This statement does not say merely that love is of God, but that God is in His essential nature love (again the construction is anarthrous). Further, the statement does not imply that God’s being love is occasioned by anything. In other words, He is love apart from any opportunity to express it.

This love is the original love (1 John 4:10) because the source of it is God (1 John 4:19). It seems to be best illustrated by the earthly picture of the love within a family (1 John 4:7; also see Ephesians 3:15; 5:25).

Expression of love within the family is the resultant idea from “God is love.” John’s reasoning was very simple: God is love; therefore what God begets loves; thus Christians should show that they are begotten of God by loving one another. This idea seems to have captivated John as he grew older. To him it was the central feature of Christianity. In no other book of the New Testament does the word *love* appear as often as it does in 1 John 3:1–5:12.

In the heart of that section, 4:11–21, John listed the important practical ramifications of our loving one another because God is love. Love fulfills our duty (4:11); love can be realized in its most complete form when we love others (4:12b); love causes us to know the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (4:13–15); love gives us boldness in the day of judgment (4:17); love casts out fear (4:18); and love proves our profession of Christianity (4:19–21). It is easy to say, “I love God,” but it is often much more difficult to prove it by loving the brethren. This, however, is the expected result of the fact that we know God, who is love.

The idea of the fatherhood of God reaches its most complete development in the writings of John. In the Old Testament the idea is limited to God's relationship to Israel, His people (Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 32:6), and to Messiah, His Son (Psalm 2:7). The idea is principally connected with the concept of authority with its consequence, obedience. In the Synoptics that same general idea also prevails. However, in John's writings the fatherhood of God does not have Messianic or national connotations as much as personal ramifications, for it pertains to man's relation to God through Christ, the revealer of God. John's idea of the fatherhood of God we now examine in more detail.

1. In relation to Christ. John primarily used two terms, "the Father" and "My Father." Generally the latter was used in revealing the Son as the One who fulfilled and properly interpreted true Judaism (John 2:16; 5:17; 6:32; 8:19, 49, 54; 10:37; 15:1, 8, 23–24). It was also used in revealing certain facts about the Son Himself (6:39–40; 10:18, 29; 14:2, 7, 20–21, 23; 15:15; 20:17). The phrase "the Father" shows God as the One who is revealed by the Son (1:18; 6:46; 10:29), as the One who sent the Son (5:23, 36–37; 6:44; 10:36; 20:21; 1 John 4:14), and as the One who helped the Son accomplish His mission (John 5:19; 6:37; 10:15, 38; 14:10–11, 31; 16:32). In these usages the Messianic concept is entirely lacking.

2. In relation to the believer. John also spoke of the fatherhood of God in relation to the believer in Christ. Again the relationship is personal. It is based on the new birth and rooted in God's love toward mankind. There is no idea of universal fatherhood. Indeed just the opposite is true, for no other writer of Scripture, with the exception of Paul, put as much stress on spiritual rebirth as the prerequisite for sonship.

To those who have become sons of God by being rightly related to His Son, there come certain blessings and requirements: (1) The Father wants to be worshiped by believers (John 4:24). (2) It is to the Father that we are to direct our prayers (15:16). (3) The Father's love toward His children is like that which He has for His only begotten Son (17:23). (4) The promise of the indwelling of Father and Son is given to those who love Him (14:23). (5) This relationship carries with it the privilege of fellowship with the Father

(1 John 1:3). The explanation of the intimacies of the family relationship is John's particular contribution to the doctrine of the Father of believers.

3. In relation to the Holy Spirit. Only John spoke of that relationship of the Holy Spirit to the other persons of the trinity which theologians have called procession (John 15:26). Like all attempts to describe eternal relations within the godhead in temporal terms, the term *procession* does not fully satisfy, for there must not be any thought of inferiority or chronological order in the description. However, we say that the Spirit's eternal relationship to the Father and the Son is one of procession (note in 15:26 the present tense of "proceeds," which suggests the eternity of the relationship).

In respect to the new relationship that the eternal Spirit would have to the believer, the Lord said that the Father would send Him (14:16, 26). It is not as if nothing had previously been known of the Holy Spirit, for He was actively ministering in Old Testament times; but Jesus spoke of a different relationship that He would have when the Father would send Him. That difference is succinctly stated in John 14:17: "He abides with [*para*] you, and will be in [*en*] you." Universal, permanent indwelling of all believers was the new relationship that the Spirit would have after the Son returned to the Father.

II. DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

If John's central purpose is theological and christological, it is natural to find a large amount of revelation concerning Christ in his writings. In this section we are treating the person of Christ apart from His work.

A. DESIGNATIONS OF THE LORD

1. Jesus. As in the other Gospels, in the Gospel of John "Jesus" is the general designation used by the writer in the narrative itself, where it occurs around 250 times. However, a striking variation from this usual narrative designation appears in 4:1; 6:23; 11:2; 20:20; and 21:12: "the Lord" is used in place of "Jesus."

2. Designations by the people. Popular designations of the Lord, as John remembered them, were "the man who is called Jesus" (9:11); "Jesus, the

son of Joseph” (1:45; 6:42); “Jesus of Nazareth” (18:5, 7; 19:19); and “this man” (9:16, 24; 11:47; 18:17, 29).

3. Designations by the disciples. His followers used “teacher” and “rabbi” most frequently (1:38, 49; 3:2; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8, 28; 20:16). “Lord” was also used with a reverential recognition of His authority (13:13–14); Thomas used it with clear implications of deity (20:28).

4. Messianic designations. The word “Christ” is infrequently used in the Gospel of John. This is in line with the purpose of John in contrast to the purposes of the writers of the Synoptics. However, he recorded that John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the Christ (1:20, 25; 3:28); that the disciples recognized Him as Messiah (1:41; 11:27); that He Himself announced His messiahship to the Samaritan woman (4:25–26); that the people speculated about it (4:29; 7:26–42; 9:22; 10:24; 12:34); and that He was called King (1:49; 12:13; 18:33, 37).

5. Son of God. This title definitely has Messianic implications (1:49; 11:27; 20:31). It speaks of the supernatural origin of Jesus (5:25; 9:35; 10:36; 11:4). It is connected with His miracles (5:25; 9:35; 11:4) and was clearly recognized by the people as a claim to deity (10:33–36). The very use of this title forbids anyone from saying that Jesus Himself did not claim to be God or that it was not so understood by the people of His day.

6. Son of man. This seemed to be the Lord’s favorite designation for Himself. The person so described is no mere earthly being (6:62), for He is the giver of eternal life (6:27; 3:14–15) and the judge of all men (5:27). As in the Synoptics, this title has soterio-eschatological implications.

7. Figurative designations. In line with John’s use of symbols, there are certain figurative designations of the Lord in his Gospel. The Lord is called the Lamb of God (1:29, 36); the light of the world (8:12; 9:5; 12:35–36, 46); the light of men (1:4–9); the door (10:7, 9); the bread of life (6:33, 35, 41, 48); the good shepherd (10:11, 14); the bridegroom (3:29); and the paraclete (14:16).

Certain comparisons can be made between John’s designations of the Lord and those of the other Gospel writers. In John’s writings there is less distinctively Messianic emphasis; rather there is more specific emphasis on

the deity of Christ. The title “Son of man” everywhere appears to be the Lord’s favorite self-designation, and John used more figurative descriptions than the other writers.

B. DOCTRINE OF THE “LOGOS”

1. In Philo. No one can discuss the *Logos* without referring to Philo (he lived from about 20 B.C. to about A.D. 54), who was the representative of the theosophy of Alexandrian Judaism. This was an attempt to combine elements of Judaism with elements of Platonic philosophy and oriental mysticism. In summing up the Platonic idea of divine archetypes, Philo used the term *Logos*. He substituted the word *Logos* for the Platonic word *idea*, and used the term to denote the intermediate agency by which God created material things and communicated with them. Whatever Philo did mean by *Logos*, he certainly did not mean a personal redeemer from sin, as in John. Wenley wrote:

While, therefore, Philo thinks in a cultural perspective akin to that characteristic of the author of the Fourth Gospel, two vast differences sway his doctrine. On the one hand, it is speculative, not ethically personal. On the other hand, it fails completely to determine the nature of his mediator in itself, vacillating in a manner which shows how vague and fluid the conception really was.²

2. In John

a. *The meaning of “Logos”.* The way John introduced the term *Logos* indicates that he assumed his readers would understand it. This would not naturally point to Alexandrian theosophy, but to Judaism; therefore one would suspect that the origin of the term is to be found in Judaism.

In the Old Testament the Word or wisdom of God is often personified as an instrument for the execution of God’s will, as if it were distinct from that will (Psalm 33:6; 107:20; 119:89; 147:15; Proverbs 8). In the Apocrypha that personification continues (Ecclesiasticus 1:1–20; 24:1–22; Wisdom 6:22–9:18). In the Targums (the Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament) it is carried still further and while these Targums were not written at the time of Christ, they were in use orally by Jews who had forgotten Hebrew. In them the Word of God takes on a distinct personification. This seems to

be that on which John was building when he suddenly opened his Gospel with the word *Logos*.³

As John used it, the concept narrowed to a personal being who is the Son of God and the complete expression of the thought of God in communicating Himself to man. It is entirely stripped of any philosophical or mystical meaning by its identification with the person of Jesus Christ.

b. The relationships of the “Logos” (John 1:1–14). In the central passage on the *Logos*, John listed a number of relationships that the Son of God sustains. First is His relation to time (1:1a). Before “the beginning” the *Logos* “was” (*eimi*) already in existence.⁴ Pre-existence to time or at least to recorded history is predicated of the *Logos*.

Second is the Son’s relation to God (1:1b–2). The Son is said to be distinct from and at the same time equal with God, for He was “with” (*pros*, implying two distinct persons) God and at the same time “was” God.

Third is the Son’s relation to creation (1:3). He is the sufficient agent of creation, for *all* things were made by Him. He is the mediate agent, for creation was accomplished through Him. And He is the necessary agent, for without Him nothing was made.

Fourth is His relation to man (1:4–5, 9–13). To man the *Logos* brought life and light. John spoke of life (*zōē*) thirty-six times in his Gospel—the Gospel of John has more references to life than any other book in the New Testament. Indeed, that we might have life is the purpose of his writing (20:31) and the avowed purpose of the coming of the Son of God (10:10; also see 1 John 5:12).

John also spoke of light. In John 1:9 we read about a universal enlightening that is probably the revelation of God in nature. A specific enlightening in the person of the Son has also shone in the world. Although some deliberately rejected the Light, those who received Him became children (not sons, for this is exclusively a Pauline revelation) of God.

The fifth relationship that the Son of God sustains is His relation to flesh (1:14). The *Logos* became flesh so that the glory of God might be seen of men. Since the glory of God is the manifestation of His attributes, the purpose of the Son’s taking flesh upon Himself may be said to be to show God off to men.

Several philosophical ideas concerning the *Logos* are contradicted by what John wrote. The *Logos* of John is very God, not some lesser God, for He is God and He was the Creator of all things. The *Logos* of John is

personal, for He is face to face with God and He gives life to men. The *Logos* of John became flesh in a permanent relationship of incarnation. He is not merely an appearance of God; He is the God-man, Jesus Christ.

C. *DEITY OF CHRIST*

1. Affirmed by divine names given to Him. The titles *Son of God* and *Logos*, both of which attest to deity, have already been discussed. To these may be added two names of Christ in the Revelation: “the first and the last” and “the beginning and the end” (1:17; 22:13).

2. Affirmed by attributes revealed of Him. The Son is said to be omniscient (John 1:48–50; 4:29; 20:24–28; Revelation 1:14; 2:18, 23; 19:12), omnipotent (Revelation 1:8), and omnipresent (John 14:23; 1:48).

3. Affirmed by works attributed to Him. Among other works assigned to Jesus that are unmistakably the works of God are the work of creation (John 1:3), the work of judging men (5:27), and the work of giving life (5:24; 10:17). If Jesus can do these things, He must be God, for these are the works of deity alone.

4. Affirmed by the worship given to Him. The Son receives the worship of men (John 20:28; Revelation 5:8,14) and of angels (Revelation 5:11–13; 7:11–12; 19:10; 22:9). That which is normally given to God is given to the Son.

5. Affirmed by His miracles. The sign-miracles recorded by John are one of the major and uniquely Johannine proofs of the deity of Jesus. Each one in some way points to the fact that He is God. The first at Cana of Galilee (John 2:1–11) was done purposely to show forth His glory. Since it was well known that miracles in the Old Testament were performed for the glory of God, and since this one was to show forth Jesus’ glory, the conclusion was that Jesus was God. The nature of the miracle being an act of creation added to the proof.

The second sign-miracle in the Gospel of John (4:43–54) showed the necessity of believing the Son in order to have life. The third (5:1–23) led to a discussion during the course of which the point was made very clear to the Jews that Jesus was claiming to be God (see 5:18). The fourth (6:1–14)

signified that Jesus claimed to be the sustainer of life, a thing that only God can do. The fifth (6:15–21) resulted in the disciples’ worshipping Him (see Matthew 14:33). The sixth (John 9) demonstrated that He was the light of men and resulted in worship on the part of the one given sight. The seventh (11:1–44) was like the first—that is, for the glory of God and for proof that Jesus is God. Each one in some particular way pointed to the fact that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (20:31).

6. Supported by His pre-existence. While pre-existence does not actually prove deity, it is a strong support to the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Four passages in John’s Gospel are relevant: 1:1; 6:62; 8:58; and 17:5. The first, John 1:1, indicates that the Word did not come into existence, but was already in existence in the beginning. John 6:62 indicates that the Son was in Heaven before He came into earthly existence: “. . . behold the Son of Man ascending where He was [*eimi*] before.” John 8:58 declares a pre-Abrahamic existence, which was understood in this case to be a claim to deity as well as to pre-existence (see 8:24). John 17:5 indicates that Christ always “had” (the verb is imperfect) glory side by side with the Father before the world was in existence.

Biblical theologians have offered several explanations of the meaning of these verses on pre-existence. Briefly, the explanations arrange themselves into two categories: (1) those that finally affirm real historical pre-existence and (2) those that affirm what is called ideal pre-existence⁵ (that is, pre-existence in the mind of God, but not in the reality of distinct persons in the trinity). Ideal pre-existence of course carries with it a denial of the deity of Christ, for in such a view He would be simply another man whose life-purpose pre-existed in the mind of God, but whose existence did not begin until He was born in Bethlehem. For further study the reader is referred to Stevens’ discussion and refutation of this idea.⁶ His conclusion is worthy of repetition:

At this point our inquiries bring us again face to face with the great problem of doctrinal theology respecting the person of Christ. That problem is, whether this altogether exceptional intimacy between the Father and the Son, taken in connection with the sinless perfection of Christ and his explicit assertions of an eternal fellowship with God, does not force us beyond the limits of

humanity for the explanation of his person, and require us to posit an ontological relation as its only adequate ground. . . . Those who are convinced that the consciousness of Jesus was “purely human,” would do far better to seek the confirmation of their conclusion in some other field than that of exegesis. As against this conclusion the apostolic Church and, for the most part, the Church of all subsequent ages have held that the self-testimony of Jesus as presented in the New Testament compels the inference that he eternally partakes in the nature of Deity. I hold that this conclusion is correct.⁷

D. HUMANITY OF CHRIST

Confirmations of the customary proofs for the humanity of Jesus are also found in John’s Gospel. Jesus possessed a human body (John 19:31, 40), soul (12:27), and spirit (11:33; 13:21). He experienced things that can only be experienced by human beings, for He was thirsty (19:28–30), He was tired (4:6), He wept (11:35), and He was troubled (12:27; 13:21). These facts prove beyond doubt that He was truly human as well as truly divine.

John’s major contribution, however, to the doctrine of the humanity of Christ is found in the ramifications of the phrase “and the Word became flesh” (John 1:14). Since this verse and its context teach that the *Logos* became a human person, the word “flesh” in this instance stands not for the material flesh only but for the whole person, material and immaterial. John was saying that the *Logos-Word* became a person, and in that statement a number of characteristics of the person are implied:⁸

1. *The Lord’s humanity was complete.* John said that the Word became flesh, not that the Word assumed a body, for a person is more than body.

2. *The Lord’s humanity was real and permanent.* John said that the Word became flesh, not that the Word clothed itself with flesh. This refutes gnosticism, which held that the *Logos* only assumed in appearance or for a time that flesh which was foreign to Himself.

3. *The Lord’s human and divine natures remained without change, each fulfilling its part according to its proper laws.* “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Both terms, “Word” and “flesh,” are

preserved side by side in the statement so that it is not merely the Word that dwelt among us or merely flesh; it is the Word-become-flesh that dwelt among us. This refutes Eutychianism, which taught that the result of the incarnation was a third nature.

4. *The Lord's two natures were united in one person.* In the statement “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” there is no change of subject with the verb “dwelt,” yet it is in the singular; therefore the Word-become-flesh is a union in one person. This refutes Nestorianism, which taught that the Lord had a separate human personality and a divine personality that were joined, but not united. The person Jesus Christ was undiminished deity and perfect humanity united in one person forever. This is fully borne out by John’s testimony.

III. DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Although John had more to say about the Holy Spirit than the Synoptists did, his development of the doctrine is not systematic or necessarily complete. Nevertheless some of the most important revelations concerning the Spirit are found in Johannine theology.

A. *THE PERSON OF THE SPIRIT*

Concerning the person of the Spirit, John affirmed three things:

1. *He is a person.* It is in John’s writings that we find the ungrammatical use of the masculine pronoun to refer to the neuter word for spirit (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13–14). Indeed the use of the masculine seems to have been the writer’s preference unless extremely pressed by grammatical propriety, and this usage can only be accounted for if we recognize that John assigned personality to the Holy Spirit.

2. *He is a distinct person.* The Holy Spirit is not merely another form of Christ, for He is distinct from the Son, being another Comforter who bears witness to the Son (John 14:26; 16:13–14). He is distinct from the Father and yet is mentioned along with the Father and Son as part of the trinity (Revelation 1:4–5; 4:5; 22:17).

3. He “proceeds” from the Father and Son (John 15:26). “Proceeds” is the word that is used to describe the Spirit’s relationship to the other members of the trinity. The present tense of the verb implies the eternal character of the procession.

B. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

John’s main contribution to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit lies in this area. What he said of the Spirit’s work could almost be summarized in a single word: *paraklētōs*, variously translated as “comforter,” “advocate,” and “paraclete.” *Paraklētōs* seems to have been his favorite term for describing the counseling or legal work of the Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1).

1. He pronounces the world guilty (John 16:7–11). One of the principal duties of the Spirit today is to give demonstrable proof⁹ to the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Although the Spirit had done convicting work before (Genesis 6:3), the Lord stated that in a particular way this would be the Spirit’s work after His departure. That the work of the Spirit is distinctive to this age is easily demonstrated, since each of the three counts in the the Spirit’s indictment of the world is based on the work of Christ. Jesus said that the Spirit would convict of sin because the world would reject Christ. The Spirit would convict of righteousness because only after Christ ascended to the Father would the world realize that they had misjudged Him. The Spirit would enlighten concerning judgment, which could only be done with full force after Satan was judged at the cross. Therefore this convicting work is a distinctive task of the Spirit today.

2. He reminded the disciples. One of the most important and immediate works of the Spirit was in relation to the disciples. Jesus said to them, “He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:26). This promise was twofold: the disciples would be reminded of the facts so that their records would be inerrant; and the disciples would be taught accurately the meaning of those facts so that their theology would be correct. The accuracy of the recording and interpreting is dependent on the work of the Spirit; to deny either is to defame His work.

3. He regenerates (John 3:6). This aspect of the Spirit's ministry to men will be fully discussed under soteriology.

4. He fosters the spiritual welfare of believers.

a. By indwelling. Although indwelling was not unknown in the Old Testament, it was not universal among all believers. Our Lord Himself made the contrast when He summarized the Spirit's relation to men in the Old Testament as being "with" them (John 14:17). Now He is "in" believers, and that apparently is a different relationship. In the first Epistle John spoke of indwelling under the figure of anointing (1 John 2:20, 27).

b. By teaching. In the first Epistle of John the teaching ministry of the Spirit is based directly on that anointing or indwelling. Of course the presence of the Spirit does not in itself guarantee that the believer will be taught, but it makes it possible. The content of that teaching was forecast by the Lord (John 16:12–15) as including things that the disciples could not understand until after His resurrection, and as pointing to Himself. Thus the test of whether the Spirit is teaching is whether Christ is being glorified.

c. By filling. The Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the ceremony of the feast of tabernacles will satisfy the thirst and overflow the lives of those who believe in Jesus (John 7:37–39). Such filling results in service, for the rivers flow out of the believer to others.

CHAPTER 4

DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

I. THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

Salvation is from sin; therefore we would expect a christological theology, as Johannine theology is, to contain a description of sin. What John said concerning sin is primarily contained in his first Epistle rather than in his Gospel.

A. *T*_{ERMINOLOGY OF} *S*_{IN}

The principal words for sin are all used in John's writings. Sin is therefore viewed as missing the mark and thus hitting the wrong mark (*hamartia*, John 1:29; 8:21, 24; 1 John 1:10), as that which is worthless (*ponēros*, John 3:19; 17:15; 1 John 2:13–14), as unrighteousness (*adikia*, John 7:18; 1 John 1:9), and as lawlessness (*anomia*, 1 John 3:4).

B. *D*_{EFINITION OF} “*S*_{IN}”

“Sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4) is both an exhaustive and a definitive definition of sin. It is exhaustive because in the Greek both words are preceded by the article, which means the phrase is convertible. Lawlessness is sin, and sin is lawlessness. The definition is definitive because lawlessness is to be understood in the most absolute sense of the condition of being without law of any kind. It is contrariness to law, not simply violation of some specific in the Mosaic law. Therefore it is the negation of that which is inherent in the very character of God Himself. Sin, then, is that which is contrary to God Himself.

C. *UNIVERSALITY OF SIN*

The universality of sin is proved by the state of condemnation in which rejecters of Christ are said to be (John 3:36; 1 John 3:14), by explicit statements that all have committed acts of sin (1 John 1:10), and by the emphasis on the need for a Savior (John 1:29; 3:17; 4:42; 5:34; 10:9; 12:47; 1 John 4:14).

D. *CONSEQUENCES OF SIN*

The sin of the unbeliever incurs for him a debt (John 20:23), a bondage to sin (John 8:32), an estrangement from God (John 3:36; 9:41), and death (5:24). Unbelievers who teach false doctrines promote community harm because of their sin (1 John 2:18–19; 2 John 10–11). All of these consequences of sin add up to the fact that a man is unable to save himself (1 John 3:8).

For the Christian, sin always brings loss of fellowship with God (1 John 1:5–2:1), which can only be remedied by confession. If persisted in, certain sins result in physical death (1 John 5:16). Sinning always dulls a person's spiritual faculties, for the sinner cannot see God as He is or himself as he is. The more a man sins, the less he realizes about sin (1 John 1:6, 8; 2:11). This is the deceitfulness of sin.

E. *THE COSMOS*

Closely allied with the major themes of hamartiology is the doctrine of the cosmos, which is mainly a Johannine revelation. *Cosmos* may be defined as "all that acts as a rival to God." This includes its head, Satan; people who, though loved by God, are a part of it and therefore rivals of God; and the things, good or evil, that oppose God and His purposes.

1. Satan's relation to the cosmos. In John's writings Satan is called the devil (John 8:44; 13:2), Satan (John 13:27), the accuser (Revelation 12:10), and the evil one (John 17:15; 1 John 2:13; 3:12; 5:18). He is the ruler or prince of the cosmos (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and as such exerts an influence over men who live in the world (John 8:44; 13:2, 27; 1 John 3:8; 5:19). In His own inscrutable counsels, God has seen fit to include this delegated authority of Satan over the world system.

2. *Christ's relation to the cosmos.* It was inevitable that our Lord, who always did those things that pleased the Father (John 8:29), should be hated by the cosmos, for they were rivals (John 15:18). Christ's work on earth was to effect the basis of the judgment of the prince of the cosmos, which He did on the cross (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). The ultimate fruits of that victory will not be finally and fully realized until the consummation of all things when the devil will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone forever (Revelation 20:10).

3. *The Christian's relation to the cosmos.* A number of things are said about the believer's relation to the world. He is not of it (John 15:19), but is not yet removed from it (John 17:15). He is not known by the world and therefore is hated by it (1 John 3:13). Victory is assured for every Christian while he remains in the cosmos, for faith is that victory (1 John 5:4) and there is sufficient resource available for all believers to be overcomers. The Lord has made it fully possible; it remains only for us to make it fully practical.

That victorious life will be characterized by separation from the world (1 John 2:15–17). This is not removal or a hermit's kind of life. Separation is siding with God and not with His rival, the cosmos. To side with the world is not to love God, for one cannot love the enemy of God and God at the same time (2:15b). To side with the world is to be interested in things that do not find their origin in God (2:16) and are transitory (2:17). Simply and basically, separation from the world means doing the will of God (2:17).

II. THE INCARNATION

One of the major emphases in Johannine theology is the doctrine of the incarnation. This is partly due to the erroneous concepts John was combating in his own day: either that Christ could not take a body or that He took an ordinary human body temporarily. That deity was permanently united to humanity is a basic tenet of John.

A. *IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE*

In Paul the incarnation is principally related to the humiliation of Christ, but in John it is related to revelation. That is why we say Johannine theology is christological. This revelation of God that came as a result of

the incarnation not only shows us God (John 1:14; 14:9), but it also destroys Satan and his works (1 John 3:8) and takes away our sins (1 John 3:5). In other words, John was saying that were deity not united with humanity in one person, Jesus Christ, there would be no knowledge of God, no victory over Satan, and no salvation from sin. As we will see shortly, the incarnation is also the basis for Christian ethics.

It is not that John was minimizing the work of the cross (see 1 John 2:2; John 3:14; 10:17–18); he was merely emphasizing that the validity of the work on the cross depends on the reality of the incarnation. Those who deny the doctrine and its ramifications are antichrists (1 John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7)—that is how important it is. Sheldon wrote:

As compared with the Pauline theology the Johannine does not so fully centre the attention upon the death of Christ. It is less emphatically a theology of the cross. The idea of revelation comes to the front. . . . It is manifest too that John was less inclined than Paul to dwell upon the judicial aspect of Christ's work. . . . Still, it needs to be acknowledged that in the background of the Johannine representation there is a sufficiently distinct recognition of essentially the same objective phase of atonement as appears elsewhere in the New Testament. This is especially noticeable in the Epistle. Nothing in the Pauline writings more clearly implies that the universal dispensation of grace is based upon Christ's work than does the Johannine declaration that He is the propitiation . . . for the sins of the world.¹

John's emphasis must be recognized and at the same time the theological balance, which is John's own, must be preserved.

B. PROOFS OF THE INCARNATION

Some of the proofs that John used for the incarnation are necessarily the same as those that prove the humanity of Jesus. The use of *sarx*, "flesh," in John 1:14 and the meaning of the title "Son of man" are two such. In addition the many citations concerning the home and family life of the Lord prove the reality of the incarnation (John 1:46–47; 2:1; 6:42; 7:3, 10, 41, 52; 19:25–26).

The opening testimony of the first Epistle is one of the strongest statements of the reality of the incarnation (1 John 1:1–3). The disciples had heard, seen, and handled Jesus Christ and so certain were they of the reality of this divine-human person that they were staking their lives on that truth, which they preached. It was no mere phantom or even theophany of which John testified in these verses. The incarnation was real; revelation was its consequence, salvation its climax, and Christian ethics its outcome.

III. THE WORK OF CHRIST

A. *I_N H_{IS} L_{IFE}*

The life of Christ was a revelation of God. Therefore His life revealed grace (John 1:17–18) as He exegeted God. It revealed truth, for He is truth (John 14:6; 1 John 5:20) and He witnessed to the truth (John 18:37), which liberates the captive (John 8:32) and sanctifies the believer (John 15:3; 17:17). His life also revealed an example, which the believer is exhorted to imitate (1 John 2:3–11). That imitation is the proof of one’s profession as a follower of the Master. Plummer was probably right when he said that “in all cases it is His loving self-sacrifice that is to be imitated.”²

B. *I_N H_{IS} D_{EATH}*

1. *Significance of His death*

a. *The death of Christ means deliverance.* Personal deliverance from a lost state is one of the benefits of the death of Christ (John 3:17; 12:47). This is not a national Israelitish deliverance, and yet it was well known (see John 4:22). We may conclude from this that the deliverance expected in the time of Christ was not only national and from Rome, but also individual and from death.

b. *The death of Christ is a propitiation.* Only John used the noun *propitiation* in the New Testament (1 John 2:2; 4:10). Propitiation is inseparably connected with the idea of divine wrath; therefore propitiation affects God, for that is where the wrath is. Thus propitiation may be said to be the satisfying of God through the working out of His plan whereby sin, the cause of God’s wrath, is removed through the death of Christ.³ It is, according to John’s clear statement, for the whole world.

c. *The death of Christ took away sin.* Blood stands for violent death; therefore to speak of the blood of Christ taking away sin is to say that the death of Christ takes away sin. It is His death, not His life liberated and offered to God, that takes away sin.⁴ The blood—that is, His death—is the basis for eternal life (John 6:53–56). The blood continually effects cleansing from sin (1 John 1:7), and the blood is the basis for victorious living (Revelation 12:11).

d. *The death of Christ means possession of eternal life.* This is a constantly reiterated theme of John (John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47, 54; 20:31; 1 John 5:12–13). Eternal life is not merely the endless duration of a being in relation to time measurement; it is a quality of life that is inseparable from Christ Himself. Death has no effect on it (John 6:50–58; 8:51–52; 11:26), for bodily resurrection is in many ways a natural outcome of the possession of eternal life. While eternal life is always regarded as a present actuality, it is also viewed as something future as far as complete realization is concerned (John 4:14,36; 6:27; 12:25; 14:19; 1 John 3:2). The full enjoyment of it awaits a future day.

2. Meaning of the new birth. No discussion of the death of Christ would be complete without reference to the classic discourse with Nicodemus on the new birth (John 3:1–12), which is based on His death (3:14). The Lord spoke on this occasion of three characteristics of the new birth:

a. *It is supernatural (3:4).* Nicodemus’s question, “How can a man be born when he is old?” was not a foolish one. Evidently he thought Jesus was speaking of physical birth when He said a man had to be born again, because he reasoned that the character of a person stemmed from his birth; therefore he could see no way to begin again morally except to begin again physically, and this was the way he interpreted the Lord’s words. Nicodemus thought it would be wonderful to start over with a clean slate, but did not see how it was possible apart from a new physical birth. Therefore Nicodemus did not understand that the new birth was supernatural. The mystery of religion is not punishment but forgiveness.

b. *It is spiritual (3:5–6).* The kingdom of God is spiritual; thus the new birth, the means of entrance, must be spiritual also. It is being born of water and spirit. The mention of water was probably to turn Nicodemus’s mind to John the Baptist’s baptism unto repentance;⁵ thus water and spirit picture the

two sides of a spiritual birth—the water of the outward testimony of repentance and the spirit of the inward change of heart.

c. It is sovereign (3:7–12). As the wind blows where it wills, so God chooses whom He will; and as the effects of the wind are seen, so the results of the new birth are seen in a changed life. Nicodemus himself illustrates the fact that a man cannot understand or will it in his own strength. Intellectual struggle may only postpone the moment of salvation; obedience of faith can immediately effect it.

3. Appropriation of salvation. The very first statement in the Gospel concerning the new birth makes it dependent on faith (John 1:12). The verse also refers to the object of faith, Christ. Thus it is throughout the Gospel: the Son as the bearer of salvation must be the object of faith (3:15–16, 18, 36; 4:29, 39; 7:38; 8:24; 20:29, 31; also see 1 John 3:23; 5:1, 12). Faith involves the most thorough kind of appropriation of the person and work of Christ as the basis for the believer's confident persuasion for salvation. The figure of eating His flesh and drinking His blood attests to that thoroughness (John 6:53–56). Faith in His person involves belief in His deity (John 3:13; 8:24; 9:22; 12:42; 1 John 2:23; 4:15), and faith in His work involves belief in the efficacy of His death to effect deliverance from sin (John 1:29; 3:14–19). In John's thought faith that saves is joined directly to the person and work of Jesus.

IV. THE LIFE OF FELLOWSHIP

Since faith is this personal appropriation of the most thorough kind, there arises from it a vertical relationship between the believer and the One in whom he has placed his faith. This person-to-person fellowship also has a horizontal ramification in the community relationship of all believers. In John's thought this life of fellowship—both on the vertical and horizontal plane—stems directly from the saving work of Christ. Therefore a discussion of it properly belongs under soteriology.

If John's emphasis on this theme were only slightly different, this section might be called his doctrine of the church. But his emphasis is not such, for the word church is nowhere used in his Gospel or first Epistle.⁶ With respect to the ordinances, there is complete silence concerning baptism and the Lord's supper as church ordinances.⁷ Therefore we are bound to follow

John's own emphasis and consider the relationships of the group under the doctrine of salvation, for salvation is the cause of which this fellowship, according to Johannine theology, is the effect.

A. *C*_{ONDITIONS FOR} *F*_{ELLOWSHIP}

Believers become brothers by virtue of being joint partakers of the new birth through faith in Christ. Brethren maintain fellowship with Christ and consequently with one another by meeting a certain condition. That condition is walking in the light (1 John 1:7), or walking in obedience to a standard that is God Himself, who is light. Walking in the light involves practicing the truth (1:6), or living in obedience to the standard of Him who is truth. Such a life brings fellowship with one another in the community relationship.

When sin is committed and the standard is not met, fellowship is broken and confession is necessary (1 John 1:9). Thus fellowship depends on our responding to the standard, which is God Himself, and realizing our imperfect state by confession of known sin. The life of fellowship is a life of no unconfessed sins, which is also a life of progressive growth, for confession involves repentance, forsaking of sin, and maturing.

B. *C*_{HARACTERISTICS OF} *F*_{ELLOWSHIP}

Two words stand out in the first Epistle as the chief characteristics of individual and community fellowship: *righteousness* and *love*. Righteousness means that sin is not practiced as the prevailing habit of life (1 John 3:4–9). It does not mean perfectionism or freedom from committing all sin, but it does mean that righteousness, not sin, is that which habitually characterizes the life.

The characteristics of love are described by John in detail (1 John 3:10–18). It is unlike the love Cain had; it will not be received by the world. It is manifest in our love for the brethren, which could involve being willing to lay down our lives for others, and which should involve the giving of ourselves and our money for the benefit of our brethren. Not all will be called on to give up life for the brethren, but all are called to give up personal abilities and resources in the service of others. It is an easy thing to say, "I love God," and even to appear very pious when saying it. But John said that real piety is demonstrated not by what we say about our love for

God, but by what we do in showing our love for our brethren (1 John 4:11–21).

C. CONDUCT OF FELLOWSHIP

A life that is walking in the light and is characterized by righteousness and love will conduct itself properly in the various relationships of life. John spoke of three of these:

1. Relationship to the life of Christ (1 John 2:1–11). The life of Christ serves as a pattern that the Christian is to imitate. The believer is to obey His word (2:3–5) and imitate His walk (2:6). It is necessary to obey His commands in order to perfect our love for God, and to imitate His actions in order to prove our profession as followers of Him.

2. Relationship to the world (1 John 2:12–17). Mention has previously been made of the Christian's responsibility to be separate from the world, for the things of the world are not of God.

3. Relationship to antichrists (1 John 2:18–29; 4:1–6). Many antichrists were active when John wrote; therefore it was necessary for believers to be on guard in their relationships. An antichrist, according to Westcott, is "one who assuming the guise of Christ opposes Christ,"⁸ and some in John's day even belonged outwardly to the Christian community (2:18–19). John believed that these people were empowered by superhuman forces (4:3) so that a believer needed supernatural discernment to recognize them.

However, John mentioned two tests for discovering antichrists. The first is doctrinal (4:2–3). Anyone who does not openly acknowledge the person of the incarnate Savior is antichrist. This means more than simply acknowledging the fact of His coming, for it incorporates the idea of the permanence of flesh that the incarnation effected. The second test is an audience test, for John suggested that an examination of those who listen to a prophet will determine what sort of prophet is speaking (1 John 4:4–6). Christians should apply these tests in order to guard their own fellowship with Christ against antichrists.

Thus in soteriology as in all of Johannine theology the development of the writer's thought centers in the person of Jesus Christ. Sin is understood

for what it is only by seeing God as He has been revealed through Christ. The incarnation of Christ revealed God to man. Salvation, the work of this person, comes to man through faith in that One and what He did. The resultant life of fellowship continues that relationship with Christ and expresses it in the community relationships of all believers. Schmid wrote:

These doctrines are the foundation pillars of apostolical teaching; and these are the very ideas which, with a decided reference to the superiority of the new covenant over the old dispensation, are fully realized in John's system by the grand view which he takes of Christ as the manifested Word of God, and of the faith which hath overcome the world.⁹

CHAPTER 5

ESCHATOLOGY

Johannine eschatology is found mainly in the Apocalypse. Since this is the case, certain foundational matters concerning the Revelation need to be considered as a basis for the doctrinal investigations.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE APOCALYPSE

A. *AUTHORSHIP*

Generally speaking there is not much agreement today concerning the authorship of the Apocalypse. Conservatives hold that the same person who wrote the Gospel and Epistles of John also wrote the book of Revelation, and that that person was the apostle John. This is determined on the basis of the evidence already cited concerning John the apostle and John the presbyter. Others are equally certain that John could not have written the Revelation chiefly because it is such a different work from the Gospel.¹ That is obviously true, but its very nature as an apocalypse demands that it move in a different world with dissimilar style and tone. More recently a documentary theory has arisen respecting the book; that is, it was a compilation of a number of little apocalypses. Some add that John was the compiler, which accounts for the association of his name with the book.

B. *DATE*

Traditionally a date of A.D. 95–96 has been assigned to the Revelation. It is based on the testimony of Irenaeus, who said, “The vision of the Apocalypse was seen no very long time since, but almost in our own days, towards the end of Domitian’s reign [that is, A.D. 81–96).”² More recently this

late date has been given up for an earlier one that places the book toward the end of the reign of Nero (A.D. 54–68). However, if Irenaeus’s testimony is given any weight, the later date is the only conclusion possible. His testimony also rules out any idea that the visions were given earlier and someone compiled them later, for he said that the vision was seen, not written, in Domitian’s day. Actually the trend of the most recent scholarship seems to be back toward the traditional later date.

C. *METHODS OF INTERPRETATION*

Commentaries on the Revelation can be divided into categories according to the basic method of interpretation used; the method casts the mold for each theology of the book. One must not straddle the fence at this point; otherwise there can be no theology.

There are four viewpoints on this matter:³ (1) The preterist view holds that the prophecies of the book were fulfilled in the early history of the church. (2) The historicist view sees a continuous fulfillment throughout the entire Christian era. While it is true that there may be relevant applications of the book made for every generation, the problem under discussion is interpretation, not application. (3) The allegorical or spiritual view considers the book an allegory that pictures the constant conflict between light and darkness. (4) The futurist view regards the entire contents of the book, except for the first three chapters, as yet to be fulfilled.

The first three viewpoints are based on the principle of allegorical interpretation, while the futurist view is the result of the consistent use of the principles of literal interpretation. The Apocalypse itself supports the futurist interpretation in 1:19 and 4:1, and it is in agreement with other prophetic Scriptures if they are plainly interpreted.⁴

In handling this particular portion of God’s Word, one should never forget that the book is not sealed (22:10) and that there is a special blessing for those who read it (1:3). These two things ought to encourage every Christian to study the Revelation.

II. DEATH

A. *SPIRITUAL DEATH*

John conceived of spiritual death as a state of alienation from God. It is the lack of the spiritual life that is in Christ; therefore it is the state of not being in Christ (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14). John recognized that there may be a false profession of having life when there is only death (Revelation 3:1). The remedy for spiritual death is of course spiritual life or salvation. This has its source in the Son (John 5:26; 1 John 5:12). It is secured by believing (John 1:12) and its surety is the resultant love for the brethren (1 John 3:14). As has been pointed out from the first Epistle of John, a lack of love for the brethren is the sure sign of abiding in the state of spiritual death.

B. P_{HYSICAL} D_{EATH}

Physical death is the end of life in the earthly body or the separation of the life-giving spirit from the body so that as a result the body decays (John 11:39). During the life of Christ, physical death was used as a means of demonstrating the power and glory of God (John 4:46–54; 11:4,15). Sometimes death is seen as a release from suffering (Revelation 9:6). On other occasions it is a means of judgment (1 John 5:16). In the latter two instances it is definitely connected with sin and comes as a result of having committed sin.

The Lord plainly stated that the power of physical death would be broken for all men by resurrection (John 5:28–29; also see 8:51). Resurrection reverses death and Christ's own resurrection is the guarantee of that. For the unbeliever, resurrection is to condemnation in the eternal lake of fire (Revelation 20:12 ff.), and for the believer, it is to an eternal glorified state (Revelation 21:4).

C. E_{TERNAL} D_{EATH}

This is the final state of the unbeliever. It is the permanent continuation of spiritual death unremedied and it finds its continuing consummation in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). God will evidently prove to the unbeliever that he deserves this punishment because of his works (Revelation 20:12–13; 21:8; John 5:29) as well as his rejection of the Son of God.

D. T_{HE} I_{NTER}MEDIATE S_{TATE} OF THE S_{OUL} A_FTER D_{EATH}

For the believer, the state after death is one of conscious bliss while awaiting the resurrection. Consciousness is displayed in many ways in the Revelation (6:10; 7:9, 15; 14:3; 20:4) and the bliss is described in equal detail (5:9; 6:11; 7:10, 16–17; 14:13; 19:8). It could not be otherwise, for the believer at death is ushered into the presence of God immediately (see 20:4—when John looked, the sitters on the thrones, saints of this age, were *already* there).

The unbeliever's intermediate state is Hades. Just as soon as death claims the body, Hades claims the soul (compare Revelation 6:8 where both Death and Hades ride forth to claim their victims immediately). Horrible as Hades is, it is only a temporary abode that delivers its captives to the lake of fire for eternal torment (20:14).

The abyss is very closely identified with Hades in John's writings. Satanic hosts are more particularly connected with the abyss, while human beings are associated with Hades. The abyss has a superhuman ruler over it (Revelation 9:11); the beast ascends from there during the tribulation (11:7; 17:8); and from there come the locusts, instruments of judgment in 9:1–10. The consummation of the abyss seems to be the same as that of Hades: the lake of fire (compare Matthew 25:41).⁵

III. JUDGMENT

Closely linked with the doctrine of death is that of judgment; indeed the two are often spoken of in the same passages.

A. *JUDGMENT IN RELATION TO CHRIST*

Judgment is invariably linked with Christ the judge (John 5:22; Revelation 20:11–12). The reason for this is clearly stated: Christ will judge men because He is a son of man (John 5:27).⁶ In other words, a man will judge men. The purpose of this arrangement is also explained: Christ will judge men so that the Son will be honored by men (John 5:23).

B. *JUDGMENT IN RELATION TO RESURRECTION*

Actually judgment is a corollary of resurrection (John 5:22–29). Those whom the Son does not will to make alive spiritually are by that very act judged and left in the death that, paradoxically, they themselves have

chosen. They are spiritually dead; they will not be made alive; therefore the only result is a resurrection unto judgment, a passing from the state of death into judgment. Although it is not especially a Johannine revelation, it is true that even the believer's resurrection is followed by judgment (see Revelation 4:4,10).

C. *JUDGMENT IN RELATION TO LIVING PERSONS*

Teaching about the judgment of the Christian is Pauline; of the unbeliever, Johannine (Revelation 20:11–15). The scene in this passage is before the throne, whose occupant is Christ (John 5:22). Heaven and earth are dissolved and the second resurrection takes place. With all unbelievers gathered before Christ, the record books are opened and judgment is meted out on the basis of the record of each individual; each one is in that particular judgment because he is an unbeliever, but once there, he is judged according to works. Perhaps this implies corresponding degrees of punishment in the lake of fire. When the book of life is opened, not a single name of those standing before the throne is found therein, for all of those who come into this judgment are condemned to the lake of fire. This judgment does not prove whether Heaven or Hell is to be the final destiny of those being judged; it is a judgment to prove that Hell is the deserved destiny.

IV. ANTICHRIST

Although all do not agree on details, it is universally acknowledged that antichrist is a major eschatological concept of Johannine theology.

A. *CONCEPT OF ANTICHRIST*

The concept basic to this doctrine is complex and needs to be given careful attention.

1. *The word antichrist.* The prefix *anti* can of course mean either “instead of” or “against.” Thus *antichrist* could mean either one who is a substitute for Christ or one who is against Christ. When *anti* is used in the former sense in compounds with other words (such as *antibasileus*, “vice-king”), it does not have the sense of an unlawful substitute, but of one who

rightly acts in the place of another. In contrast, the Scriptural picture of antichrist is of one who usurps authority. When this idea of usurping is included, the Scripture uses the word *pseudochristos*, “false Christ.”

On the other hand, when *anti* is used in the latter sense of “against” in combination with *Christ*, the resulting compound word means “one who is against Christ.” Thus unadulterated opposition, not usurpation, is the principal emphasis in the word *antichrist*. This sense of *anti* appears to be more in line with the Scriptural picture of antichrist. In John’s day an antichrist denied that Jesus is Christ. In the final apostasy the antichrist sets up his own religion of worship of himself. This is not substitution that imitates or acts in place of Christ, but outright opposition. Thus *antichrist* refers to one who is opposed to Christ openly, not a false Christ.

2. Contemporary antichrists. In John’s own day antichrists were present (1 John 2:18; 2 John 7) and were even associated with the church group. These were forerunners of a coming great antichrist, and John did not deny that a future antichrist is still to arise. Those of John’s day were not just people who were unchristian; they were definitely anti-Christian. John associated them with the antichrist to come in order to impress on his readers the peril of their teaching.

3. The coming antichrist. In his first Epistle, John acknowledged the well-known character of the future antichrist (1 John 2:18). He is described in detail in the Apocalypse (Revelation 11:7; 13:1 ff.).

4. The spirit of antichrist. John in one place spoke of the spirit of antichrist (1 John 4:3), which is evidently a superhuman spirit working through the antichrist. He was suggesting that the antichrists of his own day were demonically-inspired men and the future antichrist is likewise. In the Revelation it sometimes appears as if the antichrist were only a man and sometimes as if he were the devil himself. Evidently this concept of the spirit of antichrist explains that seeming contradiction (Revelation 11:7; 13:8; 17:11).

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF ANTICHRIST

Essentially, antichrist is one who opposes God. That opposition may be open attack as in the coming day or it may be more underhanded as in

John's day. Antichrist may belong to the Christian group outwardly though not organically. The basic doctrinal heresy promoted by the antichrists of John's own time was the denial of the incarnation. In the coming day antichrist's attacks will cause people to be put to death (Revelation 11:7).

C. CULMINATION OF ANTICHRIST

Even in John's time the antichrist was expected and while there were forerunner antichrists, so to speak, they were always compared to the great single antichrist to come, not vice versa. Therefore this future personage is the outstanding one.

A good deal of confusion has arisen over the use of the name *antichrist* in relation to the two important characters of the last days, the first and second beasts of Revelation 13. Many attach the name *antichrist* to the second person mentioned in that chapter; that is, to the one commonly spoken of as the religious leader of the endtime. Others, and I am one of them, feel that the first person mentioned is the outstanding figure in those days and that the name *antichrist* belongs to him.

Both groups agree that the first is the man of sin, but some fail to see that he exercises both political and religious functions. On the basis of the concept of antichrist formed from the meaning of the word and from the outstanding character of the person, the name must be applied to the one who takes the leadership in the last days—general leadership in the world and specific leadership in opposing God. This can only be the first-mentioned person in Revelation 13.

In John's description of him (Revelation 13:1–10; 17:8–13) certain things are clear. He is related to a confederation of ten nations and rules over it. He has characteristics like those of a leopard, a bear, and a lion. These take the reader back to the description of the world empires in Daniel 7 and thus attribute to the antichrist characteristics that were seen in those kingdoms. His empowering is of Satan, as has already been mentioned.

His activity in the last days is also described. Although his power is limited and delegated, it is extensive while it lasts (see Revelation 13:4b, 5, 7, 10). He is able to kill and capture people (13:10), to control buying and selling (13:16), and to set up his own religious system, which centers in worship of himself. He is aided in all this by a subordinate (the second-mentioned person in Revelation 13) who performs miracles, directs worship

to the first person, and supervises the marking of people with the mark of the antichrist. The antichrist's political duties will undoubtedly take him away from Palestine often so that it will be necessary for a subordinate to look after things there while he tends to his far-flung interests.

Careful balance is needed in considering this doctrine. John's teaching concerning the antichrist to come must never blind us to the danger of the presence of antichrists in any period of church history; and the truth as to contemporary antichrists must not tend to lessen our interest in every detail that can be learned about the antichrist to come.

V. ESCHATOLOGY OF THE JEWS

The simplest way to deal with what John said about the future for the Jews is to consider categories or groups of Jewish people.

For unredeemed Jews, the future holds the same as it does for unredeemed Gentiles. Those who have to pass through the tribulation will of necessity experience the judgments of that period. During eternity their lot, like that of all unsaved people, is the lake of fire.

John introduced a special group of Jews in the Apocalypse: the 144,000 sealed witnesses (Revelation 7:3–8; 14:1–5). If the language of the text is taken at face value, this is a group of that exact number who are particularly described as the servants of God. Their sealing guarantees special protection until their work of witness is finished. They are redeemed people and evidently remain a distinct group among all redeemed as “first fruits to God and to the Lamb” (14:4).

Among the witnesses to the grace of God during the tribulation, two are singularly outstanding (Revelation 11:1–14). Their unusual testimony, which includes the power to kill their enemies, to prevent rainfall, and to bring plagues on the earth, continues for forty-two months, or the first part of the tribulation. When their work is done, God takes them through physical death. Then after men have made a spectacle of their dead bodies for three days, they are raised and taken to Heaven where they dwell with the redeemed for eternity.

During the tribulation days there will be a faithful remnant of Jews who believe. For these there will be intense persecution by Satan and his followers. Protection will be divinely given in a wilderness place

(Revelation 12). Some, however, may be martyred and be part of the group mentioned in Revelation 15:2–3.

The state of all redeemed Jews—whatever their group or age—is one of eternal bliss. Although it is difficult to be definite about details of the eternal state, perhaps it may be suggested that their special abode is the new Jerusalem (which will be discussed in detail later).

VI. ESCHATOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

The concepts involved in the use of the word *church* are often overlapping. However, a distinction must be made between the group that belong to an organization and the group that belong to the Savior. The latter ought to belong to the former, and the former ideally ought to be composed only of the latter, but such is not always the case. Therefore the following comments do not suggest that these groups are mutually exclusive; the distinction is a matter of emphasis, not exclusiveness.

A. *FUTURE OF THE ORGANIZED CHURCH*

The letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2–3 were of course written to historic local congregations of John’s day. However, since not even all the churches in Asia Minor received a letter (and such an important one as the one in Colossae is left out), one would rightly suspect that the Holy Spirit signified which ones should be chosen for specific reasons. Therefore it would seem that these seven are also representative of the church throughout this age and characteristic of conditions as they exist continually and in every place.

Some futurists also see these churches as prophetic churches; that is, in tracing the historical development of ecclesiasticism, they see each church as representing conditions in a specific period of church history. Undoubtedly this is the least important of the meanings of the letters. All of the conditions pictured in these letters will be represented in the church until its consummation. In the future, just as in the past, the church, as long as she is here on earth, will leave her first love, hold the doctrine of Balaam, permit Jezebels in the group, have imperfect works, and be lukewarm. There will also be conditions that will merit commendation, for the true and professedly true elements will coexist until the rapture.

When the believing element is removed at the rapture (John did not speak of this specifically in the Apocalypse, though in the chronological structure of the book it would come at the beginning of Revelation 4), the church will not cease to exist or function; it will become a completely apostate church. The eschatology of this organization is recorded in Revelation 17 under the figure of Babylon the harlot. This is the church organization that during the first part of the tribulation unites church and state (17:2), rules the beast (17:3), displays herself with great grandeur and pomp (17:4), is organized as a federation (17:5), and reigns with cruel ruthlessness (7:6). When the antichrist shows his true colors by demanding the worship of himself, he must destroy this rival. So complete is that destruction (17:16) that it may be said that organized Christendom comes to an end at that time.

B. FUTURE OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

In this section we consider the promises made to individuals who are true believers. All such individuals together form the universal church, and obviously many of them are in local organizations and exhibit characteristics listed in the preceding section. However, we are considering now those things that pertain to all believers because they are joined to the mystical body of Christ.

1. Hope of the church. In the upper room the Lord told His disciples of that which would be the hope of the church through all its history. The hope centers in His personal return for them; it is the hope of seeing Him (John 14:1–3). Secondarily we have the hope of the mansions or abiding places in Heaven for eternity. Our hope also includes a change in our own nature to be like Him (1 John 3:1–3).

2. Future occupation of the church. In the Apocalypse the redeemed are seen worshiping God and the Lamb (Revelation 4:10–11; 5:8). This evidently will be one of the principal occupations of the church throughout eternity. The church is also seen on thrones judging (20:4), although what this involves in particular John did not say.

3. Marriage supper of the Lamb. A Hebrew marriage had three stages: (1) the legal marriage consummated by the parents of the bride and groom; (2) the groom's going to take his bride from her parents' home; and (3) the

wedding feast or supper. It is of this last stage that John spoke in Revelation 19:7, and this means that the bride has already been taken from her home on earth.

VII. TRIBULATION

Most of the content of the Apocalypse concerns the future time of tribulation. While there is wide divergence of opinion concerning the interpretation of basic and detailed features of the material, to enter into discussion of these matters would be disproportionate to the plan of this book on Biblical theology. Reasons have been given for preferring the futurist, literal view of the Revelation, and that view will be the working principle on which this section is based.

A. *DURATION OF THE TRIBULATION*

The total length of the period is given in Revelation 11. The two witnesses are said to carry on their work for 1,260 days; then the beast who kills them is said to continue on for forty-two months; thus the total period is seven years. This of course is confirmed in other places in Scripture (see Revelation 12:6,14; 13:5; Daniel 9:27).

B. *DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE TRIBULATION*

The Lord had declared that this time would be like no other period in the history of the world (see Matthew 24:21), but what makes the period so singular is a Johannine revelation. The tribulation is not merely bad times, for in it the race realizes that it is threatened with extinction and acts accordingly (Revelation 6:15–17). Men may speak of possible extinction as they do today, but only when the realization of that becomes so vivid that the ordinary activities of life are disrupted completely, can they say that the tribulation has begun.

C. *DESCRIPTION OF THE TRIBULATION*

My conviction is that the chronological movement of the book of Revelation follows the three successive series of judgments (chapters 6; 8–9; 16), the last of which moves very rapidly to its conclusion. The

intervening chapters reveal matters that fit into the basic chronology and pick up some of the details that of necessity are omitted in the description of the judgments. On the basis of such an understanding of the plan of the Revelation, the general outline of events during the tribulation, as John saw them, is as follows:

1. Events of the first half of the tribulation.

- a. The 144,000 Jewish witnesses are sealed near the beginning of the time (7:1–8).
- b. The federation of churches comes into existence (17:1–6).
- c. The ten-kingdom confederacy of nations begins its rise to power under the leadership of the antichrist (17:12).
- d. The seal judgments are poured out on the earth.
 - (1) Cold war (6:1–2). There is first conquest apart from war (compare 6:4).
 - (2) Open war (6:3–4). Revolution and war follow.
 - (3) Famine (6:5–6). One day's wages buy only one measure of wheat, whereas they would normally have bought eight measures.
 - (4) Destruction (6:7–8). One-fourth of the population of the earth is destroyed.
 - (5) Martyrdom (6:9–11). Even this early some are killed for their faith.
 - (6) Physical disturbances in the universe (6:12–17). This is when the race shows by its actions that it realizes that extinction is imminent.
- e. The two witnesses are carrying on their potent testimony all during this period (11:1–6).

2. Events in the middle of the tribulation.

- a. The two witnesses are slain after their forty-two months of testimony (11:3, 7).
- b. The antichrist shows his true colors at this time. He has of course course been on the stage of history before this, but it is not until now that he reveals his true character and demands to be worshiped (11:7; 13:1–10).
- c. Satan, the accuser, is cast out of Heaven (12:7–12).

3. Events of the last half of the tribulation.

- a. The persecution of Israel is intensified (12:13–17).
- b. The trumpet judgments are poured out on the earth.

- (1) Smiting of the earth (8:7). One-third of the vegetation is destroyed.
- (2) Smiting of the salt waters (8:8–9). One-third of the sea turns to blood.
- (3) Smiting of the fresh waters (8:10–11). One-third becomes bitter.
- (4) Smiting of the heavens (8:12–13). The uniformity of nature is upset.
- (5) Men are plagued with scorpion-like stings for five months (9:1–12).

(6) One-third of the population is destroyed (9:13–21). This destruction, coupled with the one under the fourth seal (plus other deaths because of wars and famines), leaves the earth with less than half the number of people who entered the tribulation after the rapture of the church. Yet in spite of all this display of the wrath of God, men will not repent of the evil of their hearts.

c. The mark of the beast is required for trade (13:16–18).

d. Toward the very end of the period and in rapid succession the bowl judgments are poured out on the earth.

(1) Judgment in the earth (16:1–2). This brings grievous sores which are still on people when the fifth bowl is poured out (also see 16:11).

(2) Judgment in the sea (16:3). All the oceans (which cover 72 percent of the earth's surface) become as blood so that all the fish die.

(3) Judgment in the rivers (16:4–7). The fresh waters also become as blood.

(4) Judgment in the sun (16:8–9). So intense becomes the heat of the sun that men are scorched, and yet they will not repent.

(5) Judgment in the throne of the beast (16:10). The capital of his kingdom is plagued with darkness.

(6) Judgment in the Euphrates (16:12–16). The waters of the Euphrates are dried up so that the armies of the nations of the East can pass over easily and quickly.

(7) Judgment in the air (16:17–21). This causes widespread disturbances and destruction, including hailstones weighing 125 pounds each.

e. The commercial system of the world is overthrown (18:1–24).

f. The armies of the world are brought together to the great battle of Armageddon (14:20; 16:14; 19:19).

g. The Lord Jesus Christ returns in power and great glory (19:11–16).

In general this is a brief sketch of the major events of that terrible period of the outpouring of the wrath of God. That God could do such things, men do not deny; that God would do them, some find difficult to believe. Two thousand years of relative silence and gracious dealings may have made us insensitive to the holiness, wrath, and justice of God. However, the plain sense of the text can only be understood if one accepts the premise that God will do these things. One is forced to the conclusion of Seiss:

If it is not literal, then were not the plagues of Egypt literal, nor is any other sort of fulfillment possible; and thus the tremendous record is rendered meaningless. I take it as it reads; and if any dissent, on them is the burden of proving some other sense, and of reducing to agreement their mutually destructive notions as to what it does mean. Take it as God has caused it to be written, and there can be no disagreement; take it in any other way, and the uncertainty is endless.⁷

VIII. MILLENNIUM AND ETERNAL STATE

A. *P*osition of *C*hrist

Of the position of Christ during the millennium and the eternal state, John had some specific things to say. He was shown that the Lord's rule during the millennium would be worldwide in its extent and that it would be forever (the millennium merely being the first part of that eternal kingdom, Revelation 11:15). It is implied in 20:9 that Jerusalem will be the capital of the millennial kingdom, since that city will be the center of Satan's attack at the end. The character of the King's rule is plainly stated:

And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty (19:15).

In eternity the Lamb will be over all the universe, including the lake of fire (14:10), and He will be the light of the heavenly city (21:23).

B. POSITION OF SATAN

At the beginning of the millennium Satan will be bound (20:1–3) in the abyss (9:1–3; 17:8). This is a temporary abode where for a thousand years he will be confined alive so as to be unable to deceive the nations of the earth. At the end of that time he will be loosed and will lead a revolt against God (20:7–9). After this brief release his final judgment will take place and he will be cast into the lake of fire forever in company with the beast, the false prophet, and his angels (20:10).

C. POSITION OF THE UNBELIEVER

Unbelievers who are dead have no part in the millennial state, for they will not be raised until after its conclusion (20:11–15). Then they will find their place in the lake of fire forever. Those who are alive and who refuse to accept the King during the millennium will follow Satan in his last revolt, but their eventual destiny is also the lake of fire.

D. POSITION OF THE BELIEVER

Believers will be the inhabitants of the new Jerusalem during these periods. Much discussion has been raised among premillennialists as to whether the new Jerusalem is millennial⁸ or eternal.⁹ In reality the city seems to belong to both periods.¹⁰ John saw it as the dwelling place of the bride (21:9), which relates it to the millennium. It is also clearly related to eternity (21:1–8). In both periods, eternal (not temporal) conditions obtain in the city and for its inhabitants. Therefore the new Jerusalem is millennial and eternal as to time and position, and it is always eternal as to conditions inside it. (Revelation 21:9 ff. seems to be describing the millennial time of the city and its eternal conditions, which of course will characterize it even during the millennium.)

The redeemed will experience the delights of that city, including fullness of fellowship with Him who is the fullness of life (22:4), rest (14:13), fullness of blessing (22:2), joy (21:4), service (22:3), worship (7:9–12; 19:1), and full enjoyment of paradise wherein is no sin or any of its consequences.

Van Oosterzee wrote that Johannine eschatology is in truth

the crown of that stem whose foliage is spread forth before our eyes in the prophetic and Apostolic writings of the Old and the New Testament. As streams lose themselves in the ocean, so do all the expectations of blessedness opened to us in Scripture unite in the Apocalyptic perspective; and precisely to the latest book of the New Testament the investigation as to the higher unity of the different doctrinal systems attaches itself easily, and as it were, without any effort.¹¹

In summing up Johannine theology, let it be repeated that John's viewpoint is christological and his principal thought categories are few. The doctrines of God, salvation, and future things encompass all of Johannine theology. John's is the true capstone of the doctrinal development of the New Testament from the perspective of Biblical theology, for the totality of Johannine thought centers in the person of Jesus the Son of God, the redeemer and judge of the world.

CONCLUSION

Our survey of New Testament theology has now carried us through all the parts of the progress of revelation as deposited in the New Testament—from the Gospels to the Apocalypse, from Bethlehem to the new Jerusalem. Our task has been to systematize God's truth as it was unfolded through many successive acts and through the minds of the various writers of the New Testament. Our interest has been centered in the different emphases of the human instruments of revelation as seen in their writings.

The main divisions of the progress of revelation are readily ascertained and there can be little debate about them. Synoptic theology, Pauline theology, and Johannine theology are the three major areas of doctrinal development. Between the Synoptic and Pauline theologies comes the important contribution of the early church as seen in Acts and James, and between the Pauline and Johannine theologies comes the later development as reflected in Hebrews and the Epistles of Peter and Jude. These seven divisions are the obvious categories of New Testament Biblical theology.

Likewise the emphases with-in these sections have clearly emerged from our study. The Synoptic theology is primarily a theology of the King and His kingdom. This we discovered from Matthew, the theological Gospel, and it is the key that unlocks the theological meaning of the life and ministry of Christ. The theology of Acts is like a bridge between the Gospels and the teachings of Paul. Acts continues the record of the work of Christ in His resurrected state and introduces the new entity, the church, the doctrine of which was further developed by Paul. The theology of James shows that the close relationship between doctrine and life was heeded by some and needed by others in the early church. The principal substructural doctrine of his theology is the Word, which begets us unto the new life and which governs it.

A pivotal point in the progress of revelation in the New Testament is introduced in Pauline theology. Here the new position of the redeemed in the sphere of resurrection life in Christ is revealed. Paul's doctrine is everywhere ethical, to the intent that members of the body of Christ would practice in all aspects of life their exalted position in Him. Doctrinal consistency between Paul and Christ is apparent, for Pauline theology is largely an elaboration of the Savior's promise that "in that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (John 14:20).

The theologies of Hebrews, Peter, and Jude are pointedly christological, presenting the Lord as the cure for difficulties and aberrations in the life of the church.

The climax of New Testament theology is reached in the Johannine writings. It is Christ the divine Savior and Judge who is presented therein. Again continuity is evident, for the Apocalypse is a fulfillment of the Savior's promise that He would send the Holy Spirit to "disclose to you what is to come" (John 16:13). The eschatology of Paul, complete as it is, still needs the final word concerning the consummation as contained in the Revelation. The portents of doctrinal and ethical declension seen in Peter and Jude create a need for a further word from God as given in the last book of the Bible.

Thus the development of the self-revelation of God in the New Testament is progressive both in its stages and emphases. Progressive development and diversified emphasis do not mean doctrinal disharmony. Everywhere in the historically-conditioned progress of revelation, Van Oosterzee noted, there is manifest a

higher unity . . . [so that] not simply in fundamental conception, but also in the presentation of the principal subjects, yea, even in a number of unimportant matters, there is to be observed an unsought and an unambiguous agreement between them [the different writers]. Upon no single question of life does the answer of the one contradict that of the other.¹

It was pointed out in the Introduction that Biblical theology is foundational to systematic theology. The "higher unity" perceived by the method of Biblical theology proves the validity of the doctrines of systematic theology, for if the teachings of the various writers of the New

Testament only contained a conglomeration of human opinions that were often found to be contradictory, there would be no true dogmatics. The cardinal doctrines of God, Christ, sin, salvation, the church, and the future are consistently and harmoniously presented by the writers.

Although this is a phenomenon so remarkable that there is no counterpart in the history of religions, the Christian realizes that it could not be otherwise; for this unity is the work of the Lord of glory, who through the Holy Spirit guided each human author in his own individual way. Supervised by the divine Author Himself, all contributed without blemish or blur to the perfect and harmonious picture that we call the New Testament Scriptures.

The study of Biblical theology gives us overwhelming confidence in the authority of the Scriptures, for in the survey of the various parts with their different functions, relations, and emphases, we see the diversities coalescing into a unified doctrinal scheme. The parts become a whole; in the many writers we see the one Author; the books become one Book.

As Bernard phrased it, "From the position of students, who address themselves with critical interest to the works of Matthew, of Paul, or of John, we have risen to the higher level of believers, who open with holy joy 'the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'"² This is the glorious goal toward which Biblical theology points.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

1. Cf. H. Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895) I:1.
2. As R. F. Weidner, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (New York: Revell, 1891) I:13.
3. T. D. Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.) 20.
4. Cf. E. J. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948).
5. B. Weiss, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882) I:9.
6. For a survey of the history of Biblical theology as a science see James Lindsay, “Biblical Theology” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943) I:469–472.
7. *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, edited by Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody, 1994), divides Pauline theology into three separate sections: the missionary Epistles, the pastoral Epistles, and the prison Epistles. Furthermore the material in the missionary and pastoral sections is treated as a unit, while each prison Epistle is treated separately. This is a strange (and as far as I know) unique way of dealing with Pauline theology and necessitates searching out Paul’s thought on ecclesiology or the Holy Spirit, for example, in several separate sections of the book. It also means that one cannot readily discern how much emphasis Paul placed on certain doctrines as a whole, simply because they are not treated as a whole.
8. G. Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 27.

9. J. G. Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1923) 73–74.

Part I

Chapter 1

1. As John M. King, *The Theology of Christ's Teaching* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1902).
2. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III.xxxix. 16, quoting Papias; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III. i. 1.
3. For a summary see A. Carr, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew, Cambridge Greek Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887) xv-xvi.
4. *Ibid.*, xvi.
5. A current tendency among liberals is toward an earlier dating of Matthew.
6. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III.xxxix. 16.
7. W. G. Scroggie, *Guide to the Gospels* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1948) 169.
8. Mark's companionship with Peter is mentioned by the church fathers; cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, II. xxxix.
9. Legend says that in A.D. 827 Mark's body was moved from Alexandria to Venice, where it lies buried today.
10. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, II. xv, III. xxxix, VI. xxv.
11. M. C. Tenney, *The New Testament, An Historical and Analytical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 169,215.
12. W. G. Scroggie, *Guide to the Gospels*, 83–94.
13. A weighty argument against this evidence for an early date of Mark is the testimony of Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, III. i. 1) in which he said, "And after their [Peter and Paul] exodus Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, having committed to writing the things that Peter used to preach, delivered them to us." However two questions must be answered in order to evaluate properly this testimony: (1) Does "exodus" refer to the apostles' death or a departure from Rome? (2) Were the writing and delivering at the same time?

14. W. M. Ramsay, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1898) 78–83.
15. A. H. McNeile, *An Introduction to the Study of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953) 33.
16. Cf. W. K. Hobart, *Medical Language of St. Luke* (London: Longmans, Green, 1882) and A. T. Robertson, *Luke the Historian in the Light of Research* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920) 90–102.

Chapter 2

1. Lightfoot quoted in A. Carr, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896) 31.
2. A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke, International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910) 103.
3. F. L. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890) I:195–204.
4. J. G. Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York: Harper, 1930) 207–209.
5. This is true no matter whether one understands the genealogy to be that of Joseph or of Mary. If the former, Jesus is then linked to Joseph and the case is the same as in Matthew; if the latter, Jesus is linked to his grandfather Heli through Mary, but without mentioning her name, for the Jews said, “*Genus matris non vocatur genus*” (*Baba Bathra* 110a).
6. In spite of all the arguments to the contrary, it has not been proved to the mind of the author that the wise men did not come at the time Jesus was born. R. C. Trench, in *The Star of the Wise Men* (Philadelphia: H. Hooker, 1850), suggested very plausibly that the star may have appeared first at the time of the conception, thus causing the arrival of the wise men in Bethlehem to coincide with the birth. The fact that Matthew used *paidion*, “little child,” to describe the baby (2:11) does not prove anything, for the word is used of a newborn child as well as an older one (see John 16:21). The fact that they found him in a house is only reasonable, for one cannot imagine the family staying in the stable any longer than absolutely necessary.

7. A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943) II:745–747; C. H. Kraeling, *John the Baptist* (New York: Scribner, 1951) 99–101.
8. L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947) V:61–63.
9. Cf. B. B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907) for detailed usage of all the names and titles of Christ by all the New Testament writers.
10. W. G. Scroggie, *Guide to the Gospels*, 555.
11. Cf. J. Crichton, “Messiah” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, III:2039–2040.
12. J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Luke* (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1858) I:131.
13. Even *huper*, which is also used of Christ’s death for us, sometimes clearly has the meaning of substitution (Luke 22:19–20; John 10:11; 11:50–51; cf. Philemon 13, where the preposition clearly means “in the place of” and where it is used in a passage that has no connection with the atonement). The new liberalism completely ignores this linguistic evidence and still insists that the death of Christ was merely representative rather than substitutionary. Cf. A. N. Wilder, *New Testament Faith for Today* (New York: Harper, 1955) 134.
14. Cf. A. M. Stibbs, *The Meaning of the Word “Blood” in Scripture* (London: Tyndale, 1947) 1–35.
15. J. M. King, *The Theology of Christ’s Teaching*, 298.
16. A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, II:547.
17. For an extended discussion of this see J. A. Alexander, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols. (New York: Scribner, 1872) I:134–136.
18. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols. (New York: Harper, 1930) II:286–287.
19. L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, III:68.

Chapter 3

1. J. Moffatt, *The Theology of the Gospels* (New York: Scribner, 1913) 41.

2. O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1945) 71.
3. Ibid., 83.
4. C. C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Old Mystic, CT: ECS Ministries, 1953).
5. A. Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904) 72.
6. H. D. A. Major, T. W. Manson, and C. J. Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1937) 470.
7. J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Matthew* (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1858) 32.
8. C. F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 308.
9. C. F. Hogg and J. B. Watson, *On the Sermon on the Mount* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1933) 19.
10. R. B. Miller, “Sermon on the Mount” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, IV: 2735.
11. C. F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics*, 308.
12. C. F. Hogg and J. B. Watson, *On the Sermon on the Mount*, 105.
13. L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, V:97.
14. H. D. A. Major, T. W. Manson, and C. J. Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*, 428.
15. Cf. C. Gore, *The Question of Divorce* (London: John Murray, 1911) 23; W. C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, *International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907) 51; G. Salmon, *The Human Element in the Gospels* (London: John Murray, 1908) 130–131.
16. Cf. W. K. L. Clarke, *New Testament Problems* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929) 59–60, for a detailed explanation of this view.
17. Cf. F. E. Hamilton, *The Basis of Millennial Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) 67 ff.
18. The word *ethnos*, Matthew 25:32, is translated in the New Testament as “people” one time, “pagans” one time, “nation” and “nations” sixty-

eight times, and “Gentiles” ninety-three times. I understand this judgment to be on individual Gentiles, not national groups, at the end of the tribulation for their treatment of Christ’s brethren, the Jewish people.

Part II

Chapter 1

1. The Luke in Romans 16:21 is undoubtedly a different person, as also in Acts 13:1.
2. A. T. Robertson, *Luke the Historian in the Light of Research*, 23.
3. R. B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Methuen, 1951) xxx, prefers Antioch in Pisidia, but this view is not widely held.
4. Cf. the discussion in H. Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4 vols. (London: Rivingtons, 1859) II:17–19.

Chapter 2

1. Of course chapter 12 refers again to the work in Jerusalem, but this is entirely in line with the *kai . . . kai* (“both . . . and”) of 1:8, which shows that the progress of the gospel was to be out from Jerusalem but not to the exclusion of Jerusalem.
2. F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1952) 71.

Chapter 3

1. J. A. Alexander, *The Acts of the Apostles*, II:29.
2. Contra L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, IV:62–63.
3. Contra G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899) 261–262.
4. Cf. C. C. Ryrie, “The Significance of Pentecost,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October 1955, 333–335.
5. Carl Brumback, “*What Meaneth This?*” (Springfield, MO.: Gospel Publishing House, 1947).
6. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 19.
7. Roger Nicole, “Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament,” *The Gordon Review*, February 1955, I:7–12.

8. A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, II:745–747.
9. T. M. Lindsay, “Baptism” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, I:390; J. Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) IV:xv,19.
10. Cf. A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, II:745–747; E. Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890) II:ii,319 ff.
11. Acts 2:38 is no exception. A. T. Robertson explained the meaning of the words “for the forgiveness of your sins”: “In themselves the words can express aim or purpose for that use of *eis* does exist as in I Cor. 2:7. . . . But then another usage exists which is just as good Greek as the use of *eis* for aim or purpose. It is seen in Matt. 10:41 . . . where it cannot be purpose or aim, but rather the basis or ground. . . . It is seen again in Matt. 12:41 about the preaching of Jonah. . . . They repented because of (or at) the preaching of Jonah. . . . I understand Peter to be urging baptism on each of them who had already turned (repented) and for it to be done in the name of Jesus Christ on the basis of the forgiveness of sins which they had already received” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, III: 35–36).
12. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 262; cf. R. F. Weidner, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, I:161–164.
13. Cf. E. W. Bullinger, *The Mystery* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, n.d.) 40; J. C. O’Hair, *A Dispensational Study of the Bible* (Chicago: O’Hair, n.d.) 32.
14. Cf. C. C. Ryrie, “The Significance of Pentecost,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October 1955, 333–335.
15. As was pointed out many years ago by Vitranga, *De Synagoga Vetere* (Franequerae: Johannis Gyzelaar, 1696) 914.
16. Gregory Dix in *The Apostolic Ministry*, ed. Kenneth E. Kirk (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946) 244.
17. The word *evangelist* includes the idea of itinerant ministry.
18. Cf. S. Schechter, *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1923) 80–96.

19. O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, 135–136.
20. F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 297–298.
21. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 274.

Part III

Chapter 1

1. Cf. A. Carr, St. James, *Cambridge Greek Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896) xii-xiii.
2. Ibid., xxviii.

Chapter 2

1. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 280.
2. A. Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke, *International Critical Commentary*, 30.
3. Cf. J. B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (London: Macmillan, 1897) cx-cxvi.
4. Cf. W. G. Scroggie, *Know Your Bible* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1940) II:297–298.
5. James Orr, “The Bible” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, I:461.
6. H. Alford, *The Greek Testament*, IV, Prolegomena, 102.
7. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919) 855–856.
8. C. F. Schmid, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877) 360.

Part IV

Chapter 1

1. Cf. W. M. Ramsay, *The Teaching of Paul in Terms of the Present Day* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, n.d.) 40–48.
2. Profitable comparison with the chronology of F. F. Bruce may be made by the student (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 55–56).
3. A note concerning the meaning of the name *Saulos Paulos* is in order. A. Deissmann in *Bible Studies* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901, 313

ff.) showed that the phrase in Acts 13:9, *Saulos ho kai Paulos*, can only be taken to mean “Saul who was also called Paul.” He wrote: “The *ho kai* admits of no other supposition than that he was called *Saulos Paulos* before he came to Cyprus; he had, like many natives of Asia Minor, many Jews and Egyptians of his age, a double name.” The choice of the Graeco-Roman second name, Deissmann said, was made without particular purpose, although sometimes a name was chosen that sounded similar to the first name. This might have been the case with Saul who was also called Paul. Luke’s record of this in Acts 13 simply and clearly shows that when Paul began to turn to the Gentiles, he was presented to them under his Greek name, which he had had as a second name all along. Certainly the two names in no way represent the old and new natures in the apostle.

4. H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery-Religions* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, n.d.) 115.
5. Ibid., 198.
6. Ibid., 282.
7. James S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935) 63–64.
8. Ibid., 121.
9. Philip Schaff, “The Conversion of Paul, False Explanations” in *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950) I:307.
10. Ernest Renan, *The Apostles* (New York: Carleton, 1869) 171–174.
11. F. C. Baur, *Paul, His Life and Works* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1876) 61–89.
12. P. W. Schmiedel, “Resurrection and Ascension Narratives” in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (New York: Macmillan, 1914) 4081–4086.
13. W. M. Ramsay, *The Teaching of Paul in Terms of the Present Day*, 306.
14. Ibid., 319.
15. What Paul’s physical affliction was is not easy to determine. Migraine headaches, ophthalmia, and malaria are suggested. Galatians 4:15 and 6:11 would seem to indicate ophthalmia; however, the mention of the eyes in 4:15 may merely be symbolic of a precious organ, and the large letters of 6:11 are more likely to indicate the importance of the writing

rather than the illness of the writer. Malaria apparently accounts for the symptoms that are exhibited in the Epistles. Though there is no deteriorative damage as in epilepsy, it causes severe periodic attacks and also is a chronic affliction.

16. Cf. J. G. Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1921) 67–68.
17. P. N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Oxford, 1921) 1–184.
18. It is also recognized that Harrison presents other arguments, but it is not within the scope of this work to deal with each one in detail. His “ecclesiastical atmosphere argument” is that the church organization of the Pastorals is foreign to and later than that which appears in the “genuine” Epistles. But such passages as Acts 14:23, Philippians 1:1, and 1 Thessalonians 5:12 show as much organizational development as we see in the Pastorals among elders and deacons. The order of widows of 1 Timothy 5 could easily have developed to the extent pictured by the time of the close of Paul's life. After all, ministrations to widows were pretty well organized shortly after Pentecost (Acts 6:1)!
19. Cf. P. N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*, 46–47.
20. W. M. Ramsay, *The Teaching of Paul in Terms of the Present Day*, 346–371; Philip Carrington made similar observations in *The Early Christian Church*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957) I:170.
21. For a discussion of the pros and cons of this suggestion see F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969) 359–364.

Chapter 2

1. Cf. Francis Davidson, *Pauline Predestination* (London: Tyndale, 1945) 1–36.
2. B. B. Warfield, “Predestination” in *Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings, 5 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902) IV:58.
3. Ibid.
4. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan, 1885) 110.

5. C. J. Ellicott, *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon* (London: Longmans, Green, 1888) 44–45.
6. Cf. S. N. Rostron, *The Christology of St. Paul* (London: Robert Scott, 1912) 176–186.
7. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 439.

Chapter 3

1. C. G. Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology* (South Gate, CA: Colporter Kemp, 1944) 255.
2. W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, International Critical Commentary* (New York: Scribner, 1895) 134.
3. E. Brunner, *Man in Revolt* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947) 142.
4. G. B. Stevens, *The Pauline Theology* (London: Richard B. Dickinson, 1892) 134.
5. A. H. McNeile, *St. Paul, His Life, Letters, and Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920) 293.

Chapter 4

1. Cf. D. M. Edwards, “Mystery” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, III:2104.
2. The use of *hōs*, “as,” in Ephesians 3:5 may be declarative, in which case it has the force of a participle (cf. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 953–969). Thus the verse may be paraphrased, “The mystery that was not made known in other generations, having now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets.”
3. An extended note showing that Acts 14:23 indicates not that elders were chosen by the votes of the people, but that they were appointed can be profitably studied in W. Kelly, *Lectures on the Church of God* (London: Morrish, 1918) 217–223.
4. For further study on this question the reader may consult C. C. Ryrie, *The Place of Women in the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1958) 85–91. Also see J. A. Robinson, “Deacon and Deaconess” in

Encyclopaedia Biblica (London: Oxford, 1897) 1039; H. P. Liddon, *Explanatory Analysis of St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy* (London: Oxford, 1897) 34; Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972) 159–161.

5. Whether this means that the elements of the supper silently announce the facts of the gospel or whether it refers to an oral explanation that accompanied the observance is difficult to decide.
6. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 461; cf. A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914) 324–325, who leans toward the same conclusion on the basis of the possibility that 1 Corinthians 11:5 is a hypothetical instance; that is, that a woman should pray or prophesy at all, and especially with her head uncovered, was such an unthinkable thing that it would never occur in the church.

Chapter 5

1. H. A. A. Kennedy, *The Theology of the Epistles* (London: Duckworth, 1919) 124; J. S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ*, 147–153.
2. Stewart, *A Man in Christ*, 157.
3. F. L. Godet, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.) II:308.

Chapter 6

1. Whether the word *apostasia* means “falling away, apostasy” or “catching away, departure” (thus referring to the rapture of the church) may be studied with profit. Cf. E. Schuyler English, *The Rapture* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1954) 63–71; Kenneth S. Wuest, “The Rapture—Precisely When?” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January 1957, 60–69; H. Wayne House, “The Meaning of Apostasia in 2 Thessalonians 2:3,” Pre-Trib Study Group, 1994.
2. Whoever the restrainer is, he must be more powerful than Satan, who empowers the man of sin. Only a person of the godhead would so qualify, and since each and all of the persons of the godhead indwell the believer (Ephesians 4:6; Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 6:19), the removal of the Restrainer requires the removal of believers whom He

indwells. Thus the rapture of the church must precede this tribulation period when the man of sin holds sway.

3. H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904) 221.
4. W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, International Critical Commentary*, 380.
5. H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, 222.
6. Cf. H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, 223–229; H. Buis, *The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957) 1–32.
7. H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, 241–242; cf. John 12:24.
8. W. M. Ramsay, *The Teaching of Paul in Terms of the Present Day*, 65.

Part V

Chapter 1

1. B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Macmillan, 1892) xxviii.
2. J. Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, International Critical Commentary* (New York: Scribner, 1924) 74.
3. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 486; W. Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1941) 24.
4. F. V. Filson, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," *Journal of Bible and Religion*, January 1954, 22.
5. W. R. Newell, *Hebrews Verse by Verse* (Chicago: Moody, 1947) 186.
6. W. R. Smith and H. von Soden, "Hebrews" in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (New York: Macmillan, 1914) 1993.

Chapter 2

1. B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 149.
2. Some would add a fifth work of the Spirit; namely, the part He played in the death of Christ (9:14). At best, however, it is a debatable reference to the Spirit, for it very likely refers to Christ's human spirit (cf. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 261–262).

3. H. A. A. Kennedy, *The Theology of the Epistles*, 202.
4. *Ibid.*, 203.
5. As W. Beyschlag, *New Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899) II:31–315.

Chapter 3

1. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 512.
2. G. Milligan, *The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899) 118.
3. For further discussion and references see C. C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, 105–125.
4. The details of the ritual should be studied from Leviticus 16 and a work such as A. Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1908) 302–329.
5. Cf. G. Milligan, *The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 140–143. B. F. Westcott also favors the view that the blood indicates an offering of Christ's life (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 294). For the view that blood relates to violent death see Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) and A. M. Stibbs, *The Meaning of the Word "Blood" in Scripture*.
6. B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 258–259.
7. *Ibid.*, 65.

Chapter 4

1. Cf. B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 323, for evidence that "confession" has to do with the confession of the convert at his baptism.

P_{ART} VI

Chapter 1

1. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV. xiv.
2. So Calvin, Hort, Alford, and Meyer.
3. So A. T. Robertson and Blenkin.
4. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, II. xv.

5. Ignatius, Papias, I Clement, Hegesippus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Dionysius, Tertullian, and Jerome attest to it. The evidence is conveniently summarized in G. W. Blenkin, *The First Epistle General of Peter, Cambridge Greek Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914) xvii-xix.
6. C. Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude, International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902) 199–215.
7. Cf. T. Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1953) II:262–293.
8. W. M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1894) 281.
9. E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols. I:460.
10. E. H. Plumptre, *The General Epistle of St. Peter and St. Jude, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893) 65–67.
11. B. B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory*, 275.
12. As G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 299; contra B. Weiss, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, I:226–227.
13. James M. Gray, “Peter” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, IV:2350.
14. Cf. William Kelly, *The Preaching to the Spirits in Prison* (London: F. C. Race, n.d.) 1–139.
15. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, VI:90; A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, n.d.) 333.
16. While there are parallels in these verses between Israel and the church, nowhere are they equated. Indeed the absence of the article before “people” in the Greek text guards the distinction, for it is said that Christians are a people of God, not *the* new Israel of God.
17. James M. Gray, “Peter” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, IV:2351.
18. Cf. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1927) 118.

19. J. Lillie, *Lectures on the First and Second Epistles of Peter* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1870) 413–414.
20. J. Orr, “The Bible” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, I:461.
21. K. S. Wuest, *First Peter in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945) 53.
22. *Ibid.*, 126.
23. Cf. G. W. Blenkin, The First Epistle General of Peter, *Cambridge Greek Testament*, 78–80.
24. W. Lock, “Love-Feasts” in *Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. J. Hastings, 5 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899) III:157–158.
25. G. N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1952) II:409.
26. Cf. C. Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, *International Critical Commentary*, 296.

Chapter 2

1. See R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938) 597–602; for the opposite view cf. M. R. James, The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude, *Cambridge Greek Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912) x-xvi.
2. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 318.
3. R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, 1886) 98.
4. *Ibid.*, 96.
5. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 312.
6. A. Plummer, “The General Epistles of St. James and St. Jude” in *The Expositor’s Bible*, 6 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943) VI:666.
7. W. G. Moorehead, “Jude, The Epistle of” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, III:1771.

Part VII

Chapter 1

1. “The apostle John was an intuitionist and a mystic. He does not argue; he sees. . . . What men need is not more light, but an eye.” G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 566.
2. J. J. Van Oosterzee, *The Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1871) 372–373.
3. As Weiss, Sheldon, and Stevens in his *The Johannine Theology* (London: Richard B. Dickinson, 1894).
4. As Van Oosterzee, Beyschlag, and Stevens in his *The Theology of the New Testament*.
5. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 175.

Chapter 2

1. The evidence and these stories are conveniently collected in A. Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. John, Cambridge Greek Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891) xvii–xviii.
2. G. Appleton, *John’s Witness to Jesus* (New York: Association Press, 1955) 9.
3. J. B. Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1893) 121.
4. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, quoting Irenaeus (V. viii, xx), Papius (III. xxxix), and Polycrates (V.xxiv).
5. The evidence is built on the parallel passages (e. g., John 1:1; 1 John 1:1), common phrases (e. g., “only begotten,” “born of God”), common constructions (use of conjunctions instead of subordinate clauses), and common themes (*agapē*, “love”; *phōs*, “light”; *zōē*, “life”; *menō*, “abide”).
6. Note the dilemma of the critics who argue for a date between A.D. 110 and 165 and who assume that John did not write it. If the Gospel was published between A.D. 110 and 140, why did not the hundreds of living Christians who had known John during his later years denounce it as a forgery? Or at least why did not someone mention that it had not come from John himself? If it was not published until A.D. 140–165, how could it have been universally accepted by A.D. 170, as it was? Moreover the discovery of the Rylands fragment of John’s Gospel (generally dated

during the second quarter of the second century) has tended to push the date of composition back into the first century.

7. A. Plummer has a good summary of views on “the chosen lady” (2 John 1) in *The Epistles of St. John, Cambridge Greek Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886) lxxvii.
8. *Ibid.*, lxxx.
9. B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel of St. John*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1908) I:cxxxix-cxl.
10. A. Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. John, Cambridge Greek Testament*, xlviiii-xlix.

Chapter 3

1. C. F. Schmid, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, 523–524.
2. R. M. Wenley, “Philo” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, IV:2382.
3. A. Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. John, Cambridge Greek Testament*, 62–64. In the past liberal scholars have commonly held that John’s concept of the *Logos* was based on Hellenistic thought. As a result of studies in the Dead Sea scrolls, however, there has been a great swing to the conclusion that the background of the Gospel of John is Judaic.
4. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) 222.
5. W. Beyschlag, *New Testament Theology*, I:250–255.
6. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 205–212.
7. *Ibid.*, 212.
8. Cf. B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel of St. John*, I:20–21.
9. *Ibid.*, II:219.

Chapter 4

1. H. C. Sheldon, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1922) 346–347.
2. A. Plummer, *The Epistles of St. John, Cambridge Greek Testament*, 39.

3. For a full treatment cf. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 125–185.
4. Cf. B. F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John* (London: Macmillan, 1892) 35, for this double idea in “blood,” and see A. M. Stibbs, *The Meaning of the Word “Blood” in Scripture*, 1–35.
5. Cf. B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel of St. John*, I:108–109. Possibly the kai is expegetical—“of water, even the Spirit.”
6. The organized group is referred to in 1 John 2:19 and 3:14–18 and of course the word *church* appears in the third Epistle and the Apocalypse, but we are here pointing out John’s emphasis.
7. The mention of Jesus’ disciples baptizing (John 3:22; 4:1–2) cannot be considered as referring to an ordinance of the church.
8. B. F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*, 70.
9. C. F. Schmid, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, 548.

Chapter 5

1. Cf. G. B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 526.
2. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V. xxx.3; cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, V.viii.
3. An excellent critical discussion of the interpretation of the Revelation is found in W. Graham Scroggie’s *The Book of the Revelation* (Cleveland, OH: Union Gospel Press, 1920) 75–156.
4. For further study see C. C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*.
5. An interesting note substantiating the possibility of eternal fire is found in F. C. Schwarze, “The Bible and Science on the Everlasting Fire,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January 1938, 95:105–112. The author suggested that the eternal lake of fire may be in liquid form and showed that such a phenomenon exists today in dwarf or midget or white stars. Here are excerpts from his discussion: “A midget star is one which, because of some things which have happened to it . . . should be roughly 55,000 or more times as big as it really is!” The stars have a temperature of 30,000,000 degrees Fahrenheit or more, and “at such high temperatures all matter would be in the form of gas. . . . In a white dwarf the pressure is so great that gases become compressed to the consistency of a liquid although they may still respond to the characteristics of a gas.” How

this could continue perpetually is explained: “Before such a star could cool off and gradually become dark it would have to expand to normal proportions. That is, it would have to get to be more than 5,000 times its present size. Here is the difficulty. Such expansion would cause enormous heat, which, in turn, would absolutely keep the star compressed, so that, *insofar as astronomers and physicists know, the midget stars can never cool off*. . . . The white dwarf, to all intents, can never burn out.” This is not to suggest that God will use these stars to compose the lake of fire; this is quoted merely to show that the literal idea of a lake of fire is not fanciful, because a similar phenomenon already exists in the universe.

6. The absence in the Greek text of the article before both nouns differentiates this phrase from the Messianic title *the Son of man*. The construction concentrates attention on the nature of the person as being human.
7. J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse*, 3 vols. (New York: Charles C. Cook, 1901) III:72.
8. Cf. Scott, Seiss, Gaebelein, Ironside, and Grant.
9. Cf. Newell, Larkin, and Ottman.
10. Cf. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1958) 563–583.
11. J. J. Van Oosterzee, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 414.

Conclusion

1. Ibid., 416.
2. T. D. Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, 215.

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*These books will be found to be the most helpful and/or to represent viewpoints similar to those taken in this book.

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