

Theology for Every Christian

A Systematic Theology
in the
Reformed and Premillennial Tradition
of
J Oliver Buswell
by
Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo

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Dedicated
to
True Lifers
on the occasion
of the
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of
True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church
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for the
Word of God
and for the
Testimony of Jesus Christ

PREFACE

There are many textbooks on Christian theology but J Oliver Buswell's *Systematic Theology* published in 1962 by Zondervan is, as far as we know, the only one that expresses a Reformed and yet Pro-Israel Premillennial system of theology.

The Bible Presbyterian Church as founded by Carl McIntire in 1937 is the ecclesiastical representative of the Reformed and Pro-Israel Premillennial system of theology. Timothy Tow, the father of the Bible-Presbyterian Church and movement in Singapore and Southeast Asia, studied Buswell's *Theology* under Buswell himself at Faith Theological Seminary (1948-50), and Jeffrey Khoo in turn learned it from Tow at the Far Eastern Bible College (1985-9).

Besides Calvin and his *Institutes*, Buswell—our teacher and grand-teacher—has been our guide in the Reformed tradition, and we hereby acknowledge his contribution herein. But let it be known that the Holy Scriptures are the rock foundation of our studies, and the sole and supreme authority of our faith and practice.

Satan hates God's Word, and from the beginning has tried to undermine it. This he did by demoralising our first parents, "Yea, hath God said?" and they succumbed. The theologians before us have done well in declaring the Bible to be verbally and plenary inspired, infallible and inerrant. This has confirmed our faith in the Scriptures. But in order to spoil us again, Satan tries to erode the foundation of our faith by subtle new tactics. This he does by questioning the verbal and plenary preservation of the Holy Scriptures, casting doubt on the text of Holy Scripture through Westcott and Hort. He cunningly contrives rules for interpreting, yea, rather misinterpreting, Scripture which he hides under a big word "hermeneutics," and "historical criticism," and "textual criticism." Last but not least, he twists the meaning of Scripture, right and left, by a new method of translation called "dynamic

equivalence.” In order to unmask Satan’s masquerading, this book is not only didactic but also polemic, in obedience to the apostolic injunction, “that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

Reformed Theology is known for its emphasis on the sovereignty and faithfulness of God. On this account, this book does not shun to teach the special providence of God in preserving (1) the inspired words of the Holy Scriptures in the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus on which the Reformation Bible—the Authorised/King James Version—is based, (2) the Church universal comprising all the elect who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and (3) the chosen nation of Israel which will see greatness when Christ returns to rule on this earth for a millennium.

Appreciation is hereby expressed to the Evangelical Theological Society for permission to reproduce herein Jeffrey Khoo’s paper—“Dispensational Premillennialism in Reformed Theology: The Contribution of J O Buswell to the Millennial Debate”—originally published in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (2001): 697-717.

Our sincere thanks to the Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy—the editor of *Bible Witness*, and the staff of Bible Witness Media Ministry, for their kind assistance in getting this book ready for publication. If this book will accomplish the Pauline exhortation—“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2)—its publication will not have been made in vain.

Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo
Singapore, 2007

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PART I
THEISM
Knowing God

A decorative flourish consisting of two symmetrical, curved lines that meet at a central point, resembling a stylized scroll or scrollwork.

PREREQUISITE TO KNOWING GOD

Theology is the study of God. It is the study of God's dealing with man whom He had created, but fallen into sin. The study of God and the study of man (which is inseparable from the study of God) is true wisdom, says Calvin. We would add to the statement that they are the apex of all knowledge. They are the two highest strata of learning, way beyond "mosquitology," though that is important in the quelling of malaria and dengue. The study of God and the study of man lead us to God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, Mediator between God and man, by whom we are saved (1 Tim 2:5). The Bible is God's book for man, the textbook of our salvation (2 Tim 3:14–17).

Theology is not like any other science. It is not to be studied like any branch of scientific learning. It cannot be put under a microscope for the seeing eye to examine. Rather it is to be studied by putting on the eye-glasses of faith. Not "seeing is believing" but "believing is seeing" is the theological method (John 20:29).

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb 11:1-3). By faith, the doctrine of creation, not evolution, is to be received. By faith, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity transcends the principles of mathematics. By faith, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Christ cannot be taught but by worshipful reverence. Theology is not only a science, but a "metascience," if we may coin a new word.

No man can intrude into the study of theology unless he is born again. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). "But the natural man receiveth

not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14). “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Faith is taking God at His Word.

Nominal Christians can go through a liberal and modernistic seminary and obtain a PhD in theology. But they will come out preaching themselves, not Jesus Christ the Lord. They will lord over their congregations with their own conceited ideas, “even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet 2:1). “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor 4:5) is our devout emphasis. So, it is of utmost importance that we examine the credentials of the teacher of theology. Not only must he be born again, he must also have received a mandate to teach, like Timothy from Paul, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2).

It is of the utmost importance for a teacher of theology to be thoroughly scrutinised before he can be taken on the faculty of any fundamental Bible college or seminary. “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (1 Cor 5:6). Fuller Seminary which was founded in 1947 by Charles Fuller of the Old-fashioned Revival Hour succumbed to liberalism in a matter of years. Princeton Seminary, though a proven stalwart of the faith from its founding in 1812, finally fell in 1929, J Gresham Machen notwithstanding.

What makes theology far above any brand of scientific learning is the higher teaching of the Holy Spirit. “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1 John 2:20). “But the anointing which ye have received of

him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1 John 2:27).

How do we receive the unction of the Holy One? How do we get the anointing that we need, not that any man teaches us? It is by being a devout student of the Bible, by being a regular reader of the Bible day and night, and by meditating therein, that we might be enabled to compare “spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor 2:13). Dr John Sung read his Bible 11 chapters a day and 13 chapters on the Lord’s Day; hence the power of his preaching that brought several hundred thousands to Christ. (To know more about John Sung, read *John Sung My Teacher* by Timothy Tow.) So testifies the Psalmist, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation” (Ps 119:97–99).

How does Calvin excel all other students of theology? By the superior knowledge of the Bible that shines throughout his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. He outshines all other theologians because he is a Biblical theologian.

Dr William Lyon Phelps of Yale University has said, “A knowledge of the Bible without a college education is better than a college education without the Bible.” We would encourage you, though not having a college degree, to launch right into the study of theology. In Paul’s words of encouragement to young Timothy, “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). “The Bible has in it all that the Christian needs” (McIntire).

EXISTENCE OF GOD

In presenting the Gospel, there is no need to prove the existence of God. The Christian message is not dependent upon the arguments of God's existence, but in the convicting and converting power of the Holy Spirit. Christ promised the convincing power of the Holy Spirit who will convict "the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," and will convict specifically "of sin, because they believe not on me" (John 16:8-9). The Holy Spirit not only convicts but regenerates, and imparts the gift of faith, which is "the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). God "worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13).

God has revealed His existence through His creation. This is clearly stated in Romans 1:19–20, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead [Deity]; so that they are without excuse." From this Scripture, we see that fallen and sinful though we are, we can conclude when we see the world around us, that it must have come from a Creator. How come the cosmos, this "great, wide, beautiful, wonderful world?" To believe that God created it, *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), is far more logical than to believe in evolution and the eternity of matter. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb 11:3). Everything must have a beginning from "out of nothing," except God.

The created universe reveals God's design and purpose. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" (Ps 94:9). The implicit argument is quite transparent. Can we believe that the purposiveness of

our sensory organs can be explained without an intelligent Purposer? If there is a design, there must be a Designer.

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge” (Ps 19:1–2). “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Ps 8:3–4). The Apostle Paul used these arguments in his epistle to the Romans: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom 1:18–22). In these words, we have the plain statement that the created universe is sufficient evidence for the eternal power and divine character of God.

CAN FALLEN, SINFUL MAN KNOW GOD?

Not only is God made known to man by the invisible powers He has displayed in the creation, He is very near him, even as he is conscious of Him. Paul said to the Athenians, “That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:27–28).

The knowledge of God in man is innate—we are born to know Him. Atheistic communism’s efforts to suppress it have totally failed. The knowledge of God induces man to seek after God, which distinguishes him from animals. Being made in the image of God and likeness of God (Gen 1:26), we should yearn after Him as children their Father. It makes us aspire to immortality.

Paul discusses the workings of the innate knowledge of God in man in Romans 2:7–16. In a word, the conscience in man which witnesses to whether he has done right or wrong, is that knowledge that subdues man to God. The conscience tells us that God rewards the good and punishes the bad.

To those who seek after God, like Bishop Augustine of Hippo, “O Lord thou hast made us for thyself and our souls are restless till they find rest in thee,” life everlasting is given (Rom 2:7). In order to lead Augustine into life, God caused a child to say, “Take, read. Take, read.” And the seeker for Truth was further led to read Romans 13:11–14, whereby he was gloriously saved. So was Cornelius the Centurion led to the Saviour by the preaching of Peter (Acts 10). Natural revelation is insufficient to lead a soul to salvation but the Word of God is able.

Man has no excuse not to know God. Being fallen into sin, however, instead of worshipping the Creator, he has turned to worship the things God has created. The Bible says this is the result of his wilful ignorance and vain imagination. For rejecting God, man has fallen deeper and deeper into darkness and the grossest idolatry (Rom 1:21–23). And idolatry is condemned in the strongest possible terms: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:

for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exod 20:4–6; Second Commandment).

Now, idolatry can be classified under polytheism, that is, the worship of many gods. Alongside polytheism, we have other forms of idolatry, and the other extreme to polytheism is atheism. For to say there is no God, man is flouting his Creator, and he prides himself to be a “free thinker.” Agnosticism which says that God cannot be known is no different from the Athenian altar on Mars Hill, “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” (Acts 17:23). Deism which says God exists but is no more exercising control over His creation is another form of Epicureanism, and pantheism which says God is all and all is God is a Hindu concept. Humanism is the exaltation of man and worship of himself. Materialism, which is mammonism, makes the dollar sign the Almighty.

The knowledge of God through creation indeed is not sufficient to lead sinful man to the true worship of God Almighty the Creator.

JUDGEMENT OF GOD AGAINST ATHEISTS

There is really no need to argue. The existence of God is a fact. If man denies this fact, the judgement of God he will face. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful;

but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgement of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom 1:18-32).

WHAT IS GOD?

The best description of God is found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 4: “What is God?” Answer: “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”

An inspiring story behind the answer to this question is told by William M Hetherington: “There is one anecdote connected with the formation of the Shorter Catechism, both full of interest and so very beautiful that it must not be omitted. In one of the earliest meetings of the committee, the subject of deliberation was to frame an answer to the question, ‘What is God?’ Each man felt the unapproachable sublimity of the divine idea suggested by these words; but who could venture to give it expression in human language! All shrunk from the too sacred task in awestruck, reverential fear. At length it was resolved, as an expression of the committee’s deep humility, that the youngest member should make the attempt. He modestly declined, then reluctantly consented; but begged that the brethren would first unite with him in prayer for divine enlightenment. Then in slow and solemn accents he thus began his prayer:—‘O God, thou art a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in thy being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.’ When he ceased, the first sentence of his prayer was immediately written by one of the brethren, read, and adopted, as the most perfect answer that could be conceived,—as, indeed, in a very sacred sense, God’s own answer, given to prayer and in prayer, descriptive of himself. Who, then, was the youngest member of the committee? When we compare the birth-dates of the respective members of the committee, we find that George Gillespie was the youngest by more than a dozen years. We may, therefore, safely conclude that George Gillespie was the man who was thus spiritually guided to frame almost unconsciously this marvellous answer.”

GOD IS A SPIRIT

The statement, “God is a Spirit,” comes from our Lord Himself. This, He said in answer to the woman of Samaria that since God is a Spirit, the true worshippers “shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him” (John 4:23). The words of Jesus imply that

God is not a corporeal being, like a man, as the Mormons imagine.

In the first five books of the Bible, the incorporeal nature of God is the basis of the Second Commandment which prohibits the worship of “any likeness of anything” of a corporeal nature (Exod 20:4). Before Moses cited the Ten Commandments again in Deuteronomy 5, he spared no effort to emphasise the commandment which forbade the worship of any physical or material object. “Ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice” (Deut 4:12). “Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth; and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven” (vv 15-19). “Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee” (v 23; see also vv 25, 28, etc.). The many denunciations of idolatry throughout the Old Testament are based upon the truth that God is a Spirit, not a corporeal being. Calvin rightly said, “Whenever any image is made as a representation of God, the Divine glory is corrupted by an impious falsehood.”

INFINITE, ETERNAL, AND UNCHANGABLE IN HIS BEING

God is said to be “infinite, eternal, and unchangeable” in seven specified aspects of His subsistence, in His “being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”

God’s omnipresence is the meaning of the words, “infinite in his being.” The Scriptures explicitly teach this truth: “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (Ps 139:7–12).

The presence of God is spoken of in the Scriptures in absolutely universal terms. “The LORD’s throne is in heaven; his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men” (Ps 11:4). “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry” (Ps 34:15). “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Prov 15:3). “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?” (1 Kgs 8:27). “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD” (Jer 23:24).

The Biblical doctrine of prayer argues for the omnipresence of God. That man can pray to God at any time and at any place vividly and naturally assumes the omnipresence of God. Jonah prayed from the belly of the whale (Jon 2) and

the Lord heard him. “The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth” (Ps 145:18).

The Bible writers clearly teach and always assume the eternity of God’s being. God is always God and will never cease to be God. He never began to be. He never will cease to be.

The eternal being of God is explicitly taught in many passages of Scripture. “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Ps 90:1–2). “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ... Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail” (Heb 1:8–12; cf. Pss 45:6–7; 102:25–27). “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God” (Isa 44:6; cf. Rev 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13).

After the most exalted declaration, “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place” (Isa 57:15), God immediately adds, “[I dwell] with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” God’s omnipresence assures us that He is not a distant God, but a God who is very near us, and works actively in time and space. God inspires; He never expires.

The immutability of God (i.e., God is unchangeable) is clearly taught in the Scriptures. “I am the LORD, I change not;

therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal 3:6). By these words, we are instructed that the God of the Bible is most trustworthy for He can never change His mind or His plan. Our salvation is filled with hope because our Saviour is unchangeable and He keeps His promises.

Our unchangeable God is absolutely trustworthy. This truth is clearly taught in Hebrews 6:17–18, “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” Hebrews 13:7–9 says, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.” The constancy of the character of our Lord Jesus Christ is the reason for our confidence in His gospel of salvation.

Many other scriptural verses may be quoted to prove the immutability of God. God is “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jas 1:17). “The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Ps 33:11). “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand” (Prov 19:21). “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; as I have purposed, so shall it stand” (Isa 14:24). “I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa 46:9–10).

INFINITE, ETERNAL, AND UNCHANGABLE IN HIS WISDOM

The statement that God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His wisdom is intended to teach (1) that God is all-knowing, (2) that His omniscience has always been His and always will be His, (3) that He knows all things without exception, and no one can add to or subtract from His knowledge.

Psalm 147:4–5 says, “He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” Acts 15:18, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” Matthew 10:29–30, “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” Proverbs 15:3, “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.”

Since God knows everything, we ought to be very careful not to sin against Him in our thoughts and feelings. Man may not know what we think or feel, but God knows. Even in our actions, nobody may know that we have committed theft, or cheated in our business transactions or in our school examinations, but God knows, and He will punish all who have broken His Law. We can hide from man, but we can never hide from God.

The doctrine of God’s omniscience has practical value. It provides us with every reason to pray. We pray because we do not know, but God does. He knows everything, the end from the beginning. That is why the Lord constantly exhorts us to present our petitions before Him, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil 4:6). “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all

men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (Jas 1:5). God said to Ezekiel, “Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezek 36:37–38). In other words, God says, “I will bless them and I will bless them in answer to prayer.”

Christians who know the Lord call upon Him freely and spontaneously, “casting all your care upon him” (1 Pet 5:7). As parents, we can often tell what our children want from us even before they ask us. With our limited knowledge, we can know something of the future. For example, a father knows his children need pocket money before they go to school. He has their pocket money all prepared for them, but gives it to them only when they come to him. He delights to have his children come to him for their needs.

Buswell says, “God has anticipated our prayers before the foundation of the world. He has built the answer to our prayers into the very structure of the universe. He knows that we will pray and that we will pray in a spontaneous manner as a child cries to his father. God has put the universe together on a principle of personal relationships in which He answers prayer, and we can, in a measure, understand His loving provision only on the basis of His omniscience.”

INFINITE, ETERNAL, AND UNCHANGABLE IN HIS POWER

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev 19:6).

The omnipotence of God is gloriously presented in the Scriptures from beginning to end. The God of the Bible is called “the Lord God Almighty” repeatedly in the book of Revelation. In 2 Corinthians 6:18, His omnipotence is closely linked with His love and care for His people who are separated unto Himself; “I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

It is only the Judeo-Christian religion that teaches the omnipotence of God. The Judeo-Christian religion teaches that there is but one living and true God who created heaven and earth, and that He created all things from nothing. Such a doctrine of creation out of nothing by an omnipotent God can only stem from a monotheistic faith that is found in the Judeo-Christian tradition or derived from it. There are only three monotheistic religions in the world, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism. Christianity is an outgrowth of the Jewish Scripture, and it is quite obvious that Mohammed, in the seventh century AD, derived his concept of one, and only one, supreme God from Judaism and Christianity.

Polytheism could not possibly teach a doctrine of God’s omnipotence, for since there are many gods, each one having a share of power or a sphere of power, no one god could ever claim to have all power.

The Christian Faith, on the other hand, teaches the existence of only one God, the living and true God who is the thrice holy God, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty” (Rev 4:8). One God in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:7).

Omnipotence does not mean that God can do anything. God will not and cannot do anything which is against His nature

and will (2 Tim 2:13). For instance, it is impossible for God to lie or to sin (Heb 6:18, Gal 2:17).

There is a question that is often asked by sceptics to cast doubt on God's omnipotence: Can God make two plus two equal six? Buswell answers this question with a question, "We reply by asking how much power it would take to bring about this result. The absurdity of the question is not too difficult to see. Would the power of a ton of dynamite make two plus two equal six? Or the power of an atom bomb? Or of a hydrogen bomb? When these questions are asked, it is readily seen that the truth of the multiplication tables is not in the realm of power. Power has nothing to do with it."

The omnipotence of God is such a simple truth and yet so profound. His omnipotence does not require many words to express. Simply, the God of the Bible is our God, our Heavenly Father, and we have committed our all to Him. "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10).

INFINITE, ETERNAL, AND UNCHANGABLE IN HIS HOLINESS

The holiness of God is His central moral attribute. The common word for "holy" in the Old Testament is *qadhosh*. The root meaning seems to be "separation from, and hostility to, all evil and defilement." In the New Testament, the most common word is *hagios*, which conveys the same essential meaning.

God is of course perfectly holy from all eternity past to all eternity future. God's holy will expresses His holy character. When we say that God is holy, we mean that God's will is perfectly holy, and that His will is the expression of His perfectly holy character.

The holiness of God is a theme constantly emphasised and reiterated throughout the Scriptures. “... ye shall be holy; for I am holy ... ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 11:44–45).

According to His holy nature, God must hate sin. “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13). “Our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29). “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). “Ye must pursue ... holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

Although our only visible standard is the revealed will of God (i.e. the Word of God), we conceive the ethical norm as ultimately derived from the holy character of God Himself. Right is right and wrong is wrong, ultimately, because God is holy. We have knowledge of what is right and what is wrong because God’s holy character has been revealed by His holy will in His holy Law as found in the Holy Scriptures.

INFINITE, ETERNAL, AND UNCHANGABLE IN HIS JUSTICE

The justice of God naturally stems from His holiness. The Hebrew word *tsaddiq* means “straight,” and the Greek word *dikaïos* means “upright.” Both words refer to the justice of a holy God. God’s justice is the outward expression of His holiness and is seen to apply to the believer as well as to the non-believer. Buswell explains, “If a man is walking uprightly in harmony with God’s holiness, it would follow from God’s justice that that man would be in perfect fellowship with God; but if the person is, as we know he is, fearfully self-corrupted, it follows that God must be hostile to his corruption. Since this world is unholy and unjust, it follows that God in His justice must be hostile to all things in it which are in violation of His own holiness. If there is any difference between right and wrong, God in His

righteousness must be hostile to the wrong.” “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23).

Charles Hodge says, “The knowledge of God is eternal life. It is for creatures the highest good. And the promotion of that knowledge, the manifestation of that manifold perfection of the infinite God, is the highest end of all his works. This is declared by the apostle to be the end consummated both in the punishment of sinners and in the salvation of believers. It is an end to which, he says, no man can rationally object. ‘What if God, willing to shew his wrath (or justice), and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory’ (Rom 9:22–23). Sin, therefore, according to the Scriptures, is permitted that the justice of God may be known in its punishment, and His grace in its forgiveness. And the universe, without the knowledge of these attributes, would be like the earth without the light of the sun.”

INFINITE, ETERNAL, AND UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS GOODNESS

The word “goodness” here refers to the outgoing of God’s grace and love and mercy towards man in his sin and need. It is the goodness of God that leads a person to repentance (Rom 2:4).

The goodness of God or the grace of God is the most amazing theme in all the Bible. The most astounding truth ever proclaimed is that the God of justice and judgement is the same God who justifies and declares righteous the sinful and the wicked when they place their faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:26). Surely, the cross of Jesus Christ is the supreme demonstration of the goodness of God.

The redemptive work of Christ on the Cross was an act never performed before and never to be repeated. The Cross was the central purpose of God from all eternity. We might even say it is in principle the heart of the Gospel. Christ is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8). The purpose of the atonement in the Triune Godhead from eternity past may be seen in the words of Christ, “that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

Buswell rightly points out that Christ is not a “third party” at Calvary. The “Mediator” (1 Tim 2:5) is both God and man, Himself without sin. He is the One against whom we sinned. Representatively, every man must say, “I was one of those who spat on His face. I was one of those who made the crown of thorns and mocked Him and challenged Him to come down from the cross. The act of crucifying the Son of God was representatively, my act. I, with the whole race of humanity, should have been swept into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. The twelve legions of angels should have charged down over the battlements of heaven and poured out the vials of God’s wrath upon this sinful humanity. But Christ bore my sin as my substitute. The words, ‘Father, forgive them,’ where He might have said, ‘Angels, destroy them,’ show something of the way in which he took my place and died for me.”

INFINITE, ETERNAL, AND UNCHANGABLE IN HIS TRUTH

“It is impossible for God to lie” (Heb 6:18). The Scripture says that we have a “God that cannot lie” (Tit 1:2), and “he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim 2:13).

The God of the Bible is a God of Truth. His laws of truth are supreme in every area of life on earth. That divine and heavenly truth which is essential to God’s character is above

the laws of human logic and includes His entire revelation is evident from the words of Christ. “As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:30–32). We are told that “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). It should be noted here that John does not mean that there was no grace and no truth before the earthly life of Christ, but that all God’s grace and all God’s truth, as revealed by Moses and the prophets as well as in Christ’s earthly life, are mediated by Him as the eternal Word (John 1:1).

The earthly life of Christ was directed towards the revelation of God’s eternal truth. “Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). In His high-priestly prayer, He said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth” (John 17:17).

Without God’s Truth in His Holy Word, sinful human beings would be blind to the living and true God and the only Saviour of the world—the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

“GOD REPENTED”

There are some difficult passages of Scripture which state that God “repented” or changed His mind, and they seem to contradict the passages which speak of His immutability. It must be made known that the passages that speak of God’s “repenting” are actually instances of the figure of speech called “anthropomorphism.” For example, in the book of Amos, the sermons are interspersed with visions, some of

which predict dire calamity. In Amos 7:1–2, the prophet has a vision of the total destruction of the land’s productivity by a plague of locusts. He then pleads, “O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise?” In verse 3, we read, “The Lord repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD. Then was given to the prophet a vision of destruction of the sea and land by fire” (v 4). In verse 5, Amos again pleads, “Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.” Again, “The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, said the Lord GOD” (v 6). Clearly these two visions should be taken as a whole. The teaching is not that God changes His mind, but that such disasters are *certainly* a just punishment for sins; and that the God who is ready to execute judgement is also the God who can *show mercy*.

The conditional nature of the warning of punishment, which is often not expressed but nonetheless clearly understood, can be seen in the way we discipline our children. We sometimes threaten our naughty children, “I will punish you in about a minute,” whereupon the mischief ceased. Both children and adults recognise the distinction between a conditional warning and a final decision. Such anthropomorphic language is clear in the passages that speak of God’s “repenting.”

ONE GOD IN THREE PERSONS

The Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 5 asks, “Are there more gods than one?” Answer: “There is but one only, the living and true God.” Question 6: “How many persons are there in the Godhead?” Answer: “There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.”

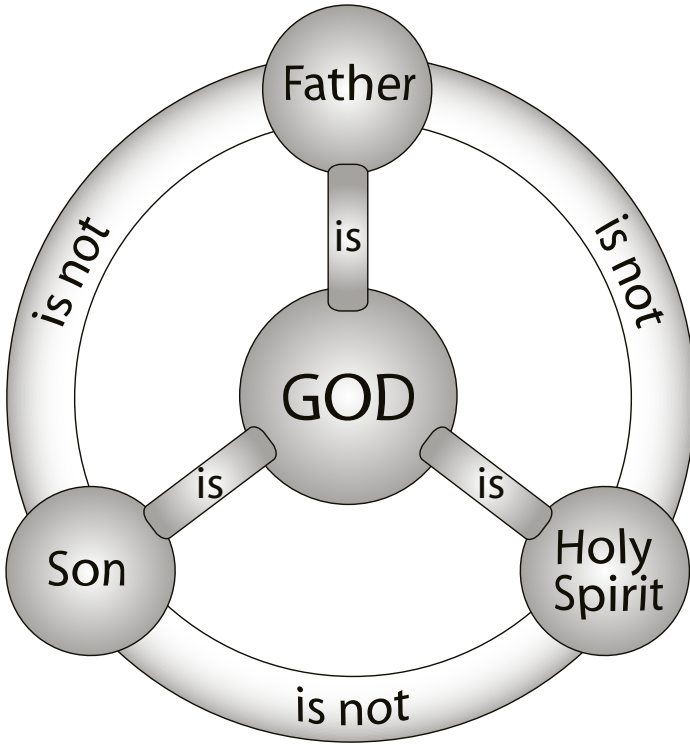
The oneness of God is an essential tenet of the Christian Faith. But in the oneness of God, there is a threeness. The Bible teaches that the one living and true God subsists in three persons, each of whom is God. The triune nature of God is a mystery, but unbelievers ridicule it as a contradiction. The notorious modernist, Harry Emerson Fosdick, for instance is quoted as saying, “The doctrine of the Trinity is a contradiction in arithmetic.” This of course is not a true statement, for no Trinitarian holds that one plus one plus one equals one ($1+1+1=1$). However, the Bible does teach that there is one God, not three, and that there are three Persons, each of whom is God. One times one times one equals one ($1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$) is true.

The Being of God is complex. As finite human beings, we can never fully comprehend God. Spurgeon rightly said, “As well might a gnat seek to drink in the ocean, as a finite creature comprehend the Eternal God” (Deut 29:29, Ps 145:3, Isa 55:8–9, Rom 11:33).

It is the history of revelation which gives rise to the doctrine of the Trinity, not speculative philosophy. The Biblical doctrine of the Trinity may well be outlined by four propositions. (1) God is one. (2) Jesus is God. (3) The Holy Spirit is God. (4) These three persons are in the subject-object relationship, each to the others within the Godhead.

The clearest proof-text for the doctrine of the Trinity is 1 John 5:7, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” (Textus Receptus and KJV).

We see clearly the three distinct persons of the Trinity in action at the baptism of Jesus: (1) God the Son on earth, going through the waters of baptism, (2) God the Father in heaven, commending His beloved Son, and (3) God the Spirit



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descending from heaven to earth in the form of a dove (Matt 3:16–17).

The Biblical teaching is clear. There is only one God. In this oneness, there is a threeness. There are three Persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three Persons are not divided but distinguished; the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, the Spirit is not the Father; but the Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God (i.e. the same living and true God who is only One). One God in Three Persons is divine, not human, arithmetic.

GOD IS ONE

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut 6:4–5). “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exod 20:3; cf. Deut 5:7). “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else” (Isa 45:5–6). “Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God ... thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else” (Isa 45:14, 18). “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me” (Isa 46:9).

The unity of the Godhead is just as emphatically taught in the New Testament as in the Old, and that, in direct conjunction with the Deity of Christ. “As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called

gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Cor 8:4–6). “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph 4:4–6).

JESUS IS GOD

When Thomas, the doubter, saw the risen Lord, he cried out, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). There can be no doubt that the early disciples regarded Jesus as God in the most absolute sense of the word without limitation or subordination. Paul describes the saints as “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:13). That the name “God” applies to Jesus in this text is clear. It is clear from the entire New Testament that it is Christ whose glorious appearing is expected. Christ Jesus is our great God and Saviour.

In a similar form of expression, Peter refers to those who have obtained faith “in justification by our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.” And he continues, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Pet 1:2). Paul referred to Christ with the words, “Christ ... , who is over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom 9:5). Again Paul refers to “the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 1:12). It is evident that the names Christ and God are interchangeable in Paul’s mind.

Other powerful proofs that Jesus is none other than God Himself are John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;” and 1 Timothy 3:16, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the

Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

JESUS IS YAHWEH

Not only is Jesus called God in the New Testament but He is called LORD in the Old Testament where the Old Testament word is Yahweh. In the prophecy of Zacharias (Luke 1:76), it is said of John the Baptist, “And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.” It is obvious that Luke understood this prophecy as referring to John as the forerunner of Jesus. But Zacharias was alluding to Malachi 3:1 in which the word “the LORD” is Yahweh. “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: ... saith the LORD (Yahweh) of hosts.” Thus “the LORD,” whose way John was to prepare, is none other than Yahweh Himself.

Paul gives great emphasis to the prophecy of Joel. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom 10:13). It is clear in the context that Paul is calling Christ “the Lord,” but in Joel 2:32, in the phrase, “whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered,” “the LORD” in the Hebrew text is Yahweh. In the Romans 14:10 reference to the judgement of the saints, Paul adds a quotation from Isaiah 45:23, “I have sworn by myself, ... every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” That Yahweh is the speaker in Isaiah’s words is evident from verses 24 and 25. These passages indicate that Christ and God and Yahweh are one. Jesus Christ is not only the Saviour of New Testament saints but also Old Testament saints.

CHRIST THE SON OF GOD

Christ is called “Son of God” scores of times in the New Testament. The key passage on this subject is John 5:18. “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he ...

said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” In Jewish usage, the term “son of ...” does not generally imply any subordination, but rather equality and identity of nature. “Son of Man,” especially as applied to Christ in Daniel 7:13 and constantly in the New Testament, essentially means “The Representative Man.” Thus for Christ to say, “I am the Son of God” (John 10:36) was understood by His contemporaries as identifying Himself as God, equal with the Father, in an unqualified sense.

The occasions on which Christ’s divine Sonship was proclaimed from heaven, according to the gospel records, are of great significance.

(1) At His baptism. “And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:10–11; cf. Matt 3:16–17; Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:32–34).

(2) On the occasion of His transfiguration, “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt 17:5; cf. Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 2 Pet 1:17).

(3) Again, on an occasion of His public teaching, shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus said, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” (John 12:27–28). In this instance, the word “Son” is not used, but the filial relationship is clearly implied in the words of Jesus addressed to the “Father.”

Jesus has only one Father, not Joseph but God the Father in heaven, the First Person of the Holy Trinity (cf. Luke 2:33, 43, 48, 49).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD

If God is one, and Jesus is God, the proposition that the Holy Spirit is God is not difficult to accept. That the early church so understood is evidenced by such passages as Acts 5:3–4, “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost. ... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

That the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, “The same in substance, equal in power and glory” with the Father and the Son, is manifested throughout the Scriptures. The references to the Spirit in the gospel according to John should make the matter abundantly plain. The first mention of the Holy Spirit in the fourth gospel is found in chapter one, verses 32-34. “And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”

The thought of these verses is closely connected with that expressed in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” In these references, we see that the Holy Spirit is compared to the refreshing and life-giving power of God, under the metaphor of the water of baptism, and the water of drinking. In the “form of a dove” in the vision which occurred at the baptism of Jesus, we have symbolised the quiet, non-showy character of the mode of operation of the Holy Spirit.

LIFE-GIVING POWER OF THE SPIRIT

The life-giving power of the Spirit is brought to a focus in Christ's conversation with Nicodemus. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:5–8). It is through the life-giving Spirit that the miracle of regeneration is wrought.

The life-giving power of the Spirit is vividly set forth in the account of the conversation between Christ and the woman of Samaria. "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:10–14).

The same thought is amplified in the Lord's public address a little later. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive)" (John 7:37–39).

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The streams of living water flowing forth from the hearts of believers evidently signify the power of the Holy Spirit in the missionary programme for this age. The glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ, from a study of the word “glory” in John’s gospel, means His offering of Himself upon the cross, and the completion of His earthly work. The missionary programme for this age, and the giving of the Holy Spirit in this respect, the streams of living water, began at the day of Pentecost.

In the farewell discourse, the Lord had much to say about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:15–17). In these words the personal presence of the Spirit is particularly prominent. His invisible presence is to take the place of the visible presence of Jesus among His disciples.

There is a popular cliché, based upon a misunderstanding of these verses, to the effect that the Holy Spirit since the day of Pentecost dwells in believers, whereas in the Old Testament times He dwelt only with or upon them. The facts give no support to such a view. The Spirit dwelt in Joshua (Num 27:18). It is said of Israel under Moses’ leadership that God “put his holy Spirit within him” (Isa 63:11). “My Spirit remaineth among [“in,” the same preposition] you; fear ye not” (Hag 2:5). In all three of these passages the preposition is “in,” Hebrew *beth*, the equivalent of the New Testament word *en*. The Holy Spirit of God, as a Personal Presence, is and always has been and always will be in the midst of God’s people, in their hearts and in their minds.

When Christ completed His earthly ministry, He resumed His place at the Father's right hand as our Mediator and Intercessor. The Holy Spirit took His place on earth as our Counsellor and Guide. Jesus comforted His disciples in His farewell speech, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:12–15).

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "And when he is come, he will reprove [convict] the world of sin, and of righteousness [justification], and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness [justification], because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world [Satan] is judged" (John 16:8–11).

This entire passage is rich in its implications: (1) As we preach the Gospel we may have confidence that the Holy Spirit Himself, personal Deity, will produce conviction in the hearts of those who hear. He will convict the world of sin and of not believing in Christ. (2) Justification is contingent upon the finished work of Christ. (3) The final judgement is coming with absolute certainty. The Lord here selects from those features of final judgement predicted in the Scriptures, the ultimate judgement of Satan himself (Rev 20:10). A Christian lives under the view of definite, specific, revealed end-time events – finite, but of worldwide proportions. The judgements of God will certainly come.

Jesus promised His people the guidance of the divine, personal Spirit who would reveal to them the "things to

come.” The revealing of things to come, and the special guidance promised in these verses, refer to the special work of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the writers of the New Testament Scriptures. The Apostle Peter commented, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet 1:19–21).

Finally, after His resurrection, evidently on the evening of the resurrection day, Jesus appeared to His disciples and said, “Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John 20:21–23).

Putting away or retaining sins by the disciples of Christ is more fully explained in Matthew 16:19; 18:18. The thought is that the disciples of Christ on earth have no power in and of themselves, but when motivated by the Holy Spirit, they preach the Gospel and souls accept the forgiveness offered them in the Gospel. The disciples of the Lord may be assured that the forgiveness of sins on earth has already had its counterpart from the heavenly point of view in the eternal election of God.

GOD CREATED ALL THINGS OUT OF NOTHING

“What is the work of creation? The work of creation is, God’s making all things out of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 9). The material universe

and man, as well as the angels and whatsoever anywhere anytime other than God may exist or may have existed, have been created by an act of God, not from previously existing materials. This is continuously assumed throughout the Bible. Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning [when there was nothing] God created the heaven and the earth.” And He created all things in the space of six literal days, “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day” (Exod 20:11).

The New Testament likewise teaches that God created all things out of nothing. Hebrews 11:3 clearly states, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” John 1:3, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” Colossians 1:16–17, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” The world came into existence not by evolution, but by creation.

CHRIST THE CREATOR

The Bible writers consider creation as an act of the Triune God. In several striking passages, the Second Person of the Trinity is presented as the special agent of the Godhead in the work of creation. It is the “Son,” “by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb 1:2). Speaking of Christ, Paul says, “... by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Col 1:16). Speaking of Christ as the eternal *Logos*, John says, “All things were made by him,

and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3).

It should be clear that these references to the Son as the Creator do not exclude the Father, but they do indicate that the Son is just as truly the Creator as the Father. The words of the Apostles’ Creed, “I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth,” are certainly correct, for creation is an act of the Triune Godhead; but in the work of creation, the Son has a special and distinctive function.

The Holy Spirit is not excluded from the work of creation. It seems to me that His activity is implied particularly in the coming of light into this world. “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (Gen 1:2–3).

The whole universe was created by the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

CREATION NOT ACCIDENTAL BUT INTENTIONAL

The creation of the universe was no accident. God created the universe out of His own good pleasure and will. God created not accidentally, but intentionally.

The world was created, not evolved. Genesis 1:1 states explicitly “God created.” Evolution is atheistic. There is no God and there was no creation. Everything on earth is a result of millions or billions of years of chance and change. To the man who says God does not exist, God only has one word for him: “You are a Fool”—“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps 14:1, 53:1). He is also a fool who says that the earth is a result of chance. All creation shouts design, not chance. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the

glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.” Romans 1:19–20 says, “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” Why does the evolutionist not see this? Romans 1:21–22 tells why, “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”

In Genesis 1:3 we read, “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” In verse 6, again we read, “And God said, Let there be ...”. This is repeated in verses 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, and 26. Psalm 33:6 says, “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” “For he commanded and they were created” (Ps 148:5).

IN SIX LITERAL DAYS

We have a young earth of about 10,000 years of age and not an old earth of millions or billions of years. Scientists tell us that the universe is about 15 billion years old. Nothing can be further from the truth. Unfortunately, certain Christian scientists try to fit Scripture into science so-called. It is futile. One cannot fit a square peg into a round hole. In order to fit Genesis into the theory of evolution, they make the days of Genesis to mean not literal days but figurative days of long periods of millions and billions of years.

There are three reasons why they must be literal and not figurative days. First, we find in Genesis One, the numerical adjective. Whenever the numerical adjective (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) is used with the word “day” it always refers to a literal

24-hour day. Second, the qualifying phrase, “evening and morning” suggests the beginning and ending of a day within a 24-hour cycle. Third, the fourth commandment in Exodus 20:11 interprets the creation week as a literal week of six days plus a day of rest. If the days are millions of years, then how long must we work before we rest? Moses clearly understood the days of Genesis to be literal days. As God’s creation week was a literal week, so is man’s. God Himself has set the infallible pattern (see day-by-day chart below).

Gen 1:1-5	First Day	Heaven and Earth (Empty), Darkness, Light, Day, Night
Gen 1:6-8	Second Day	Water Canopy (“Firmament”)
Gen 1:9-13	Third Day	Dry Land, Vegetation
Gen 1:14-19	Fourth Day	Sun, Moon, Stars
Gen 1:20-23	Fifth Day	Sea Creatures, Birds
Gen 1:24-31	Sixth Day	Land Creatures, Man
Gen 2:1-3	Seventh Day	Cessation of Creation

CREATION OF MAN

God created human beings special, in His image. Psalm 8:4–5 tells us that we were not made slightly higher than the animals, but slightly lower than the angels. There is a lot of difference between man and animals. “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.” God promotes man, but Science demotes man. It is an insult to God and to man, to say that man, made in the image of God, came from the apes.

Genesis 2:7 tells us that God “formed man of the dust of the ground.” Man was formed by special creation from materials

originally inorganic, and not by derived creation through some previously living form.

This thought is borne out by the statement that God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul.” Breath symbolising Spirit is a common metaphor throughout the Scriptures, “By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Ps 33:6). By the symbolical act of exhaling, Jesus, meeting with His disciples after His resurrection, symbolised for them the reception of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). The Spirit breathes into man the spiritual life of regeneration (John 3:8). Thus, the breath of God in Genesis 2:7 symbolises the special, spiritual creative act whereby man was made a living being. As a living being, the soul of man was created in the image of God. This was not the case with the souls or lives of the beasts (Gen 1:20–21, 24).

Then follows the record of the creation of woman as a suitable help for man. Eve was also a special creation by a special miraculous act of God. She was made from a rib taken from Adam’s side (Gen 2:21-23). We should not deny that there may be spiritual symbolism in the act by which God created woman. It has been poetically said, woman was not taken from man’s feet to be his inferior, nor from his head to be his superior, but from his side to be his companion and equal. Man would not be complete without the woman.

CREATION OF ANGELS

The words for angel in Greek and Hebrew, *aggelos* and *mal’ach*, mean “messenger.” The words describe the primary function of such spirit creatures.

When were the angels created? The Scripture does not clearly say. What we do know is that Lucifer, the leader of the

angels who fell, makes his appearance as a creature already fallen, while man is still in the Garden of Eden (Isa 14:12–15, Ezek 28:12–19). If the phrase, “every thing that he had made,” in Genesis 1:31 means everything without exception, then we must infer that the angels had been created within the six days of creation, but that the fall of Satan and the evil angels took place after God’s pronouncement that “everything he had made” was “all very good” (Gen 1:31). So far as the teaching of the Scripture is concerned, the creation of the angels may have taken place at any time during the six days. The fall of Satan must have taken place between the end of the sixth day and the temptation of man in the Garden of Eden.

The angels are ministering spirits. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews says, “Are they [the angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb 1:14). Although the status of man in this life is in a way “lower than the angels,” yet essentially the angels are of lower rank than redeemed humanity in the overall view of God’s redemptive programme. They are, as indicated above, “ministering spirits” for God’s elect, and when Christ comes in His kingdom, the saints, who are to reign with him, will be judges over the angels (1 Cor 6:2–3).

MINISTRY OF ANGELS

The question may be asked, if we are not to worship the angels, or in any way pray to them, what is the value of the doctrine that they are “ministering spirits”? In answer we can say at least that the Scriptural teaching in regard to the ministry of the angels is a beautiful enrichment of our conception of God’s government of the world.

In the phrase translated “which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Pet 1:12), the “things” are things of salvation (v 10), and the word “look into” is the same word used to

describe John's act of stooping down and looking into the empty tomb (John 20:5). It may be translated, therefore, "The things of salvation, the angels desire to stoop down and watch!" "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). Calvin said, "Under Christ as Head, angels are the guardians of the Church."

An especially beautiful thought is the relationship of guardian angels to children, suggested in the words of the Lord in Matthew 18:10.

The ministry of the angels in connection with the birth, the suffering, the resurrection, the ascension, and the glorious Second Coming of Christ, greatly enriches the Scriptural presentation of these events. In general it may be said that God governs not only by automation, but also by cosmic impersonal forces. Furthermore, God's government over the universe includes a vast amount of personal relationships, very beautiful and stimulating to our imagination.

ETERNAL DECREES OF GOD

"What are the decrees of God? The decrees of God are his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his will, whereby for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass" (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 7).

"What are God's works of providence? God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions" (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 11).

The decrees of God are His sovereign decisions made before time concerning everything that will happen in this world that He has created and presently sustains. That the eternal decrees of God are as stated in the above quotation from the

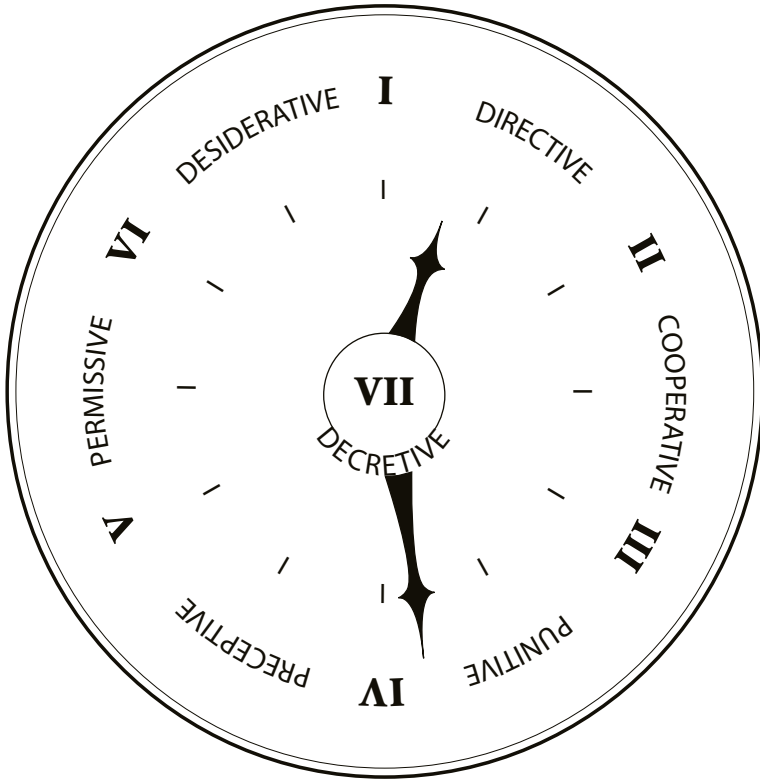
Westminster Shorter Catechism is made evident by many Scriptures. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph 1:4–5). “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11). These verses clearly teach not only the doctrine of election by which God’s people are eternally saved, but the total universal doctrine of God’s all-inclusive decrees. He is the One “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

With infinite power and infinite wisdom, God has from all eternity past, decided and chosen and determined the course of all events without exception for all eternity to come. God is in control. Nothing happens by chance.

THE SEVENFOLD WILL OF GOD

Calvin, the great French Reformer, has probed most deeply into the mysteries of God’s decrees. It is hereby presented more graphically as “Calvin’s Clock of the Sevenfold Will of God.” A clock tells time by its three hands: the hour hand, the minute hand and the second hand. But these are out-workings of the mechanism beneath the face of the clock. The moving hands are simple to read, but not the inner workings of the clock.

In this brief study of the complex will of God from Calvin’s teaching, we can classify them under four headings: **The General:** (1) Preceptive, (2) Desiderative. **The Specific:** (3) Directive, (4) Cooperative, (5) Punitive and “Chastitive” (Chastitive is a new word coined here from the word “chastise”). **The Extraordinary:** (6) Permissive. **The Predetermined:** (7) Decretive.



The Clock of the Sevenfold Will of God

PRECEPTIVE WILL

Preceptive comes from the word “precept” (i.e., command, moral instruction). God’s commands and moral instructions are given to us in an open Bible. The more Bible we read the more we know of His holy will for our lives. The Bible is a torchlight to shine on our pathway through this dark world here below (Ps 119:105). It is a road map to guide us to our destination (Ps 119:35).

Calvin believes in verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, infallible and inerrant, in the strongest possible terms. In book I chapter VII, paragraph 1 of his *Institutes* he says, “It is only in the Scriptures that the Lord hath been pleased to preserve His truth in perpetual remembrance. It obtains the same complete credit and authority with believers, when they are satisfied with its divine origin, as if they heard the very words pronounced by God Himself.”

DESIDERATIVE WILL

The second aspect of His general will is His desiderative will. When Jesus gave us John 3:16, He was offering the whole mankind His saving grace. It is of His character, loving and merciful, to desire all men to be saved. “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek 33:11). “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?” (Ezek 18:23). “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:3–4). “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

Now, the hyper-Calvinists will retort that God's love is only to the elect. So John 3:16 is directed to the elect, not to all mankind. Those who so say try to out-Calvin Calvin. For if you read Calvin's commentary on John 3:16, he says God's saving grace is extended to the whole world. But not all will believe. Here comes Augustine's famous diction, "Sufficient for all, efficient for the elect." To say John 3:16 is offered only to the elect is like holding a grand Christmas sale with a proviso "Only buyers need enter"! But "God invites all indiscriminately to salvation through the Gospel" (Calvin). Are you saved? Believe in Him now, elect or not elect. Indeed, if you truly trust Him, love Him, you are elect and you will be saved (Rom 8:28–30).

DIRECTIVE WILL

The revelation of God's will is progressive. Before the Bible was written, God came to man in theophanies (i.e., God appearing as Man to man). The encounter of the three heavenly visitors with Abraham, eating the sumptuous meal laid before them as the Lord confided in Abraham what He was about to do to Sodom, is well known to students of the Old Testament (Gen 18). God appearing to Abraham, whether by vision or theophany, to direct him in the way he should go, is only one of the many appearances He had made to the Patriarchs. And when these holy men of old received God's direction, without a doubt to do His Will, they obeyed, yea, even Abraham, who left his home country though not knowing where he was to go (Heb 11:8). For, he walked by faith, and not by sight. For his quick obedience to do God's will as directed, Abraham received the honour of being called the "Friend of God" (2 Chron 20:7, Isa 41:8, Jas 2:23).

Does God come to us in theophanies or visions today? Does God direct us today by speaking in our ears as He did to Samuel (1 Sam 9:15)? Well, now that we have God's Final Revelation in His Written Word—the Holy Scriptures, we

must reject the claims of Charismatics today who profess to hear voices and see visions frequently.

There was a young pastor who told a young lady in his congregation, “Thus saith the Lord, I am to marry you.” Succumbing to such a high-powered claim this young girl married the pastor. But they were divorced in a matter of weeks. Young ladies of Charismatic churches, take heed to this advice: If any young man should propose to you because he claims to have received a directive from God, may you reply him squarely: “But as for me, I did not hear Him tell me to marry you last night, nor this morning.”

COOPERATIVE WILL

Having been assured of the Lord’s direction for our life, and we seek to do His will to the best of our ability, He will surely bless us and lead us to good success. This Divine help we call the cooperative will of God.

A classical example of the cooperative will of God bringing success to our endeavours may be taken from Genesis 24. Here, we see Abraham commanding his eldest servant to go to his own country to find a wife for his son, Isaac. When the servant came to Abraham’s people, being a stranger in a foreign land, he prayed for two things to happen as a confirmation from the Lord: “And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master” (v 14). Sure enough, Rebekah, the daughter of Abraham’s brother, came upon the scene and did exactly as the servant had prayed. At this the servant bowed and worshipped the Lord. “And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his

truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren" (v 27). "Self help with God's help is the best help" (Timothy Tow).

How many a time in the course of our service to God have we not met with such good speed and success? In finding a life-partner we surely need God's help. How? When we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things shall be added unto us (Matt 6:33).

PUNITIVE/CHASTITIVE WILL

Every servant of God must be attentive to the Master's command. To take lightly His Word and to question Him is death.

Balaam was a Gentile prophet. He was asked by Balak, king of the Moabites, to curse Israel who were a threat to Moab as they gathered to enter the Promised Land. When Balaam brought up the matter to the Lord, he was told not to go with the king's emissaries nor curse Israel at all.

When Balak sent more honourable princes to Balaam, offering the prophet more rewards, Balaam brought the matter before the Lord again, being motivated by his lust for gain. He should never have done that. God, having spoken once, Balaam should have heard, with his two ears, twice (Ps 62:11). God, who is unchangeable, immutable in His character cannot be influenced like fickle man (Num 22:19) to do otherwise than what He has already said. Since Balaam was moved by material gain, he had set his heart to go to Balak. To serve him right, the Lord said "Go" to him, this not to his promotion, but punishment. Though the Lord said to him, "Go," it was rather this: "Go and die!" Balaam was ultimately punished with death (Num 31:8). We call this His punitive will.

We have a New Testament counterpart to Balaam. It is Judas. Though Jesus loved him and desired his repentance, his mind was set to betray his Master. So the Lord said to him, “That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:27). Judas, by selling his Lord for 30 pieces of silver, ended up on the gallows, and when he fell to his death, his bowels burst to his further condemnation (Acts 1:18). Oh the severity of the punitive will of God! What a warning to us, the story of Balaam and the betrayal of Judas.

A corollary to God’s punitive will is His chastisement. His “chastitive” will against David for his sin is a corrective from a loving father. So David was taught a grim lesson, but he did not go into perdition like Balaam. Those punished under God’s punitive will are lost. Those under His paternal chastisement are spared. A father’s cane is a sugar cane (Heb 12:6).

PERMISSIVE WILL

God’s permissive will is clearly seen in the life of Job. Normally God will not allow Job to be hurt. Since Satan’s accusation of Job insinuated that God’s servant loved Him because of material gains, God permitted Satan to take away all his possessions including the lives and properties of his ten children. Job underwent the test and came out with flying colours. Satan was defeated. Now, when God permitted Satan to bring misery to Job, He purposely permitted from His Omnipotence. He did not permit because He was too weak to resist Satan like an old indulgent father giving way to his wayward son. How do we react when God allows troubles to overwhelm us? Let us say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). Calvin is most emphatic on suffering for Christ’s sake. His emblem is a hand holding a heart with these words, “My heart I offer to You, Lord. Promptly and sincerely.”

This is my (Timothy Tow) testimony. Years ago the Lord tested me with a trauma that brought me back to Job. The Lord took away my wife and youngest daughter in a motor accident that involved 50 Lifers heading towards Cameron Highlands. This was Easter Monday, 1965. Though it shocked me white, the grace of God sustained me. The words of Job came to me to comfort and strengthen me in the hour of darkest gloom. “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). I, through learning the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, had no doubt this tragedy had come by His permissive will. He would work out good from evil.

How comforting is the doctrine of the permissive will of God, of a God who brings good out of evil. So could Joseph in his old age forgive his brothers who out of a wicked heart had sold him to Egypt. But God used their wrath to bring up His praise (Ps 76:10), for through Joseph’s ordeal in Egypt, the lives of the big family of Jacob were preserved in the famine. Joseph’s words to his brothers indicate the permissive will of God, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gen 50:20). Neither Satan nor man can thwart the good plan and purpose of God.

DECRETIVE WILL

The seventh and last aspect of God’s will is the deepest and most wonderful, like the mechanism of the clock. It is the Predetermined or Decretive will.

The decretive will of God is clearly taught in Romans and Ephesians. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, “The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His own will, whereby for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

Ecclesiastes 3 tells us that our birth, death and marriage or singlehood are predestinated of God. So is our salvation. From a reading of Romans and Ephesians we discover that our salvation is entirely of the Lord, for except He had chosen us from before the foundation of the world, we would not be what we are today. If God did not elect us to be saved before the creation of the world, we would not be saved. Now, when He planned to save us, it was entirely “according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph 1:5). Nor did He choose us because He foresaw we would be better than others. This is proved by Paul’s statement on Esau and Jacob (Rom 9:11–13): “(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

Therefore no man can believe in Christ if he had not been predestined, foreordained, pre-chosen by God the Father. Calvin’s motto is, “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jon 2:9). Thus we are saved by grace, through faith, not of works lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8–9). Once saved always saved. But make sure you are truly saved.

NATURE OF GOD’S DECREES

The decrees of God never had a beginning. If His decrees had been arrived at in the process of time and events, He would not have been all-knowing. Thus we are told that our calling in Christ is “according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (i.e., before eternal times)” (2 Tim 1:9). Similarly, Isaiah says, “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand” (Isa 14:24). “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and

from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa 46:9–10).

God’s decrees are unchangeable even unto eternity future. “The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Ps 33:11). God’s purpose in giving us our standing in Christ is “in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:7).

Since God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in all of His perfections, it follows that the greatest good that could be conceived within the finite creation is that He should be glorified. That His love, His goodness, His holiness, and His justice should be infinitely magnified among all His creatures is the highest conceivable goal of all finite events. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism states, “he hath for his own glory foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.” Whatever happens on earth and in history, all things and events will ultimately redound to the glory of God.

GOD’S PURPOSE IN HISTORY

God has always known what He would know when tomorrow becomes yesterday, so from all eternity past, God has been glorified by the fact that the praise of His people will ascend before His throne today and tomorrow. When we glorify Him we do not add to the sum total of His eternal glory, for His eternal glory includes the glory of all events in time, past, present, and future, for the future is just as certain as is the past. All our glorifying of the Lord is eternally and fully included in His decrees.

We should conceive of the glory of God as chronologically and geographically spread over the earth in the process of time, in exactly that missionary programme which God has

decreed from all the ages past. As we preach the Gospel day after day, and week after week; as souls are led to the Lord Jesus Christ; as children grow in the faith and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, God is being glorified among His creatures. This dynamic, moving glory of God through His creation is already in His decrees from before the foundation of the world.

When our Lord Jesus Christ in His high priestly prayer said, “Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5), He referred to the glory of the cross which was now to be accomplished in time, once for all, that glory which was absolutely fixed and certain “before the world was” in the eternal decrees of God.

Peter brings out this thought when he says, “ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, ... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Pet 1:18–20). The atonement of Christ was eternally in the decrees of God, and was accomplished once for all as an historical fact. “Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and, by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23).

PROVIDENCE OF GOD

“God’s works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 11).

God is not only the Creator of all things, but He continuously sustains and rules all His creation. Christ is spoken of as the

One who is “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3). The one “by him all things consist,” or in whom all things have their orderly integration (Col 1:17). Nehemiah states in magnificent phrases God’s preserving and governing all things—“Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee” (Neh 9:6).

Job ascribes the same praise to God. “But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of LORD hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind” (Job 12:7–10).

God not only created but also maintains and sustains this whole world. After His work of creation, He did not go on vacation.

SPECIAL PROVIDENCE AND COMMON GRACE

God’s general providence in sustaining the processes of nature and caring for His non-human creatures is used as an argument for faith in God’s special providence toward His children. “Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?” (Luke 12:24). “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? ... If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” (Matt 6:26, 30).

God's general providence is included in His common grace and is impartially available for all men, "for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth the rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:45). "He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:25–28).

"MY TIMES ARE IN THY HANDS"

God's providence includes complete power to bring to pass His will among the nations of the earth, whether by miracle or by natural causes. "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few ... Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood" (Isa 10:5–7, 15). "He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves" (Ps 66:7). "He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding" (Dan 2:21).

Nebuchadnezzar had to learn “that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan 4:25); and he finally acknowledged, “... him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan 4:34, 35).

The Lord said to Cyrus, “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me” (Isa 45:5). To Sennacherib God said, “Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest” (2 Kgs 19:28). “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Ps 75:6–7). “My times are in thy hand” (Ps 31:15). God rules and overrules the rulers of this world.

GOD IS IN CONTROL EVERY DAY

The providence of God includes the reactions of human minds. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain” (Ps 76:10). “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Ps 119:36). “Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established ... A man’s heart deviseth his way: but LORD directeth his steps” (Prov 16:3, 9). “The king’s heart is in the hand of LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will” (Prov 21:1).

God’s providence through day-to-day activities and in natural events is of such a nature that His servants can give testimony, “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.” “And the

children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us” (1 Sam 7:8-12).

BIBLICAL MIRACLES

The word “miracle” (Latin *miraculum*) literally means a marvellous event or an event which causes wonder. In the Christian context, it is (1) an extraordinary event, inexplicable in terms of ordinary natural forces, (2) an event which causes the observers to postulate a supra-human personal cause, and (3) an event which constitutes evidence (a “sign”) of implications much wider than the event itself.

Most of the miracles of the Bible are found in three main periods of Biblical history. The first period came in the time of the exodus: The time of the exodus was a time of great spiritual depression. The people under Egyptian bondage had forgotten the name of Yahweh their God. The Lord their God graciously delivered them from slavery and brought them into the promised land. During this great period of miracles (e.g., the burning bush, the ten plagues of Egypt, the numerous miracles between the parting of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan, the fall of Jericho, the battle of Gibeon, etc.), the first five books of the Bible (i.e., Torah or Pentateuch) were written. All the miraculous events were

recorded to prove that the God of Israel was the only, living and true God, and there was none like Him.

The first period of miracles was followed by a long period of spiritual declension under the judges, and very few miracles were found during this time. Despite the scarcity of miracles, God did not leave Himself without a witness. There was at least a time of spiritual revival under David and Solomon.

The second period of miracles came at a time of rampant apostasy and idolatry. The names of Yahweh and Baal were hyphenated, and even the good king Jehoshaphat formed an unholy alliance with idolatrous Ahab (1 Kings 21:25-26, 22:1-49). So God sent Elijah and Elisha, and through their prophetic ministry, many miracles were done. By mighty miracles and works of grace, God restored and confirmed His pure worship during the time of His servants, the prophets. During this time, many of the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament were written.

There were very few miracles during the days of the Babylonian captivity, and the return to Jerusalem. By that time, enough revelation had been given for the spiritual life of God's people until the time of the coming of Christ.

The greatest period of miracles in Biblical history occurred in the days of Christ and His apostles. Israel was at its lowest ebb in terms of true spirituality and godliness, for the people during the Roman period, were steeped in self-righteousness and hypocrisy. Although they read the Hebrew Scripture diligently, they did not do so with a heart of faith, but of pride and unbelief (2 Cor 3:13-16). In their religious pride and stubborn unbelief, they crucified the Lord of glory, their Messiah. It was to this kind of dark and cruel world that God sent forth His only begotten and beloved Son.

The Gospels contain nearly 40 demonstrative sign-miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord did many more miracles, but those were selected and recorded by divine inspiration for our instruction and edification. The Apostle John says, “Many other signs [miracles] truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30–31). The whole New Testament was written by the miracle-working Apostles of Jesus Christ (Mark 16:19-20, Acts 2:43).

WHY MIRACLES

The ministry of the apostles began after Christ’s ascension. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled the apostles in a most powerful way so that they were miraculously enabled to speak in different languages and dialects which they had not previously known (Acts 2:1-11). This miracle of tongues-speaking was given to the church until it was properly organised throughout the Roman world with both Jewish and Gentile congregations. There were numerous other demonstrative miracles. As the author of the epistle to the Hebrews puts it, this “great salvation ... at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will” (Heb 2:3–4).

The purpose of miracles is revelation and edification. Not all the miracles of Christ are recorded in the Scriptures, but all that have been recorded are for us to know who the Saviour truly is: “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31). Christ, several times, expressed His purpose in working miracles and He dismissed the mere desire to see the spectacular.

“An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign” (Matt 12:39; cf. Luke 23:8). Nonetheless, the miracles were a powerful witness of who He was, the Son of God Himself, whose words were truth and life. “The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me” (John 5:36). Jesus intimated that it was better to see miracles with a heart of faith than merely to seek free food (John 6:26). Jesus no doubt preferred that man would accept His message for its intrinsic worth, but to believe Him because of His miracles was not wrong. “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him” (John 10:37–38).

MIRACLES TODAY?

The charismatic phenomenon is causing a lot of confusion in the church today. Like the Montanists of old, the charismatics insist that miracles and predictive prophecy must be perpetual gifts. With their “faith healing,” “demon-casting,” and “tongues-speaking,” they zealously convince themselves that demonstrative miracles frequently occur.

On the other hand, competent Christians have published investigations proving that many of the alleged miracles are instances of psychotherapy, or self-deception, or even fraud. Warfield’s *Counterfeit Miracles* is excellent for criticism of alleged miracles in the Church today. Jesus had already warned of false Christs and false prophets who will arise in the last days to perform fake miracles in order to deceive the ignorant, and if possible, the elect (Matt 24:24).

It is clear from Biblical history and Biblical revelation that God does not choose to reveal Himself by demonstrative miracles at all times. On the contrary, there have been long periods of history, even in Biblical times, when God has not

used miracles (except the “miracle of grace”) in His dealings with His people.

Christ pointed out that miracles do not occur with any uniform regularity (Luke 4:25-27). In fact, if miracles were regular occurrences they would cease to be regarded as miracles.

In the New Testament period, the ability to perform miracles was given to a special group of people, namely the Apostles for the purpose of authenticating their God-given message and ministry (Mark 16:16–20, Acts 2:43, 5:12, 2 Cor 12:12). Thus, the sign gifts of miracles, healing, demon-casting, tongues-speaking, prophesying and the like have been withdrawn after the Apostles passed away, and the Holy Scriptures completed.

TONGUES-SPEAKING TODAY?

Paul’s rules for the restriction of the use of foreign languages (1 Cor 14) might be applied by analogy to all miracles. Evidently the miracle of languages which occurred on the Day of Pentecost had been confused in the minds of devout people in Corinth with mere ecstatic, meaningless ejaculations. Paul points out, “Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not” (v 22). And he commands that in Christian assemblies not more than two or, at the most, three, in turn, should be allowed to speak in a foreign language, and “if there be no interpreter, let him [the one who wishes to speak in a ‘tongue’] keep silence in the church” (vv 27-28).

If Paul’s restrictions were literally carried out in the modern church, making sure that the translator is a genuine translator, following known rules of grammar and syntax and vocabulary, the actual miracle of languages as it occurred on the Day of Pentecost would never be interfered with. Rather

it would be the better attested; but the counterfeit “miracle” would be eliminated.

If analogous methods were used in examining reports of alleged miracles, genuine miracles would never be hindered but would be the better attested. At the same time, delusions and exaggerations would be prevented.

History confirms the cessation of tongues. The famous Church father—Augustine—wrote in the fourth century, “In the earliest time the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spake with tongues, which they had not learned, ‘as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, and to shew that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening and it passed away.”

What we need today is not tongues in confusion but tears of confession.

MIRACLES TODAY BUT BEWARE

It is a mistake to say that God cannot, or will not work miracles in our day. God performs miracles today, no more through men, but directly from heaven if He so wills. However, it is a reasonable opinion, not against any clearly attested fact, that God generally ceased to work through sign-miracles or the spectacular gifts of signs and wonders when the New Testament was finished; and that it is His will that the “miracle of grace,” the witness of the Spirit, answered prayer, and supremely, the written Word, shall be the chief sources of knowledge of Himself for His people during this age. It should be clear to all that the most godly, sacrificial, competent ministers, missionaries, and laymen today do not experience demonstrative “sign” miracles.

A healthy mind, full of faith in God’s power and in God’s wisdom, without denying God’s miracle-working ability, expects to learn foreign languages by regular processes of study and hard work. A healthy Christian mind expects to observe the ordinary principles of bodily health and sanitation, using such physical provisions of food, shelter, and medicine as divine providence may make available. In spreading the Gospel we do expect the convicting ministry of the Spirit and the evidence of transformed lives, but we do not expect, unless God should so choose, that the sudden healing of a man born with twisted feet and ankle bones, will gather a crowd to hear us preach the Word. We are prepared to serve the Lord, to experience wonderful answers to prayer, and to find that the Word does not return void, regardless of “signs and wonders.”

Christianity is indeed a “supernatural” faith. But again, beware the counterfeit miracles and miracle-workers (Deut 13:1–3, Matt 7:15–23, 24:24). Indeed, beware!

FROM THE WORLD BOOK TO THE WORD BOOK

We have learned from Romans 1 that the light of natural revelation (i.e., the created world) is insufficient to lead fallen, sinful man back to God. By his wilful ignorance and vain imaginations, man’s foolish heart is darkened. Instead of worshipping the Lord God Almighty, he turns rather to worshipping the things He has created. This is gross idolatry. This is utter abomination in the sight of the Almighty. In order to lead man in the right path, God must specially reveal Himself. He does this by opening His mouth to speak to man. This is the light of special revelation (i.e., the Word of God).

God first spoke to Adam. Though man became separated from Him by sin, God continued to speak through chosen holy men—to Enoch, to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

to Joseph, to Moses, to kings like David and Solomon, and to the sixteen prophets. Whether He spoke to them mouth to mouth as He did with Moses (Num 12:8) or by theophanies and visions as to Abraham (Gen 15:1; 18:1–15), or by dreams as to Joseph (Gen 37:5), or in the ear to Samuel (1 Sam 9:15), they who received these revelations were convinced they came from the Almighty God. They received them in reverential awe.

In order to preserve God’s Word given progressively to man through the ages, God first appointed Moses to write the Pentateuch, the Torah or Law (of Moses). Other holy men like David wrote the Psalms and Solomon the Wisdom Literature. The rest of the Old Testament were penned by four Major Prophets and twelve Minor Prophets. These made up the 39 Books of the Old Testament. These 39 Books of the Old Testament were received not only by the Jews to be God’s Holy Word but also endorsed by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 5:17-19, Luke 24:44).

The 27 Books of the New Testament were written by the Apostles and Apostolic men. They were received at par with the Old Testament Books as declared by the Apostle Paul that the Church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles [New Testament] and prophets [Old Testament], Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph 2:20). The Church’s one Foundation is Jesus Christ and His Word.

INFALLIBLE MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLES

Not only are the writings (2 Tim 3:16) and preachings (1 Thess 2:13) of the Apostles infallible and inerrant, but also their pattern of work. Paul says to the Corinthians, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).

How did the prophets and Apostles write the Holy Scriptures?

1. By receiving directly from the Lord the pattern of the Tabernacle “which was shewed thee in the mount” (Exod 25:40) in the case of Moses.
2. In the case of David, “the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern [of the temple]” (1 Chron 28:19).
3. By writing down first hand that which Moses was bidden by the Lord according to the formula, “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, ...” (Lev 1:2), or “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ...” (Exod 6:10, etc). Moses wrote down as it was said (dictated) to him. The whole Book of Leviticus from beginning to end, as it is clearly stated, was recorded directly from the mouth of the Lord.
4. The Seven Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia (Rev 2-3) were similarly recorded by dictation. For that matter, except for the introductory remarks to the Book of Revelation, the rest of the Book was transmitted to John by Divine audio-visual, a sort of pictorial dictation.
5. So was the scroll Baruch wrote against Israel and Judah dictated by the mouth of Jeremiah the prophet, which Jehoiakim the king cut up with a penknife, and burnt in the fire. But it was restored by Jeremiah dictating a second scroll, “and there were added besides unto them many like words” (Jer 36:32).
6. The early chapters of Genesis on Creation, we believe, were also by direct dictation to Moses, for He spoke to His servant, mouth to mouth (Num 12:8). Logic demands such a conclusion since no man saw the creative processes but God Himself. Should anyone say that Moses used those grotesque, hideous, heathen Babylonian tablets—the Enuma Elish and Adapa Myth—to write Genesis by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it will be illogical, unholy speculation, to say

the least. It is tantamount to extracting oil out of rock, turning stone into bread.

7. Superseding the dictation process, there are the Ten Commandments which God “gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God” (Exod 31:18).

While we have brought out these dictated portions of the Bible to light, hitherto buried by prejudice and ignorance, we recognise there are the epistles of Paul and Peter, which they wrote, each from himself. And there is the Gospel of Luke penned from the accounts of eyewitnesses. Nevertheless, these wrote by the higher hand of God what God would have written Himself. There is the human element and there is the Divine element, but the Divine element so worked in the human element that the finished product was kept from error. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet 1:21).

The finished product is indeed the infallible and inerrant Word of God, verbally and plenary inspired (VPI). “All scripture is given by inspiration of God [God-breathed]” (2 Tim 3:16), and this inspiration extends not only to the ideas behind the words, but the words themselves (Mark 13:31) and to every letter. “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot [the Hebrew letter yod] or one tittle [like the cross of a “t” or the dot of an “i”] shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt 5:18).

HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS GOD’S WORD?

The Bible is an encyclopaedia. It is not only a source book on matters of faith but also a source book on matters of knowledge. The Bible is the one and only storehouse of true

knowledge which Calvin has defined to be the knowledge of God and of man (not of mosquitoes)!

The Bible is Truth unchanging. It requires no new edition (did you realise that?) like secular books, whether they be of art or science, to keep abreast of the times. It is the oldest book, yet ever new.

The Bible contains the greatest statement made on knowledge. Jesus says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). If you have believed the Lord Jesus and know but a tenth of the Bible, you are more enlightened than the unbelieving scientist or educationist. Dr William Lyon Phelps of Yale University has made this observation, "A knowledge of the Bible without a college education is better than a college education without the Bible." What is it that made the distinguished educator say so? It must be due to the fact that he recognised the Bible to be a super Book, a supernatural Book, a Book God has given to man.

How do we know the Bible is God's Word? When we say the Bible is God's Word, we mean not as the New Evangelical scholars say, the Bible is God's Word inerrant when it touches on matters of Faith, but not on matters of science, history, geography and language. This wolf-in-sheep's-clothing teaching is summed up in the damnable doctrine against God's Word called "limited inerrancy." This damnable doctrine we must expose wherever we go. When we say the Bible is the Word of God, we mean what our Lord has categorically stated. The Bible is true and unchanging to the last letter, to the dot of an "i" and the cross of a "t." Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt 5:18).

We know the Bible to be God's Word precisely because the Bible declares it. None of the writers of the Bible ever wrote as secular writers would. Secular writers say things out of their own hearts, out of their own thoughts, and declare them to be their own. None of the writers of the Bible state the words they declare are theirs. Everyone speaks in the Name of God or of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Book points to the Saviour of mankind. The declaration, "Thus saith the LORD [or Lord God]," or "Hear the Word of the LORD" or "The LORD spake ... saying" appears over 3,000 times in the Bible.

The 39 Books of Old Testament were and are received by the Jews to be the very Word of God. This found endorsement in our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus declares His coming is not to destroy or supplant the Old Testament teachings but rather to fulfil them (Matt 5:17–18).

The Books of the New Testament are declared to be on the same footing with the Old when Paul says the faith of the Church is built on the foundation of the Apostles (NT) and the prophets (OT), Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20). Peter, when quoting Paul, puts him at par with the Books of the Old Testament. In 2 Peter 3:15–16, Peter classed Paul's epistles with "the other scriptures," which, of course, refer to the Old Testament. Further, when Paul writes to the churches, in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, he is gratified that the word he gave them was received not as the word of men, "but as it is in truth, the word of God ..." (1 Thess 2:13). Summing up, we see how writers of both the Old Testament and New Testament declare the Divine origin of their writings, without apology, but with authority and authenticity. God is the Author behind every human writer!

“As for us, we take the Bible as it is, at its face value. Whatever the Book represents itself to be we recognise it to be, and we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church” (McIntire). By faith, we take God at His Word for He is Truth and does not lie (Heb 6:18).

The second reason why we say the Bible is God’s Word is its *Unity*. The Bible is made up of 66 Books (excluding the 14 books of the Apocrypha which are finding their way back through Ecumenical machinations). These 66 Books are penned by 40 different writers. Moses wrote the first Five Books, David wrote the Psalms and Solomon the Proverbs, etc. These two were kings. The prophets who wrote after them were from every stratum of society. Some moved in the royal palace, others were herdsmen, nobodies; while the Books in the New Testament were authored by such a scholar as Paul, and by fishermen like Peter. The time span between the first and last writers of the Bible is over 1,500 years. Despite all these differences in personages and time, the Bible is woven together as One Book. No Scripture is penned so that it contradicts another.

The theme the Books of the Bible display is one—God’s eternal and all-complete plan of salvation through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This all-embracing theme came not from the minds of the writers, since they wrote independently and without mutual consultation across the ages. This all-embracing theme can come only from one Supreme Mind, from God alone. If you have not read through the Bible, start reading it now! David says, “O taste and see that the LORD is good” (Ps 34:8), and says again, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Ps 119:103).

The third reason why we say the Bible is God’s Word is *the fulfilment of every prophetic utterance*, and the fulfilling

today before our eyes of those on Israel and world events, leading to the soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to know about future events, go to the Prophetic Scriptures, not the fortune-teller.

The Bible does not predict and generalise on the prediction. There is no need of using equivocal language by an all-knowing God. The Word of God is yea and Amen, infallible and eternal. Every one of the prophecies about our Lord Jesus Christ in His first coming—from His conception in the Virgin, His birth and upbringing to His crucifixion and resurrection—has been fulfilled. These are so well-known that we have no need to refer to the Scripture passages. His coming again in power and great glory, setting foot on the Mount of Olives as He went up before His disciples may occur in our time, according to the prophet Zechariah (14:14).

In conjunction with the prophecies on Christ's Second Coming, which have yet to be fulfilled, there are the prophecies about the Restoration of Israel that must first come to pass, because Christ shall return to the throne of David (Isa 9:7). The restoration of Israel as a nation May 14, 1948 after 2,000 years of Diaspora (exile in foreign lands), and her victory in the four wars she has fought against her enemies, as foretold in Isaiah 11, are most wonderfully fulfilled in our times. The routes taken by the Israelis to knock out their enemies in the Six Day War of 1967 can be traced practically step by step, according to Isaiah 11:14; "But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west" (Israel's capture of the Gaza strip on the Mediterranean coast). "They shall spoil them of the east together" [Syria is referred in the Old Testament as of the east (2 Kgs 13:17)]. "They shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them" (the names of the small countries mentioned here are linked to

Jordanian territory, and from Ammon is derived the modern name Amman, capital of Jordan). All the above territories were either conquered or defeated by Israel in the Six Day War.

God's Word is fulfilled and will be fulfilled as the present day drama of nations is acted on the stage of history. There is a tendency by prophetic teachers to set dates or gauge the year of Christ's coming. All of these have failed and failed miserably.

Why? Because the Prophetic Word of God not only fixes the place and time of fulfilment, but also forbids any intrusion into the sanctity of His secret knowledge. Jesus says, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). So if prophecies seem not to be fulfilled, they are not fulfilled due to erroneous human interpretations, and not due to the prophecy itself. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Pet 1:24–25). The Bible is God's Holy Word. Do not speak too loudly. "Be still," the Bible says, "and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10).

Beware of the many false prophets of today. How to test the so-called "prophets"? The credibility of any prophet is the fulfilment of his prediction. Moses says, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut 18:22).

At a certain charismatic meeting, an American preacher who claimed to be a faith-healer gripped the audience by announcing his special communications from God. "You

don't tell me what your sickness is," he thundered, "God will tell me, and I'll tell you." But as he went on, he did not fulfil what he had boasted. He began to drawl as he pointed to a group of 30 ladies sitting in the front, "God tells me one of you is suffering from diabetes!" Surely this is the trickery of a charlatan and a psychologist. He was a false prophet, for what he predicted he could not bring to pass. Do not be afraid of him.

Now let us come to our fourth and last reason, though not the least. Every reason given to show the Bible is God's Word is as important as the others. This fourth and last reason is *the absolute accuracy and fidelity of the moral teachings of God's Word.*

The Bible has plenty to say on family life. It records the lives of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now, because Abraham had Hagar and Keturah as concubines and Jacob had four wives, the Mormons tried to justify polygamy, and even practise it. To ensure that the records of the patriarchs' polygamous marriages are not a preceptive example, but rather a warning, we must compare with the teaching of other Bible passages. Malachi 2:14–16 rebukes the Jews for marrying more than one wife. It challenges them for an answer why God had created one Eve and not two. Sarcastically, was it because He had no more strength to make another woman? No! But that He might have a godly people.

Let us take another case for study. It is so often quoted, or rather misquoted, "money is the root of all evil." If that is the case, how then did God prosper His children with riches and declare the riches to be His blessings? Genesis 26:12–14 records, "Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, ... For he had possession of flocks, and

possession of herds.” Money, riches, possessions are not evil of themselves. What Paul writes to Timothy is, “The love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim 6:10). How true! A Christian who is blessed with a good job or business that prospers him is blessed indeed. A Christian who becomes covetous, who loves money more than God, soon falls “into temptation and a snare” (1 Tim 6:9). How it shames the Lord and the Church to read of Christian professional men booked and hooked by the law for one extra, unlawful, morsel of bread. It is not money that entangles them, but the love of money in their covetous hearts.

God’s Word is inerrant not only in the form of the letters but even more in the content of their meaning. To test my students, I [Timothy Tow] pretended to say, Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind ... and Thou shalt love thy neighbour more than thyself.” A good many were taken in, but these were soon enlightened by the original statement that is not “more than thyself” but “as thyself.” Is not God fair to all? Paul says, if we love our wives as ourselves that will be good enough. There is no undue stress of spirituality, and no superhuman demand over sinning humans in God’s Word. I hope this study of Christian ethics, so holy and so equitable, will make you treasure God’s Word as inerrantly sublime in its teachings. McIntire has rightly said, “God is honoured when we honour His Word; God is exalted when we trust in His promises.”

Alas! After all that has been said, after all these objective truths are presented to you, after all the logical arguments have been discharged in a most logical fashion, if you are not a Christian, you will not fully understand. Are you a born again Christian? If not, you would not understand what I have said to show the Bible is God’s Word. Jesus says, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of

God” (John 3:3). Except you have been born by the working of the Holy Spirit in your heart, you will not treasure and love the Bible as a Christian would, much less understand. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Do you want the Spirit of God to help you understand His wonderful Word? Repent of your sins and believe the Gospel. Trust in the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, for by His death on the cross for your sins and His resurrection from the dead, He is able to cleanse you and forgive you of all your sins, and give you new life, life everlasting. Then a spontaneous, illuminating answer to the question, “How do we know the Bible is God’s Word?” will come to your heart.

“No fundamentalist needs to apologize for the Bible or to be ashamed of anything in it. It has stood the test of the centuries. It is God’s Holy and Infallible Word” (McIntire).

VERBAL PLENARY INSPIRATION

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God (*theopneustos*)” (2 Tim 3:16a). The Bible is a God-breathed Book, written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As the verbally and plenary inspired Word of God—inspired as a whole as well as in its parts, even to the jot and tittle (Matt 5:18)—it is all-sufficient and all-authoritative, “and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16b–17).

Unless the Holy Spirit authenticates the Holy Book in our hearts, we will not bow to its authority. Calvin says, “The authority of Scripture is to be established rather by the testimony of the Holy Spirit. For as God alone is a sufficient

witness of Himself in His own Word, so the Scripture will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till they be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit. It is necessary therefore, that the same Spirit, who spoke by the mouths of the prophets, should penetrate our hearts, to convince us that they faithfully delivered the oracles which were divinely entrusted to them. And this connection is suitably expressed in these words, “My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed ... for ever” (Isa 59:21).

“It is an undeniable truth, that they, who have been inwardly taught of the Spirit, feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture, and that it is self-authenticated, carrying with it its own evidence. The authority of the Scripture is therefore not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason. Only those illuminated by Him can believe in the divine original of the Scripture.

“This, that I have spoken, is what every believer experiences in his heart. That alone is true faith, which the Spirit of God seals in our hearts, even as Isaiah predicts, that, “all [the] children” of the renovated Church ‘shall be taught of the LORD’ (Isa 54:13). This faith, which the Holy Spirit sends in our hearts, God deigns to confer only on His elect, and not on the rest of men. It is, therefore, not surprising that we see so much ignorance and stupidity among the vulgar herd of mankind.” Without the Holy Spirit, we will never believe the Bible.

The Holy Spirit confirms in our hearts that the Holy Book is God’s Word to us that we should submit to its commands. As for Dr John Sung, this is what he testifies after his conversion and enforced confinement in a Mental Hospital in the United States: “The first lesson I’ve learned is how to

become an obedient servant. God has thoroughly moulded my character and temperament. The day of my complete capitulation and surrender to Him was the day of my graduation from God's Seminary!

"The second lesson was my understanding of Holy Scripture. So I have declared the Mental Hospital my Seminary from which I have graduated. The Holy Spirit was my Teacher, teaching me the deep things of Truth. The day of my leaving the Hospital was the day I received my diploma.

"The Bible was my textbook. ... The Bible comprises 1189 chapters. By the Lord's instruction, I've derived 40 methods of study, reading the Bible 40 times. Of course I did not read the Bible crudely word by word. When I read the Bible I was so carried away by it that I kept on and on, like enjoying a delicious meal.

"The Bible is the inspired Word of God, written by the moving of the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore, the Bible reader, unless it is revealed to him by God at the instruction of the Holy Spirit, how can he understand it? I thank God that He has shown me the mysteries of the Bible. I know that every chapter, every verse, every word has something good for my spiritual life."

The exposition of Calvin and the testimony of John Sung on the Bible should find a ready amen-echo from our hearts. The Holy Spirit has authenticated the Holy Book, that we should bow to its every dictate.

THE BIBLE IS ABOVE THE CHURCH NOT VICE VERSA

It is therefore unmitigated insolence for the Roman Catholic Church to claim that "the Scriptures have only so much weight as is conceded to them by the suffrages of the Church." They pretend to decide what Books of the Bible have come

down to us from God, which are to be comprised in the canon. This is sheer arrogance, tantamount to an extortion from the ignorant. Such a claim, subjecting the authority of God's Word to the judgement of men is contempt of the Holy Spirit.

The Church does not take precedence over the Scripture, but the Scripture the Church. One word from the Apostle suffices to prove this. Paul testifies that the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph 2:20). If the doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles be the foundation of the Church, it supports the Church and not the Church the doctrine. The Scripture existed before the Church, so it is absurd to say the Church is the power that determines the Scripture's authority. Which comes first, the hen or the egg?

This rather is the truth of the relationship between the Church and the Scripture: when the Church receives the Scripture, and seals it with her suffrage, she does not authenticate a thing otherwise dubious or controvertible. Knowing it to be the truth of her God, she performs a duty of piety. But if it is asked, "How shall we know it is God's Word unless we have the Church to tell us?" This is just like asking, "How shall we distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter?" The Scripture exhibits the truth clearly, as white is distinguished from black, as sweet is distinguished from bitter. With the anointing of the Holy Spirit (1 John 1:20–27), we re-affirm with the Westminster Confession of Faith the sixty-six books of the Protestant Bible to be the infallible and inerrant Word of God, to be our rule of faith and life.

"The fortress that has to be held, if there is to be Christianity and Protestantism, is the Bible" (McIntire). "If the

foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Ps 11:3).

VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION

The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) states very clearly that the verbally and plenary inspired (VPI) Scriptures in the original languages are by God’s “singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages” (1:8). The Westminster divines used Matthew 5:18 as a proof text for this affirmation of the verbal and plenary preservation (VPP) of the Holy Scriptures. This proves that the doctrine of the VPP of Scripture is not just creedal, but more importantly Biblical.

The VPP of Scripture is a position of faith that is based solely on the Word of God. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). It is a position that we must take if we are to weather and survive the onslaughts of postmodernism, pop-modernism, open-theism and neo-deism that seek to destroy the church today.

What does VPP mean? “Verbal” means “every word to the jot and tittle” (Ps 12:6–7, Matt 5:18). “Plenary” means “the Scripture as a whole with all the words intact” (Matt 24:35, 1 Pet 1:25). So VPP means the whole of Scripture with all its words even to the jot and tittle is perfectly preserved by God without any loss of the original words, prophecies, promises, commandments, doctrines, and truths, not only in the words of salvation, but also the words of history, geography and science. Every book, every chapter, every verse, every word,

every syllable, every letter is infallibly preserved by the Lord Himself to the last iota.

VPP was affirmed by the Helvetic Consensus Formula (1675): “God, the supreme Judge, not only took care to have His Word, which is the ‘power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth’ (Rom 1:16), committed to writing by Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, but has also watched and cherished it with paternal care ever since it was written up to the present time, so that it could not be corrupted by craft of Satan or fraud of man. Therefore, the church justly ascribes it to His singular grace and goodness that she has, and will have to the end of the world, a ‘sure word of prophecy’ (2 Pet 1:19) and ‘holy Scriptures’ (2 Tim 3:15), from which, though heaven and earth perish, ‘one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass’ (Matt 5:18).”

The doctrine of VPP is taught in the following biblical passages:

Psalm 12:6–7—“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. *Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.*”

Psalm 33:11—“*The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*”

Psalm 78:1–7—“Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he

commanded our fathers, that they should *make them known to their children*: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and *declare them to their children*: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.”

Psalm 100:5—“For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and *his truth endureth to all generations.*”

Psalm 105:8—“He hath remembered his covenant *for ever*, the word which he commanded *to a thousand generations.*”

Psalm 111:7–8—“The works of his hands are verity and judgement; *all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever*, and are done in truth and uprightness.”

Psalm 117:2—“For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and *the truth of the LORD endureth for ever*. Praise ye the LORD.”

Psalm 119:89—“*For ever*, O LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.*”

Psalm 119:152—“Concerning *thy testimonies*, I have known of old that thou hast *founded them for ever.*”

Psalm 119:160—“Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of *thy righteous judgements endureth for ever.*”

Isaiah 40:8—“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but *the word of our God shall stand for ever.*”

Isaiah 59:21—“As for me, this is *my covenant* with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and *my words* which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth,

INSPIRATION AND PRESERVATION OF SCRIPTURE : FOUR VIEWS

	MODERNISM	NEO-EVANGELICALISM	NEO-FUNDAMENTALISM	FUNDAMENTALISM
BIBLICAL INSPIRATION	No inspiration	Partial inspiration	Total inspiration	Total inspiration
BIBLICAL PRESERVATION	No preservation	Partial preservation	Partial preservation	Total preservation
BIBLICAL INFALLIBILITY AND INERRANCY	Denies both infallibility and inerrancy in autographs and apographs.	Affirms infallibility but denies inerrancy in the autographs and apographs.	Affirms total infallibility and inerrancy but in the autographs only.	Affirms total infallibility and inerrancy in both the autographs and apographs.
AUTHORITY AND EPISTEMOLOGY	Science alone. Intellect, not Faith, is supreme. See to believe.	Science plus Bible. Faith subjected more to Intellect than to the Bible. See to believe.	Science plus Bible. Faith subjected more to Intellect than to the Bible. See to believe.	Bible alone (<i>Sola Scriptura</i>). Faith and Intellect totally subjected to the Bible. Believe to see.
TEXTUAL CRITICISM	Yes to Westcott and Hort	Yes to Westcott and Hort	Yes to Westcott and Hort	No to Westcott and Hort
ORIGINAL GREEK TEXT	Minority and Critical Text only	Minority and Critical Text only	Minority and Critical Text mainly	Majority Text and Textus Receptus only
ENGLISH BIBLE VERSIONS	Only modern versions acceptable	Only modern versions acceptable	All versions acceptable	Only KJV acceptable

nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, *from henceforth and for ever.*"

Matthew 4:4—"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*"

Matthew 5:17–18—"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, *one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass* from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Matthew 24:35—"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but *my words shall not pass away.*"

John 10:35—"If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and *the scripture cannot be broken.*"

1 Peter 1:23–25—"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of *incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But *the word of the Lord endureth for ever.* And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Is not VPP a biblical doctrine? Surely it is! Every believer— young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, unlearned or educated, Jew or Greek—by *simple, childlike faith* in God's forever infallible and inerrant words—can say "Amen" to the truth that God has indeed preserved His inspired words, and every one of them to the last iota!

What and where are the preserved words of God today? They are the inspired Old Testament Hebrew words and

New Testament Greek words the prophets, the apostles, the church fathers, the reformers used which are today found in the long and continuously abiding and preserved words underlying the Reformation Bibles best represented by the time-tested and time-honoured King James Bible, and NOT in the corrupted Alexandrian manuscripts and critical Westcott-Hort texts underlying the liberal, ecumenical, and neo-evangelical modern English versions.

PRESERVATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WORDS

The Word of God is forever infallible and inerrant. The Church today has a 100% Perfect Bible without any mistake because God promised to preserve His inspired words to the last jot and tittle (Matt 5:18). Thus, (1) the inspired Scriptures were never lost but *always preserved* without any corruption or missing words; (2) the Sacred Scriptures are *always infallible and inerrant, and supremely authoritative not only in times past, but also today—Sola Scriptura!*

The Old Testament Scriptures were first given to Israel—God’s chosen nation. Romans 3:1–2 tells us that God had committed to the Jews the safekeeping and copying of the Holy Scriptures. Knowing well the divine nature of the Scriptures, that the words of the sacred pages were the very words of the Almighty God, they copied the Scriptures with great precision and accuracy employing very strict rules. H S Miller in his book—*General Biblical Introduction*—gave examples of these scribal rules: (1) “No word or letter could be written from memory; the scribe must have an authentic copy before him, and he must read and pronounce aloud each word before writing it.” (2) “The revision of a roll must be made within 30 days after the work was finished; otherwise it was worthless. One mistake on a sheet condemned the sheet; if three mistakes were found on any page, the entire manuscript was condemned.” (3) “Every word and every letter was counted, and if a letter were omitted, an extra letter

inserted, or if one letter touched another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed at once.”

These very strict rules of transcription show how precious the Jews had regarded the inspired words of God, and how precise their copying of these inspired words must have been. Such strict practices in copying “give us strong encouragement to believe that we have the real Old Testament, *the same one* which our Lord had and which was originally given by inspiration of God” (Miller).

The words of the Scriptures are important (Deut 8:3, Matt 4:4, Luke 4:4). God uses His words to communicate His Truth so that we might know who and what He is and how we might be saved through Him. The Bible clearly tells us that it is God’s written words (*pasa graphe*—“All Scripture”) that are inspired (2 Tim 3:16), and from these inspired words come all the doctrines that are sufficient and profitable for the spiritual growth and maturity of the believer (2 Tim 3:17). The Bible also clearly says that God Himself will preserve all His inspired words to the jot and tittle without the loss of any word, syllable or letter (Ps 12:6–7, Matt 5:18, 24:35).

Now if we have the inspired, infallible and inerrant words of God today preserved in the traditional and Reformation Scriptures, then how do we explain the differences or discrepancies found in the Bible especially those found in 1 Samuel 13:1, 2 Chronicles 22:2, and many other places. Can these be due to “scribal errors” or lost words?

Since God has preserved His inspired words to the last iota and no words are lost but all kept pure and intact in the original language Scriptures, we must categorically deny that our Bible contains any mistake or error (scribal or otherwise). But it is troubling that certain evangelicals and fundamentalists would rather choose to deny the

present infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures by considering the “discrepancies” found in 1 Samuel 13:1 and 2 Chronicles 22:2 and other like passages to be actual instead of *apparent* discrepancies, and calling them “scribal errors.”

A denial of the verbal preservation of the Scriptures will invariably lead one to believe that some words of God have been lost and remain lost leading to a “scribal error” view of the Old Testament Scriptures. For instance, in the book *One Bible Only?*, W Edward Glenny denied that God has perfectly preserved His Word so that no words have been lost. He says, “The evidence from the Old Testament text suggests that such is not the case. *We might have lost a few words ...*”.

Based on his “lost words” view of the Bible, he was quick to point out “obvious discrepancies” in the Old Testament like 2 Chronicles 22:2. He wrote, “In 1 Chronicles 8:26 [sic], the KJV states that Ahaziah was twenty-two when he began to reign; the parallel in 2 Chronicles 22:2 says that he began to reign at the age of forty-two. ... These *obvious discrepancies* in the KJV and the Hebrew manuscripts on which it is based show that *none of them perfectly preserved the inspired autographa.*”

Now, know that 2 Chronicles 22:2 reads “forty-two” in the KJV. A number of the modern versions like the NASV, NIV, and ESV read “twenty-two” instead. So which is the original, inspired reading: “forty-two” (in KJV), or “twenty-two” (in NASV, NIV, and ESV)? In making such a textual decision, we must have a perfect standard, and that infallible and inerrant standard is the inspired and preserved Hebrew Scripture, and not any translation ancient or modern.

It is significant to note that every single Hebrew manuscript reads “forty-two” (*arebba'im wushetha'im*) in 2 Chronicles 22:2. There is no evidence of lost words—every word to

the letter is preserved, and reads precisely as “forty-two” as accurately translated in the KJV. If every Hebrew manuscript reads “forty-two” in 2 Chronicles 22:2, then on what basis do the NASV, NIV, and ESV change it to “twenty-two”? They change “forty-two” to “twenty-two” on the basis of the Septuagint (LXX) which is a Greek version of the Hebrew Scripture just like the NIV is an English version of it. In other words, they use a version or translation to correct the original Hebrew text! Should not it be the other way round?

Why do they do this? They do this because of their fallacious assumption that (1) God did not preserve His words infallibly, (2) lost words exist in the Hebrew text, and (3) 2 Chronicles 22:2 is an “obvious” discrepancy (cf. 2 Kgs 8:26). Thus, Glennly and all such non-preservationists are quick to use a fallible translation (e.g. LXX) to correct the infallible Hebrew Text! This is no different from someone using the NIV today to correct any part of the Hebrew Text according to his whim and fancy! But Glennly calls it “conjectural emendation” which sounds scholarly but it is pure guesswork. Can a translation be more inspired than or superior to the original language text? Can a translation or version (whatever the language) be used to correct the Hebrew? Glennly’s method of explaining such “obvious discrepancies” in the Bible is troubling for it displays (1) a sceptical attitude towards the numerical integrity of God’s Word, (2) a critical readiness to deny the present inerrancy of Scripture in historical details, and (3) a lackadaisical approach towards solving difficulties in the Bible by conveniently dismissing such difficulties as “scribal errors.”

A godly approach is one that presupposes the present infallibility and inerrancy of God’s Word not only when it speaks on salvation, but also when it speaks on history, geography or science. *“Let God be true, but every man a liar”* (Rom 3:4). A godly approach to difficult passages

seeks to compare (not correct) Scripture with Scripture. By comparing Scripture with Scripture, there are two possible solutions to the so-called “problem” or “error” in 2 Chronicles 22:2. The age of “forty-two” could be either (1) Ahaziah’s years counted from the beginning of the dynasty founded by Omri, or (2) the year in which Ahaziah was actually seated as king though anointed as one at “twenty-two” (2 Kgs 8:26). Whatever the answer may be, the truth and fact is: the inspired and preserved Hebrew reading in 2 Chronicles 22:2 is “forty-two” and not “twenty-two,” and no man has the right to change or correct God’s Word by “conjectural emendation,” taking heed to the serious warning not to add to or subtract from the Holy Scriptures (Rev 22:18–19).

Now, let us look at the next text which is 1 Samuel 13:1 which the KJV translates as, “Saul reigned one year.” But the other versions read quite differently. The NASV has, “Saul was *forty* years old when he began to reign;” the NIV has, “Saul was *thirty* years old when he became king;” and the RSV and ESV have, “Saul was ... years old when he began to reign.” Which of the above is correct? The only way whereby we can ascertain the correct reading is to go to the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible since day one reads *Ben-shanah Shaoul*, literally, “A son of a year (was) Saul,” or idiomatically, “Saul was a year old.”

Now, the difficulty is: How could Saul be only a year old when he began to reign? Scholars and translators who do not believe in the jot-and-tittle preservation of Scripture say that this is an actual discrepancy in the Hebrew Text which they attribute to a “scribal error.” This is why Michael Harding in a mistitled book—*God’s Word in Our Hands*—wrote, “[I]n 1 Samuel 13:1–2 the Masoretic Text states that Saul was one year of age (*ben-shanah*—literally “son of a year”) ... Some ancient Greek manuscripts ... read “thirty years” instead of “one year,” ... On account of my theological conviction

regarding the inerrancy of the *autographa*, I believe the original Hebrew text also reads “thirty,” even though *we do not currently possess a Hebrew manuscript with that reading.*”

Harding and those like him fail to apply the logic of faith to the promise of God that He will preserve and has preserved every iota of His inspired words. This leads them to conclude that a word is lost and 1 Samuel 13:1 contains a “scribal error” even when there is no such error to begin with. They change the text when the text needs no changing. They replace divine words with human words. Instead of attributing error to the translation (NASV, NIV, RSV, ESV), they rather fault the inspired and preserved Hebrew Text and treat it as an actual discrepancy even when there is absolutely none. This undermines the integrity of God’s Word: Do we really have God’s infallible and inerrant Word in our hands? Many are indeed stumbled by such allegations of error in the Bible, and are questioning whether they can really trust the Scriptures at all if there is no such thing as a complete and perfect Word of God today.

It must be categorically stated that there is no error at all in the Hebrew Text and no mistake also in the KJV which translated 1 Samuel 13:1 accurately. So how do we explain 1 Samuel 13:1? A faithful explanation is offered by Matthew Poole who wrote, “[Saul] had now reigned one year, from his first election at Mizpeh, in which time these things were done, which are recorded in chap. xi., xii., to wit, peaceably, or righteously. Compare 2 Sam. ii.10.”

In other words, the year of Saul was calculated not from the time of his birth but from his *appointment as king*; “Saul was a year old *into his reign.*” This meaning is supported by the Geneva Bible which reads, “*Saul now had beene King one yeere.*” Rest assured, there is no mistake in the Hebrew Text

and in the KJV here. God has indeed inspired and preserved His Old Testament words perfectly so that we might have an infallible, inerrant Old Testament Bible in our hands today.

The Biblical doctrine of the jot-and-tittle preservation of the Holy Scriptures affirms a 100% infallible and inerrant Bible *today!* The Written Foundation of our Judeo-Christian Faith is sure and secure for “the Word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isa 40:8). Amen!

PRESERVATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WORDS

In the light of God’s supernatural and continuous preservation of His inspired words in the original languages (Ps 12:6–7, Matt 5:18, John 10:35, 1 Pet 1:23–25), we identify the Traditional, Majority and Received Text (Textus Receptus) to be the VPP Text, and not the recent corrupt, scissored and mutilated text of Westcott and Hort (1881), represented today by the modern Critical Text underlying the modern versions.

The VPP Text is the Textus Receptus (TR) underlying the King James Bible. All the editions of the TR descend from the pure stream of the divinely preserved Traditional or Majority Text. But which edition is the purest? We believe it is the TR underlying the KJV. Edward F Hills (ThD, Harvard) takes the same view concerning the KJV and TR. Hear Dr Hills himself, “The texts of the several editions of the Textus Receptus were God-guided. They were set up under the leading of God’s special providence. Hence the differences between them were kept down to a minimum. ... But what do we do in these few places in which the several editions of the Textus Receptus disagree with one another? Which text do we follow? The answer to this question is easy. We are guided by the common faith. Hence we favor that form of the Textus Receptus upon which more than any other God, working providentially, has placed the stamp of His approval,

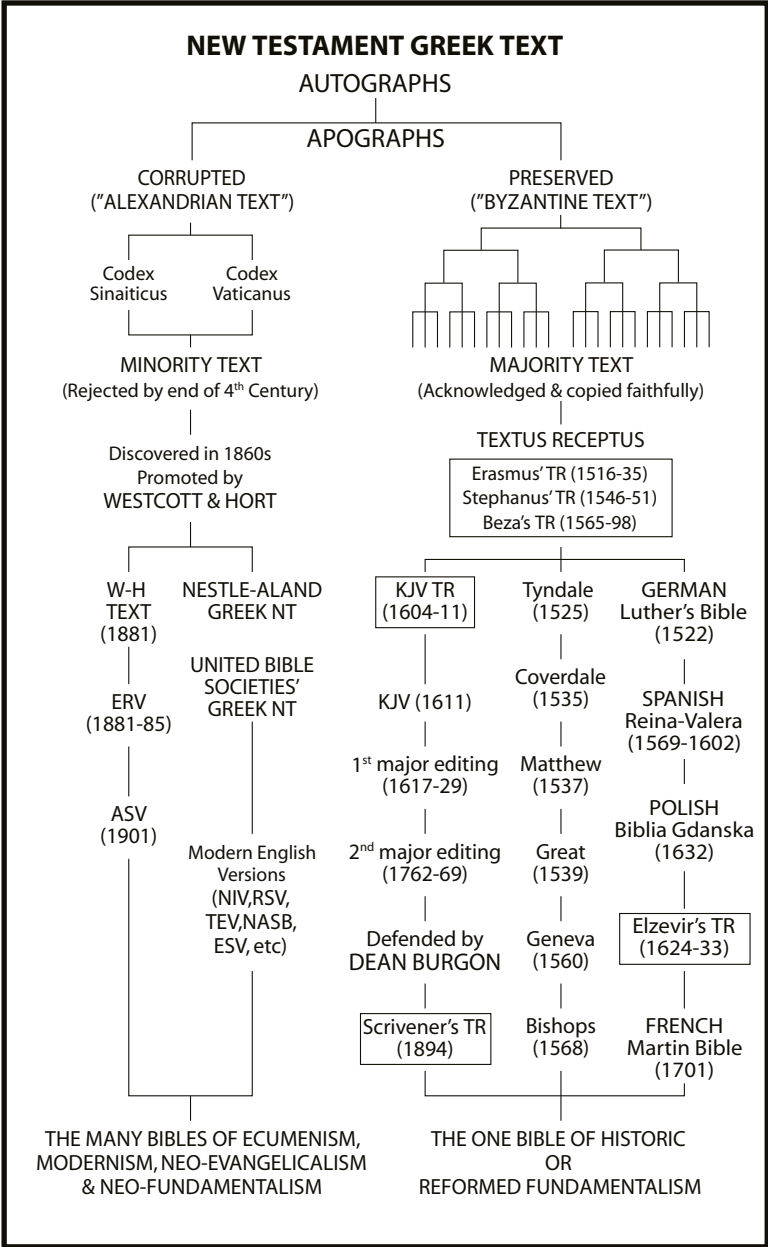
namely, the King James Version, or more precisely, the Greek text underlying the King James Version.”

Like Dr Hills, we believe that all the TR editions are pure, but there is one that is purest—the one underlying the KJV. Dr Hills said that the King James Version “ought to be regarded not merely as a translation of the Textus Receptus but also as an independent variety of the Textus Receptus.” Is not the Greek Text underlying the KJV the Textus Receptus? Whose TR? Not completely Erasmus’s, Stephen’s, or Beza’s, it is a new edition of the TR which reflects the textual decisions of the KJV translators as they prayerfully studied and compared the preserved manuscripts. According to the Trinitarian Bible Society, “The editions of Beza, particularly that of 1598, and the two last editions of Stephens, were the chief sources used for the English Authorised Version of 1611. ... The present edition of the Textus Receptus underlying the English Authorised Version of 1611 follows the text of Beza’s 1598 edition as the primary authority, and corresponds with ‘The New Testament in the Original Greek according to the text followed in the Authorised Version,’ edited by F H A Scrivener.”

It ought to be noted that God’s providential preservation of His Scripture is not static but dynamic. The deistic heresy that God inspired His Word but did nothing to preserve it must be rejected. Dr Timothy Tow rightly said, “If Deism teaches a Creator who goes to sleep after creating the world is absurd, to hold to the doctrine of inspiration without preservation is equally illogical ... inspiration and preservation are linked one to another. Without preservation, all the inspiration, God-breathing into the Scriptures, would be lost. But we have a Bible so pure and powerful in every word and it is so because God has preserved it down through the ages.”

God had providentially guided the KJV translators to produce the purest TR of all. The earlier editions were individual efforts, but the TR underlying the KJV is a corporate effort of 57 of the most outstanding biblical-theological, and more importantly, Bible-believing scholars of their day. And as the Scripture says, “in a multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Prov 11:14). The KJV translators had all the various editions of the TR to refer to, and they made their decisions with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Lord providentially guided the King James translators to make the right textual decisions. As such, there is no need to improve on the TR underlying the KJV. No one should play textual critic, and be a judge of God’s Word today. God is His own Textual Critic. God’s special providential work in history during the great 16th Century Protestant Reformation is seen in the publication and widespread use of the Textus Receptus.

Now the question remains: Why the TR underlying the KJV and not Luther’s German Bible, or the Spanish Reina Valera, or the Polish Biblia Gdanska, or the French Martin Bible, or some other language Bible? Now we do not deny there are faithful and reliable versions that are accurately translated and based on the TR, nor do we discount the need for foreign language Bibles, but here is Dr Hills’s reply to the question: “God in His providence has abundantly justified this confidence of the King James translators. The course of history has made English a world-wide language which is now the native tongue of at least 300 million people and the second language of many millions more. For this reason the King James Version is known the world over and is more widely read than any other translation of the holy Scriptures. Not only so, but the King James Version has been used by many missionaries as a basis and guide for their own translation work and in this way has extended its influence even to converts who know no English. For [almost 400] years therefore the reverent diction of the King James



Version has been used by the Holy Spirit to bring the Word of life to millions upon millions of perishing souls. Surely this is a God-guided translation on which God, working providentially, has placed the stamp of His approval.” This is in keeping with Jesus’ words, “Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit ... Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt 7:17–20).

Some may say that this belief on biblical preservation is a result of “circular reasoning.” Indeed it is. On what basis does the Church believe in Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI)? Is it not on the testimony of the Bible itself (2 Tim 3:16, Matt 5:18)? “God says it, I believe it, that settles it.” Circular reasoning or *a priori* reasoning is not illegitimate. It is fallacious only when the premise to begin with is false. If I reason, “I am perfect because I say I am,” it is fallacious because the presupposition is utterly untrue (Rom 3:4–23). If God says of Himself, “I am perfect because I say I am,” that is absolutely true. Why do we believe God has preserved His Word and words perfectly? It is simply because God has promised to do just that in the Scriptures cited above. We simply take God at His Word because God cannot lie (Num 23:19).

Do we know everything that went on in the transmission of the text? No, we do not. But God knows; He knows everything and we believe He knows what He is doing. For instance, we were not there when God created the world. We did not see His work with our own eyes. When “Science” so-called contradicts what the Bible says concerning origins, who are we going to believe? Science or the Bible? We believe the Bible. Hebrews 11:3 says, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Faithfulness to God and His Word demands that a Christian believe in a perfect God who has given His

Church a perfect Bible. Biblical epistemology is not “seeing is believing,” but “believing is seeing.”

Is there a historical precedent that tells us that God’s providential work can involve a closure, a terminus? The answer is yes. All the inspired New Testament books were completed by AD 100 when the Apostle John wrote the last book of Revelation, and God warned against adding to or subtracting from His Word in Revelation 22:18–19. However, we know that in the first few centuries, there were uninspired men who penned spurious gospels and epistles, and passed them off as Scripture. Some of these were the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the Epistle of Barnabas, etc. Nevertheless, none of the inspired books of Scripture have been lost or obscured in the canonical process. By the providential guidance of the Holy Spirit, God’s people were led to identify the 27 books to become our New Testament Canon, no more, no less. There was a terminus to the canonisation of Scripture at the Council of Carthage in AD 397.

In like manner, the Lord allowed copyist errors and corruptions to enter into the transmission process through the pen of fallible and heretical scribes. Nevertheless, His special providential hand kept His inspired words of Scripture from being lost. In light of God’s special providence, that nothing happens by chance, and that history is under His sovereign control, we see that in the fulness of time—in the most opportune time of the Reformation when the true church separated from the false, when the study of the original languages was emphasised, and the printing press invented (which meant that no longer would there be any need to handcopy the Scriptures thereby ensuring a uniform text)—God restored from out of a pure stream of preserved Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, the purest Hebrew and

Greek Text of all—the Text that underlies our KJV—that accurately reflects the original Scriptures.

That the providential preservation of Scripture sees its historical parallel in the providential canonisation of Scripture was Dean Burgon’s thinking as well. Dr Hills wrote of Burgon: “Burgon ... never lost sight of the special providence of God which has presided over the transmission of the New Testament down through the ages, expressly set out to maintain against all opponents that the Church was divinely guided to reject the false readings of the early centuries, and to gradually accept the true text. He denied that he was claiming a perpetual miracle that would keep manuscripts from being depraved at various times, and in various places. But ‘The Church in her collective capacity, has nevertheless—as a matter of fact—been perpetually purging herself of those shamefully depraved copies which once everywhere abounded within her pale’ (*The Revision Revised*, 334-5). He believed that just as God gradually settled the Canon of the New Testament by weaning His churches from noncanonical books, so He did with the Text also.”

SOLA AUTOGRAPHIA OR SOLA APOGRAPHIA?

What is the use of having a Bible that was only perfect in the past, but no longer perfect today? Only the autographs (the original God-breathed scripts penned by the very hand of the inspired Apostles and Prophets) may claim infallibility and inerrancy but not the apographs (the copies of the autographs), so it is popularly taught. This section intends to answer the question: Is the view that the Church no longer has the infallible and inerrant autographs but only fallible and errant apographs a tenable view?

The *Sola Autographa* view of infallibility and inerrancy is generally held today by so-called evangelicals and fundamentalists. The Evangelical Theological Society (ETS)

deny the total and present inerrancy of Scriptures albeit in varying degrees. The controversy over Open Theism in the ETS is a case in point. The ETS definition of inerrancy is so loose that it allows for all kinds of interpretations with regard to what inerrancy means. This is due to the ETS belief that inerrancy lies only in the autographs, “The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.” The consensus among evangelical scholars is that the autographs are no longer in existence. As such, an individual who believes that the Bible contains mistakes may subscribe to such a statement because it can be said, “I only believe the Scriptures to be inerrant as originally given; I do not believe that they are inerrant today since we no longer have the autographs, the Scriptures as originally given.” It goes without saying that the theological confusion found in evangelical (or neo-evangelical) Christianity today finds its root-cause in such a denial of Biblical inerrancy in the apographs.

Regrettably, the *Sola Autographa* view of inerrancy is also held by fundamentalist Bible colleges and seminaries. Two recent books—*From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man* and *One Bible Only?*—authored by men from Bob Jones University and Central Baptist Theological Seminary (Plymouth) respectively championed such a position. Apart from the pro-Westcott/Hort and pro-modern versions stance that they have taken, they also contend that the Scriptures though verbally and plenary inspired in the autographs are not verbally and plenary preserved in the apographs. It is their assumption, that since God did not choose to preserve His inspired words perfectly, there can be no such thing as a perfect Scripture today. Or if there exists a perfect Scripture, there is no sure certainty of where it truly is.

The denial of the supernatural jot-and-tittle preservation of the Holy Scriptures has caused great confusion and

hindrance to the evangelistic-fundamentalist cause worldwide. There is a need today to reaffirm the present infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures in the divinely preserved apographs of God's Word.

According to the Chamber's Dictionary, the word "infallibility" means "incapable of error," and the word "inerrancy" means "freedom from error." As such, "infallibility" may be deemed a stronger term for the perfection of Scripture than the term "inerrancy." If the Bible by nature is incapable of error, it goes without saying that it must also be totally free from error. We shall use the terms "infallibility" and "inerrancy" in their pure dictionary sense.

The Scripture when it speaks of its inspiration and preservation and consequent infallibility and inerrancy speaks of them in terms of its apographs. For instance, when Jesus spoke of the jot-and-tittle infallibility (or verbal inerrancy) of the Scriptures in Matthew 5:18, He was referring to the Scriptures that He had in His hands, which were the apographs of the Old Testament Scripture, and not the autographs which had since disappeared. The canonical Old Testament which was completed by the 5th century BC had been preserved exact and intact until the time of Jesus Christ in AD 27. The Apostle Paul when he spoke of the divinely inspired Scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:16 must have thought of them in terms of the Scriptures then used by the church (AD 64), which were the apographs, for the non-existent autographs could hardly have served as a supreme rule of faith and life that is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim 3:16–17).

Some say that the Apostle Paul meant the perfect *autographa* when he spoke of the God-breathed Scriptures in 2 Timothy

3:16. If that was what Paul meant, then a question may be raised: how can an intangible and non-existent *autographa* serve as a supreme and final authority? An authority must be existing, present and accessible or else it would be no authority at all. An eye-witness who is already dead and unable to testify is of no use in a court of law. Furthermore, what could Paul have meant by “the holy Scriptures” with which Timothy was brought up but the apographs themselves (2 Tm 3:15)?

Others say that Paul meant the *apographa*, but argue that the *apographa* cannot be deemed as perfect or complete. If this be the case, then how can an imperfect and an incomplete *apographa* serve as an all-sufficient guide for the perfect and complete equipping of the Christian towards godly living (2 Tim 3:17)? If an eye-witness is not of impeccable character, but a compulsive liar, what good is he? His testimony would be utterly discredited. The same goes for Scripture. If the Church does not have an infallible and an inerrant Scripture, and have it today, then her supreme and final authority of faith and practice is all myth. But it is truthful that the Scripture was, is, and shall be God’s infallible and inerrant Word, and thus supremely authoritative (Ps 12:6–7, Ps 119:89, Matt 24:35, Heb 13:8).

Not only does the testimony of Scripture itself affirm the perfection of its apographs, the Reformers of the 16th century, in their declaration of *Sola Scriptura*, always thought in terms of the existing infallible and inerrant apographs rather than the autographs. The great Puritan divine—John Owen (1616-83)—believed in “the purity of the present original copies of the Scripture, or rather copies [*apographa*] in the original languages, which the Church of God doth now and hath for many ages enjoyed as her treasure.” Francis Turretin (1623-87)—pastor-theologian of the Church and Academy of Geneva—wrote in his Systematic Theology, “By

original texts, we do not mean the autographs written by the hand of Moses, of the prophets and of the apostles, which certainly do not now exist. We mean their apographs which are so called because they set forth to us the word of God in the very words of those who wrote under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”

The Protestant creeds reflect the Reformation doctrine of the infallibility of the *apographa* as their *Sola Scriptura*. It was not enough to affirm the infallibility and inerrancy of the *autographa* in the days of the Reformation for the Roman Catholic Church challenged *Sola Scriptura* at the Council of Trent (1545-63) by pointing out the scribal errors, variants and discrepancies in the extant Scriptures. The Reformers met this serious challenge by stating unequivocally that the extant Scriptures were infallible and inerrant by virtue of God’s promise to preserve His words to the last iota. In response to the Council of Trent, the Westminster Confession of Faith (1643-8) produced a most excellent statement on the continuing infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture, “The Old Testament in Hebrew ... and the New Testament in Greek ... being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them.” (1:8). The biblical proof-text cited was Matthew 5:18, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” In the battle for the sole and supreme authority of the Scriptures over against the Roman Catholic dogma of papal and ecclesiastical infallibility, the doctrine of the special, providential preservation of Scripture was eventually and necessarily credalised in the days of the Protestant Reformation.

Although it is admitted that the Westminster Confession did not specifically use the terms “infallible” and “inerrant”

to describe the Scriptures, their use of the word “authentic” said just as much. They did not at all believe that the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures that they possessed were in any way imperfect or errant. J S Candlish rightly observed that the word “authentic” did not mean simply that the Scriptures were “historically true,” but that in a literal sense, the existing Scripture “is a correct copy of the author’s work.” William F Orr put it more forcefully, “Now this affirms that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New which was known to the Westminster divines was immediately inspired by God because it was identical with the first text that God has kept pure in all the ages. The idea that there are mistakes in the Hebrew Masoretic texts or in the Textus Receptus of the New Testament was unknown to the authors of the Confession of Faith.”

It is historically quite clear that the Reformation slogan of *Sola Scriptura* involved a belief in an existing Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament in their respective apographs that were not only fully inspired but also entirely preserved to their last jot and tittle, and hence absolutely infallible and totally inerrant. The infallible and inerrant apographs could legitimately serve as the Protestant Church’s supreme and final authority in all matters of faith and life. It ought to be noted that the 19th–20th century idea of infallibility and inerrancy as residing only in the autographs was utterly foreign to the minds of the 16th–17th century Reformation saints and scholars.

The current evangelical view of “inerrant autographs” is a relatively new one that began in the 19th century in conjunction with the introduction of rationalistic textual criticism. Textual Criticism as introduced by Westcott and Hort treated the Scriptures like any ordinary literature, and sought by human reasoning and subjective analysis to judge which part of Scripture is inspired and which part is

not. They touted the highly corrupted Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus as the new standard text, and rejected the traditional Textus Receptus as the providentially preserved text. Their revision of the providentially preserved Textus Receptus saw them cutting out a total of 9,970 Greek words from it in their newly edited Greek text of 1881. The Westcott and Hort text deleted such divinely preserved and time-honoured passages as the *Pericope de adultera* (John 7:53–8:11), the last 12 verses of Mark (Mark 16:9–20), and the Johannine Comma (1 John 5:7). Their denial of verbal inspiration as seen in their rendering of 2 Timothy 3:16 was soundly castigated by Southern Presbyterian theologian—Robert Dabney—as the work of a Socinian and a rationalist.

The tragedy in reformed scholarship was in Warfield's adoption of the Westcott and Hort textual-critical theory and his redefinition of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy to make it apply only to the autographs. Warfield's novel concept of *Sola Autographa* unfortunately caught on, and became the new paradigm in the textual-critical exercise of reconstructing (or rather deconstructing) the inspired text. The new paradigm of older, harder, shorter readings as the inspired reading is based on false rules. Based on such false rules, "A textual critic engaged upon his business is not at all like Newton investigating the motions of the planets: he is much more like a dog hunting for fleas" (A E Housman). Indeed!

The uncritical acceptance of Westcott and Hort's false textual-critical theory by Princeton Seminary, and later evangelical and fundamental seminaries resulted in the Textus Receptus being replaced by the United Bible Societies and the Nestle-Aland Critical Texts as the "commonly received" text in New Testament studies and modern translations. Over a hundred modern English versions have been birthed by this mutilated and corrupted text causing much confusion over

the infallibility, inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures. Where is the Bible? Do modern textual critics have the answer? They are agnostic!

Who are the textual critics that determine which text is the inspired text that Christians should use? They are the editors of the Critical texts, viz. Aland and Metzger among others who are modernists. Can we expect them to make spirit-guided decisions with regard to the text? “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart” (Ps 24:3–4). Can the Spirit of Truth be pleased to use men devoid of the Spirit to guide them into all truth concerning His Word of Truth (John 16:13)? Georg Luck of Johns Hopkins University has rightly said, “our critical texts are no better than our textual critics.” Jesus said it well, “Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?” (Luke 6:39). Non-spiritual men have produced a non-spiritual text that formed the basis of a plethora of liberal, ecumenical and feminist versions that demote the deity of Christ and deny the veracity of the Scriptures. Is it no wonder that the mainline denominational churches today are in such a pathetic state, plagued by rampant apostasy and immorality?

Fundamentalism’s love affair with Westcott and Hort, the modern versions, and textual criticism is truly a classic case of the unequal yoke (2 Cor 6:14–7:1). The KJV and its underlying inspired and preserved Hebrew and Greek texts ought to be the Text of Biblical fundamentalism. But today, certain fundamentalists pay lip service to the KJV as the “very” (100%) Word of God, but undermine its very source—the underlying Hebrew Masoretic Text and Greek Textus Receptus—saying that it is not 100% (with much deference to Westcott and Hort). It goes without saying that this partnership of the KJV with the Westcott and Hort Text

in the classrooms of fundamental theological colleges and seminaries is a marriage unequally yoked.

There is a vital need today for true Biblical fundamentalists to teach and defend the indispensable doctrine of the verbal and plenary preservation (VPP) of the Holy Scriptures, and by so doing, recapture the Reformation battle-cry of *Sola Scriptura* as found in the infallible and inerrant *apographa* of the traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus on which the venerable KJV is based.

The 19th century Warfieldian concept of the inerrant *autographa* as reflected in contemporary evangelicalism ought to be expanded to include the inerrant *apographa*. According to Richard Muller of Calvin Theological Seminary, “The Protestant scholastics do not press the point made by their nineteenth-century followers that the infallibility of Scripture and the freedom of Scripture from error reside absolutely in the *autographa*, and only in the derivative sense in the *apographa*; rather, the scholastics argue positively that the *apographa* preserve intact the true words of the prophets and the apostles and that the God-breathed (*theopneustos*) character of Scripture is manifest in the *apographa* as well as in the *autographa*. In other words, the issue primarily addressed by the seventeenth-century orthodox in their discussion of the *autographa* is the continuity of the extant copies in Hebrew and in Greek with the originals both *quoad res*, with respect to the thing or subject of the text, and *quoad verba*, with respect to the words of the text.” It is quite clear that the Reformation scholars believed in the 100% inspiration and 100% preservation of the very words of Scripture that God has breathed out, and not simply the doctrines (2 Tim 3:16, Ps 12:6–7, Matt 5:18, 24:35). Without the words, where the doctrines? It must be pointed out that the current neo-evangelical and neo-fundamental view of (1) verbal inspiration and total inerrancy in the autographs

alone, and (2) conceptual inspiredness and limited inerrancy in the apographs, contradicts reformed and fundamental dogmatics.

Myron Houghton of Faith Baptist Seminary was precisely right when he wrote, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” [2 Timothy 3:16]. Another way of saying this would be, ‘all Scripture is God-breathed,’ or ‘all Scripture comes from the mouth of God.’ This means God is directly responsible for causing the Bible writers to put down everything that He wanted written without error and without omission. But what of the Bible I hold in my hand? Is it God’s Word? Can it be trusted? The answer is yes! Both truths—the inspiration and inerrancy of the original manuscripts and the trustworthiness of the Bible in my hand—must be acknowledged. To affirm the inspiration and inerrancy of the original writings while casting doubt on the authority of the Bible that is available to us is just plain silly. Can you really imagine someone seriously saying, ‘I have good news and I have bad news: the good news is that God wanted to give us a message and therefore caused a book to be written; the bad news is that He didn’t possess the power to preserve it and therefore we don’t know what it said!’ A view of inspiration without a corresponding view of preservation is of no value.”

Ian Paisley, renowned leader of the World Congress of Fundamentalists and President of the European Institute of Protestant Studies, wrote likewise, “The verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures demands the verbal Preservation of the Scriptures. Those who would deny the need for verbal Preservation cannot be accepted as being really committed to verbal Inspiration. If there is no preserved Word of God today then the work of Divine Revelation and Divine Inspiration has perished.”

In the battle for the Bible today, there is a need for Bible-believing and Bible-defending churches and seminaries to produce statements of faith that affirm the Scriptures to be verbally and plenary preserved in the apographs; that all the Hebrew and Greek words of the Masoretic Text and the Textus Receptus underlying the King James Bible are the verbally and plenary inspired words of God, and therefore absolutely infallible, totally inerrant and supremely authoritative.

There is also a need to be specific in the identification of the preserved text. In his discussion on “How to Combat Modernism—Follow the Logic of Faith,” Dr Edward F Hills warned against a false view of preservation that says (1) the doctrines are preserved, but not the words (contra Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33), or (2) the true reading is preserved somewhere out there in the whole body of extant manuscripts. Such a general and uncertain view would imply that God was somehow careless in preserving His inspired words. Hills rightly advised, “It is not sufficient merely to say that you believe in the doctrine of the special, providential preservation of the holy Scriptures. You must really believe this doctrine and allow it to guide your thinking. You must begin with Christ and the Gospel and proceed according to the logic of faith. This will lead you to the Traditional text, the Textus Receptus, and the King James Version.”

It is by this same logic of faith applied consistently that Dr D A Waite, the President of the Dean Burgon Society, concluded that “the WORDS of the Received Greek and Masoretic Hebrew texts that underlie the KING JAMES BIBLE are the very WORDS which God has PRESERVED down through the centuries, being the exact WORDS of the ORIGINALS themselves.” (Note that Waite is speaking of the Hebrew and Greek words underlying the KJV, and not the English words, nor the KJV per se.)

This is not a new view, but a restatement of an old truth. By believing in the verbally and plenary preserved apographs, we are affirming or reaffirming good old Protestant and Reformation Theology. It is heartening to note that God's people, filled and guided by the Spirit, are recognising this vital truth of the verbal and plenary preservation of the Scriptures, and not a few theological institutions have already taken a declared position for it.

One such institution is the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC). The ICCC is a worldwide fellowship of fundamental churches which are opposed to liberalism, ecumenism, charismatism, and neo-evangelicalism. Led by Dr Carl McIntire, its founding President, the ICCC in its 16th World Congress in Jerusalem, 2000, a statement, "On the Word of God Forever Inerrant and Infallible," was passed:

"Believing the Holy Scriptures on the originals to be fully inspired with its words and genders and being complete as God's revelation to man without error;

"Believing that God not only inspired the Bible without errors in fact, doctrine and judgement but preserved the Scriptures in all ages for all eternity as the Westminster Confession of Faith standard says—'the O.T. in Hebrew and the N.T. in Greek ... being immediately inspired by God and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages are therefore authentical ... They are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come;'

"Believing the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, gave us a supernatural gift, and both inspired and preserved it. By inspired we mean that the Holy Spirit moved in the hearts of its human authors that they recorded the very words that God wanted written in the Bible using the

personality and background of its writers but without error. 'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' II Pet 1:21;

"Believing God safeguarded the Bible in times past and will continue to do so in the future and all eternity. He preserved on Scripture, the Bible. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away;' Matt 24:35;

"Believing the O.T. has been preserved in the Masoretic text and the N.T. in the Textus Receptus, combined they gave us the complete Word of God. The King James Version in English has been faithfully translated from these God-preserved manuscripts. Other good Protestant versions have been translated around the world in many languages based on the Masoretic and Textus Receptus until 1881 when Drs. Westcott and Hort used a shorter text removing many words, phrases and sections by following the eclectic watered down polluted Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts;

"These manuscripts differ widely among themselves and with others amount to less than 5% of the manuscript evidence. God preserved the Textus Receptus in the majority text with 95%. This is called the traditional, or majority text. It is also called Eastern Byzantine text and also the manuscripts that have the longer and fuller texts; ...

"We the International Council of Christian Churches meeting in Jerusalem, 8-14 November 2000 strongly urge the churches in their pulpits and people at large, to continue to use the time honoured and faithful longer translations and not the new shorter versions that follow in too many places the short eclectic texts. These are very similar to the shorter Westcott and Hort texts that remove or cast doubt on so many passages and words. Furthermore we are not

against new versions as such but believe all true and faithful versions must be based on the traditional longer texts that the Holy Spirit preserved through the early century versions, the early church fathers and the faithful Textus Receptus.”

It is significant to note that Dr Carl McIntire—founding president of the ICCA—believed the Bible to be 100% perfect without any mistake, and that Psalm 12:6–7 teaches the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of the Holy Scriptures. In his sermon, “Help, LORD!” (Psalm 12), preached on January 11, 1992, he said, “Now come verse 6, ‘The words of the LORD are pure words,’ not one of them is mistaken, ‘as silver tried in the furnace of earth, purified seven times.’ All the dregs are out. Here is a marvellous affirmation and vindication that God’s Word is perfect. ... Now, ‘The words of the LORD are pure words.’ And then verse 7, how I love this: ‘Thou shalt keep them, O LORD,’ that is, keep His words; ‘thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.’ No matter what happens, one generation comes and another passes away, God is going to preserve His words ... from one generation to another. The words of God will be preserved throughout all the generations.”

WHY THE AUTHORISED/KING JAMES VERSION?

A number of publications seek to attack and destroy the verbal and plenary perfection of the Bible. They claim that the Bible is verbally and plenary inspired (VPI) but not verbally and plenary preserved (VPP). Simply put, they want Christians to believe that the Bible was only infallible in the past but no longer infallible today.

In attacking the present infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures and the identification of an existing infallible and inerrant Scripture in the original languages in the inspired and preserved Hebrew and Greek words underlying the Reformation Bibles best represented by the KJV, these



WILLIAM TYNDALE (1494-1536)

William Tyndale, master linguist of Oxford and Cambridge Universities, gave his people their first Bible translated from the original languages. By selfless toil, he completed translating the NT in 1525 and most of the OT before his death. Tyndale's Bible became a forerunner of the King James Bible (1611).

His testimony on translation: "I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of doings, that I never altered one syllable of God's Word against my conscience, nor would this day, if all that is in the earth, whether it be pleasure, honour, or riches, might be given me."

anti-perfectionists, anti-preservationists, anti-TR/KJV, pro-Westcott-Hort modern-versionists falsely accuse believers of the present perfection of Scriptures as schismatics, heretics and even cultists by linking them to Ruckmanism and Seventh-Day Adventism (SDAism). Their writings imply that it is simply unscholarly and even sinful to suggest that Christians today indeed possess a 100% infallible and inerrant Bible.

Henceforth, we will refer to such propagators of untruth generally as “the accusers,” bearing in mind that not all of them share exactly the same beliefs with regard to the VPP and the KJV, as some among them even inexplicably profess love for the KJV—notwithstanding their readiness to find fault with the KJV and/or the original language texts (words) underlying the KJV. The title of “arch-accuser” goes to Doug Kutilek who contributed a chapter to the faith-denying and doubt-casting book called *One Bible Only?* authored by the faculty of Central Baptist Theological Seminary (with support from Bob Jones University). In that book, Kutilek paints with a broad and contemptuous brush all pro-KJV advocates as Ruckmanites. He linked sound defenders of the KJV like Edward F Hills, David Otis Fuller, David Cloud, and D A Waite to Ruckman! This is hitting below the belt. He also unjustly accused pro-KJV defenders of SDAism just because D O Fuller quoted from SDA Benjamin Wilkinson who so happened to defend the KJV as well in his book, *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* (1930). This is a common tactic by detractors to mislead, to paint white as black so that people will not see the white but only the black, and to make people think that the black they see is indeed white. Such sophistry is usually employed by those who have no case or a weak case, who have to resort to such low blows to score their points in order to look credible.

VPP is not Ruckmanism. It is a well-known fact that authors like Hills, Fuller, Cloud and Waite by no means defend the KJV in the way Ruckman does. It is clear from the writings of Hills, Fuller, Cloud and Waite that they do **NOT** espouse at all the beliefs of Ruckman that:

1. the KJV is doubly inspired;
2. the KJV is advanced revelation;
3. the English KJV is as or more inspired than the original language Scriptures;
4. the KJV can be used to correct the original language Scriptures;
5. there is no need whatsoever to study the Biblical languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek due to an “inspired” English translation;
6. the KJV cannot be improved on (*The Defined King James Bible* edited by D A Waite and S H Tow and published by Bible For Today is certainly an improvement of the KJV);
7. the KJV is the only Bible that has gospel or salvific content;
8. those who do not use the KJV are condemned to hell; and
9. all non-English speaking believers must learn English to know the Truth.

Hills, Fuller, Cloud and Waite are all essentially speaking of the infallibility and inerrancy of the inspired Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Scriptures behind the Reformation Bibles best represented by the KJV. The KJV does not stand independently or separately. It is dependent on its original language source texts, and these source texts (words) known by various names—Byzantine, Majority, Received—are the infallibly preserved apographs of the inerrant autographs.

As far as non-English translations or versions of the Bible go, all non-English speaking believers are encouraged to use the Bibles they have in their own native tongue, but they ought to use that version which is closest to the inspired and preserved Byzantine, Majority and Received texts, and as far removed as possible from the Alexandrian, Minority, and Westcott-Hort texts. They ought also to use a Bible that is translated by means of the verbal equivalence method (word-for-word) rather than the dynamic equivalence method (thought-for-thought) in keeping with the twin doctrines of VPI and VPP. Biblically and theologically trained pastors and teachers are necessary to teach faithfully the whole counsel of God, expounding from the inerrant Hebrew and Greek Scriptures God has infallibly preserved, namely, the Masoretic Text and the Textus Receptus of the Protestant Reformation, all the truths that God has given using the best version or translation the people have in their hands.

VPP is not SDAism. Dr Benjamin Wilkinson (an SDA) does not own the King James Bible. The King James Bible was not translated by SDAs but by Reformation and Protestant scholars of the highest calibre during the reign of King James in the early 17th century. The King James Bible is for everyone who loves the Bible and desires to have the best and most faithful English Bible ever produced for their meditation and edification. Neither does Wilkinson own the “copyright” to the Biblical doctrine of VPP which belongs only to the Lord Jesus Christ who said in all three Synoptic Gospels, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33).

Wilkinson did not pioneer the defence of the KJV. The original defence of the KJV may be traced to the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS) which was originally founded in 1831 to defend the biblical and fundamental doctrine of the Trinity and the 100% deity of Christ—hence its name “Trinitarian.”

The clearest proof-text for the doctrine of the Trinity is 1 John 5:7, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” This most excellent verse has been scissored out by Westcott and Hort, and the modern versions. The TBS in its defence of the Trinity found it most necessary also to defend 1 John 5:7 as found in the underlying preserved Greek text of the KJV. By so defending the KJV and its preserved underlying Greek text, is the TBS now SDA just because Wilkinson at a later time happened to defend the KJV and its underlying Greek text too? Note that the TBS is stoutly against Westcott and Hort, and the modern versions, and even considers the NKJV untrustworthy.

The Bible League is another early defender of the KJV. Founded in 1892, the Bible League resisted the “Downgrade” in Great Britain. The modernists were throwing out one doctrine after another including the foundational and indispensable doctrine of the divine inspiration and total inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. The Bible League was founded to contend earnestly for the historic Christian Faith. Since its inception, the League has endeavoured “[t]o promote the Reverent Study of the Holy Scriptures, and to resist the varied attacks made upon their Inspiration, Infallibility and Sole Sufficiency as the Word of God.” Insofar as the Bible versions issue is concerned, the Bible League unashamedly holds to the view that “the Authorised Version is the most accurate and faithful English Bible translation available today.” Its latest publication (2004), a 126-paged book authored by Alan J Macgregor and titled *Three Modern Versions* is a most timely critique of the NIV, ESV and NKJV. It is significant to note that Macgregor quoted Wilkinson’s *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated*, but in a footnote Macgregor wisely explained his use of Wilkinson’s material thus: “It must be pointed out here that while there is some good material in Dr Wilkinson’s book, there are also

a number of inaccuracies. He was a Seventh-day Adventist (a fact that many who quote from him fail to reveal). Some who support the use of modern versions of the Bible allege that one of the reasons for Dr. Wilkinson's strong opposition to the Revised Version of 1881 was that it altered two verses which Adventists regard as proof-texts in support of their doctrines: Acts 13:42 (which they regard as teaching the necessity of Gentiles keeping the Sabbath or Seventh Day), and Hebrews 9:27 (which Adventists believe teaches soul sleep). I have sought to be selective in the quotes I have used. Some might argue, why quote from him at all, if he was a member of a cult? The answer is that despite his Adventist views ... there is nonetheless some sound evidence in his book that rightly exposes facts concerning the Westcott and Hort Text, and the errors of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. He also provides solid, factual support for the superiority of the Received Text."

This allegation that the belief in the verbal and plenary preservation of the Scriptures and the defence of the KJV is a "new doctrine" and a "new practice" has been very much the tactic of anti-VPPists, anti-TRists, and anti-KJVists to vilify the fundamental doctrine of the infallible preservation of the inspired words of the Holy Scriptures to the last jot and tittle as promised by our Lord Himself in Matthew 5:18, and the goodness of the KJV and its underlying Hebrew and Greek Texts, so that the unknowing populace would automatically shun the good old doctrine of VPP, the good old TR, and the good old KJV without consciously giving them a second thought. Some of the accusers even claim to be "preserving our godly paths" (Jer 6:16)! Can this be so?

David Cloud rightly says that such new attacks against KJV defenders "has increased in intensity in recent years and is finding a home even among those who claim to be Fundamentalists and Bible-believing Baptists." Cloud quoted

from the Rev Denis Gibson (a minister of the gospel who has served in Presbyterian and Baptist churches since 1958, and a regular contributor to the international devotional guide—*Read, Pray, Grow*) who in a letter to him dated April 19, 1995 wrote, “I see a real hostility that has been generated in the minds of some of the younger pastors. There does not seem to be, on their part, a serious interest in dealing with this issue ... It is the hostility, however, that is troubling. Sides are forming and deep prejudices are evident. To be ‘a King James man’ is now a term of opprobrium. This opposition is within ‘so-called’ evangelicalism, not as in the past, from the liberal-modernist camp.”

Is it no wonder that the Trinitarian Bible Society, noting a significant change in theological climate in Christendom, felt compelled to issue a comprehensive statement in 2005 defining what it believes to be the Doctrine of Scripture? D P Rowland, the General Secretary of TBS wrote in the Society’s *Quarterly Record* (April-June 2005), “Today, as has been stated, things are very different. The doctrine of Scripture has been, and is being, assailed on every side; not least from within many branches (including those taking the name of ‘evangelical’ and ‘reformed’ [*and ‘fundamentalist’*]) of the so-called ‘Christian Church’ of our day. The Committee, therefore, considers it necessary for the Society clearly and unambiguously to state where it stands on this most fundamental of all doctrines.”

New assaults on the foundational and indispensable doctrine of the infallible preservation of the inerrantly inspired words of Holy Scripture require updated statements and more definitive terms to affirm Christianity’s fundamental beliefs concerning the forever infallible and inerrant Scripture, hence our term—“Verbal Plenary Preservation”—as expressed in the Constitution of the Far Eastern Bible College:

1. We believe in the divine, Verbal Plenary Inspiration (Autographs) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (Apographs) of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and as the perfect Word of God, the Supreme and final authority in faith and life (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20–21; Ps 12:6–7; Matt 5:18, 24:35);
2. We believe the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament underlying the Authorised (King James) Version to be the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant;
3. We uphold the Authorised (King James) Version to be the Word of God—the best, most faithful, most accurate, most beautiful translation of the Bible in the English language, and do employ it alone as our primary scriptural text in the public reading, preaching, and teaching of the English Bible.

What is the real problem today? Is it not the unequal yoking of “reformed” and “fundamentalist” theology with the textual-critical method of Westcott and Hort and the “inerrant autographs alone” view of Warfield, their resultant corrupt text and modern perversions? Why are “reformed” people agreeing with certain fundamental Baptists who castigate the doctrine of special providential preservation as a “new doctrine,” non-existent before 1648 and the Westminster Confession? Why are certain Biblical fundamentalists well-known for their Biblical conservatism and separatism speaking favourably of rationalistic methods of Biblical criticism, modernistic critical texts, and the ecumenical and neo-evangelical modern versions? Has there not been a downgrade today within reformed Christianity and historic fundamentalism? If so, is this not a backsliding away from the 16th and 20th century Reformation movements?

Our sincere and earnest prayer is that Bible-believing and Bible-defending Christians would not just believe and defend the Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) of Scripture, but also the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of Scripture. The Bible was not only infallible and inerrant in the past (in the Autographs), but also infallible and inerrant in the present (in the Apographs). These Apographs are the providentially and specially preserved Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and texts underlying the Reformation Bibles best represented by the KJV.

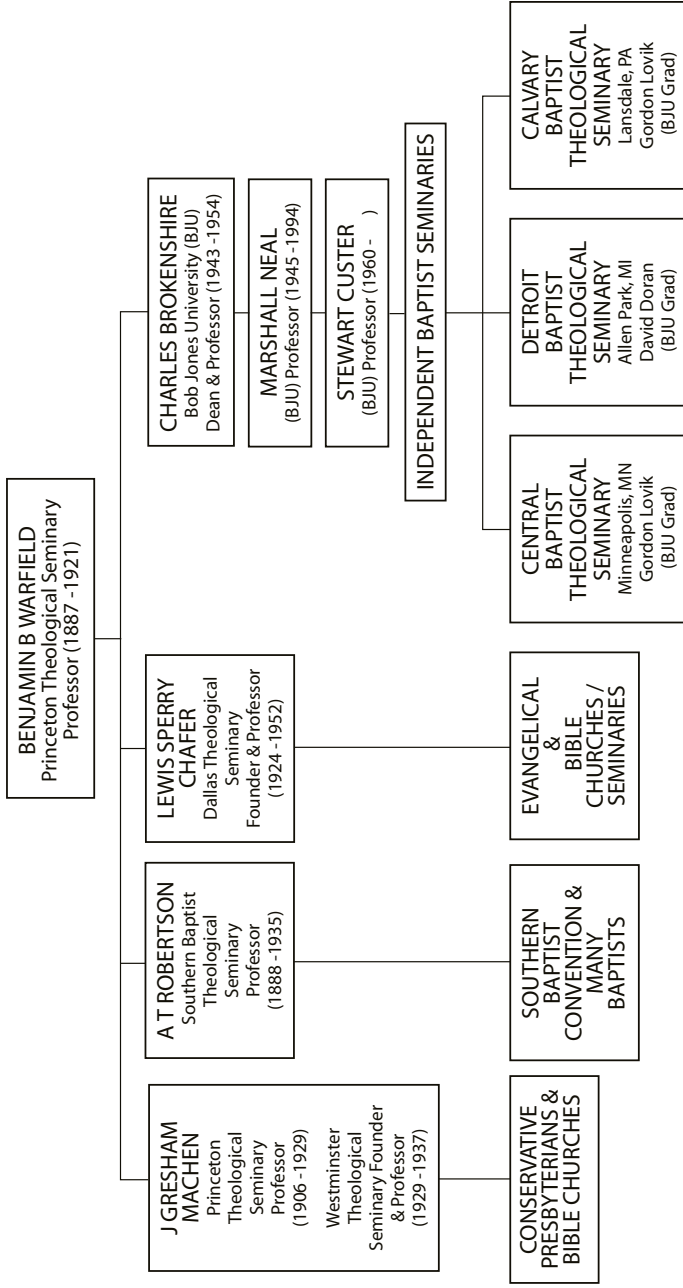
The Trinitarian Bible Society's latest position statement on the Bible as published in its *Quarterly Record*, April-June 2005, is noteworthy. The TBS identifies and describes the underlying texts of the KJV as follows:

"The Trinitarian Bible Society Statement of Doctrine of the Holy Scripture" approved by the General Committee at its meeting held on 17th January 2005, and revised 25th February 2005 declares its position on the underlying texts of the KJV:

"The Constitution of the Trinitarian Bible Society specifies the textual families to be employed in the translations it circulates. The Masoretic Hebrew and the Greek Received Texts are the texts that the Constitution of the Trinitarian Bible Society acknowledges to have been preserved by the special providence of God within Judaism and Christianity. Therefore these texts are definitive and the final point of reference in all the Society's work.

"These texts of Scripture reflect the qualities of God-breathed Scripture, including being authentic, holy, pure, true, infallible, trustworthy, excellent, self-authenticating, necessary, sufficient, perspicuous, self-interpreting, authoritative and inerrant (Psalm 19:7–9, Psalm 119). They

THE ENTRANCE OF THE LEAVEN OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM INTO FUNDAMENTALISM



Source: Dell G Johnson, overhead chart entitled “The Leaven in Fundamentalism,” in *The Leaven in Fundamentalism: A History of the Bible Text Issue in Fundamentalism*, videocassette tape 3, 145 mins, Pensacola Christian College, 1998. Used by permission.

are consequently to be received as the Word of God (Ezra 7:14; Nehemiah 8:8; Daniel 9:2; 2 Peter 1:19) and the correct reading at any point is to be sought within these texts.

“The Society accepts as the best edition of the Hebrew Masoretic text the one prepared in 1524–25 by Jacob ben Chayyim and known, after David Bomberg the publisher, as the Bomberg text. This text underlies the Old Testament in the Authorised Version.

“The Greek Received Text is the name given to a group of printed texts, the first of which was published by Desiderius Erasmus in 1516. The Society believes that the latest and best edition is the text reconstructed by F.H.A. Scrivener in 1894. This text was reconstructed from the Greek underlying the New Testament of the Authorised Version.”

Can the accusers and detractors fault the TBS for letting us know which texts have been preserved by the special providence of God and used by the TBS as its final point of reference in all its work? If they find fault, it may be because they want to paint VPP as merely a theory with no specific texts that can be found or identified in practice (i.e., in the real world). If VPP is destroyed or undermined by them, the immediately underlying original Hebrew and Greek apographs become of no consequence and it would then not matter if Christians use perverted modern versions since such versions can also claim to be ultimately traceable to the unavailable autographs. VPI without VPP can lead to the floodgate being opened for the inclusion of the heretical Gnostic gospels and perverted modern Bible versions.

DANGER OF DENYING VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION

The Bible warns in 1 Timothy 4:1–2, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart

from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.”

The Bible today is under attack like never before. The modernists through *The Da Vinci Code* tell us that the 27 books of the New Testament Canon are false and must be replaced by newly discovered Coptic manuscripts which speak of a more realistic down-to-earth Jesus stripped of all His deity and moral purity. They claim that the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the Gospel of Judas, and other Gnostic Gospels are the true Gospels; and that these Gospels must replace the Canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Many evangelical Bible Colleges and Seminaries today teach that the Bible was only infallible and inerrant in the past, but no longer infallible and inerrant today. According to popular theology, the Bible today contains “insignificant mistakes,” “redundant words,” and so-called “scribal errors.”

It is significant to note that the Bible under constant attack by modernists and evangelicals is not the NIV, not the NASB, not the RSV, not even the NKJV, or any of the modern versions but the good old Authorised or the King James Version (AV/KJV). Why is the KJV under such attack? The KJV is under such attack because it is the Bible of the 16th century Protestant Reformation, and as the Reformation Bible, it stands against the tide of unbelief, apostasy, and compromise today.

Bart Ehrman in his book entitled—*Misquoting Jesus* (2005)—attacked the KJV and the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures behind the KJV. According to Ehrman, “The King James Bible was based on corrupted and inferior manuscripts that in many cases do not accurately represent the meaning of

the original text. The favorite Bible story of Jesus's forgiving the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3–11) doesn't belong in the Bible. Scribal errors were so common in antiquity that the author of the Book of Revelation threatened damnation to anyone who 'adds to' or 'takes away' words from the text." In other words, in Ehrman's mind, if you quote from the KJV or its underlying texts, you are misquoting Jesus.

Bart Ehrman began as a fundamentalist at Moody Bible Institute but finally lost his faith at Princeton Seminary where he got his PhD. How did he lose his faith? Ehrman tells us on page 11 of his book. He wrote, "If one wants to insist that God inspired the very words of scripture, what would be the point if we don't have the very words of scripture? In some places, as we will see, we simply cannot be sure that we have reconstructed the original text accurately. It's a bit hard to know what the words of the Bible mean if we don't even know what the words are!

"This became a problem for my view of inspiration, for I came to realize that it would have been no more difficult for God to preserve the words of scripture than it would have been for him to inspire them in the first place. If he wanted his people to have his words, surely he would have given them to them (and possibly even given them the words in a language they could understand, rather than Greek and Hebrew). The fact that we don't have the words surely must show, I reasoned, that he did not preserve them for us. And if he didn't perform that miracle, there seemed to be no reason to think that he performed the earlier miracle of inspiring those words.

"In short, my study of the Greek New Testament, and my investigations into the manuscripts that contain it, led to a radical rethinking of my understanding of what the Bible is. This was a seismic change for me. Before this—starting



JOHN WILLIAM BURGON (1813-1888)
Professor of Divinity, Oxford University
Dean of Chichester

John William Burgon was a man of deep faith and strong convictions, with an intense love of the Word, and a fierce loyalty to God's Truth. Raised of God at a time of great "falling away" from the faith, Burgon devoted himself with singleness of mind to defend the inspired Word of God by study of ancient manuscripts, the source texts of Bible translations.

Travelling extensively, he visited libraries throughout Europe, including the Vatican, to examine and study all available NT manuscripts. By his vast knowledge of Greek, he was able to identify those preserved NT manuscripts originating from the Apostolic church, and handed down intact up to the time of the Reformation.

To this group of preserved manuscripts, Dean Burgon gave the name of "Traditional Text," which formed the basis of the KJV, and continued to be used in the Protestant Church for the next three hundred and fifty years. He also identified the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus to be among manuscripts the "most corrupt."

with my born-again experience in high school, through my fundamentalist days at Moody, and on through my evangelical days at Wheaton—my faith has been based completely on a certain view of the Bible as the fully inspired, inerrant word of God. Now I no longer saw the Bible that way.”

Ehrman’s testimony serves as a warning: If we do not believe that God has verbally and plenary preserved His words, that we have truly the very words of God today—100% infallible and inerrant without any mistake—and are against the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words behind the KJV, we might just end up like Ehrman—an agnostic and a modernist.

It goes without saying that it is not enough for true Christianity to believe in the Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) of the Scriptures; it is equally important to believe in the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of the Scriptures. “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever” (Ps 12:6–7). The twin doctrines of VPI and VPP are our only sure defence against the attacks on the Bible today. We have a fixed Canon and a fixed Text. We see no need for textual criticism and we reject higher criticism altogether.

The leadership of the Far Eastern Bible College believes without any reservation the present infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures as spelled out in the College Constitution (see Appendix O).

The Board of Directors and Faculty affirm their allegiance to the Word of God by taking the Dean Burgon Oath at every annual convocation: “I swear in the Name of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit that I believe ‘the

Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God, not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the throne, faultless, unerring, supreme.' So help me, God. Amen."



FEBC Faculty and Board Taking the Dean Burgon Oath

PART II
ANTHROPOLOGY

Knowing Man



CREATION OF MAN

How did God create man? The Westminster Shorter Catechism answers, “God created man male and female after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.”

God created Adam and Eve, the first man and the first woman. He made them special. He endued them with intelligence, and the ability to reason. He gave them immortal souls—“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7).

Man was made morally pure and without sin. He was created “in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). Endued with spiritual knowledge, he has the ability to walk with God and have a relationship with Him (cf. Gen 3:8–9).

God also appointed man to be vice-ruler over His created world. As God’s image bearer, man is superior to the creatures of the sea, air and land—“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen 1:26–28).

Man is not a glorified ape.

IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN

The image of God in man is not physical but spiritual. It is not our body that resembles God, but our spirit. Since God is a Spirit (John 4:24), our resemblance of Him must necessarily be a spiritual likeness—“in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.”

The teaching that “knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness” are aspects of the image of God in man is based upon a combination of Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10.

However, due to sin, this image of God in man is corrupted. It can only be restored by being in Christ. True holiness comes only when one has accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour.

Only a born again Christian can be said to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). “Nothing can bear the image of God but spirit, since God is a Spirit” (Calvin).

The Spirit of Christ that indwells believers makes them more and more like Christ as the days go by—“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18). Christ is said to be “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15, cf. 2 Cor 4:4); “the brightness of his glory, and the express image (exact likeness or representation) of his person” (Heb 1:3).

The glorious climax of the doctrine of God’s image in man, renewed in those who are born again, is found in 1 John 3:1–2, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what

we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

That man is made special, in God’s image is seen in the commandment that Christians should treat other human beings with dignity and respect. We cannot say God be blessed when we curse man who is made in the image of God (Jas 3:9). We have no right to pronounce a curse upon any man or woman. God is the only judge. We must consistently labour that men, created in the image of God, may be restored in that image through redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

The very fact that God’s image in man is spiritual and not physical makes idolatry wrong. For idols are made in man’s physical image, not God’s. God is invisible and that is why no image or figure may be made of Him. It is precisely for this reason that we have the Second Commandment: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exod 20:4).

Paul uses the fact of humanity, created in the image of God, as an argument against idolatry (Acts 17:28ff). Human beings are the “offspring of God.” As such, “we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device” (Acts 17:29).

Right now, God commands all men everywhere to repent of their idolatry (Acts 17:30). Man who is made in the image of God should worship the living and true God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24) and not hand-made objects of wood, stone, metal or clay.

Calvin rightly warned, “Every statue, every image, by which foolish men seek to represent God, is a teacher of falsehood.”

If sinners persist in worshipping idols crafted after their own image, the wrath of God shall come upon them in due time.

One aspect of God's image in man is that man was created to exercise dominion over creation as God's assistant ruler. This fact is clearly stated in Genesis 1:26–28, and in numerous other portions of Scripture. Before sin came into the world, God had said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion" (Gen 1:28). Even after sin came into the world, man was commanded to rule creation as restated in Genesis 9:1–2.

The dominion which man is intended to exercise is wonderfully brought out in the eighth Psalm. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" (Ps 8:4–9).

However, sinful man is incapable of ruling this world perfectly. Only the Lord Jesus Christ is capable of subduing and ruling over the whole world completely and absolutely. He shall return to do just that one day. He has also promised that His people shall reign with Him in His future kingdom (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:18, 28–30; cf. 2 Tim 2:12; 1 Cor 6:2–3; Luke 19:11–28; Rev 5:10, 20:6). The time of restitution is coming (Acts 3:20–21). When it comes, this created world will be released from its "bondage of corruption" (Rom 8:18–23). Then the children of God, reigning with Christ, will have that dominion over the creation in fulfilment of the

Creator's original plan and intention. This perfect rule of Christ on earth will last a thousand years (Rev 20:6).

HOW MANY PARTS HAS MAN?

According to the Bible, man consists of two parts: the body and the soul (spirit). These two aspects of man are not only distinguishable, but separable. At death the soul of man goes into the realm of the unseen. The Christian will go to heaven while the unbeliever will go to hell. The body meanwhile returns to the dust, awaiting the resurrection when it will be reunited with the soul.

Man must have both body and soul to be complete. Although the blessed dead are in heaven in their spirit (Rev 6:9–11), rejoicing in the presence of the Lord, their bodies which “sleep in Jesus” will one day be raised from the dead at the “last trumpet” (Luke 14:14; 1 Cor 15:50–57; 1 Thess 4:13–18). The Scriptures nowhere teach that man will remain a spirit forever. There is always the hope of a future bodily resurrection when Christ returns.

When a Christian is still alive on earth, he must ensure that his body is kept pure and holy. Made in the image of God, the believer must display a godly life through his body. Paul speaks angrily against those who defile their bodies with sinful corruption (Rom 1:24). He teaches that sin must not rule as king in our mortal bodies (Rom 6:12). Our bodies are subject to death on account of sin (Rom 8:10) but our bodies await the fullness of our inheritance as sons of God at the resurrection (Rom 8:23). Meantime, our bodies are to be presented to God as an acceptable, living sacrifice (Rom 12:1). We are to recognise our bodies as “members of Christ” and “temples of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:13–20).

Now, there are those who say that man consists of three parts based on 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians

15:44, putting undue stress on the words “spirit *and* soul *and* body.” But the same argument applied to Luke 10:27 would make man to have four parts, “heart *and* soul *and* mind *and* strength!” It is important to note that the words “soul” and “spirit” are often used interchangeably (Isa 26:9, Matt 20:28 cf. 27:50) to mean the invisible or immaterial part of man. Man consists of only two parts (i.e. the material and the immaterial), not three or four parts.

ORIGIN OF THE SOUL

Man’s soul is not pre-existent. It had a beginning. Only God is pre-existent, and He knows every human soul since eternity past. In history, only Origen (about 185–254 AD) held to the individual personal pre-existence of the soul. He said that the soul went through many incarnations. Through these transmigrations it inherited sinfulness. His heretical views were not very different from the reincarnation doctrine of Taoism. This view of the soul’s pre-existence and transmigration is wholly absent from the Bible and quite inconsistent with the doctrines of eternal life and punishment.

The Scriptures teach that God created the human soul in the beginning (Gen 2:7). It was created pure and holy. But the sin of Adam and Eve in eating the forbidden fruit led to its corruption. All born after Adam and Eve inherited not just their physical but also their spiritual nature.

The soul was initially created by God for Adam and Eve, but after that, it was passed on to all other human beings through conception and birth.

Did Jesus Christ inherit His soul from sinful man? The answer is most certainly in the negative. Christ took to Himself a sinless body that was derived from Mary by the miracle of the virgin birth. The sinlessness of that body is

guaranteed by the special protection of God. The body of Christ was perfectly sinless, simply because of a supernatural protection. As the Scripture says, Mary was promised, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

When Jesus was born, no new personal being came into existence. His soul was neither created nor inherited. The eternal Son of God took to Himself a sinless body and a sinless soul without ceasing in any way to be a divine Person or divine Soul. And Christ could become man precisely because man’s soul was created in the image of God.

If man is made in the image of God with an intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature, then he is not an animal and should not behave like one. Sin is a problem and must be dealt with.

As objects of God’s grace, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” God sincerely invites all to have fellowship with Him through the gospel. The Lord says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28). God has, in Christ, provided a way for sinful man to be reconciled to Him (John 3:16). As Calvin wonderfully put it, “The Son of God became the Son of man so that the sons of men might become the sons of God.”

Made in the image of God, man is supposed to have personal fellowship and personal communion with God, and with those who have accepted His invitation to become members of His household. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1).

Those who believe in Christ are not only recipients of God's grace and eligible for fellowship with Him, they are also His representatives in the world. In His high priestly prayer, the Lord said, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). We are told that we are "the light of the world" (Matt 5:14), as we represent Christ who Himself is "the light of the world" (John 8:12). We are commanded that our light shall shine so that men may give glory to God (Matt 5:16). We are ambassadors for Christ.

As Christians, we must not only live a holy life but also oppose all things in the world which detract from the glory of God. We are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph 5:11). We are instructed that "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jas 4:17).

Christians are responsible for sharing the gospel of the grace of God with all human beings everywhere. Only the Lord Jesus Christ is able to restore sinful man back into God's image of righteousness and true holiness for "the whole gospel is contained in Christ" (Calvin).

Christ has commanded His Church to go into the world to evangelise the world, baptise and indoctrinate His people with the whole counsel of God. It is the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20). We are responsible for sharing the light which we have to all those who do not have the light.

Paul explains that he has nothing to boast of in the fact that he preaches the Gospel because, says he, "necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel ... dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me" (1 Cor 9:16–17). When Paul said to the elders of the church of Ephesus, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am

pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26–27), he was undoubtedly alluding to the solemn words given to Ezekiel (3:17–18, 33:7–8), making him responsible for conveying God’s message to those around him.

But we should preach the good news not so much out of duty but out of love. Paul said, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel,” but he also said “the love of Christ constraineth us” (1 Cor 9:16; 2 Cor 5:14).

The fact that man is created in the image of God should change the way we look at other men. The doctrine of the image of God in man should motivate us to seek to win others to accept God’s offer of grace so that they might possess the image of Christ in them.

We ought to be overwhelmingly grieved by godlessness. Although we abhor the degrading and perverse lifestyle of unregenerate men, we must think of man as man in the light of the purposes of God for humanity. Only the gospel can save and change them. We do not know who or where are God’s elect. It is for us to seek them out everywhere.

Since God has made man in His image to have dominion over His creation, that original intention must be fulfilled. It was not fulfilled in the garden because man sinned against God. It must be fulfilled one day, and it can only be fulfilled in Christ (Heb 2:8).

The Lord Jesus Christ will one day return to subdue and rule the world in righteousness. God will judge the world one day and destroy all His enemies at the battle of Armageddon (Rev 19:11–21). Then this earth will be rejuvenated. Creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption and the

children of God will enjoy the glorious liberty of having their resurrected bodies (Rom 8:19–21; 1 John 3:2–3).

God has given man dominion over the earth including the sea, air and land animals (Gen 1:28). Note that this dominion does not cover mankind and outer space. As such, modern day outer space expeditions and habitations go beyond God's boundaries of dominion as originally given to Adam.

Furthermore, the absolute right and power to rule over mankind belongs only to God who alone determines man's existence and destiny, whether he lives or dies (Eccl 8:8; Dan 4:32). Man was not given dominion over his kind to create a super race. One such attempt in biblical times proved disastrous (Gen 6:1–7, 17). Never play God!

Human cloning today is thus another wicked attempt by man to play God. When man seeks to clone himself, he transgresses God's original decree of dominion. Human cloning is thus out of bounds to man. Man must not play God. If man persists in his wickedness, the final fiery judgement will come for sure (2 Pet 3:3–12).

A FALLEN HUMANITY

According to the Bible, man in this world is a fallen creature. God meant for man to be a special and spiritual creature, made perfectly in His image. But man is not what he ought to be since the fall. Although the image of God in man is not obliterated, it is corrupted. Man today is broken and defiled.

The reality of human sin and depravity is presented in Romans 1:18–2:13 and Romans 3:9–18, and finds its present-day commentary in almost every news report. Almost daily, we read and hear of wars and terrorism, mixed with numerous robberies, rapes, and murders, and all kinds of human corruptions and perversions.

Man knows that God exists. His “eternal power and divine character” are clearly seen in creation and nature. Man is truly “without excuse” when he rejects God. His sins will one day be punished. Calvin rightly observed, “Wherever sin is ... it is accompanied with the wrath and vengeance of God.”

Man is not only born sinful, he sins every day of his life. Every person is guilty before God. If human beings continue to reject the good news of salvation in Christ, refuse to confess and repent of sins, God will eventually “give them up.” Three times over in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28, we are told that “God gave them up.” Man, says Paul, prefers to worship and adore the creature rather than the Creator, “wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves” (v 24). “God gave them up unto vile affections” (v 26). Paul goes on to specify horrible crimes of corruption and perversion and then summarises, “and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (v 28).

Paul gives a general description of human sinfulness in Romans 1:29–31. His description of the total depravity of man in two prose poems is terribly eloquent; an awesome resounding *onomatopoeia* moving the emotions to a sense of horror.

No one escapes from sin. In Romans 1, Paul argues that Gentiles are sinners. In Romans 2, he says that Jews are sinners. In Romans 3, he concludes that all are sinners without exception. In Romans 3:9–18, his indictment against sinful man “is a mosaic of Old Testament passages woven together into a terrifying composite picture” (Buswell):

*We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they
are all under sin; As it is written,*

*There is none righteous,
no, not one:*

*There is none that understandeth,
there is none that seeketh after God.*

*They are all gone out of the way,
they are together become unprofitable;
there is none that doeth good,
no, not one.*

*Their throat is an open sepulchre;
with their tongues they have used deceit;
the poison of asps is under their lips:*

*Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:
Their feet are swift to shed blood:*

*Destruction and misery are in their ways:
And the way of peace have they not known:
There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

Referring to Romans 3:9–18, the reader may say, “That is too severe. Not all human beings are like that.” Although it is true that not every human being is characterised by all these attributes of corruption, yet all these attributes of corruption are found in humanity and seen all too often. For instance, not every block of a fallen building is broken or marred in the same way; similarly not every person is guilty in all these ways. Although this may be so, yet every block in a fallen building is a part of the ruin and is characterised thereby.

A story is told of a missionary in a heathen land who once read the first chapter of Romans to a group of people who had never heard any part of the Bible before. As the terrible description of sin and corruption was read out, an old man was seen to be extremely angry, making menacing gestures.

After the reading was done, the old man suddenly leaped to his feet and shouted, “Who told you all about me?”

No one who examines himself honestly can deny what the Scripture teaches about his sinful nature. The fallen man, though not guilty of many of the individual crimes mentioned, has to confess, “That is the race to which I belong; I am of that kind. I belong to that ruin.”

Calvin’s observation concerning man’s sinful and self-destructive ways is true, “When man add sin to sin, God loosens his reigns, and allows them to destroy themselves.”

SALVATION IN CHRIST

Only Jesus Christ can save us from our sins.

When confronted by the thrice holy God “high and lifted up” (Isa 6:1), Isaiah immediately realised he was thrice sinful, and cried out, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa 6:5).

Isaiah was given a vision of the Lord and he saw his wretchedness. Today, such a vision is found in the Gospels where we see Christ supremely revealed in all His perfection and holiness. Such a vision of Christ should convict us, and condemn us as sinners. When we see how good Christ is, we see how bad we are. Jesus in history is the best evidence that man is a fallen being, far short of the pattern.

We must not forget the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised, “When he [the Spirit of Truth] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). This was Jesus’ promise concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The wicked world is

unconvicted, unconvinced, and unconcerned; but like it or not, conviction of sin comes when Spirit-filled men faithfully preach the Spirit-inspired Word of God. The great need of the world today is for faithful men and women who will preach the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. The consecrated preaching of the gospel accompanied by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit will see true repentance, and a genuine conversion of souls to the Lord.

WHAT IS SIN?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines sin as “any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God.” These words are based upon 1 John 3:4, “sin is the transgression of the law.”

God tells man, “Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev 19:2). But man, when confronted with the thrice holy God, finds himself totally guilty, utterly dirty and absolutely sinful. When the prophet Isaiah saw a revelation of the holy character of God (Isa 6:1–6), he recognised immediately his own sinful corruption.

Thus, sin is not just crossing the line (transgressing God’s holy commandments), but also missing the mark (falling short of God’s holy character). “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

ORIGIN OF SIN

Sin first took place in heaven, not earth. It was an angel who sinned first, not man. 1 John 3:8 tells us that “the devil sinneth from the beginning.” Lucifer, a chief angel, rebelled against God and fell into sin (Isa 14:12–14; Ezek 28:11–19). Lucifer became Satan. He was banished from heaven, and cast down to earth (Rev 12:9). When Lucifer fell, he did not fall alone (Rev 12:4). In Jude 6 we are told that other angels fell with him, “the angels which kept not their first estate,

but left their own habitation.” The parallel verse, 2 Peter 2:4, speaks of “the angels that sinned.”

The root cause of Satan’s sin was his pride (1 Tim 3:6). Consider his five proud “I”s in Isaiah 14:13–14. The centre of PRIDE is the letter “I.” Satan was also a liar and a murderer from the beginning. Jesus said, “He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44).

When Satan was cast down to earth, he tempted man. He had the intention to kill man through his lies. His falsehood brought about the fall of man. Satan lied, man believed. Big mistake! Man died! This death is: (1) physical death, (2) spiritual death (i.e., alienation from fellowship with God), and (3) eternal death (i.e., eternal condemnation in the lake of fire).

As Christians we must be on our guard against the lies of Satan. We must be wary too of his agents. Beware if anyone comes to you with another gospel, another Jesus, and another spirit (2 Cor 11:4). In these last days, false prophets and false Christs abound (Matt 24:5, 11, 24). Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). They look good, but they are full of poison. Many snakes look very colourful, but they are the most poisonous. “Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgement” (John 7:24). “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matt 7:15–16).

ORIGINAL SINLESSNESS OF MAN

As recorded in Genesis 1 and 2, man was originally created in a holy state. Man was made in the image of God. This image is spiritual, implying moral likeness and correspondence,

with complete absence of sin, and with harmonious dominion over God's creation.

The dominion exercised by man over creation saw the beginnings of productive economic activity. This is implied in the words of Genesis 2:8, "And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed." We also read in verses 15–17, "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

True to his appointment as God's assistant ruler over creation, man began to study and classify the world in which he lived in. It needs to be pointed out that in Genesis 2:18–20 man exists on an entirely different level from the rest of the animal world. As such, sexual intercourse with an animal is strictly forbidden, even condemned in the Scriptures.

God knowing the needs of Adam created for him a most suitable helper in Eve (Gen 2:21–25). The bringing together of Adam and Eve by God clearly teaches the uniqueness and sanctity of the monogamous marriage relationship.

It was truly paradise on earth in Eden when there was no sin.

TWO SPECIAL TREES

There were two special, historical trees in the garden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What do these two trees mean, and why were they put there?

It is clear that the two trees were put there to test man. “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:16–17). God did not make man robots. He gave men a free will. Would they choose to obey God and gain eternal life, or would they disobey God and receive judgement?

The tree of life has spiritual symbolic meaning. Eating of the tree of life symbolises, or is somehow connected with, living forever. “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen 3:22–24).

In the garden, if Adam had eaten of the tree of life in a free and decisive act of the will, he would have gained eternal life, and become a child of God forever. Passing the test he would have been promoted to a position of permanent spiritual sonship. If Adam had eaten of the tree of life, we would all be born holy having eternal life. The second tree: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—must also be understood in the symbolical sense. The meaning of the words “good and evil” is symbolical and ethical. If the tree of the knowledge of good and evil signifies ethical knowledge of good and evil, how does partaking of the fruit make one “know” good and evil?

When God commanded man not to eat of the forbidden tree, surely man must have known in his mind that obedience to

God was good, and disobedience bad. Pure knowledge of the mind can thus be ruled. It is not theoretical knowledge.

There is another kind of knowledge, the knowledge of experience, the knowledge of practice (Deut 1:39; Isa 7:15–16; 2 Sam 14:17–20). When Eve saw that the tree was, “a tree to be desired to make one wise” (Gen 3:6), she lusted to taste it. She wanted to experience the pride of life.

By eating the forbidden fruit, man made a choice. In a free act of his will, the decision was made to go against God’s commandment no matter what. This act of disobedience led to man’s fall into sin and to eternal condemnation (Rev 20:6, 14).

Sin is sweet but deadly.

TEMPTATION OF ADAM AND EVE

As already noted, the first sin was committed not by a human being, but by an angel. It was not the first man, Adam, but a chief angel by the name of Lucifer that fell into sin first. His fall is recorded in Isaiah 14:12–14 and Ezekiel 28:12–19. He was God’s anointed cherub, created perfect and very beautiful in the beginning. He was made chief over the other angels, and served in the very presence of God. But he became proud and rebelled against God (1 Tim 3:6). Lucifer the light bearer became Satan the slanderer and murderer.

Satan is a tempter. He tempted man to sin against God. For this reason, man tries to push the blame and punishment away from himself. Eve, for instance, excused herself by blaming the serpent, “the serpent beguiled me,” and Adam blamed Eve, “the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me ...” (Gen 3:12–13).

Man has only himself to blame. He had a choice. He could have chosen not to sin, not to yield to temptation, but he made a conscious decision to go against God and His Word. Man was not without help either. Even in the garden, if man had cried to God for help, it would have been given him. The Bible tells us, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13).

Satan began his temptation of Eve by casting doubt on God’s Word (v 1b). The temptation continued with a distortion of God’s Word, “Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (cf. Gen 2:17). Although Eve corrected the Serpent, she added another of her own, “Neither shall ye touch it” (v 3). Sensing that Eve was not sure of God’s Word, Satan went in for the kill with this lie, “Ye shall not surely die” (v 4). God had said explicitly, “thou shalt surely die,” a double death—physical and spiritual. When man sinned, he truly died in these three ways: He became (1) dead in sin (Eph 2:1), (2) subject to physical death (Gen 3:19), and (3) liable to “the second death” which is eternal condemnation in the lake of fire (Rev 20:6, 14).

Satan seduced Eve with a half-truth. Half-truths are still lies, and lies are deadly (v 5). God had named the tree “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” and after man sinned we read, “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil” (v 22). These words mean that man has failed the test, disobeyed God, and has come to a state of confirmed sinfulness. Man has experiential knowledge of good and evil by having made a responsible choice. There is no longer any good in man, and there is no hope of salvation in him whatsoever. If man is to be saved, it must come from Another, and He is Christ.

Jesus Christ—the greater Adam—was likewise tempted (Matt 4:1–11), but He resisted the devil successfully because He knew, quoted, and obeyed the Scriptures: “it is written ... it is written ... it is written” (vv 4, 7, 10). The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. Use it to fight against Satan and His temptations. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4). We are most vulnerable to the temptations of Satan when we fail to know God’s Word well.

NATURE OF TEMPTATION

The detailed nature of temptation is in Genesis 3:6. Sin has a threefold nature. Eve was tempted to sin after a threefold manner as referred to in 1 John 2:16. “The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” The lust of the flesh is carnal appetite and fleshly desire contrary to the will of God; the woman saw that the fruit was “good for food.” The lust of eyes is greed or covetousness; the woman saw that the fruit was “pleasant to the eyes.” The pride of life is selfishness and rebellion; the woman saw that the fruit was of “a tree to be desired to make one wise.”

All the different kinds of sin may be classified under the above three general categories of (1) the lust of the flesh (gluttony, pornography, etc.), (2) the lust of the eyes (envy, jealousy, etc), and (3) the pride of life (idolatry, self-esteem, etc.).

Christ was tempted in the same threefold way in the wilderness (Luke 4:1–15). Christ was tempted (1) to turn stones into bread to satisfy hunger (i.e., the lust of the flesh), (2) to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to make a display to the eye (i.e., the lust of the eyes), and (3) to possess all the kingdoms of the world under Satanic leadership (i.e., the pride of life).

The first Adam failed the test of temptation, but the greater Adam—Christ Himself—passed the test most excellently, and earned salvation for us. “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:18–19). We cannot save ourselves. Only Jesus can save us.

WHO WAS THE GREATER SINNER, ADAM OR EVE?

The question of who is more culpable, the man or the woman, is irrelevant. Both Adam and Eve were tempted, and both fell into sin. In the most important doctrinal passages, such as Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, Adam as the representative man was mentioned, not Eve.

It is interesting to note that in warning the Corinthian church, which was being corrupted by heresies, Paul wrote, “I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor 11:3). However, do know that Paul was applying his words generally to both men and women in the church who were in danger of being deceived by false teachers.

In 1 Timothy 2:8–15, Paul does refer to the tendency of the woman to be deceived, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” Nevertheless, Adam was equally if not more at fault because he was supposed to be the leader and not the follower. In the temptation, he turned his God-given headship over to Eve. Big mistake! Adam as the head was entirely blameworthy.

The difficult statement in verse 15, “Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing,” is best explained as

a reference to Genesis 3:15, that is, the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the Serpent's head. It is significant to note that it is the childbearing, i.e., a particular childbearing, and not just any childbearing. The Greek definite article—"the"—used with the word "childbearing" in 1 Timothy 2:15 points specifically to the virgin birth of Christ. The woman, though deceived and implicated in the transgression, is just as eligible for salvation through Christ—the virgin-born Seed—as the man is. Both men and women are equally sinful, and both can equally obtain the same benefits of salvation if they believe in Christ. God is no respecter of persons.

WHAT IS ORIGINAL SIN?

Original sin is that moral corruption in which every human being is born with, and it consists of both the judicial guilt and the actual corruption of humanity which results from Adam's sin. The Westminster Shorter Catechism states, "The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it."

It is clear (1) that the guilt of Adam's first sin is judicially imputed to us on the representative principle, and (2) that the guilt of our corruption and of our particular sins is imputed to us because it is in us individually and collectively as a race.

It is important to understand that sin is not only what we do, but also what we are. Sin, in the form of corruption, is in our very nature. It is in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans that Paul most vividly discusses "the sin that dwelleth in me." He says, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh [i.e., my fallen human nature] dwelleth no good thing."

He cries out in anguish, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

But prideful sinners, full of self-esteem and super-ego often fail to see this. This is tragic, for until man acknowledges his sin, he will not come to the Saviour.

Sinfulness is the root of man’s nature, and the sins are its fruits. Romans 5:12–21 is the most extensive commentary on the sin of Adam to be found anywhere in the Bible. Here Paul teaches that by the representative act of Adam all his descendants naturally become sinners and consequently face the punishment of death.

The representative principle is clearly taught in the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

“Question 13: Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created? Answer: Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.

“Question 16: Did all mankind fall in Adam’s first transgression? Answer: The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.

“Question 17: Into what estate did the fall bring mankind? Answer: The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

“Question 18: Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell? Answer: The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of

his whole nature which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

“Question 19: What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell? Answer: All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.”

We are born in sin and are dead in sin. If we are to live forever we need to be born again.

That the sin of Adam was a representative act involving all of his natural descendants is evident from the plain and direct statements of the Scripture, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12).

The words “all have sinned” in this verse do not mean merely that all men have sinned at some time or other, but that all sinned representatively when Adam sinned. Likewise the obedience of Christ is said to be a representative act by which man can be made alive when they are born again in Christ. By way of illustration, when the Brazilian soccer team won the World Cup, it was all Brazil that won even though not every Brazilian citizen was on the field. The team represented the nation.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14–15, Paul wrote, “that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” If you believe in Christ, you shall be saved. For those who are saved, Christ our Saviour is our Perfect Representative.

Therefore, sin and death came into the world through the disobedience and failure of Adam. But praise be to God for the Greater Adam—Jesus Christ the Lord—who by His obedience and righteousness had gained the free gift of eternal life for all (Rom 5:17–19). Calvin said, “By Christ’s obedience, he has wiped off our transgressions; by his sacrifice, appeased the divine anger; by his blood, washed away our stains; by his cross, borne our curse; and by his death, made satisfaction for us.” This free gift of salvation in Christ is infinitely sufficient for all and is offered to all.

Jesus Christ is the answer to Adam’s sin which led to universal death in mankind. In 1 Corinthians 15:22, we find the words, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” This is also stated in 1 Corinthians 15:45, “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [i.e., Christ] was made a quickening spirit.” Paul continues, “The first man is of the earth, earthy [cf. Gen 2:7, 3:19]: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor 15:47–49).

Jesus Christ is the Life-Giver. He has the power to give life. He has the power to raise the dead, He is the source of everlasting life. That Christ is eternally the Giver of life is clearly set forth in John 1:4. “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” Christ is pre-eminently the life-giver (John 5:40, 6:33, 51). He is “the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25; 14:6; 20:31).

Man is hopeless without Christ. Christ is the Hope of glory. If we want to enjoy heaven with God, we need to repent of our sins, and believe in Christ. Otherwise, death and hell are our final destination, and the lake of fire, our eternal abode.

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25–26).

Do not delay, believe in Jesus today!

WHO PUT JESUS ON THE CROSS?

As sinful human beings, we were the ones who put Jesus on the cross. By the representative principle, all of us were there at Calvary. All of us were personally involved in doing despite to the Son of God: I mocked him. I spat in His face. I slapped and punched Him. I put the crown of thorns on His head. I nailed Him to the cross. I speared His side. I derided Him and challenged Him, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross!” (Matt 27:40).

Now, let no one put the blame on the Jews alone; Gentiles are equally guilty for putting Jesus on the cross. Buswell rightly pointed out, “A Gentile judge sought to wash his hands of his obvious responsibility. Gentile soldiers put on Him the purple robe and the crown of thorns. Gentile soldiers drove the nails into His hands and feet. A Gentile spear pierced His side. Gentiles cast lots over His garments. Jew and Gentile together, the entire human race, are guilty.”

By the representative principle, both Jews and Gentiles stand condemned before God for their heinous crime of putting Jesus on the cross. But herein is the love of God: “Christ was stripped of his garments that he might clothe us with righteousness; ... his naked body was exposed to the insults of men, that we may appear in glory before the judgement seat of God” (Calvin).

Unless we acknowledge our involvement in the original sin of man, we shall not be able to understand how we might

participate in the redemption purchased by Christ. Adam was our representative and we sinned in him. But in Christ, our Representative and Substitute, we are made righteous when we believe on Him (Rom 5:19).

COVENANT THEOLOGY

The word “covenant” (Hebrew *berith*, Greek *diatheke*) is used frequently throughout the Bible to mean any formal or informal arrangement, agreement, contract or treaty made between two or more parties. The word “covenant” can also mean a “will” or a “testament” (Heb 9:16–17). Sometimes a covenant simply means a promise made by one party to bless another without any conditions.

The term “New Testament” or “New Covenant” as contrasted with “Old Testament” or “Old Covenant” originated with the words of Jeremiah 31:31–33. This “new covenant” is referred to by Christ at the Last Supper (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). The Apostle Paul discussed at length the contrast between the New Testament and the Old Testament in 2 Corinthians 3:6–16 and Hebrews 7:22, 8:6–10, 9:4, 15–20, 10:16, 29, 12:24 (cf. 10:19ff), 13:20.

The “Old Testament” or “Old Covenant” refers to the period before Christ came. It was a period full of symbols and rituals administered by the priests in the temple. These objects pointed to the person and work of the Christ who was to come. When Christ finally came in the flesh, these symbols and rituals disappeared to make way for a new and better way of worship. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. ... But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (John 4:21, 23).

The “New Testament” or “New Covenant” refers to the spiritual relationship that every believer has in Christ which was entered in by faith. The New Covenant was ratified when the Son of God became the Son of man. When He died on the cross, He sealed the New Covenant with His blood. Christ’s redemptive work as foretold in the Old Testament was fulfilled in the New Testament which is a “better” testament (Heb 7:22). The Old was good, but the New is better.

COVENANT OF WORKS

The covenant of works was the first covenant God made with man in the garden. In this covenant, man was required to obey these two commandments of God: (1) “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen 1:28), and (2) “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:16–17).

The status of permanent spiritual holiness was not automatically given to Adam. He had to work for it. If Adam obeyed perfectly God’s covenant of works, he and his children would be eternally blessed by God with permanent spiritual sonship. If he disobeyed, divine judgement would come. So on the basis of his deeds, blessing or judgement would be determined.

Before the fall, salvation was by works, but after the fall, it can only be by grace. And so the Westminster Confession states, “The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.”

Adam as we all know failed, and fell into sin. Did God consign man to eternal destruction immediately? The Confession answers, “Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.” There is hope!

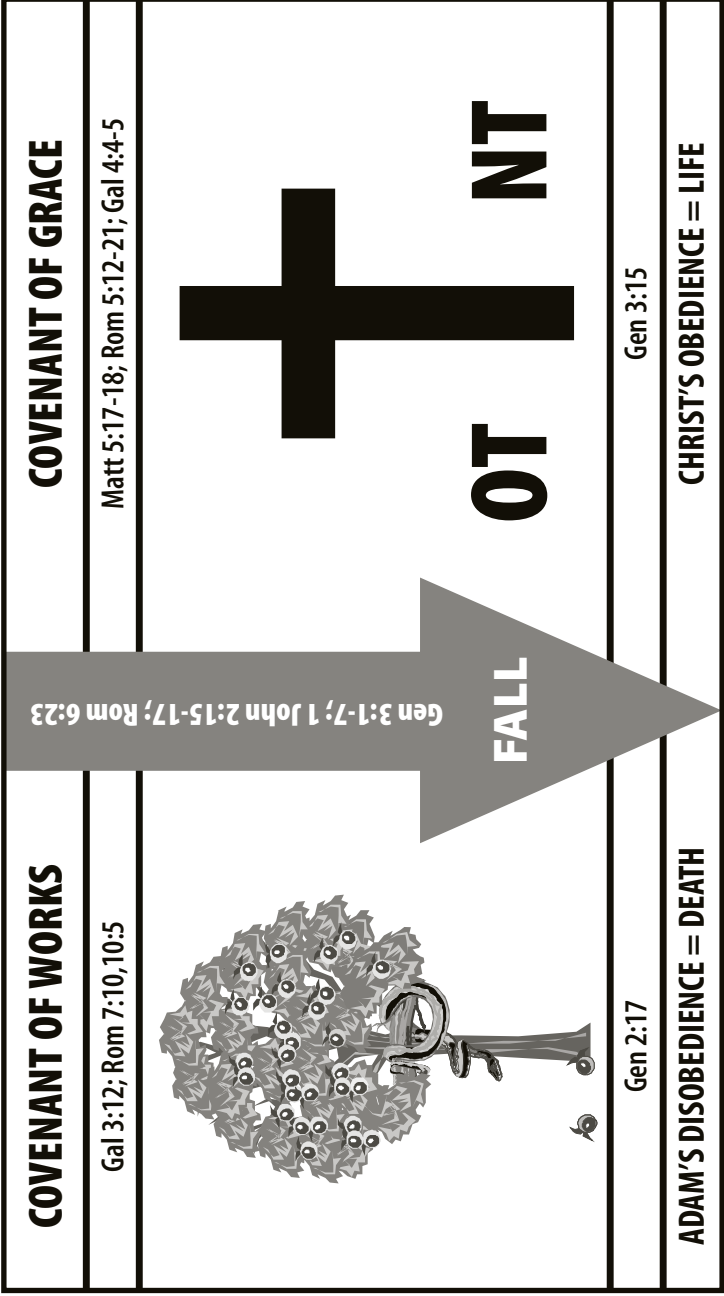
COVENANT OF GRACE

Yes, there is hope! God “is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

Since man failed to get eternal life through the covenant of works, God instituted another covenant called the covenant of grace. Man in his sin can no longer obtain eternal life by means of works. Adam’s banishment from the garden signifies the end of the covenant of works. Man has lost paradise, and his freedom to partake of the tree of life (Gen 3:22).

Paradise can only be regained by Christ, and the tree of life now must be given, not taken. Eternal life must be humbly received as a free gift. No longer can it be obtained by good works. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Tit 3:5).

Christ earned the righteousness we need to enter heaven by: (1) His perfect life of obedience to the commandments of God, and (2) His perfect sacrifice on the cross shedding His precious blood for the remission of sins.



Covenant Theology Illustrated

It is by God's pure mercy and love that we are saved. God instituted the covenant of grace in Genesis 3:15. God promised a Saviour through the seed of a woman—a virgin conception and birth. This virgin-born Saviour finally came, the Son of God Himself. What God had promised, He finally gave, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

DID MAN COME FROM THE APES?

God created human beings special, in His image. Psalm 8:4–5 tells us that we were not made slightly higher than the animals, but slightly lower than the angels. There is a lot of difference between man and animals. “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.” God promotes man, but Science demotes man. It is an insult to God and to man, to say that man, made in the image of God, came from the apes.

Some theorise that God used the process of evolution to create man. Through millions of years, God made man from the apes. These so-called Christian scientists claim that man was once upon a time non-human, then sub-human, and finally human. Such a view of the origin of man is of course distilled nonsense. Man was created from lifeless material and not derived from any living organism (Gen 3:19).

Adam was uniquely created by God from the dust of the ground, and then made alive through His creative breath (Gen 2:7). Breath symbolising Spirit is a common metaphor throughout the Scriptures, “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Ps 33:6). The Spirit breathes into man the spiritual life of regeneration (John 3:8). Thus, the breath of

God in Genesis 2:7 symbolises the special, spiritual creative act whereby man was made a living being. As a living being, the soul of man was created in the image of God. This was not the case with the souls or lives of the beasts (Gen 1:20–21, 24).

Another proof against the theory of evolution is the creation of Eve (Gen 2:21–22). Eve did not come into existence through evolution, but by special creation—she was specially and beautifully crafted by God from the rib of Adam. There was a reason for this. It has been poetically said, “woman was not taken from man’s feet to be his inferior, nor from his head to be his superior, but from his side to be his companion and equal.”

HOW OLD IS THE EARTH?

The earth is young not old. Archbishop Ussher (1581–1656) said the world began in 4004 BC. Although it is unlikely that 4004 BC is the precise year of the world’s genesis (considering the gaps in the genealogies found in Genesis), it is not far off. It is important to understand that the genealogical gaps in Genesis are not huge gaps of hundreds of thousands or millions of years. Furthermore, not every genealogy contains gaps. Insofar as the genealogy of the Pre-Flood Patriarchs in Genesis 5 (cf. Luke 3:36–38) is concerned, the internal evidence reveals no such gaps. The years between the Creation of Adam and the Flood of Noah would thus add up to a total of 1656. The fact that Lamech, the ninth from Adam, spoke of the curse of the Fall in Genesis 5:29 reveals that the events of Eden were still fresh in his mind.

Dr John Whitcomb argued against the theory that man was created hundreds of thousands or even millions of years ago. In his book—*The Early Earth*—he wrote, “In the first place, to stretch the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 to cover a period of over a hundred thousand years is to do violence to

the chronological framework of all subsequent Bible history. By means of biblical analogies, it is indeed possible to find gaps, especially in the genealogy of Genesis 11. But those very analogies serve to limit our time scale for Genesis 11. The gap between Amram and Moses was three hundred years, not thirty thousand (cf. Exod 6:20; Num 3:17–19, 27–28). And the gap between Joram and Uzziah in Matthew 1:8 was fifty years, not five thousand.

“In the second place, it is impossible to imagine that Reu, Serug, and Nahor, to say nothing of Lamech, Noah, and Shem, were savage, illiterate cave-dwellers of the stone-age period. The fourth chapter of Genesis with its clear indication of cultural achievement, including forging of ‘all implements of bronze and iron’ (v 22), and Genesis 6, with its account of the great ark-building project, make such a theory completely untenable.”

IS SCIENCE THE AUTHORITY OF OUR FAITH?

Dr Whitcomb provides an excellent answer to the above question: “Our understanding of the basic outline of man’s earliest history must come from Scripture rather than from science.

“The fact that the first eleven chapters of Genesis cannot be harmonised with evolutionary schemes of earth history is evident by the fact that neo-orthodox and neo-liberal scholars have long since given up the effort of taking those chapters as serious history. It is the privilege of these men to dispense with an historical Adam if they so desire. But they do not at the same time have the privilege of claiming that Jesus said: ‘For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: ... But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?’ (John 5:46–47). Our Lord also insisted that ‘... Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law [and this includes Genesis],

till all be fulfilled' (Matt 5:18). If Genesis is not historically dependable, then Jesus is not a dependable guide to all truth, and we are without a Saviour.

"If Adam didn't fall from original righteousness, then there is no sin, and Christ died for nothing. If universal death through Adam is a myth, then so is the doctrine of the resurrection, and the Apostle Paul is a false witness (1 Cor 15:15). The full historicity of the Genesis account of Adam and Eve is absolutely crucial to the entire God-revealed plan of salvation.

"Our basic problem today in the question of origins is not so much that we are ignorant of the theories and speculations of men. Our problem too often is that we know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God, and therefore deeply err in communicating God's message to modern man. May God be pleased to grant to each of us a renewing of our minds through submission to His special revelation of truth in His infallible Word, that we might prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Scripture, not science, is the sole and supreme authority of our faith.

THE GLOBAL FLOOD

The Bible speaks of a watery catastrophe of global proportions in Genesis 6–8. Those who attempt to marry science with the Bible, who question the historicity of Genesis, say that there has never been a divine destruction of human civilisation on a worldwide scale (2 Pet 3:4). They either reject the Genesis Flood as a myth or insist that it was but a local flood. What does the Bible say when read and studied honestly? In no uncertain terms, both the Old and New Testament testify of a global flood that never will be repeated. The destruction caused by the Genesis Flood was

both geographically and anthropologically universal. The waters covered every inch of the earth, and drowned every single human being save Noah and his family who were safe in the Ark.

By the time of Genesis 6, about 2000 years have transpired. Genesis 6:1 tells us that mankind has multiplied, and the earth was richly populated. What was the population like in terms of number? The biblical record does not provide an exact figure, but Dr Henry Morris in his book—*The Beginning of the World*—says a reasonable guess is possible: “Assuming that each family had only six children, and assuming that each generation (the time required for one cycle of birth, growth, marriage and childbearing) took 100 years, and also that the average lifespan was five generations, then the population at the end of Adam’s 930 years of life would have been approximately 80,000. At the time of the Flood (1656 years after Adam’s creation), the population would have been about 235,000,000 people. If a generation were 90 years instead of 100 years, the two numbers would be about 250,000 and 1,750,000,000 respectively. If each family had eight children per 100-year generation instead of six they would become one million and 25 billion, respectively!”

Genesis 6:2 tells us that “the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.” Who are the “sons of God”? One view says that the “sons of God” were the fallen angels who cohabitated with human daughters which created a monstrous generation of intensely wicked but extremely powerful men. The second view says that these “sons of God” were the godly sons of Seth (Gen 4:25–26) who married the ungodly daughters of Cain. This resulted in a whole new generation of unbelievers that threatened to wipe out the promised Messianic line (cf. Gen 3:15).

The main difficulty with the first view is that it appears to contradict what Jesus had said about angels that they do not marry (Matt 22:30). However, it is possible that these fallen angels took bodily possession of the men in order to cohabit with the women to satisfy their sinful lusts (Jude 6; 2 Pet 2:4). The second view is not without problems either. The term “sons of God” (*bene elohim*) has only been used in the Old Testament of angels and never of human beings (see Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7). Moreover, Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4 seem to connect this event in the time of Noah when angels were judged for going after strange flesh, committing fornication.

A harmony of these two views is possible. Fallen angels, to thwart God’s redemptive plan (Gen 3:15), possessed the bodies of male Sethites so as to impregnate female Cainites to produce a generation of monstrously wicked and fallen humanity of gigantic prowess and size. This was Satan’s second attempt to destroy the Messianic line; the first being Cain’s murder of Abel (Gen 4:8, 25).

God had to wipe out completely that wicked generation (Gen 6:11–13). God cannot fail. His plan cannot be thwarted. He always has His faithful remnant for “Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen 6:8–9). Through Noah, the promised Seed would eventually come (Luke 3:36).

God decreed that this wicked and violent pre-flood generation must be decimated. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air ... And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh,

wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die” (Gen 6:5–7, 17). What are the biblical evidences that this flood that God had brought down upon the earth was a global, not local, one?

The Bible speaks of the Flood in universal terms. Firstly, Genesis 7:19–20 says, “And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.” Since water must seek its own level, the Flood must have been global for all the mountains that were under the whole heaven to be covered. Take note of the universal expressions, “all the high hills,” and “under the whole heaven.” Leupold’s commentary is noteworthy, “A measure of the waters is now made by comparison with the only available standard for such waters—the mountains. They were said to have been ‘covered.’ Not merely a few but ‘all the high mountains under all the heavens.’ One of these expressions alone would almost necessitate the impression that the author intends to convey the idea of the absolute universality of the Flood, e.g., ‘all the high mountains.’ Yet since ‘all’ is known to be used in a relative sense, the writer removes all possible ambiguity by adding the phrase ‘under all the heavens.’ A double ‘all’ (*kol*) cannot allow for so relative a sense. It almost constitutes a Hebrew superlative. So we believe that the text disposes of the question of the universality of the Flood.” The Bible is clear when we read it through the eyes of faith.

Secondly, Genesis 7:11 and 8:13–14 tell us that the Flood lasted for 371 days. The Flood attained its maximum mountain-covering depth in six weeks, and remained at that level for an additional 16 weeks (Gen 7:17–20, 24). Such a long rain-spell could only have been caused through a supernatural puncturing of the pre-Flood atmospheric canopy.

Thirdly, Genesis 6:13–16 reveals the size of the Ark. “And God said unto Noah, ... Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.”

Consider how big the Ark was. One cubit could either be 17.5 inches or 20.4 inches. Whitcomb and Morris based their calculation of the Ark’s dimension by using the shorter cubit. In *The Genesis Flood*, they wrote, “According to this standard, the Ark was 437.5 feet long, 72.92 feet wide, and 43.75 feet high. Since it had three decks (Gen 6:16), it had a total deck area of approximately 95,700 square feet.” This would be equivalent to 80 five-room HDB flats! A whole point block! The Ark was thus not a small family-sized boat for Noah and his family, but a large sea-worthy vessel, the size of a large Star Cruise ship. Surely the need for such a huge Ark which took over a century to build anticipated a global deluge. If it had been merely a local flood, it would have been more reasonable for God to tell Noah to move out of the region of destruction. Even if Noah were required to stay, a small *sampan* or boat would have sufficed. The size and need for the Ark most certainly point to a global flood.

In Genesis 2:6, the Bible says that there was no rain upon the earth as a mist came forth out of the ground to water the plants. When Noah preached to his generation that a global flood would destroy the earth, he preached to a people who had never seen rain. It was Noah’s faith in God’s Word that caused him to build the Ark in preparation for the judgement to come. Hebrews 11:7 says, “By faith Noah, being warned of



HDB Point Block (Size of Noah's Ark)

God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

It is also significant to note that there was no rainbow until after the Flood. God gave the rainbow as a sign that He would not destroy the world again by water. Genesis 9:12–15 says, “And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.”

The rainbow undoubtedly points to a global flood. If it was a local flood, then God has broken His promise, for today we still see various parts of the world being hit by localised flooding especially after heavy rains. God did not promise that there would be no local floods; He only promised that there would no longer be a global flood. Whenever you see a rainbow, remember the global flood.

In 2 Peter 3:3–7, the Apostle Peter used the Genesis Flood to warn the people of a future universal destruction by fire: “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the

heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

Peter used the Genesis Flood as an illustration to prove the certainty and universality of the future fiery judgement. Whitcomb and Morris argue, “In speaking of the events of the second and third days of creation, Peter uses the terms ‘heavens from of old, and an earth’ in a sense that is obviously universal. By the same token, no one can deny that Peter also uses the terms ‘heavens that now are, and the earth’ in a strictly universal sense. Otherwise, Peter would be speaking of the creation and final destruction of only a part of the earth!” The Apostle Peter’s infallible commentary on the extent of the Genesis Flood settles decisively that the waters indeed covered the whole earth.

There will be another global catastrophe, this time no more by water but by fire. Will the destruction by fire come soon? “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps 90:12).

WORLD AFTER THE FLOOD

The world after the Flood is significantly different from the world before the Flood. The Flood caused certain geological and anthropological changes in the world. The geological change is in the break up of the landmass into different continents and in climatic conditions. We are told in Psalm 104:6–9 that the Flood (i.e., “the waters stood above the mountains”) receded into the deep ocean trenches (e.g., the Mariana Trench is 35810 feet or 10915 metres deep). The earthshaking and earth-changing phenomenon in the Genesis Flood not only caused the ocean basins to plunge in depth, it also caused the mountains to tower in height (“they go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys”). The great continents separated by the oceans and their shorelines

are a result of the Flood (“Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth”).

Not only did the earth’s topography change, there was a change in the climate too. With the pre-Flood “firmament” (Gen 1:6–7) burst, the conducive, life sustaining, relatively uniform weather is no more. There was no rain before the Flood (Gen 2:5), but the Flood introduced not only rain but also great variableness in the world’s climate: “cold and heat,” “summer and winter” (Gen 8:22, 9:13–16).

The anthropological change is in the drastically shortened lifespan of man. The pre-Flood people could live to nearly a millennium (Gen 5). After the Flood, with the protective “firmament” destroyed, the earth and its inhabitants have been subjected to the harmful ultraviolet radiation that hastened the aging process. Instead of a millennium, the lifespan of man is much reduced to a century (Gen 11), threescore and ten, i.e., 70 years plus a decade or so more if strength permits (Ps 90:10).

ORIGIN OF NATIONS AND LANGUAGES

How did the nations of the world come about? Why are there so many languages in the world? The Bible has the answer in Genesis 10:1–32, 11:1–29, and 1 Chronicles 1:4–34.

All the nations of world can trace their roots back to one of the three sons of Noah, viz. Shem, Ham or Japheth. It is stated in Genesis 9:19, “These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.” Of Japheth it is said, “By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations” (Gen 10:5); of Ham, “These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations” (Gen 10:20); and of Shem,

“These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations” (Gen 10:31). After the division in the time of Peleg (Gen 10:25) when God smashed the ecumenical tower of Babel and confused their language (Gen 11:1–9), the families of Shem, Ham and Japheth separated and occupied different places.

Generally speaking, Shem moved eastward (Asia), Ham southward (Africa), and Japheth north and westward (Europe).

WHY IS BLOOD FORBIDDEN FROM MAN’S DIET?

Created in the image of God, man was intended and is destined to have dominion over all the earth and all the creatures upon it. However, because of sin, this destiny is not to be realised in this age (Heb 2:8–9). Nevertheless, the intended dominion of man over the earth is to be held before the human race as a goal and standard. This is clearly seen in God’s command to Noah and his posterity to rule the earth even after mankind became sinful (Gen 1:26ff cf. 8:15–9:17).

Although man is to rule the earth, the conditions to that rule have changed. For instance, the fear of man is now to be an aspect of his rule over the other creatures, all of which are said to be given to him, delivered into his hand (Gen 9:2–3). Before the fall there was one restriction, the forbidden tree. Now, he is strictly forbidden to eat blood (Gen 9:4). This restriction is related in the immediate context to the sacredness of human life (Gen 9:5–6. See also the sixth commandment, Exod 20:13); but more than this, the Levitical ritual instructions (See especially Lev 17:10–14. Other passages in which the eating of blood is forbidden are Lev 3:17; 7:26, 27; 19:26; Deut 12:16,23; 15:23) specifically connect the prohibition against eating blood with the doctrine of the atonement: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an

atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev 17:11). Christ died by the shedding of His blood on the cross. Thus His life was made an offering for sin.

There seems to be no other reason for the prohibition of eating blood than the two reasons given above, namely: (1) to teach the sacredness of human life, and (2) to teach the significance of the atonement in which Christ was to give up His life, by the shedding of His blood, for the salvation of our souls. Calvin commented, “The eating of blood is prohibited because it was consecrated to God in order to make expiation.”

RULE OF MAN OVER THE WORLD

Noah and his posterity inherited the same commission to rule the world that God originally gave to Adam. But the commission was no longer given in a setting of sinlessness and harmony. The commission to rule is now set against a background of sin and disharmony. The earth has just been devastated and the human race almost annihilated. Mankind remains sinful. Murder when committed must be dealt with forcefully (Gen 9:6). Drunkenness and immorality appear in human affairs (Gen 9:20–27). Men conspire together to oppose the sovereign rule of God (Gen 11:1–9).

Despite the sinful conditions of the post-Flood world, God continued to maintain a covenant relationship with man (Gen 9:8–17). The God of the Covenant did not leave man without His Word, but preserved His Word by the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1–3; Rom 3:1–2). Man in his sin has to struggle greatly to fulfil the purpose of God under a covenant relationship, and will succeed only when divine providence makes it possible. Man’s success is dependent entirely upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

The New Testament predicts our reigning as kings with Christ in His future kingdom, not in this present age (Rev 5:10, 20:6). But now we are in the position of servants and stewards in this world. Perfect rule can only come from a perfect Man, and He is none other than Jesus Christ—the God-Man. Christ will return one day, and we His saints shall reign with him a thousand years (Rev 20:6).

IS THE GOD OF THE BIBLE THE GOD OF THE JEWS ONLY?

The Old Testament speaks a lot about the Jewish people. A careless reading of the Bible may lead one to conclude that God was entirely preoccupied with a small group of people in a little land at the Eastern end of the Mediterranean, ignoring the spiritual interests of the surrounding nations, not to mention India, China, and the then unknown western region.

First, it ought to be clarified that the Bible does not claim to give the history of God’s dealings with all the peoples of the world, but a particular part of world history in which the “oracles of God” have been preserved in a special way. This specialised recording of history should not be taken to mean that God is uninterested in the affairs of the other nations.

Buswell rightly noted that “a certain kind of particularistic view of history is essential to the Christian faith, and if this kind of particularism is rejected, Christianity is rejected.” It must be said that the particularism of the Bible is not one of racial or geographical favouritism. In fact, it is Israel and the Church which are most vigorously denounced. Buswell wrote, “The Old Testament contains a hundred times as much criticism of the sins and idolatries of Israel as of the sins of the heathen. The New Testament covers a brief moment of history when compared with the Old Testament, but, in proportion there is far greater emphasis on the sins

of professing Christians than on the sins of out-and-out heathen.”

God has an international view of the world. “Red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight.” God works through Israel and the Church to bless the whole world. Did not the Lord tell Abram, “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:3)? The Lord Jesus Christ may be a Jew but He is the Saviour of the world. Did not the angels say, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10–11)? Did not the angels sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14)? It is thus false to say that God is only interested in one nation and not in all nations.

UNIVERSALITY OF GOD’S PROVIDENCE

The book of Genesis assumes the universality of God’s providence. God spoke directly to Pharaoh (Gen 12:17) and to Abimelech (Gen 20:3). God told Jonah to preach to the Ninevites, and not merely the Jews. Amos presented a God who is not only supreme over all the surrounding nations, but also the Ethiopians, Egyptians, Philistines and Syrians. In the New Testament the wise men from the East came to worship Christ at the time of His birth. This is further evidence that, though biblical history is largely Palestinian, yet the God of the Jews is the God of all peoples.

In Romans, Paul wrote emphatically on the universal sovereignty of God. He argued that the reason men are found in the darkness of heathen idolatry is that they have turned their backs upon the revelation they had. It was not God who rejected men, but men who rejected God. The light of nature is sufficient that idolaters are “without excuse” (Rom 1:18–32). Paul quoted Psalm 19 which declares that

the evidence of God is seen in nature and this knowledge has gone out into all the earth (Rom 10:18).

The Apostle Peter, in Acts 10:34–35, recognised the universality of divine providence when he said, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” The God whom the Apostle Paul preached in his missionary journeys is “the living God which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein, who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:15–17).

Considering the many references to the spread of the Gospel and the mission of the Messiah, as set forth for example in such prophetic passages as Isaiah 2:1–4, it is reasonable to say that the Old Testament Prophets as well as the New Testament Apostles were no less conscious of God’s universal providence than the most missionary-minded pastor in a Bible-believing church today.

The Christian faith demands all men everywhere to believe in Jesus Christ and accept His atoning work in order to be saved (Acts 4:12, 1 Cor 3:11). The truth that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of the world is something which Christianity cannot surrender nor compromise. The atonement through the cross of Christ is presented unequivocally as an event accomplished once for all. Christ having been raised from among the dead, dies not again. Death no longer has lordship of Him. The death which He died, He died with reference to sin once decisively. The life which He lives He lives with reference to God (Rom 6:9–10).

Even in the Old Testament, men were saved by Christ. Abraham was a “Christian.” Jesus who knew Abraham spoke of his faith, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. ... Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:56–58). Moses likewise made his choice, “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Heb 11:25–26). That Moses chose the reproaches of Christ, and that Christ was in the Old Testament is the natural assumption (cf. 1 Cor 10:4 “the Rock was Christ”) of one whose thoughts are steeped in the biblical view of human affairs. Besides, there can scarcely be any doubt that Jude intended to say that it was Christ who saved a people out of Egypt (Jude 5).

The Christ of the Bible is a figure of worldwide proportions filling all time and appearing in all places. Christ did not begin to be when He was born in Bethlehem. “Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Mic 5:2). Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah were all saved by faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ. And the same thing is true of Job; of the king of Nineveh when Jonah preached; of Naaman the Syrian (2 Kgs 5); and of the magi who came from the east to worship Christ when He was born.

There is reason to believe that the living presence of Jesus Christ and the living presence of the Holy Spirit who would “convict the world,” does operate in the darkest portions of the world through the Gospel and the Bible. The Westminster Confession states: “Those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.”

We must remember that the Bible does not record the events of history in an impersonal or mechanical way. We must not discount the personal superintendence of God over all the events that have happened in the world. We must recognise that God's particular intervention in world affairs is always assumed throughout the Bible. The Holy Spirit breathes where He chooses. The Bible clearly teaches that God has His elect in every race and language and tribe in all the world. It is clearly taught that whoever is eternally lost, is lost because of his rejection of the grace of God in Christ. "Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

We can confidently state that from all the world, our God will save His people. Our personal Saviour is the great Shepherd of the sheep. We must always keep the fact clearly in mind that the divinely sanctioned way through which the Gospel is to be brought to the lost is through born-again believers preaching the Word of God in all its fullness. As we present and defend biblical history, we need not be embarrassed at all over the narrowness of the doctrine of salvation through the atonement of Christ and through Him alone, for our Christ is Lord of all. He is the eternal and omnipresent Son of God. We will do well to note that "the gospel cannot be published without instantly driving the world to rage" (Calvin).

A GOLDEN AGE ON EARTH

It is commonly known that the major religious philosophies of the world pay considerable attention to the concept of a "golden age." For example, the Marxian philosophy has advanced the idea of a golden age to be brought about by inevitable economic processes through the proletarian revolution. Marxism is atheistic in its prevailing expressions, and its hope lies in an optimistic view of the blind forces of nature. It is foolishness, no less!

Christianity teaches quite differently from other systems “in that the golden age is to be brought about not through natural processes or through humanistic programmes, but by the personal intervention of God in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom in visible form upon the earth, and to bring about an age of blessedness in which God’s creative purpose and redemptive programme will come to their full vindication and consummation” (Buswell).

The Bible presents God’s redemptive programme as realised only in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Every event that happens on earth has been foreordained by God. The unchanging plan and universal scope of God’s redemption in Christ and His offer of grace is clearly revealed in John 3:16, 1 John 2:2.

The Biblical view of history requires us to acknowledge that God has created the human race for a purpose; He has allowed moral evil to come into existence by the free voluntary act of man as a moral agent; and over against a background of human sin and moral corruption, He has chosen to redeem a people for Himself by His grace.

The Bible from Genesis to Revelation assumes a goal and consummation in which God’s redemptive programme will be completely vindicated on earth in the visible kingdom of Christ when He returns. There will be peace on earth only when the Prince of peace returns.

DO ALL MEN SHARE THE SAME BLOOD?

The whole of the human race has its origin in one human pair, namely, Adam and Eve. Paul told the philosophers of the Areopagus that God the Creator “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if

happily they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:26–27).

That God made all men “of one” is clearly taught in the book of Genesis. God made all men of one stock, of one seed, of one kind. The same thought is expressed in Hebrews 2:11, where it refers to Christ, “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” The oneness of Christ with His brethren is stated most clearly in the verses which follow, especially verses 14 and 16, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same ... he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him [the nature of] the seed of Abraham.” The oneness of Christ with His brethren is here specified as a oneness “of flesh and blood.”

The whole human race is one big family. We are all of one kind, the human kind. As human beings we all share the same surname—Adam. It is precisely because of this physiological unity in mankind that the fall of Adam meant our fall as well though we be many generations removed from him; and that the atonement of Christ, two thousand years ago, remains meaningful and applicable to us if we are born again in Him.

DO NATIONAL BOUNDARIES PREVENT MISSIONS?

Deuteronomy 32:8–9 tells us that the boundaries of the nations are appointed by God: “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” Compare also Psalm 74:16–17, “The day is thine, the night also is thine; thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.”

Paul in his address to the Areopagus, explicitly declares the purpose with which God has appointed both the seasons and the boundaries of the nations, namely, that men might be moved to seek after God (Acts 17:26–27). Through the missionary programme of His Church, God has providentially made sure of the geographic progress of the Gospel from nation to nation. “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt 24:14).

The gospel is to be preached to all nations. The Scripture nowhere teaches racial discrimination. God has not made the boundaries of different peoples inflexible and unchangeable. On the contrary, Job 12:23 explicitly declares, “He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again.” Oftentimes, the emigration of Christians to other countries has resulted in a gospel witness being established in those countries.

WHEN DID CULTURE BEGIN?

Adam and Eve could not possibly have survived without at least some aspects of what we call human culture. Culture is social and intellectual formation. Of the necessary aspects of culture for human survival, the power to communicate by language would naturally be the most important. Language has a supernatural origin. It came from God. The Bible tells us that man, from the very first, was able to receive communication from God, and that man and woman were able to use language.

Man needs language to convey ideas. Right in the book of Genesis, man was already able to speak. Adam gave names to the animals. We read in Genesis 2:19–20, “And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every

living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field.”

In Hebrew usage, to give a name meant to give the essential character of the thing named, or to classify it. God, in the Garden of Eden, led man to begin a study of nature. Adam observed the nature of the animals, and gave a name to the animal that was descriptive of it. It was not a speculative but an intelligent naming of the animals. The naming of the animals may also suggest the beginning of animal husbandry (cf. Gen 4:2).

When it is said that Adam named all the animals, “all” in a context of this kind does not necessarily mean all without exception, but all in general, or all kinds of. It is not that Adam named every particular animal and bird in the entire earth, but that Adam named, or gave the essential characteristics, or classified, all kinds of animals and birds, all those which God brought to his attention. Man is still engaged in this activity of naming and classifying things. Taxonomy is a God-given responsibility of man.

WHY IS LIFE ON EARTH SO HARD?

The beginnings of culture in the Garden of Eden may be seen in the nature of the garden itself and man’s relation to it. The record tells us, “And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ... And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat” (Gen 2:8, 15, 16). It is quite obvious that God gave the beginnings of agriculture and horticulture. Man was commanded to maintain the garden and to cultivate it for food.

Adam was expelled from Eden after he sinned. It was a severe discipline for man culturally and economically. The record gives God's pronouncement, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen 3:17–19). Sin did not end man's cultivation of the earth, it only made it harder. The destruction of crops and animals through weather (floods, drought, etc.), or disease (mad cow, bird flu, etc.) has caused many an industry or company to close down or go bankrupt suddenly.

We are living in a sin-cursed world. Sin is found in all strata of human society and culture. There is a whole lot of pressure and stress in the workplace. It takes quite a bit of struggle to eke out a comfortable living. The arts fare no better in terms of beauty and purity. What is bad and ugly today is defined and described as good and pretty. Pornography is described as art or artistic. The degeneration of human culture will continue, and it will reach a stage when judgement must come.

As Christians, we must always remind ourselves that although we are in the world, we are not of the world: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom 12:2).

LAW AND PRINCIPLE OF THE SABBATH

Culture may change but Truth never. The Bible has one meaning but many applications. Principles are fixed, but applications are flexible. The Scriptures lay down many rules that require strict adherence, but the qualification—*ceteris paribus*, "other things being equal"—still apply.

One example of “fixed principle but flexible application” is seen in Christ’s comments on the Sabbath law. The Sabbath commandment is given definitively in Exodus 20:8–11. It is well-known that Jewish legalists, in the inter-testamental period, added extra-biblical rules to the Sabbath commandment. We must understand that Jesus was against these and not the original commandment. Jesus never set aside the laws of Moses. He was the Author of these laws Himself. What He simply did was to interpret them in accordance with their original intention. His statement in Mark 2:27 is central in the understanding of all that He says on this subject.

To reinforce this truth, Jesus pointed out the Old Testament instance of the eating of the sacred shewbread when men were in dire need of food (1 Sam 21:1–6). This Old Testament incident in itself has no direct bearing on the law of the Sabbath, but it illustrates the principle that there are many regulations in the law of God which are to be understood, as we have said above, *ceteris paribus* (Matt 12:1–5; Mark 2:23–26; Luke 6:1–4).

There are today Neo-Pharisees who come up with their own set of extra-biblical rules for keeping the Sabbath: “Thou shalt not take public transport to church on Sunday;” “Thou shalt not eat out on the Lord’s Day;” “Thou shalt not transgress the Sabbath by reading the newspapers.” Their intentions may be well and good, but they overstep their bounds when they condemn others for not keeping the Sabbath according to their man-made rules. When these hyper-puritans elevate their rules to the level of Scripture, they fall into the danger of legalism which Jesus condemned. “Those who want to eat ‘inside,’ we do not criticise them. But let them not criticise those who eat ‘outside.’”

Jesus pointed out that according to the Mosaic law the priests had many duties to perform on the Sabbath day, yet they were not considered to be violating the Sabbath. “Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day” (Matt 12:5–8).

When Christ said that He is the Lord of the Sabbath, it should not be taken as indicating that He regarded Himself as setting aside or nullifying the laws of Moses. That would be contrary to all that He had to say in regard to the Old Testament Scriptures. These words indicate that He is the Author and authoritative Interpreter of the Old Testament laws.

Jesus’ infallible interpretation and application of the Sabbath law can be seen in Matthew 12:11–12, “And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.” On another occasion of healing, He said, “Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer him again to these things” (Luke 14:5–6).

The higher law of necessity overrides the lower law of ceremony.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

Christ resurrected on the first day of the week, i.e., Sunday. Sunday became “the Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10). It became the Christian Sabbath and replaced the Jewish Sabbath as a “holy day,” a day of rest and worship. The Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches this: “From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian sabbath.”

That the Christians regarded the first day of the week as the appropriate day for Christian assembly is clear from the New Testament. Paul arranged for churches to observe the first day of the week as the time for Christian assembly (1 Cor 16:1–2).

These words could hardly be understood without the assumption that there was a regular assembly on the first day. The *thesauros* in which each one was, by himself without compulsion, to deposit his offering, must have been the treasury of the church, because Paul adds, “so that there may be no collections when I come.” If each one had put something away in private storage, then public collections would have been quite unnecessary when Paul came. There are frequent references in Paul’s writings to regular assembly at times evidently understood by all.

Hebrews 10:25 says that the church in those days had the habit of meeting regularly. We may assume this is a reference to the assembly for worship and fellowship on the first day of the week. At Troas, “Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow” (Acts 20:7).

The Sabbath truth remains the same, but the Sabbath day has changed. In the New Testament it is on Sunday, not Saturday, commemorating the Lord's resurrection. The early church kept the Sabbath on the first day of the week. Ignatius, shortly after AD 100, wrote of those who "have come into the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the [Old Testament] Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day on which also our life has sprung up again by him."

Although the Christian Sabbath in principle is on the first day of the week, the keeping of it should not be one of legalistic ceremonialism. The Lord's Day should not be more important than the Lord Himself. It is the Lord, not the day, that we worship. Paul made it clear that salvation comes not by the observation of a day (Gal 4:10–11; Col 2:16–17; Rom 14:5–6). Salvation comes from the Lord (Jon 2:9).

Paul's anti-legalism was exactly in line with the teachings of Jesus. Jesus and Paul did not abrogate the law of the Sabbath; they gave it its true meaning. Paul was not against the Sabbath truth when he said, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom 14:5) with regard to a religious day. A believer who truly loves the Lord and who fully understands the scriptural meaning and practice of the Sabbath, has liberty in applying the principle to the details of his life.

The Old Testament Sabbath was meant to be "a shadow of things to come" (Col 2:17). Just as the Lord's Supper takes the place and has all the value of the Passover (1 Cor 5:7–8) and the sacrifices which involved the shedding of blood and the eating of unleavened bread; and just as Christian baptism takes the place of circumcision (Col 2:11–12) and the rituals prescribed in Leviticus 12; so the Lord's Day takes the place and has all the value of the Jewish Sabbath.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17) comprise essentially negative “Thou shalt not” injunctions. However, that does not mean that the negative injunctions do not carry positive implications. The command not to do evil assumes the requirement to do good. The Westminster Larger Catechism says, “... where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded; so, when a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.”

The Ten Commandments give general principles to cover every type of doctrinal or moral sin. Every type of sin may be classed under one or more of the Ten Commandments. The Christian is required to be absolutely loyal to the principles of the Ten Commandments, and need to apply those principles in different social or cultural situations according to the Scriptures.

It is thus important to understand that the Ten Commandments do not list the only sins there are in this world. There are many different types of sinful behaviour. In Galatians 5:19–21, Paul lists some of the works of the flesh, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” The double reference to “such like” and “such things” makes it imperative that God’s people must not only obey the Ten Commandments as explicitly laid down in regard to particularly mentioned practices, but they must also diligently apply the principles involved as conditions not named, but similar, may arise.

SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Spiritual maturity does not come overnight. It takes time to grow in the Christian faith. It takes time to become more like Christ. We must remember that those who are immature in the Christian life, who do not yet “by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb 5:14) need, not only correction, but sympathetic encouragement. “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench” (Matt 12:20).

It is important for believers to be careful not to have a holier-than-thou attitude towards other believers who are struggling in their Christian life, trying to live out their faith. We must recognise the due process required for a person to be more like Christ. Older or more mature believers need to instruct patiently and correct gently younger ones in a humble and meek spirit.

There must be absolutely no compromise in the area of truth and doctrine. We must spare no effort and waste no time to warn against falsehood and false teachers.

However, in the area of Christian living and practice, we need to be more prayerful for and less judgemental of one another.

“Charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Pet 4:8).

PROGRESSIVE UNDERSTANDING

Nothing is to be added to the Scriptures at any time. The Westminster Confession puts it, “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or

traditions of men.” Nevertheless it is to be expected that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide the church into a deeper and fuller understanding of the Scriptures, and that future events will throw light upon questions hitherto unresolved or unanswered.

Church history provides many instances and evidences of how God’s people progressed in their understanding of revealed truth. Certainly, the doctrine of the Trinity is taught in the Scriptures. Yet it was not until the Council of Nicea, 325 AD, that it was clearly defined in the mind of the church. Similarly, the doctrine of the two natures of Christ (fully God and fully man) in one Person was not clearly expressed until the Council of Chalcedon, 451 AD. The doctrine of justification by faith alone was greatly clarified in the Reformation of the sixteenth century. All these doctrines are contained in the Scriptures and believed by the church. Yet time had a part to play in bringing about clarity of understanding and expression.

We hope that time will bring increasing clarity and unanimity among Christians in doctrines such as the perfect inspiration and perfect preservation of the Holy Scriptures. Thank God that the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture is now very clear after being defined and defended in the last century. It is now firmly established that the Scripture is 100% inspired and without any error even in the areas of science, history and geography, and not just salvation. In this century, the doctrine of the 100% preservation of Scripture is not so clearly understood. May it be increasingly discussed, debated, and defended, until it be clearly defined. It must be declared unequivocally that God’s Word has been kept pure in all ages, verbally and plerarily preserved to the last iota (Ps 12:6–7; Matt 5:18). The Church has God’s Perfect Word today and we believe it is in the Hebrew and Greek

Scriptures underlying the time-tested and time-honoured King James Bible.

WHY DID GOD MAKE FOR MAN A WOMAN?

In Genesis 2:18–25, God instituted marriage. In the Garden of Eden, God saw that it was not good for man to be alone. So He made for Adam a helper—a companion—a wife. He beautifully designed and carefully made a woman, and presented her to him. Together they would rule over God’s creation (Gen 1:27–28).

Marriage is thus not simply a bilateral but a trilateral relationship. Three is not a crowd when Christ is the third. God as the Divine Matchmaker must be figured in every marriage relationship. The problem today is that God is taken out of the picture. Divorce would never be an option for the Christian if God is placed first in a marriage relationship. A breakdown in our marriage is usually due to a breakdown in our personal walk with God.

Marriages that are on the rocks need the Rock—the Lord Jesus Christ. Troubled couples need to stop talking and start doing. Start obeying this divine counsel: “Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it ... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church ... Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Eph 5:21–33).

THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

Malachi 2:14 speaks of marriage as a covenant: “Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.” What is a marriage covenant? A marriage covenant is a solemn agreement before God between a man and woman to be each other’s loyal and loving companions for life. A covenant has rules. These rules are set by God. If we want a blissful and successful marriage we must play by God’s rules. “Marriage is a covenant consecrated by God” (Calvin). A marriage breaks down when we break the covenant by violating God’s rules.

One fundamental rule is monogamy. When God made for man a woman, He took one rib from Adam to make one Eve; He did not take several to make many. Note the singular, “a woman” (Gen 2:23), and “his wife” (vv 24-25). More importantly is the thought of “one flesh” (v 24)—the physical and spiritual unity between one man and one woman. The “one flesh” concept rules out polygamy as an option. That is why in the New Testament, it is required of a leader in the church to be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2). This fact is also attested by analogy of Jesus’ relationship to the Church—His Bride. There is but one Bride of Christ—the one true, invisible, universal Church comprising all of God’s elect. That is why when a married person has a sexual relationship with another person other than his lawful spouse, it is adultery. “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (the seventh commandment). Yes, in the Old Testament we have many instances of God’s people having many wives. We think of Abraham and his wives Sarah and Hagar, but look at the trouble Abraham brought upon himself and his descendants. The antagonism between the two brothers—Isaac and Ishmael—continues till this day. Having more than one wife at a time is against God’s will and Word.

DID GOD MAKE ADAM AND “STEVE”?

Marriage is a special relationship between two persons of the opposite sex—not man with man, woman with woman, but man with woman. As the saying goes, “God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.” Leviticus 18:22, “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.” In other words, “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman.” Severe judgement befalls those who pervert what God has so ordained. “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet” (Rom 1:26–27).

Homosexuality is a sin. Homosexuals consciously choose to live in sin. This choice is reversible. It is something that can be repented of. The only way to break the chains of this type of destructive lifestyle which breaks down the divine institution of marriage and the family is for the homosexual to confess and repent of his sin, and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The pure gospel will break the shackles of homosexuality for it is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16).

It must be made very clear that homosexuality is a sinful lifestyle that God hates, and that it is a sickness that God can heal.

MALE HEADSHIP AND LEADERSHIP

A fundamental rule being blurred today is the distinctive role of the man and of the woman as ordained by God. In terms of worth, we are all equal in God’s sight regardless of gender, language, race or colour; but in terms of function, there is a difference! In the traditional and biblical marriage

vow, the groom pledges to love and cherish his wife, while the bride promises to love, cherish, and obey her husband. In modern versions, the word “obey” is removed. What does God say about headship and authority?

In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul says, “The head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” What is the meaning of “head”? Obviously, it cannot mean literally that the woman has a man’s head. Here it means headship or rulership. It refers to authority.

To prove this point, Paul cites the functional hierarchy that exists within the Godhead. Paul says “the head of Christ is God.” Note that all three Persons of the Trinity are absolutely equal in essence, in their omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience; the Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God. But in the area of function or role, there is subordination. God the Father has authority over God the Son. Christ occupies a subordinate position in the functional hierarchy of the Godhead. That is why Jesus said, “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). Jesus is saying, “I am an obedient Son to my Father, and am here to fulfil His will and pleasure.” Jesus performed that role perfectly. And the Father commended the Son: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Read John 17 on how Jesus was an obedient Son.) Likewise, God has set up such a functional hierarchy for the family unit.

“Two heads are better than one,” but not in marriage. The husband is head of the wife. His duty is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave His life for her. Her duty is to submit to her husband, as much as the Church is required to submit to Christ and do His will. It is when husbands fail to love their wives, and wives fail to obey their husbands in the Lord, that marriages break down. Dr Carl McIntire wisely advised, “There would be a great deal more happiness

in homes if there were more understanding of the kind way and the right way of doing things.”

PERMANENCY OF MARRIAGE

Genesis 2:24 reads, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” The word “cleave” here is significant. It is a very strong word of union. For example, it is used in Isaiah 41:7 of soldering together the metal plates of an armour. So a man leaves father and mother, and is “soldered” to his wife. It is a permanent joining together of the man and his wife. This verse was quoted by Jesus in Matthew 19:5–6, “What therefore God hath joined (or soldered) together, let not man put asunder.”

Marriage is a life-long commitment. It is “a total commitment and a total sharing of the total person with another person until death.” In a Christian marriage, “the dependence is mutual, the obligation reciprocal, and the dependence on God, absolute.”

At the heart of marriage is companionship, communion, and consummation. God’s blue-print for marriage involves leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh. The husband and the wife relationship is the closest, the most intimate of all human relationships, for it is likened to the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph 5:22–33).

Dr William Lyon Phelps wisely said, “The highest happiness on earth is in marriage. Every man who is happily married is a successful man even if he has failed in everything else.” How to get married and stay married? Faith is the key: “Faith makes a home, Faith keeps a family, Faith is the victory” (McIntire).

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

What does the Bible say about divorce and remarriage? If I am a divorcee, can I remarry? In the light of what God intended marriage to be, there should be no divorce after marriage (Mal 2:14–16; Mark 10:9, 11–12). But did not God allow for the annulment of a marriage covenant in Scripture? Yes, He did, but only on three grounds: death, desertion, and adultery.

Can a Christian remarry? In order to answer these important questions, we need to understand correctly the doctrine of marriage. Marriage as instituted by God involves a covenant relationship which is meant to be permanent or binding. With these things in mind, we now enter into our discussion on divorce and remarriage.

Should a Christian divorce? In light of what God had intended marriage to be, the answer would be no. God's Preceptive Will (i.e., His commandments in the Bible) says no to divorce. However, due to sin, the Permissive Will of God allows for divorce but with certain restrictions.

In Matthew 19:3, the Pharisees' trick question was: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" The Pharisees taught that a man could divorce his wife for the slightest reason: if your wife can't cook well—divorce!; if someone more attractive comes along—divorce! The women were bullied, and Jesus here defended the rights of the fairer sex. Jesus emphasised that marriage as a divine institution involves a covenant relationship that is meant to be permanent: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh, What therefore God hath

joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt 19:4–6). In other words, no divorce!

If there should be no divorce, then what about Moses’ words in Deuteronomy 24? “Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?” (Matt 19:7). Jesus answered, “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.” Jesus reminded them that marriage as a divine institution was meant to be permanent and a blessing to the married couple right from the start. This original intention was spoiled by sin. Divorce is thus not a divine but a human institution. Divorce is not something God wanted, but what man wanted—“the hardness of your hearts”! The people in those days insisted on the bill of divorcement. Divorce is therefore a product of sin. It is shameful to divorce even though God had granted permission for it.

Marriage must be taken seriously, and divorce should not be made easy. Deuteronomy 24 does not provide a convenient escape from marriage. Consider the Mosaic regulations. Moses instructed that for a divorce to take effect:

1. It must go to the courts in the presence of witnesses where a legal bill for divorce must be drawn up, and signed. This of course requires time. There should be no such thing as getting married today, and divorced tomorrow. Neither can a person divorce his spouse verbally by simply saying “I divorce you” three times. Quick divorces are forbidden.
2. A certificate of divorce must be served. The one who filed for divorce is required to put the bill into the other party’s hand.

3. The person divorced must move out of the house; they are no longer to live together. There is a rupture in the family unit.
4. Once divorced and remarried, they can never be married to each other again.

All these rules were imposed to discourage divorce, to encourage reconciliation, and to allow for time to heal relationships. “Nothing is settled until it is settled right” (Carl McIntire).

The Pharisees taught that a man can put away his wife for every cause. Against this Jesus said, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matt 19:9).

There is but one reason for divorce and only one, namely, fornication (i.e. marital infidelity or adultery and other sexual sins like homosexuality, bestiality and incest). Anyone who marries an adulterer or adulteress commits adultery as well.

It is significant to note that the exception clause (“except it be for fornication”) is found only in Matthew 19. Mark 10:1–12 and Luke 16:18 are parallel passages on marriage and in those places the exception clause is absent. Why? It is to emphasise the rule that the marriage covenant is binding. Jesus was highlighting the rule, not the exception.

Once married, there should be no divorce. The Lord hates divorce, and if we insist on divorce, it is only on the grounds of adultery. As the Lord will never break His redemptive covenant to save us till the very end, so must we not break our marital covenant; we need to be faithful to our respective

spouses till the very end. Remember the marriage vow, “as long as you both shall live”!

The marriage vow is not to be taken lightly for the vow was made before God. Beware not to take God’s name in vain. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7).

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul was answering questions on marriage and divorce posed to him by the Corinthian Church. This chapter is meant for Christians especially. Can a Christian couple divorce and remarry? Paul gives an exposition of what Jesus had taught concerning divorce in Matthew 19, Mark 10, and Luke 16. Here Paul repeats what Jesus had said, “Marriage is permanent.” So Paul lays down these injunctions: (1) verse 10: “Let not the wife depart from her husband,” and (2) verse 11: “Let not the husband put away his wife.”

But what if a divorce has already taken place? If that has already happened, then let both remain unmarried! Why? To allow the Lord to work. (As stated earlier, a marriage relationship, especially a Christian one, is not just bilateral, but trilateral.) If both husband and wife are Christians, regenerate, and Spirit-indwelt, the Lord can work in their lives to convict them of sin, and cause them to be reconciled. This may be impossible with men, but not with God.

The solution to a broken Christian marriage is not divorce and remarriage to another person, but reconciliation to the same person. Now, what if a remarriage to another person has taken place? Then this person has become an adulterer. The hope of reconciliation is dashed; Deuteronomy 24 applies. You cannot remarry your former spouse under any circumstance; it is an abomination to the Lord. How about the so-called innocent party? Can he or she remarry? Paul is

silent. The Westminster Confession, however states, “In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce: and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead” (24:5).

In verses 12–16, Paul deals with the question of a woman who was an unbeliever when she got married. Now she is a Christian, but her husband remains an unbeliever; what is she supposed to do? This case also applies to a man who has an unbelieving wife. Can or should the Christian divorce his or her non-believing spouse? Again the general principle that marriage is for life applies. The believer must not be quick to get a divorce. If the unbelieving husband loves his wife, is pleased to remain married, her conversion notwithstanding, she must not get a divorce. The reason is given in verse 14, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.”

In order to appreciate this, one needs to understand the implications of covenant theology. Covenant theology teaches that God is not only concerned for the individual, but also his family. When a person becomes a believer, the Lord is interested to see his family coming to salvation also. That is why Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31). This does not mean automatic salvation for our family members when we get saved. Our family members, husband or wife or children, too, must personally believe in Christ in order to be saved. What it does mean is that because of one family member being saved, in this case the mother, the father and children though not yet a part of God’s family are sanctified for God’s holy purpose. The word “sanctified” here does not mean inward holiness or righteousness, but “being set apart” just like the vessels of the temple were “sanctified” or “set apart” for sacred use.

Paul explains that the faith of the believing mother has resulted in the whole family coming under God's special care and protection. When God blesses the believing mother, the blessing is also experienced by the unbelieving husband and children. God's Word is now found in the home. There is now a sanctifying influence at home. The Bible is read by mother. She talks about Jesus Christ. She has answers to what life is all about. She bears a good Christian testimony. She prays, and God answers her prayers. God begins to work. With the Gospel found at home in word and in deed, the Spirit uses the Gospel which is powerful to change lives to bring the whole family to a saving knowledge of Christ in accordance to His will.

However, what if the unbelieving husband would have nothing to do with Christianity and does not want to maintain the marriage? Verse 15 answers, "A brother or sister (i.e., the Christian) is not under bondage in such cases." In other words, if he insists on a divorce, let him have it. But "God hath called us to peace." Before agreeing to a divorce, every effort must be made with God's help to maintain the marriage, and win the unbelieving spouse to Christ. But if the unbelieving spouse insists on a divorce, the Christian is under no obligation to keep the marriage. Divorce becomes a legitimate step when dissolution is the only solution.

The question arises: Can the Christian remarry in this instance? Again Paul is silent. There is a lot of wisdom in Paul's silence. What if after divorce, the unbelieving ex-husband gets converted, and wants to return (assuming he did not remarry)? If the Christian wife gets remarried, the opportunity to return to the original spouse is forfeited. It is God's intent and ideal that the original spouses be reconciled and remain together.

At any rate, the Westminster Confession of Faith does not prohibit the Christian deserted by an unbelieving spouse from remarrying (24:6). In making such decisions, to remarry or not, apply Proverbs 3:5–6.

Can a Christian widow or widower remarry? Paul gives explicit instructions in verse 39. Remarry if you want to when your husband or wife has passed away, but make sure it is to a Christian (“only in the Lord”). Paul says in verse 40 that it is better to remain single. Remarrying is good, but remaining single is better, according to Paul.

In summary, the teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage are:

1. The marriage covenant is permanent, and binding.
2. Sin enters and spoils God’s wonderful institution of marriage. Man wants divorce, God allows it only on the grounds of adultery (Matt 19). Other regulations on divorce and remarriage apply (Deut 24).
3. When a Christian couple wants a divorce, divorce is permitted but both are to remain unmarried. The solution is not remarriage to another person, but reconciliation to each other (1 Cor 7:11). If divorce is due to adultery, the Westminster Confession of Faith allows the innocent party to remarry.
4. The Christian must not seek a divorce just because his or her spouse is an unbeliever. The believer must bear a Christlike testimony. But if the unbeliever insists on a divorce, the Christian is not obliged to maintain the marriage. In such a case, there is no wrong in divorce (1 Cor 7:15). However, no explicit permission is given for remarriage. The Westminster Confession of Faith however allows the Christian who has been wilfully deserted by an unbelieving spouse to remarry.

5. An explicit permission to remarry is given only when one's spouse has passed away (1 Cor 7:39).

A failed marriage often brings guilt and pain. If you feel that you have sinned, and things cannot be undone, and you are truly sorry, and you ask: "Can God forgive me?" The answer is: Yes, He can and He will (1 John 1:9, John 8:10–11).

THE FAMILY COVENANT

The clear teaching that a marriage is not to be broken on the grounds of difference of religious faith is followed by one of the great statements of the Scripture on the subject of the family covenant with God. 1 Corinthians 7:14 states, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." The holiness here predicated is a holiness of a covenant relationship. Although Paul does not mention the word covenant, it is clear that he has in mind the principles implied in Genesis 17:7, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

The God of the Bible is a God of the family. The fact that God is not only our God, but the God of our children, the God of our families, is emphatically taught throughout the Scripture, and should be regarded as a source of comfort to Christian parents in all ages and under all circumstances. God-fearing parents may, in confidence, claim the promise for their children, "I will be their God" (Gen 17:8). It is on this basis that Paul declares that if one parent is a believer, the other members of the family are "sanctified" by the covenant relationship.

These words do not declare that the individuals "sanctified" are all born again. Paul says later in the same context "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy

husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?” (v 16). The believer is to continue steadfast in faith, praying for the salvation of the unbelieving member of the family. Romans 11:16 and Hebrews 10:29 are two other passages in which unbelievers are said to be sanctified, because they are in a holy relationship.

God is the God of those who, being born in a covenant family relationship, turn their backs upon Him. Those who, from this holy covenant relationship, reject the grace of God, are worthy of so much more severe punishment. From these references we see that the holy relationship in the family covenant is an extremely sacred matter, a matter which must not be trifled with. This covenant is the spiritual basis for the permanence of Christian marriage.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

The key text of Scripture on the subject of the relationship of parents and children is the fifth commandment: “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Exod 20:12). Throughout the Scriptures there is a strong emphasis upon the parental-filial relationship. Of Abraham, God said, “Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him ... For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment” (Gen 18:18–19).

Again the relationship of parents and children is emphasised in connection with the great command in Deuteronomy 6:4–5, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut 6:4–5). These words are immediately added, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou

shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deut 6:6–7).

The duties of parents to their children include more than mere education. Paul commands, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). A similar teaching is found in Colossians 3:21, “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” Do not anger or restrict your children unnecessarily. Grant them the freedom to learn and explore within proper limits and boundaries as long as they do not violate the laws of God.

Note: “The hope of preserving our future is wrapped up entirely in our children” (Carl McIntire).

EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN

Parents have a responsibility to educate their children in the things of the Lord. Secular education is not enough. Spiritual education is most necessary if we want our children to grow up not only as useful citizens of society but godly servants of the Lord in His kingdom. Where and how can this be done?

Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up [or catechise] a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Teaching the Bible to our children is a must. This should be done right from birth. Mothers ought to pray and sing the words of Scripture when feeding, bathing, playing with their baby. Their first words should not only be Papa and Mama but also Jesus.

It is vital that mothers be in the full-time work of bringing up their children in the Lord and in His Word (cf. 2 Tim 1:5). This should be especially so within the first seven years of

a child's life, for it is the time of their spiritual formation. If they are trained well in the Christian way, they shall not stray from the Lord in their youth and adult life when temptations come fast and furious. The roots of faith must sink in deep and strong for them to withstand the relentless onslaughts of youthful lusts.

Children are not only to be taught at home, but also in church. They should be enrolled in the Sunday school not only to study the Bible but also to make good Christian friends that would last a life-time. They should also participate in the worship services from young.

Children ought to be disciplined when they are disobedient. Contrary to modern and godless psychology, the rod is truly an effective tool to inculcate values and virtues in their young hearts and minds (Prov 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13–14, 29:15, 17).

When disciplining our children, it is important to ensure that they understand why they have been disciplined in the light of God's commandments. Dr Carl McIntire rightly warned, "When you are training children without the knowledge of the Word of God, the floodgates are open, the churches are empty, and the lovers of pleasure take over instead of the lovers of God."

DUTY OF A CHRISTIAN TO HIS GOVERNMENT

The biblical teaching on human authority or government can be traced to Genesis 9:6 where God said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." These words do not teach personal vengeance, but that God intends that human government shall exercise power of life and death in the enforcement of law and order.

In the New Testament, the most outstanding passage on a Christian's responsibility towards human government is Romans 13:1–2. Here, Paul teaches, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

We are to obey the government. The human government is a divinely ordained institution. If a lawless person resists what God has ordained, he is in effect resisting God (other things being equal).

What Paul is talking about in Romans 13 is the kind of government which seeks to maintain law and order for peaceful human existence. He is not speaking of lawless governments which break the commandments of God and trample upon the rights of man.

When a government commands men to act contrary to the laws of God, Christians must obey God rather than man. For instance, when the disciples were commanded not to proclaim nor to teach in the name of Jesus, Peter and John answered and said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19–20). Later, under similar circumstances the disciples replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Read Romans 13:3–7 for Paul's description of a rightful government. There are only two functions of government that are here brought out: (1) "praise" for those who do good, and (2) "punishment" for those who do evil.

The exercise of these functions is here said to be the reason for the payment of taxes and tribute.

The main function of government as emphasised by Paul in Romans 13 is the forcible maintenance of law and order, restraining evil deeds and encouraging the good. The statement “beareth not the sword in vain” teaches the necessity to bear arms for the sake of peace and security. “Protection, justice, righteousness—these are all responsibilities of the state” (Carl McIntire). Thus extreme pacifism (i.e., opposition to military action) is erroneous and anti-scriptural. The coalition of peace-loving nations to resist by force the evil aggressions of imperialism and terrorism is thoroughly sanctioned by the Scripture.

However, it would be wrong for us to think that the government has no other functions. Public utilities were a part of the functions of government in Old Testament times. We read that Hezekiah “made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city” (2 Kgs 20:20). We may infer from Paul’s many journeys that he approved of the function of the Roman government in building roads throughout the empire. If Paul approved of the activity of the Roman government in building roads, we may find a basis for the government maintaining other public utilities.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS UNGODLY RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES

How may we respond to ungodly religious authorities? In answer to this question, we have the example of the Apostle Paul in Acts 23:1–10. Paul was hauled up before the Jewish religious leaders who had crucified Jesus. He was not afraid (Acts 23:1–5). We learn from Paul to stand firm in the truth, and to question any injustice. Note that he did not give in or keep silent in the face of illegal procedure. He spoke out roundly in rebuke. Dr Carl McIntire rightly advised, “The

way to meet opposition is not to suppress it or smear it, but to answer it.”

In commenting on Acts 23:1–5, Calvin argues that in commanding to “turn the other cheek” (Matt 5:39), “Christ doth not in these words require silence, whereby the wickedness and forwardness of the wicked may be nourished.” Christ, in similar circumstances (John 18:19–23) also protested against illegal treatment. It is perfectly clear that Paul, even when thus abused, comes out clearly for obedience to lawful authority lawfully exercised. He quotes from Exodus 22:28 with the words, “it is written,” thus indicating, as Calvin points out, that obedience to the law was the rule of his life.

In Acts 23:6–10, we find Paul exploiting the division between the Pharisees and Sadducees in the Sanhedrin. By his truthful testimony, he set the two parties against each other. “He cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.” It was indeed a strategic word at a crucial moment. This follows Jesus’ inspired instruction, “And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say” (Luke 12:11–12).

ATTITUDE TOWARDS SECULAR AUTHORITIES

Paul’s attitude towards the Roman government is seen in his appeal to his Roman citizenship for protection on several occasions (Acts 16:37–40, 22:25–29), and his appeal finally

to Caesar (Acts 25:10–12, 26:32). Paul evidently shows an appreciation for the functions of government, under God, in maintaining law and order and promoting justice.

Paul's respect for the government is further reflected in his pastoral epistles, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:1–4). He instructed Titus to remind the church "to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work" (Tit 3:1).

Peter likewise commanded the church to be submissive to human authorities. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the [Christian] brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Pet 2:13–17). Peter no doubt remembered the words of Christ, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt 22:21).

How about National Service or military service? Some think the words of Christ not to retaliate when personally insulted or beaten (Matt 5:38–45) mean the prohibition of military service. Buswell says that this is a misunderstanding of Jesus' words: "If the Apostle Paul was not flatly contradicting the teaching of Christ when he said that it is the God-given

function of government to bear the sword against wicked aggression, and to bear the sword “not in vain,” then we must not construe the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount as teaching something beyond what they actually say, nor in such a manner as unnecessarily to create a contradiction. A slap in the face, unfair legal action to the extent of a coat or a cloak, unreasonable demand of assistance from a government authority, unreasonable neighbourly borrowing, all these are matters in which a Christian should be extremely generous. I believe we can get the most value from the Sermon on the Mount if we take it literally in its most simple and obvious meaning. It is not worthwhile for a Christian to resist or resent a slap in the face or any such personal insult or inconvenience.” Calvin rightly said, “A desire of revenge reigns in all unbelievers, while, on the other hand, God governs his own children by the spirit of meekness and benignity.”

There is nothing here to contradict the righteous function of government in bearing the sword effectively against wicked aggression and criminal activities.

SHOULD THE CHURCH HAVE AN ARMY?

At the time of the last supper, Jesus said to His disciples, “he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.” Then He was told, “Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough” (Luke 22:35–38).

What did Jesus mean when He told His disciples to buy a sword, and that two swords were enough? It is quite obvious that He did not mean that each one of them must literally secure a sword, for it was already late in the night. That was why He said that two swords were enough. They were enough because He was not thinking of a military revolution against the Roman government, but for the personal protection of His disciples.

This is clearly evident in Jesus' conversation with Pilate (John 18:36). Jesus referred to the fact that His servants did not fight and that He did not intend them to fight for His deliverance. Jesus also made the point that His kingdom was not one which would arise by earthly power out of a carnal setting. That was why when Peter used the sword for offence instead of defence, he was soundly rebuked by the Lord. "Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt 26:52–53).

As it is, the Church is not a nation. She has no land to defend. The Church is a spiritual body of Christ, and her work is a spiritual one—to preach the good news of salvation in Christ to the world (Matt 28:18–20). Jesus commanded all believers to take up their own crosses, and not arms. Jesus came first to suffer and die for the sins of many, and His followers are called to follow His example. Christians are to preach the good news to the world even if it means persecution and death.

LAWSUITS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Does 1 Corinthians 6:1–11 teach that a Christian has the right to appeal to the civil courts to protect his property rights? Let us examine the Scriptures carefully on this point. Paul begins the discussion, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust [unbelievers], and not before the saints?" (1 Cor 6:1). It may be taken that Paul is not absolutely prohibiting judgement in secular courts here, even before unbelievers. However, the thrust of Paul's argument is that Christians ought to do their best to settle their cases under the judgement of fellow believers, without having to appeal to the civil courts.

Paul elaborates on judgement within the church, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? (cf. Matt 19:28; Luke 22: 28–30) and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers” (1 Cor 6:2–6).

These words clearly indicate the propriety of organising church courts to take care of disputes between Christians which cannot be resolved by ordinary, informal, personal conferences. This is exactly the subject presented by Christ as recorded in Matthew 18:15–17.

The Christian ought to be willing, before taking any steps for correction, to take wrong uncomplainingly. This is in line with the words of Jesus in regard to the turning of the other cheek.

Putting together the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6 and the words of Christ in Matthew 18, the following five stages in Christians dealing one with another ought to be observed. The first stage involves taking no steps at all. A Christian should be willing to turn the other cheek and take a slap in the face, an inconvenience, even a definite loss of property, rather than to cause disturbance.

There are cases, however, in which one is a steward of property for his own dependents and for others, cases in which it would be wrong to allow great loss without a protest. In such cases one must: (1) Confer with the wrongdoer privately, then, if unsuccessful, (2) take one or two other

Christians into conference. (3) If the second step cannot succeed, bring the matter before the church courts. (4) But there is such a thing as a professing Christian stubbornly refusing to be reasoned with and continuing in a course of conduct which harms his fellow Christians. The words of Christ, “Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican,” apply. This does not mean that he is to be treated with malice, but rather that he is to be excommunicated.

There are exceptional cases in which stewardship of life or of property for our dependents and for others is of such importance that if the dispute cannot be settled among Christians, there must be resort to secular law as in Paul’s appeal to Caesar.

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS

The theological basis of the economic teachings of the Bible is expressed in the words, “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase” (Prov 3:9). Paul in Ephesians 4:8 gives all the essentials of sound economic doctrine on the basis of Exodus 20:15, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” Buswell commented, “Here we have thrift, hard work and industry, ‘Let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good.’ Here we have private property, ‘That he may have something.’ Here we have Christian stewardship, ‘to give to him that needeth.’”

Since God is our Creator and Provider, we must realise that all that we have and own are meant to be held as a stewardship or trust from God. “The earth is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Ps 24:1; quoted in 1 Cor 10:26–28). “The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’s: but the earth hath he given to the children of men” (Ps 115:16).

The need to work and the toil that comes with it must be understood in the light of God's common grace for a fallen humanity. Buswell explained, "When sin came into the world, God introduced a disciplinary measure in the area of economics. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread' (Gen 3:19). This disciplinary providence is one of the best material things God has ever done for a fallen sinful race. The necessity of hard work to earn a living for a family is one of the factors in life which makes a man of an otherwise careless individual. He who tills the soil diligently, or he who prospers by diligence in his business, takes nothing away from his neighbour but rather contributes to the good of all, and to his own personal character." Carl McIntire rightly said, "It takes work to make wealth, it takes work to increase production, it takes work to build a nation or a church."

The New Testament churches in the days of the Apostles practised a form of communalism. The Jerusalem church was evidently not able to support herself. She was suffering greatly due to famine and persecution, and not because of idleness or laziness (Acts 11:27–30, 1 Cor 16:1–3). In a show of Christian love, the other churches sent aid to her. It is significant to note that the communal sharing in the early church was purely voluntary, for Peter said to Ananias, "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" (Acts 5:4). There was no compulsion, nor coercion. All gave willingly, freely, and happily. John Wesley described such a spirit of charity well when he said, "Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can." Communism, on the other hand, weakens the need for industry and charity, and is ultimately anti-biblical, anti-Christian, and anti-social.

The book of Proverbs is a treasury of infallible economic principles, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest” (Prov 6:6–8). “The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer” (Prov 30:25). Buswell commented, “What a picture of free enterprise economy! No dictator, no bureaucracy but with freedom for each worker to forage and explore on his own initiative; a vast, intricate economy is developed by thrift and saving. The words, ‘having no guide, overseer, or ruler,’ do not indicate a state of anarchy for this is not the case in the economy of the ants, but they do indicate free individual initiative without slavish supervision or compulsion.”

The Bible condemns greed, “For the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim 6:10). “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt 6:33); and “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim 6:6). Herein is God’s formula for true wealth and success: Godliness + Contentment = Great Profit. This means we should strive to be a blessing and not a burden to others.

Work is thus sacred. God had put man under a system of necessary labour for economic rewards, and that for his own good and the good of others. Paul understood this well for he told the Thessalonians, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thess 3:10); “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (1 Thess 4:11–12). Paul’s teaching in regard to the individual’s responsibility for his own household is very strong: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim 5:8, cf 2 Thess 3:12–14).

TITHING AND GIVING

The simple principle of tithing is made clear in the words of Jacob on the occasion in which he entered into a new spiritual relationship with the Lord, “and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee” (Gen 28:22). The spiritual principle of tithing is clearly brought out in the last chapter of the Old Testament. “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal 3:10).

The giving of one's tithe and the giving of one's freewill offerings are taught in the New Testament. With reference to the collection for the church of Jerusalem, Paul directs, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, [in proportion to] as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor 16:2). Later, with reference to the same matter, Paul directed, “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever” (2 Cor 9:6–9). “The gifts which we receive from God's hand ought to be invitations to gratitude” (Calvin).

Have we been faithful to tithe a tenth of our earnings to God? When God saves us from a serious loss or heals us of our sickness, do we thank Him with an offering? Our giving is an expression of our gratitude and love for the Lord. One

thing is for sure: We can never out-give God, and He is a debtor of no man.

CHURCH STEWARDSHIP

“The Church is a distinguished theatre on which the divine glory is displayed” (Calvin).

“The visible church ... consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 25:2).

The visible church is also known as the local church. The local church should be able to hold property for the purpose of worship. Local churches are usually incorporated under the laws of the state, and run by boards and agencies which have to do with the dispensing of funds. There are countries in which the law provides for unincorporated religious societies holding property, and there are instances in which the property of the church is held in the name of individuals. Whatever the particular arrangement may be, local churches find it necessary under nearly all circumstances to be so organised in human society as to be able to hold property as a stewardship under God.

It is thus necessary for the local church in her stewardship of property to comply with the laws of the land and with recognised ethical standards in the administration of real estate, and invested and current funds. Those in charge of all properties or funds should be meticulous in their bookkeeping and subject to auditing by proper authorities (see Rom 12:17, 13:13–14; 2 Cor 8:20–21; 1 Thess 4:12 and 1 Pet 2:12).

CHURCH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Church in the Old Testament was Israel. Although a nation, Israel possessed the characteristics of a church. She was not merely a political entity, but a “separated” group, a “chosen” people, a “called out” congregation. It was a separated, chosen and called out congregation to worship God (Ps 22:22; Heb 2:12). Stephen refers to Israel as “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38). Israel as such occupied a particular territory.

One churchly feature of Israel was the provision for excommunication of unbelievers within the nation (cf. 1 Cor 5:1–13). The phrase, “cut off from his people,” often found within the Pentateuch, refers to the excluding of transgressors of the community from the fellowship and worship of the body (Gen 17:14; Exod 12:15,19, 30:33, 31:14; Lev 7:20–21, 25, 27; 17:4, 10, 14; 18:29; 19:8; 20:3, 5, 6, 17, 18; 22:3, 24; 23:29; Num 9:13; 15:30–31; 19:13, 20).

The Church is clearly found in the New Testament. Although in the New Testament the word “nation” is used twice to describe the church, it is used in the figurative and not literal sense. When Christ denounced Israel for her faithlessness, He said, “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matt 21:43). These words may be understood to predict the change of outward administration from the church of Israel to the church as organised from the day of Pentecost onward. If this is true, then the word “nation” is used figuratively. Peter writes to Christians in Asia Minor, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet 2:9). In this instance also it is clear that the word “nation” is used metaphorically. Buswell said,

“The church today is not a nation in any literal sense of the word, but it was a nation prior to the time of Christ.”

“The Church belongs to the Son of God. It is His. It is His Body, His Bride. He is its Head and its King” (Carl McIntire).

BIBLICAL SEPARATION

Separation is not an option but a command. In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to keep themselves separate from the heathen nations. In Deuteronomy 7:1–11, we read, “When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee ... thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly ... Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.”

The command of separation here has the same imperative force as that of the Ten Commandments. Obedience will bring blessings, disobedience will bring curses. The command of separation was so serious that the Lord in Deuteronomy 22:9–10 applied it to their daily agricultural life: “Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.” Why such a rule against mixing the seeds and the animals? The reason is purely pedagogical. It was God’s practical way of teaching the Israelites on a daily basis what it meant to be a separated people of God (Deut 7:1–6). Each time they cultivated their fields, they

would be reminded of the command of separation—“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6:14). They must not forget to keep themselves separated and holy unto God.

Not just in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament, separation is not an option but a command. In the New Testament, the separation commandment is clearly given in 2 Corinthians 6:14. There are several imperatives here: (1) “Be ye not unequally yoked,” (2) “Come out,” (3) “be ye separate,” and (4) “touch not.” Not only is the Church commanded to be separate from unbelievers, she is also commanded to be separate from disobedient believers.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14 and 15, we read, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. ... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

Concerning these errant believers, Paul commanded the congregation, “withdraw yourselves” (v 6). The command, “withdraw yourselves,” speaks of avoidance and shunning. Paul tells the believers to cut themselves totally off from a fellow Christian who “walketh disorderly.” The word “disorderly” (*ataktos*) is a military term used of one who is “out of ranks.” In other words, this disobedient person is not standing in line with the apostolic “tradition” (*paradosin*). “Tradition,” as used by Paul refers to the infallible teachings of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, or the Holy Scriptures (1 Thess 2:13, 2 Tim 3:16). Paul continued, “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (v 14).

Hence, any member who is not walking according to the Word of God faces the disciplinary action of excommunication from the church. Paul told the church to “note” that erring individual and “have no company with him.” “Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” The word “admonish” (*noutheteo*) can also be translated as “instruct,” or “teach.” This tells us that excommunication is for the purpose of correcting the errant believer so that he might repent of his sin, and be restored to the fellowship of the Church. The disciplinary act of separation is thus constructive and not destructive.

Other passages on separation are Romans 12:1–2, 16:17, 1 Corinthians 15:33, Ephesians 5:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:22, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14–15, 1 Timothy 6:3–5, 2 Timothy 2:16–21, Titus 3:10, 1 Peter 1:14–16, 2 John 7:11, Jude 3, and Revelation 18:4.

The doctrine of separation is a doctrine of preservation. Like white blood cells in our body that seek and destroy any invading virus or bacterium, separation keeps the Church pure and free from false teachers and heresies.

Who is a Bible believer and Bible defender? It is the Christian who loves the Lord and loves His Word 100%. Truth unites, love divides (1 Cor 13:6). Every Christian should be a defender of the faith. A true and faithful Christian believes in the fundamentals of the Faith and defends them. In order to defend the Christian Faith, the Christian must separate himself from all forms of unbelief and apostasy.

PART III
SOTERIOLOGY
Knowing Salvation



WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

In Matthew 16:15, Jesus asked His disciples, “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16).

Jesus Christ is the most important person in the history of the world. He is the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of His Church. What does His Name mean? “Jesus” means “Saviour,” and “Christ” means “the Anointed One.” He is our promised Redeemer (Gen 3:15). According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the Eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person forever” (Question 21).

It is vital in Christian theology that the historical person of Jesus Christ be none other than the Eternal Son of God, equal in essence and same in substance with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Like the other two persons of the Holy Trinity—the Father and the Spirit, the Son is also without beginning and without ending. He is just as truly God as the Father is God and the Holy Spirit is God. And when He became man, He was just as truly man as we are.

Jesus was born into this world through the virgin Mary. The Son of God was conceived and born supernaturally and miraculously in fulfilment of prophecy, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa 7:14, Matt 1:23). It was a unique conception and birth. The angel told Mary, “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son” (Luke 1:31), and so it happened that “before they [i.e., Joseph and Mary] came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Matt 1:18). Mary remained a virgin until she gave birth to Jesus: “And [Joseph]

knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS” (Matt 1:25).

The supernatural phenomenon of God becoming man is a mystery. This mystery can only be understood by the logic of faith—“Through faith we understand ...” (Heb 11:3). The virgin birth must be explained scripturally, not scientifically. Any attempt at a scientific explanation is sacrilegious.

JESUS IS GOD AND YET MAN

In John 10, we find the enemies of Christ rejecting Jesus’ declaration that He is God. In verse 30, Jesus said, “I and my Father are one.” This led to a violent response: “the Jews took stones again to stone him” (v 31). Jesus answered their threat by saying, “Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?” (v 32). They replied, “For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” (v 33).

Can the people be blamed for rejecting Jesus as God? Here stands Jesus, obviously a man—He speaks, He breathes, He walks, He exhibits all the common characteristics of humanity. Yet He says, “I and my Father are one.” Jesus had already declared “that God was his Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18). He had even said “that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” And He had added, “He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him” (John 5:23). In the minds of His adversaries, for one who is obviously a man to claim to be God, equal with God the Father, could not possibly be true; and therefore such a claim was the height of blasphemy.

Jesus’ reply on this occasion is of the greatest significance. It is in connection with the doctrine of the image of God

in man. Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods” (v 34). Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6, and reasoned, “If he called them [i.e., these men] gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” (v 36).

From Psalm 82:6, Jesus sought to point out that the incarnation (i.e., the fact that God can become man) was not a concept so difficult to accept. The fact that man is capable of receiving the Word of God when it comes to him is one proof that there is a corresponding nature between man and God. Being made in God’s image, man resembles God in a spiritual sense. That God can become a human being is thus not something impossible. And so, Jesus’ declaration that He is God Himself need not necessarily be blasphemous. By virtue of the fact that He had done the works that only God can do (v 35), His claim to deity was precisely true!

Jesus can never be questioned, He must be believed.

LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST

Christ’s love for us is like super glue. We are forever stuck to Him.

It was God’s love that sent Jesus Christ to save man from their sins. The coming of Christ to save the world from sin shows the love of God. This manifestation of love is seen in Philippians 2:1-5 where Paul pleads, “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own

things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

The people were commanded to manifest the same love for one another as was exhibited by Christ (vv 2-4). Jesus was in very essence God Himself (“being in the form of God”). When He became man and lived on earth, He did not cease to be God, but remained fully God—all-present, all-knowing, and all-powerful.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines the attributes of God as follows: “God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth” (Question 4). When Jesus Christ took on human flesh, He retained all these divine attributes as indicated by the words “being in the form of God.”

It is written in Colossians 2:9, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” It is written again in another place, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim 3:16).

There is no question that Jesus Christ was very God and very Man in one Person when He was on earth.

PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

Jesus has a beginning of no beginning.

Jesus Christ—the Second Person of the Trinity—has always existed. His pre-existence is taught in John 1:1-3. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with

God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

Paul is equally clear in emphasising the pre-existence of Christ in Colossians 1:15-17, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

In the book of Revelation, Jesus is presented as the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending” (Rev 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13). He is the Uncaused First Cause.

Jesus Himself explicitly expressed His pre-existence in His high priestly prayer, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5). He constantly referred to Himself as having “came forth from the Father.” He spoke to the crowds of His ascending up to “where he was before” (John 6:62). He declared in no uncertain terms His pre-existence in John 8:56-58, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” When Jesus referred to Himself as the I AM, He was claiming to be Jehovah Himself (Exod 3:14-15).

SELF-HUMILIATION OF CHRIST

The Son of God became a human being entirely out of His own choosing. He willingly became a man in order that He might save mankind. He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in

the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:7-8).

Jesus already possessed equality with God before He became man. His equality with God was not something that He needed to strive for. It was His from time eternal. And when He became man, He did not give up being God.

If that be the case, then what did Jesus leave behind to take on human flesh? Well, He took upon Himself “the form of a servant” (i.e., all the essential attributes of a servant), and was made in “the likeness of men” (i.e., all the essential attributes of a human being).

What Jesus gave up was not His deity, but His kingship. He left His throne in heaven to become a slave on earth. He did so in order that He might die upon the cross on the sinner’s behalf (Heb 2:14).

Upon the successful completion of His redemptive mission, Jesus returned to His heavenly and glorified state as both God and Man. Now, all who wish to enter into heaven must kowtow to Him. The eternal Son of God is man’s only Saviour (John 14:6).

“Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:11). The word “Lord” is a reference to Jehovah or Yahweh. Nobody can deny that Jesus truly bears the sacred name that was given to Him in Old Testament Scripture, a name which is above every name. Only Jesus Saves!

The exaltation of the Christ after His redemptive work on earth should not be seen as a “promotion.” Such a thought would radically contradict His eternal deity. His exaltation

was simply a resumption of the eternal equality He always had with God.

ETERNAL EXALTATION OF CHRIST

Jesus Christ is the eternally exalted Lord. He was already “exalted” before His humiliation as a man. He was there “in the beginning.” He “laid the foundation of the earth.” The “heavens” were His handiwork. Hebrews 2:10 restates Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

If Christ were not the Eternal Son of God, He could never have offered Himself as a sacrifice sufficient for every man. Only our Saviour—Jesus Christ—can be our righteousness. He is “Yahweh, our righteousness.” He alone can earn the righteousness that we need to enter into the very presence of God in heaven.

Christ was also truly the Son of man, and fully human. When He was on earth, He was literally subjected to all kinds of human experiences without sinning at any time. That is why we can be encouraged “for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15). In His perfect and sinless humanity, He became the Captain of our salvation (Heb 2:10) for “though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb 5:8-9).

There is no contradiction in the 100% deity and 100% humanity of Christ. The Lord did not cease to be God when He became man. When He was on earth, He acted perfectly according to His deity as well as humanity. His deity did not in any way contradict His humanity, nor did His humanity contradict His deity. As one Person with two natures, Christ conducted Himself in perfect harmony as the God-Man.

When He was on earth, He accomplished what He had always intended to accomplish even before the world began.

We find comfort in such a Perfect Saviour. Man can change and disappoint us, but not God. He never changes, and always keeps His promises—“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8).

CHRISTUS VERE RESURREXIT

“The resurrection is the chief point of the gospel” (Calvin).

Jesus was who and what He claimed to be. This is proved by the fact that He rose from the dead as He said He would. Christ’s resurrection is an indisputable fact of history. The slogan, *Christus vere resurrexit*, “Christ truly arose,” has been a rallying point for Christian faith and testimony all through the centuries.

The resurrection of Christ is infallibly reported in the New Testament Scripture (1 Cor 15:1-23). The New Testament was penned at the beginning of our era. It was written within the Christian movement which had organised societies called “churches” in the great cities of the Roman world. It was penned by men who thoroughly believed that Jesus Christ had arisen from the dead. They believed that His grave was empty and that He had appeared in recognisable form in the same body in which He had suffered on the cross.

The New Testament does not attempt to prove the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection was a publicly known event. It was assumed to be true. No one who knew the facts could intelligently dispute it. In those days, the resurrection had to be told not proved.

In those days, there was one attempt to disprove the fact of the resurrection of Christ as recorded in Matthew 28:11-15.

The enemies of Christ invented a story that the disciples came by night to steal His body when the guards were sleeping! Matthew, of course, wasted no time to refute such an argument (Matt 28:16-20). It seems that this was the only opposing argument that circulated at that time (Matt 28:15).

Nonetheless, the fact of the resurrection was proclaimed far and wide. The biblical writers had every confidence that their testimony of the resurrection of Christ could not be intelligently and evidentially challenged or refuted.

The resurrection did happen as the Scriptures say. Surely men who are guilty of religious fraud, or who are pursuing hallucinations, are not capable of producing a literature like this. The New Testament itself is tangible evidence that Christ arose from the dead.

“BY MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS”

The Christian movement has existed in the world, and still exists, solely on the basis of the truth that Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose again from the dead. In the year AD 30, there was hardly a Christian church in the sense of a conspicuous movement in human society. By the year AD 40 and shortly thereafter, Christian societies called “churches” were formed in the cities of the Roman world. Christian documents began to appear, and Christian names were found inscribed in cemeteries. In a miraculous manner, the Christian movement swept over the whole Roman Empire in a matter of 300 years.

How did the Christian movement originate? The infallible records of the Gospels and Acts reveal that Christianity began by faith in the historical fact of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection in fulfilment of Scripture (1 Cor 15:1-4). When Jesus died, His little group of disciples scattered and fled. They were completely crushed in their hopes, and

testified of their own complete despair. Men do not describe themselves in such terms fictitiously. They said, “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel” (Luke 24:21), but now He is dead and all hope is lost.

Then suddenly the Christians changed in mind and spirit, and faced the world with a testimony of courage and confidence which has never yet died out. That Jesus Christ has arisen from the dead is a fact attested “by many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3). The very existence of the Christian movement even today is one important evidence that He truly arose.

Another evidence for the resurrection of Christ is that before the time of Christ, the Jewish day of worship was the seventh day of the week; but the Christian church, immediately after the resurrection, began to worship God on the first day of the week. This was because the first day of the week was the day of the Lord’s resurrection, and became known as “the Lord’s Day” (John 20:1, 19 cf Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 16:2, Rev 1:10).

RESURRECTION LIFE

Another proof of the resurrection of Jesus is the fact of transformed lives. When a broken, sinful soul puts his confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, he experiences a powerful change which is called “the resurrection life.” If Jesus only died, then death conquered Him; but if Jesus died and rose again, then His death was a victory. When one believes in Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, he lives a renewed life by the power imparted to him by his risen Lord. As Paul puts it, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). This miracle of transformed lives upon belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as seen in the saints of

old, and in believers today cannot be explained if Jesus only died and did not rise again. Truly He is risen just as He said.

All Four Gospels in the New Testament tell us about the resurrection of Jesus. These Gospels were written during the generation of Jesus' contemporaries while many who had personal knowledge of the facts connected with His life and death must have been still alive. By the year AD 170, the Four Gospels had been widely circulated in the Roman world not only as individual books, but also as a single "harmony." Tatian combined all Four Gospels into one, and called it *The Diatessaron*. Thus, it cannot be denied that the Four Gospels were written, widely circulated, generally accepted, and already combined into a harmony of the gospels by the year AD 170 (140 years after the death of Jesus). Tatian's very name for his harmony, *The Diatessaron*, assumes that everyone would understand. Tatian would never have used such a title if he could not have assumed that all would know of the Four Gospels which he thus harmonised.

The Four Gospels were written very early, within the very first century, soon after Jesus died and arose. We can say with confidence that no competent New Testament scholar would deny that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written within the generation of Jesus' contemporaries, that is, when there must have been many men alive who were personally acquainted with the facts. Matthew was written in about AD 40, Mark AD 45, Luke AD 50, and John AD 85.

FROM PERSECUTOR TO PROPAGATOR

Saul of Tarsus was a brilliant Jew, and thoroughly trained in rabbinical learning. He hated the Christian church and sought to destroy it. But all of a sudden, he became the greatest propagator of the Christian Faith, and the greatest missionary of the Christian Church (Acts 22:3-21). He also

became the author of at least 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament.

What brought about this abrupt and stupendous change? Saul testified that his radical change of position was due to the overpowering supernatural vision of the resurrected Christ. Through this experience, he was convinced that Christ had arisen from the dead. He was once blind, but now he saw. The resurrection of Christ is fact, not fiction. It has indeed the power to change a person for the better, even such a hater of Christianity as Saul.

Saul the persecutor became Paul the preacher. He went about preaching the Gospel and establishing churches. His method was, first of all, to preach in the Jewish synagogue, expounding from the Old Testament Messianic prophecies that Jesus was indeed the promised Christ to come, who died and rose again. That Christ had risen from the dead was the pivotal point in the message (1 Cor 1:17, 15:1-4).

There must have been hostile hearers of Paul's preaching who would have done everything possible to refute his claims. But nobody could. If Paul's testimony of Christ's resurrection could be easily refuted, the churches he founded would not have survived and flourished for years after his death.

Every true believer of Jesus Christ would have experienced the power of His resurrection in his life. The truth of the resurrection is better experienced than explained.

FULLY GOD AND FULLY MAN

EARLY HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON AND THE NATURES OF CHRIST

Party	Time	Reference	Human Nature	Divine Nature
Docetists	Late 1st Century	1 John 4:1-3	0%	100%
Ebionites	2nd Century	Irenaeus, etc.	100%	0%
Arians	4th Century	Condemned by Nicaea, 325	100%	50%
Apollinarians	4th Century	Condemned by Constantinople, 381	50%	100%
Nestorians	5th Century	Condemned by Ephesus, 431	100% (separate person)	100% (separate person)
Eutychians	5th Century	Condemned by Chalcedon, 451 and III Constantinople, 680	50%	50%
Orthodox	From Beginning	Defined by Chalcedon, 451	100%	100%

In the first four centuries, the Person of Christ was being attacked. The erroneous views of Docetism, Ebionism, Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism were all condemned as heresies by the Early Church.

In the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD), the historic Christian and Biblical view was finally stated: Christ is one person with a fully divine nature and a fully human nature, and His natures are without mixture, without change, without division, without separation.

Besides John 1:1 and 14, the doctrine that Jesus Christ was 100% God and 100% Man is clearly taught in Colossians 2:9, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” and 1 Timothy 3:16, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”

Jesus Christ is a Unique Person who alone is 100% God and 100% Man.

SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

All human beings have inherited Adam's original sin by natural descent and birth for he was our first parent and representative. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, was not born in sin. This was because of His virgin conception and birth. As such He was in no way involved or represented in the original sin of Adam. Neither did He come under the guilt of Adam's transgression. In His birth He was supernaturally protected from the pollution and corruption of sin. The promise was made to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

Not only was Christ sinless at birth, He was sinless throughout His life on earth. He could challenge His enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46). John refers to Him as "Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). And John comments, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). Peter expresses the same thought, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet 2:21-22). In all of His earthly trials, He was "without sin" (Heb 4:15).

Christ was also sinless at the time of His death, at the atonement. As the perfect Sacrifice for our sins, Jesus had to be the spotless and unblemished Lamb of God. Paul wrote, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor 5:21). Peter likewise taught, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and

gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet 1:18-19).

PERFECT LAMB OF GOD

Jesus Christ was both the Great High Priest and the Lamb of God. The Old Testament spotless lamb, “without blemish,” that was required for the Passover (Exod 12:5) pointed to the atonement that was accomplished by Christ. Likewise, as Great High Priest, He had to be without blame: “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those [ancient] high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath [Ps 110:4], which was since the law, maketh [designates] the Son, who is consecrated for evermore” (Heb 7:26-28).

It goes without saying that the sinlessness of Christ is an attribute which is absolutely essential to the atonement which He accomplished on the cross of Calvary. His sinlessness throughout His entire lifetime as He perfectly obeyed God’s holy law is called His “active obedience.” He had to live a perfect life before He could offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice. The Lamb over me is Righteousness.

The Lord Jesus Christ had to overcome all kinds of trials and temptations for the sake of earning the righteousness we need to enter heaven. Hebrews 4:15 clearly says, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted [tried, tested] like as we are, yet without sin.” The trials and temptations Christ faced were very real, yet He went through them all

without ever sinning. He had never at any time sinned in His thought, word, or deed.

Many a time when we are tempted, we have already sinned in our mind or in our heart even before committing the very act of sin. It is important to understand that Jesus never knew sin in any of these ways, for in Him there was no sin at all. When trials or even temptations in our modern sense of the word, came to Him, He had taken no previous steps towards the sin and there was no sinful response in His nature. That was why Jesus could say, “the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30).

TEMPTATION OF JESUS

The temptation of Jesus is recorded in all three synoptic gospels (Luke 4:1-13, Matt 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13). It was truly a crucial event in the life of Christ. We are told that Jesus, being full of the Spirit, was immediately led by the Spirit into the desert. There He was tempted by Satan for a period of 40 days and nights. During this period of time, Jesus fasted, and did not eat anything. This made Him all the more physically vulnerable to the devil’s temptations.

Why did Jesus have to go through this time of temptation or testing? Jesus had to go through this time of testing because He had to earn the righteousness His people needed to enter the kingdom of heaven. It was part of His active obedience. Just like Adam had to be tested in the Garden of Eden in order to secure life eternal through obedience, Christ as the greater Adam had to go through such a test to secure our salvation. This is clearly taught by Paul in Romans 5:12-21: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not

sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Adam failed, but Christ passed the test. We are not only saved by His death; we are also "saved by his life" (Rom 5:10). Jesus saved us by His life, by His death, and by His life again.

In Luke, the temptation account is placed immediately after the genealogy of Jesus which Luke has traced right back to Adam. Luke through Paul's instruction has correctly portrayed Christ as the second Adam who must obtain eternal life for man that the first Adam had failed to obtain.

What Adam failed to do under the covenant of works, Christ succeeded under the covenant of grace. Christ, being man's perfect Representative, kept the Law of God on our behalf through His active obedience. Adam failed to obey God's commandment in the Garden by yielding to Satan's threefold

temptation (Gen 3:6, 1 John 2:16). But Christ successfully resisted the same threefold temptation, thereby securing “righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4).

The threefold temptation consists of (1) the lust of the flesh, (2) the lust of the eyes, and (3) the pride of life. Having been tempted by Satan, Eve partook of the fruit because it was (1) “good for food,” (lust of the flesh), (2) “pleasant to the eyes” (lust of the eyes), and (3) “to be desired to make one wise” (pride of life). By so disobeying God, Adam and Eve plunged not only themselves, but also the whole human race into the condemnation of sin.

Jesus Christ was also tempted in the same threefold way: He was tempted (1) to turn stones into bread (the lust of the flesh), (2) with the kingdoms of the world (lust of the eyes), and (3) to jump from the pinnacle of the temple (the pride of life). But Christ was victorious. He defeated Satan with the Word of God quoting (1) Deuteronomy 8:3, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;” (2) Deuteronomy 6:13, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;” and (3) Deuteronomy 6:16, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). It is a very effective weapon against Satan’s fiery darts of temptation. Christ conquered Satan. He perfectly obeyed the commands of God, and so saved us by His active obedience.

TRIAL IN GETHSEMANE

Jesus’ trial in Gethsemane is recorded in all three synoptic gospels (Luke 22:39-46, Matt 26:30-46, Mark 14:26, 32-42). Gethsemane (meaning “oil press”) was an olive tree garden beyond the Kidron Valley, East of Jerusalem, near the Mount of Olives. The “oil press” garden filled with the twisted branches typical of olive trees vividly portrays the intense

agony that Jesus went through as He thought of “this cup,” i.e., His impending death on the cross. The agony was so great that He sweated drops of blood. Christ shed His blood not only at Calvary, but also at Gethsemane.

Here we have a display of His passive obedience. Although He struggled in His flesh fearing the pain, suffering, and death to come, yet He willingly obeyed His Father’s will to go to the cross. Hebrews 5:7-9 makes clear, “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”

Did the Father answer the Son’s prayer? Indeed He did. His prayer was answered because He prayed obediently, “not my will, but thine, be done.” Jesus as the *Theanthropos*—the God-Man—has two wills—the divine and the human. His human will would like the cup removed, but His divine will which was the same as the Father’s would have the cup drunk as eternally decreed. That was why Jesus said to Peter, “the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11). Jesus subjected His human will to the divine will. His prayer that the Father’s will be done was answered (Heb 5:7). Although there was a holy tension between His human will and divine will (the dynamics of which we are unable to fathom), His divine will was in perfect harmony with His Father’s—“I and my Father are one” (John 10:30).

The prayer that pleases the Father best is the prayer of faith: “not my will, but thine, be done.”

TRIAL UPON THE CROSS

The most severe trial endured by our Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly life was the trial of the cross. The physical suffering was extreme. The crucifixion itself was preceded by the scourging, the crown of thorns, the beatings, and the indignities of every sort.

The physical suffering of Christ was indeed great, but His spiritual suffering—the agony of mind and spirit—was greater. For a minister of the Gospel or a missionary of the cross there is no greater suffering than to see the message of the grace of God despised and rejected. One learns to love the souls to whom one tries to minister. When they reject and despise the Gospel, one experiences great sadness and sorrow. When Jesus bore our sins on the cross, He suffered the hatred of those He loved, and suffered this in the greatest possible degree. Our filthiness deserved that kind of a treatment. All the angels should spit upon us; but Christ, in order to present us pure and holy in the presence of the Father, resolved to be spat upon.

Jesus knew, of course, that hostility was developing against Him. Of this there are many indications in the Gospels. Jesus warned, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (Matt 7:6). Those who are called to preach the gospel are called to offer the holiest and the best to the worst. And they are forewarned that their message will sometimes be despised and they will sometimes be the objects of attack.

What Jesus did in His life on earth was precisely to give the holiest to the dogs and to cast the pearl of heaven before swine; and indeed they trampled both His message and His person. This, not merely physical suffering, is the sacrifice of the cross.

The most excruciating point of the suffering of Christ on the cross was probably the time when He cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). These words, taken from the opening verse of Psalm 22, contain a mystery which no human mind can ever fathom. If ever we who have trusted Christ feel forsaken of God, we know that we are not really forsaken, for Christ endured this for us as our Representative and Substitute on the cross. He knows how to comfort and encourage us when we go to Him in prayer (Heb 4:14-16).

“WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”

Jesus has plumbed the depths of suffering and pain far deeper than any man can go, far deeper than any finite mind can comprehend. His cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?,” shows His anguish. Although we do not know the depth of the meaning of this outcry, we can be sure that it represented no illusion or false impression. Our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross by these words indicated that the opening sentence of Psalm 22 described His condition at the time. Yet the “forsaking” of verse one is not total forsaking, for verse 24 of the same Psalm adds, “When he cried unto him, he heard.”

It was indeed the Son and not the Father nor the Spirit who died upon the cross. Nevertheless, the sin that the Son bore was the sin against the Triune God. As such, the motivation of the sacrifice and of the entire act of the atonement is just as truly the motivation of the Father and of the Spirit, as it is of the Son. The “God” of John 3:16 is actively concerned in the accomplishment of His redemptive purpose. All three Persons of the Trinity were involved in the work of redemption, but it was the Second Person of the Godhead—the Lord Jesus Christ—who suffered on the cross.

Calvin explains the words of Christ, “To such a degree was Christ dejected, that in the depths of His agony He was forced to exclaim, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ ... the expression was wrung from the anguish of His inmost soul. We do not, however, insinuate that God was ever hostile to Him or angry with Him. How could He be angry with the beloved Son, with whom His soul was well pleased? or how could He have appeased the Father by His intercession for others if He were hostile to Himself?”.

When we read, “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,” He “make his soul an offering for sin,” “It pleased the LORD to bruise him” (Isa 53:6, 10), “He ... spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all” (Rom 8:32), we must certainly understand that it was our sin that resulted in the crucifixion of Christ. It was by the will of the Father (and of course by His own will also) and by the power of the Holy Spirit (Heb 9:14) that He was thus “delivered up” to bear our sins.

When Christ uttered the words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?,” on the cross, He was in effect telling His disciples, “Remember the 22nd Psalm.” In other words, Jesus was indicating that He was the fulfilment of that Messianic Psalm.

Christ’s enemies had just quoted another saying from this Psalm in taunting Him, “He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God” (Matt 27:43, quoting Ps 22:8). This fact would give added weight to Jesus’ citing this Psalm as proof that He has indeed fulfilled the Psalm’s prophetic intent.

Although Psalm 22 speaks of the pain Christ suffered on the cross, it is also filled with words of hope. For instance, verse 22 says, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren:

in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” These very words are put into the lips of Jesus with a triumphant note in Hebrews 2:12. It seems, therefore, that for Jesus to quote the opening words of the Psalm as He hung upon the cross would have meant to His disciples something like the following: “Indeed I am in the situation described in this prophetic Psalm. Other portions of the Psalm are now being fulfilled, particularly the words, ‘They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture’ (v 18). But remember that this Psalm issues in triumph.”

Although the disciples were at the time filled with despair, the recollection of Jesus’ reference to this Psalm might well have reminded them of the promise. “For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard” (Ps 22:24).

FOREVER GOD AND MAN

The incarnation of Christ is permanent. Once the Son of God became the Son of man, He will always remain both Son of God and Son of man. The answer to question 21 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism states that Christ “continueth to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever.” Our Lord Jesus Christ continues to be a man and ever will be a member of our race. This, of course, does not mean that He is subject to the physical limitations which characterise our life upon this earth, but it does mean that He has a bodily, tangible form such as was manifested to His disciples after His resurrection, and such as will appear to us all in His glorious Second Coming. The promise of the angels when Jesus ascended (Acts 1:11) was, “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ has, from eternity, and has never ceased to have, all the attributes of Deity. Since His incarnation He has, and will never cease to have, all the essential attributes of humanity. It is of the nature of man, created in the image of God, though fallen into sin, yet redeemed by the grace of God, to enjoy eternal blessedness with God in immortal form after the resurrection. Whatever are the essential attributes of humanity in the resurrection and in the unfolding vistas of eternity, our Lord Jesus Christ has all those essential attributes. He is one of us.

As our Great High Priest, Jesus must ever remain not just God, but also man. This truth is taught in the book of Hebrews: “But so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:22-25).

SATISFACTION, SUBSTITUTION, PROPITIATION

The Westminster Confession of Faith declares, “The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself which He, through the Eternal Spirit once offered up to God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him” (8:5). The Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 25 asks, “How doth Christ execute the office of a priest?” The answer given is, “Christ executeth the office of a priest, in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us”.

The doctrine of the atonement may be seen as a satisfaction. The meaning of this term in such a context is by no means psychological, i.e., it is not the mere satisfaction of a desire. The term in the theological context simply means that the atonement of Christ which He offered by His shed blood upon the cross, satisfies the demands of God's holy law.

Man has broken the holy law of God, and the penalty for such a sin is death (Rom 6:23). Christ on the cross bore the penalty rightly due to us for our sins. This is taught in many passages of Scripture, for example, "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him" (Isa 53:5). The divinely instituted moral order in the universe required the infliction of a just penalty for any violation of the moral law. As such, the atonement of Christ may also be understood as a substitution. Christ died for our sins in our place as our substitute. Calvin wrote, "In order that Christ might satisfy for us, it was necessary that he should be placed as a guilty person at the judgement-seat of God actually to undergo in our room the judgement of God."

In the payment of sin's penalty, the Lord became the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 2:2 declares, "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Propitiation speaks of not only the covering of sins, but also the appeasement of God's wrath against the sinner. It is necessary to point out that our salvation is totally based upon our genuine acceptance of what Christ has accomplished for us, and not just a mere understanding of that fact. A mere understanding of the fact of the gospel does not save. A person is saved only when he (1) knows the gospel (2) agrees with the gospel, and (3) believes in the gospel. All three factors of knowing, agreeing, and believing must be in place if salvation is to take place. When one believes that "Christ died for our sins according

to the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3), and when a person accepts Christ thus as his Saviour, he is regenerated, and becomes a member of the household of faith.

The work of God in making a sinner a saint is a supernatural one. The gospel can be perfectly understandable to a kindergarten child who listens obediently to the Word of God with simple, childlike trust. But the same gospel can be well nigh impossible for a PhD to understand if he does not believe the Holy Scriptures, and proudly thinks he knows better than God. That was why Paul said, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God ... For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor 1:18, 21).

The story is told of a simple-minded man who presented himself before the elders of a great city church and asked to be admitted as a communicant member. He was unable to memorise the statements found in the catechism, and was unable to state the doctrines with any degree of clarity. The elders were about to dismiss him when one of them asked, “Why did you come to apply for membership if you cannot explain your faith?” At this, tears came to the eyes of the simple-minded man, and with genuine earnestness he said, “I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all, but Jesus my Saviour is all in all.” He was accepted and went on to live a simple but radiant Christian life.

FORGIVENESS

When thinking of the cross, think forgiveness.

It is important to note that when Christ died for our sins upon the cross, He was not a “third party,” but the party sinned against. The “One Mediator” is “God manifest in the

flesh” (1 Tim 2:5; 3:16). Since genuine forgiveness necessarily involves substitutional bearing of the sin forgiven, and since the crucifixion of Christ is to be taken as the all-inclusive, all-representative act of sin, therefore Christ died for my sin in my place as my Substitute. I should justly have been swept into the Lake of Fire. Upon the cross, He might have said, “Angels, destroy them.” But when He said, “Father, forgive them,” He was dying in my place.

Christ died for my sins as my Substitute. All forgiveness, human and divine, is in the very nature of the case substitutional. No one ever really forgives another, except he bears the penalty of the other’s sin against him. When the state pardons a criminal, society takes upon itself the burden of the criminal’s guilt.

The guilt of one individual’s sin against another cannot morally be transferred to a third party. Moses and Paul prayed that they might become substitutes for Israel, and bear their guilt, but it was morally impossible, for they were third parties in the affair. “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him” (Ps 49:7). When we say that Christ died as our Substitute, we do not in any sense imply that He was a third party who stepped in between God and man.

Christ was not a third party in the affair at Calvary. He was the very party against whom that sin (and every sin in the final analysis) was committed. At Calvary, 12 legions of angels could not wait to slay the guilty who had put Jesus on the cross, but the lone Saviour, the one whom we had sinned against, in forgiveness, bore the guilt Himself. The whole meaning of the death of Christ can be summed up in one word, the beautiful word “forgiveness.” When the Son of God, being hanged on a gibbet of shame by the sons of men, said, “Father, forgive them,” instead of saying “Angels,

destroy them,” He did, in the clearest imaginable way, substitute Himself for the sinners, and bare their sin “in his own body on the tree.” What a wonderful Saviour!

SIN OFFERING

Jesus Christ was our “sin offering.” The epistle to the Hebrews as a whole presents Christ as our great high priest, offering Himself upon the cross as our sacrifice. His priesthood was not the priesthood of Aaron, but the priesthood of Melchizedek, who was both king and priest, a priesthood which both preceded and superseded the Aaronic priesthood. It was necessary for the Aaronic priest, who himself was “compassed with infirmity,” to make an offering not only for the sins of the people, but also for his own sins (Heb 5:2-3). “So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but [He who glorified Him was] he that said unto him, ‘Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee’ [Ps 2:7]. As he saith also in another place [Ps 110:4], ‘Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec’” (Heb 5:5-6). “For such an high priest became us ... who needeth not daily, as those [ancient] high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this [sin offering] he did once, when he offered up himself” (Heb 7:26-27). Christ as the high priest offering Himself as a sin offering was nothing other than the substitutional atonement. Jesus was both Priest and Sacrifice.

The high priesthood and the sin offering are not the only terms in which the atonement of Christ is presented in the Scriptures. Another scriptural word for the atonement of Christ is “ransom.” Matthew and Mark both record Christ’s saying that He came “to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). Paul writes to Titus, He “gave himself for us, that he might redeem [ransom] us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit 2:14). Peter writes, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were

not redeemed [ransomed] with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet 1:18-19).

Another mode of expression representing the atonement of Christ is the “payment of debt.” We are taught to say in the Lord’s Prayer, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt 6:12). The grace of God is presented in several passages in Jesus’ teachings, as the forgiveness of a debt (Matt 18:30ff; Luke 7:41).

SAVIOUR

The word “saviour” and the corresponding abstract noun, “salvation,” and the verb, “save,” occur frequently throughout the Scripture. The word “saviour” may be applied to anyone who saves from any pitiable circumstance. In the New Testament, the word “saviour” sometimes applies to the Father: in 1 Timothy 1:1, “God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope,” and probably also in 1 Timothy 4:10, Titus 1:3; 3:4.

The most common and most important use of these words has to do with salvation from sin and its consequences, the salvation that comes from God the Father through Jesus Christ who is called the Saviour pre-eminently. His function as such is stated in Matthew 1:21, “thou shalt call his name JESUS [‘Jesus’ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Yeshua* which means ‘Yahweh is Salvation’]: for he shall save his people from their sins.” The saviourhood of Christ is further highlighted in such texts as the following: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:30-31). “Much more

then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom 5:9-10). “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20). “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim 1:15). “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim 1:10). “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit 2:13-14). “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

Jesus saved the world sufficiently but the elect efficiently.

A TRANSACTION ONCE FOR ALL

Christ’s atonement on the cross of Calvary must be regarded as a transaction never to be repeated, an actual accomplishment of the salvation of God’s elect once for all.

The atonement is and was efficacious in all ages, past and future. It was the basis of “the remission of sins that are past” (Rom 3:25). It signifies that God is both “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26), and it is the basis of the continuous process of sanctification (1 John 1:7). Paul teaches, “Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once [for all]; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God” (Rom 6:9-10). The

epistle to the Hebrews states that Christ accomplished His offering of Himself as a sin offering “once [for all]” (Heb 7:27). It also emphasises the finality of this unrepeatable offering: “Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once [for all] in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb 9:25-26). Christ is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb 5:9). “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

The once-for-all atonement of Christ fulfilled the satisfaction of the eternal principle of divine justice and the vindication of God’s holy law. It thus speaks against the error of the Roman Catholic version of the Holy Communion (or the mass, or Eucharist) which teaches that Christ’s atoning work is still unfinished, that each time the bread and the cup are observed, Christ is crucified all over again. Calvin said, “The Mass is the head of all abominations, and must therefore be condemned as devilish.”

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

The good news of salvation is offered to all men everywhere. When certain men stubbornly and finally reject the grace of God offered to them, they “sin against the Holy Spirit” and commit the “unpardonable sin.” The unpardonable sin is the irrevocable rejection of the grace of God in the atoning work of Christ that is offered to lost men through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

The unpardonable sin proves the once-for-all atonement of Christ. When sinful men reject the atonement of Christ, there is no more or no further atonement. They are “in

danger of eternal damnation,” and are “guilty of an eternal sin” (Mark 3:29).

That Christ “dies not again” adds striking significance to the statement found in Hebrews 6:4-6. Those who commit the unpardonable sin are trying to crucify Jesus all over again. It speaks of the extreme wickedness of those who have had every opportunity of salvation and have definitely rejected it. The statement is that those here described will never repent, “It is impossible to renew them again unto [the point of] repentance.” They are definitely not born-again individuals. They only appear to believe, but actually do not believe in Christ. A true believer can never commit the unpardonable sin.

Paul warned against an unholy participation of the Lord’s Supper, “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Cor 11:27-29). These words corroborate the fact that Christ “dies not again,” and shed light on the words in Hebrews 6:6, “they [try to] crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

Six things are asserted of the persons discussed in Hebrews 6:4-6: (1) They have been “enlightened.” This must mean that they have heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but it does not necessarily mean they have been genuinely converted. (2) They “have tasted of the heavenly gift.” This can be taken to mean that they have enjoyed the fellowship of the saints, perhaps in a Christian family or in the church, just as Judas Iscariot enjoyed the company of the other disciples. (3) They “were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.” This need not mean

that they have been born again, but that they have been witnesses of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of others. (4) They “have tasted the good word of God.” There are many unsaved people who enjoy reading the Scriptures as great literature, but not necessarily as the Word of God to be obeyed. (5) They “have tasted ... the powers of the world to come.” These have known the Kingdom promises of God, and yet prefer this sinful world than the glorious world to come. (6) They have fallen “away.” This does not mean that they were once saved and then lost again, but that with all the benefits of Christian instruction, fellowship with Christian people, conviction of the Holy Spirit under God’s common grace, they have finally and deliberately denied and rejected Jesus Christ. It must be understood that the church visible on earth is a mixed multitude comprising both true believers and false believers. The latter are those who “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” They were never truly born again in the first place.

Dr H Framer Smith was correct to conclude, “There is no stronger force of love and persuasion, there is no greater message of love in the universe, than the message of the grace of God revealed in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who deliberately and finally reject Christ, and resist the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, will never repent.”

ACTIVE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ saved us by His perfect obedience. Calvin says in his *Institutes*, “... in general He accomplished it [the atonement] for us by the whole course of His obedience. This is proved by the testimony of Paul, ‘As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous’ (Rom 5:19).” Calvin continues, “In short, from the time of His assuming the character of a servant, He began to pay the price of

our deliverance in order to redeem us.” Calvin notes that the Apostles’ Creed refers especially to Christ’s death and resurrection, “in which the sum of perfect salvation consists. Yet there is no exclusion of the rest of the obedience which He performed in His life; as Paul comprehends the whole of it, from the beginning to the end, when he says, that He ‘made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, ... and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross’ (Phil 2:7-8).”

In his *Systematic Theology*, Charles Hodge does not say very much about the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ, but he does make the doctrine clear, “... that our moral excellence, habitual or actual, is not and cannot be the ground of any judicial declaration [such as the doctrine of justification includes]. What then is the ground? The Bible and the people of God, with one voice answer, ‘the righteousness of Christ.’ ... it is ... the answer rendered by every believer’s heart. He relies for his acceptance with God, not on himself, but on Christ, not on what he is or has done, but on what Christ is and has done for him. By the righteousness of Christ is meant all that He became and suffered to satisfy the demands of divine justice, and merit for His people the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life.” In other words, Jesus Christ kept the Ten Commandments on our behalf in order to earn the righteousness that we need to enter into heaven. Our garment of righteousness is not self-made or man-made but Christ-made.

Christ saved His people by His active and passive obedience. The active obedience refers to His keeping of the Law, while His passive obedience speaks of His sufferings on earth and His eventual death on the cross. Although this distinction is scriptural, it is important to understand that the active and passive obedience of Christ are not two obediences but one complete and unified obedience. The active and passive

obedience of Christ are simply two aspects of the one obedience of Christ.

Jesus' keeping of the Law and His sufferings on the Cross are for the sole purpose of saving His people from their sins. We are justified by His blood which represents His life as well as His death. The obedience of Christ includes all He did in satisfying the demands of the law from the time of His birth to the time of His death (Gal 4:4-5). A A Hodge rightly said, "He lived His whole life, from His birth to His death, as our representative, obeying and suffering in our stead and for our sakes; and during this whole course all His suffering was obedience and all His obedience was suffering ... His earthly life as suffering, cancels the penalty, and, as obedience, fulfills the precept and secures the promised reward."

A A Hodge went on to say, "The endurance of the penalty therefore, is required of Christ's people in order that their sins be expiated. And perfect obedience is required for a definite period, in order that they may be righteously advanced to the grace which had, from the beginning, been offered only on that condition. The active and passive obedience of Christ, the suffering of the penalty for the remission of sin, and the obeying of the law for life, do not therefore constitute two satisfactions, but are one complete and perfect satisfaction of the whole law in all its relations."

The doctrine of the passive obedience of Christ is often emphasised, but the active obedience of Christ is unfortunately quite neglected in churches and Bible schools. Christians ought not to be ignorant of this important aspect of Christ's obedience. The last words of J Gresham Machen, the great Biblical scholar, were, "The active obedience of Christ ... no hope without it." Amen!

ONE ATONEMENT

The active obedience of Christ was His holy life, and the passive obedience was His suffering for our sins on the cross. They are not two atonements, but one single atonement. Let it be emphasised that the active obedience and passive obedience of Christ are two phases of that one atonement.

If Christ had not lived a sinless life in complete and absolute obedience to God's holy law, He could not have offered a perfect sacrifice "without blemish" on the analogy of the Old Testament sin offering. The Lord lived a perfect life as God manifest in the flesh. He offered that perfect life as a perfect sacrifice upon the cross, as upon the altar of the heavenly tabernacle. His resurrection gave positive evidence proving that His perfect life and His perfect sacrifice constituted a victory for us, a victory over all His and our enemies. It is because of the active obedience of Christ that we may "be found in him, not having [our] own righteousness, ... but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil 3:9).

We have a very thorough, complete and perfect Saviour who left nothing out to save us from our sins, and to gain the righteousness that we need to enter into heaven. That is why the Scriptures say that Christ is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Hebrews 5:8-9 tells us, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Since we have such a wonderful Saviour, we are enjoined to keep "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2). Jesus did the work of salvation every moment of every day throughout His life on earth.

HOLY CHARACTER OF GOD

God is holy and He demands that we be holy too. When Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt 5:48), He was doubtless referring to the many Old Testament passages which demand holiness from God’s people on the basis of the holiness of God’s own character. Jesus doubtless had in mind such passages as Deuteronomy 18:13, “Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.” “For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: ... For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. ... Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2).

The implications of God’s holiness upon His creatures are clearly expressed in Isaiah’s vision of God’s throne. Isaiah recounted his fearful experience, “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa 6:1-5). Unless God cleanses us from sin, and makes us holy, we may not at all come nigh His very holy presence.

The thrice holy God does not and cannot condone sin. Sinners will one day be judged and punished by God. God will “by no means clear the guilty” (Exod 34:4-7). Sins not punished in this life will be punished in the next (Rev

20:13-15). If earthly judges cannot allow criminals to go unpunished, how much more will the heavenly Judge punish those who sin against Him!

Habakkuk declares the holy character of God, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13). These words of Habakkuk must not be taken out of context, for he continues, “Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” Habakkuk’s answer to this question is that the offenders will come into “judgment” (v 12), and in the meantime, “the just shall live by his faith” (Hab 2:4). In other words, God’s holy character must ultimately require that sin be punished. Faith in the vindictory judgement of God is a strong element in the entire faith message of Habakkuk’s prophecy.

The implications of the holy character of God are vividly set forth in the epistle to the Hebrews, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). “Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Those who reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the glories of the world to come can only expect to face the wrath and judgement of God, “For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29).

All said, it is important to know that the God of the Bible hates sin and will certainly punish sin. His wrath against all sin and corruption contrary to His holy nature, is revealed in present judgements, and solemnly and emphatically predicted as most certainly coming in the final judgement.

REPRESENTATIVE PRINCIPLE

The representative principle is a fact of human life and is seen throughout human history. We act through our representatives and are responsible, not only as isolated

individuals, but also as individual members of our communities.

Buswell proved this principle by arguing from Scripture and society. He wrote, “In Bible history, it is strikingly clear that God deals not only with individuals, but with families, with nations, and with the human race as a solidarity, yet a solidarity in which individual responsibility is never submerged or set aside by group responsibility.

“In human society, it is frequently possible for an individual, though legally and morally represented, and hence implicated, to repudiate his original representatives and choose other representatives. In human affairs, this can be done by revolution, or by emigration, or by some other form of identification with representatives of an opposite group.”

The representative principle may be thus illustrated: I am a Singapore citizen because I was born to parents who are Singapore citizens. I became a Singaporean by representation of my parents. However, if I do not wish to remain a Singapore citizen, I can choose to emigrate and identify myself with another country.

Theologically speaking then, “I became a wicked sinner, both guilty and corrupt, in the Garden of Eden. I was not there but my representative acted for me. I am involved not simply because of the physiological solidarity of the human race, but chiefly on the representative principle. But I have repudiated my representative, by whom I was constituted a guilty and corrupt sinner. I died for my sins on the cross of Calvary in the year AD 30. I was not there, but my Representative was there. I have chosen to accept Him as my Representative, my covenant Head, my substitutional Sin-Bearer. I have gone to Him, as it were, ‘without the camp’ (Heb 13:12-13).

“Just as the representative principle is right and is understandable in human affairs, so the doctrine of the substitutional atonement is not only taught explicitly in the Scriptures, but it is rationally and ethically comprehensible” (Buswell).

The biblical doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine that Christ died for my sins, in my place, as my Substitute, is logically grounded upon the representative principle. Just as Adam in his sin represented me, and through his action I am constituted a guilty sinner, so Christ on the cross represented His elect as their federal, or covenant Head (Rom 5:12-21). Christ is thus the sinner’s only and best Substitute for salvation.

COVENANT OF WORKS

The God of the Bible is a covenant God. He relates with man according to His covenants. A covenant in the biblical sense is an agreement between God and man where God promises to bless man if and when he keeps the stipulation(s) laid down by Him.

“The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 7:2). In the Garden of Eden, God entered into a covenant of works with Adam. God promised Adam eternal life upon condition of perfect obedience. If Adam did well by not eating from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would have lived forever, and not die.

God created Adam with a free will. Adam, in his state of innocency, had freedom, and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but at the same

time, he was capable of disobedience, and so might fall from it.

In the covenant of works, Adam was the representative and federal head of the human race. Therefore, whatever he did, he did on behalf of all mankind (Rom 5:12, 19). Adam was under probation in the Garden. He was subjected to a test. He was given freedom of will to choose between God and self, between obedience or rebellion (Gen 2:15-17). Eternal life was not automatically given; it had to be earned. God promised Adam eternal life if he obeyed (Rom 7:10). Disobedience incurred the penalty of eternal death (Rom 6:23).

Adam disobeyed God, and fell into sin (Gen 3:1-7), and that is the reason why the world is in such a miserable state today—the sufferings, diseases, pain, wars, immorality, broken families, etc, are all due to man's original sin against God.

Man is to blame for the sufferings of this world, not God.

TWO TREES OF EDEN

The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were real historical trees (Gen 2:9, 16-17). What was the significance of these two special trees?

The tree of life symbolises eternal life (Gen 3:22-24; cf. Rev 2:7, 22:2, 14). Man was free to partake of the tree of life before he became sinful. It is symbolic of life and obedience. It should be seen in the same way the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, and the sacraments of the New Testament are seen as symbolic of a believer's faith in God. Adam in the Garden was under probation. He was not in a position of permanent spiritual sonship yet. If he had chosen to eat of the fruit of this tree, he would have been elevated to this

blessed position eternally, and his posterity would have enjoyed the same.

The tree of life is not magical. The idea that eating the fruit will bring about physical longevity and immunity from disease is false. Neither is the tree mythical. The mythical view denies the historical truthfulness of the Genesis account.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil must not be seen in the magical and mythical, but symbolical sense. The phrase “good and evil” is to be understood ethically or morally. (Deut 1:39, 30;15, 2 Sam 14:17, 1 Kings 3:9, Isa 5:20, 7:15-16, Amos 5:14-15, Mic 3:2). This knowledge that is spoken of is not pure cognitive knowledge. (We can infer from Gen 2:16-17 that Adam knew in his mind the evil of disobedience and the good of obedience even before he sinned.) This knowledge rather is experiential knowledge. It is the knowledge of action and commitment (Gen 3:6; cf. 1 John 2:15-17). The eating of the forbidden fruit was an act of disobedience towards God. This resulted in physical, spiritual, and eternal death. Man became an enemy of God. It is separation from the presence of God, and a severance of relationship with Him (Gen 2:17; cf. Rom 6:23).

COVENANT OF GRACE

“Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 7:3).

Since sinners cannot save themselves, God sends His Son—Jesus Christ—to save them from their sins. This is purely by the grace of God. Man does not deserve His salvation, but God shows mercy anyway through Christ. That is why it is known as the Covenant of Grace, and GRACE stands for “God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense.”

In the Old Testament, people are saved when they by faith look forward to what Jesus Christ will one day do on the Cross as found in the promises, prophecies, sacrifices of the Law and the Prophets. People in the New Testament are saved when they by faith look back at what Christ had already done on the Cross as revealed in the Gospels and the Epistles.

Abraham for instance was saved by grace through faith in Christ alone, “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom 4:3). Jesus Himself said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56). Through the eyes of faith based on God’s promises, Abraham saw what His Saviour would one day do to save him from sin. The same kind of faith is exercised by those who believe in Christ today, “Therefore being justified by faith, we (in the New Testament) have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand (like Abraham), and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:1-2). “Faith cannot stand unless it be founded upon the promises of God” (Calvin).

The Central Figure in the Covenant of Grace is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace.

The Covenant of Grace was instituted by God after the fall of man in the Garden of Eden when the first gospel was

preached (Gen 3:15). It was initiated by God even though man did not deserve to be saved (Gen 3:21, 4:1-5 cf John 15:16, Rom 5:8, Heb 9:22). It is a gracious covenant.

Since God is faithful and true, He will fulfil and accomplish what He has promised (Gen 17:1-8, 2 Sam 23:5, Heb 13:20). Although man may violate the stipulations of the covenant, the covenant relationship cannot be broken (Heb 10:23, 1 Thess 5:24). It is an irrevocable covenant.

Man's salvation is not dependent on good works or personal merit (Eph 2:8-9, Titus 3:5). It is dependent on the finished work of Christ in His life and in His death (Gal 2:20, 4:4-5, Matt 3:15, 5:17-18, Heb 4:14-16, 10:10-12, John 1:29, 36). By faith, a Christian believes to be true everything that is revealed in the Scriptures, obeys the commands, trembles at the warnings, and embraces the promises of God for this life and the life to come. Thus, saving faith is the accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the Covenant of Grace. It is an unconditional covenant.

The Covenant of Grace is essentially the same in the Old Testament and New Testament: (1) The promise is the same—"I will be your God!" (Gen 17:7, Exod 19:5, 20:1, Deut 29:13, 2 Sam 7:14, Jer 31:33, Heb 8:10). (2) The gospel is the same—"Salvation is of the LORD" (Ps 3:8, Jon 2:9, Isa 43:11, Acts 4:12, Rev 7:10; e.g., Abraham [Gal 3:8-9, Luke 24:27, John 5:46, 8:56]). (3) The means of salvation is the same—"by grace through faith" (Hab 2:4, Rom 4:1-3, Eph 2:8-9, Gal 3:7-9, Heb 11:6). (4) The Mediator is the same—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb 13:8, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Gen 3:21, 4:4).

The sacraments likewise share the same significance though they differ in form or mode. In the Old Testament, the

sacraments were the Passover and circumcision. In the New Testament, they are the Lord's Supper and water baptism. They all serve as signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace (Gen 17:10-11, Rom 4:11, 1 Cor 5:7, Col 2:11-12).

“Whenever the word ‘covenant’ occurs in Scripture, we ought to remember the word ‘grace’” (Calvin).

COVENANT AND MISSIONS

The covenant concept is of supreme importance for our understanding of missions and evangelism. We have a Covenant God, and we preach His covenant grace. The Covenant God is never fickle-minded, changeable, or inconsistent. The God of the Bible is a covenant-keeping God, and He cannot lie (Heb 6:18), neither can He deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13). When we preach the Gospel offering salvation to everyone who will believe, we preach with full confidence for the gospel promise is entirely true, and fully guaranteed by an all-powerful God who changes not (Mal 3:6, Heb 13:8). God's promises are always Yes and Amen, sealed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross.

The atonement remains a fact based upon God's promise and covenant. This fact has been experienced by the people of God throughout the ages. Doctrines are of great evangelistic and devotional value to the Christian life, but they are of no value if they are not factual or truthful. “So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17), and the Word of God is Truth (John 17:17). Countless men and women have expressed their testimonies in words similar to those of the man born blind: “one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). It is an incontrovertible fact that in Christ “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7).

Man is utterly lost and hopeless if he remains under the self-righteousness of legalism and vain works. But here is the good news, “Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:21-26).

God’s Word is Fact not Fiction. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17).

GLORY OF THE CROSS **(Buswell Abridged)**

The word “glory” of course means magnificence, splendour, or that which is admired. In John’s gospel, there are passages in which the word clearly points to the cross showing that it is in the cross that the glory of God is supremely revealed.

One such passage is found in John 12. Jesus is teaching; the crowds are there. Philip and Andrew had just brought the Greek visitors and presented them to Jesus. “And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (vv 23-24).

After a few words in regard to the sacrificial nature of discipleship: “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If

any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour” (vv 25-26). Jesus continues, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again” (vv 27-28).

In the light of what Jesus had already said in verse 23, “The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified,” it is quite clear that Jesus was alluding to His crucifixion. That John uses the word “glory” here to refer to the cross, throws light upon verse 16 of the same chapter. “These things [the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jesus’ triumphal entry] understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified [i.e., His crucifixion and subsequent resurrection], then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him” (John 12:16).

It was not until after the cross that the disciples recognised the full significance of the prophecy which was fulfilled in His triumphal entry into the city. No cross, no crown.

The use of the word, “glory,” in John 12 sheds light on the saying, “Jesus was not yet glorified,” in John 7:39. The “streams of living water” flowing from the hearts of believers, that is, the missionary programme for this age, was not to begin until after the cross.

The reference to “glory” in John 12:41ff does not only refer to the cross, but also the throne. In the preceding verses, John quotes Isaiah 53:1, “Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?” In explaining the strange fact of unbelief John further quotes, “He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with

their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them” (Isa 6:9 as quoted in John 12:40). It is immediately after these sad words that John remarks, “These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him” (John 12:41). Seeing “His glory” doubtless refers to Isaiah 6:1, “I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.” Isaiah’s vision was a preview of the supreme glory which was to be manifested in the cross.

John continues, “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (vv 42-43). For the rulers who, in a way, believed in Jesus but would not confess Him, because they preferred the glory of men to the glory of God, for them to confess the Lord Jesus would have meant persecution and suffering, the glory of the cross, which is indeed the glory of God.

It is disgraceful for a Christian to be ashamed of Christ and His Gospel. No believer should hide his faith. He must declare it openly, and be prepared to suffer for it. If Christ was not ashamed to be humiliated openly in order to save us from our sins, how can we be ashamed of confessing His Name and preaching His Gospel to others? Calvin said, “In the cross of Christ, as in a magnificent theatre, the inestimable goodness of God is displayed before the whole world.”

In John 13 the crucifixion is referred to as the glorification of Christ. Judas had just taken the morsel of food and gone out, when Jesus said, “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him” (vv 31-32).

That the cross is the supreme revelation of the glory of God is brought out with the greatest richness in John 17. The prayer of the Lord begins, “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: ... I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (vv 1, 4-5).

Jesus’ prayer to His Father in heaven, “The hour is come, glorify thy Son ...” refers directly to the cross. This glory which Jesus had before the world began surely points to the fact that Jesus was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8; 17:8; 1 Pet 1:20; Eph 1:4). It had been decreed from before the foundation of the world that the glory of God should be supremely revealed in the cross of Christ. Christ is now saying, in effect, “Just as in our eternal decree, the glory of redeeming love was to be accomplished in the cross, so now let it come to pass.”

This also explains John 17:24 where Christ prayed, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” Jesus was praying that some of His disciples might see the crucifixion so that they might tell the story the more effectively. Surely it is significant that we have the eyewitness story of the cross from some of those who loved Him. The story of the glory of the cross may be read in all its fullness from the divinely inspired, eyewitness accounts as found in the Four Gospels.

When John said, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14),

the words “we beheld his glory” include supremely, though not exclusively, the glory of the cross.

Another aspect of the glory of the cross is highlighted in the Lord’s high priestly prayer when He, with reference to His disciples, said, “I am glorified in them” (John 17:10). “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:22). If the supreme glory of the earthly life of Christ was His earthly sufferings and ultimate death on the cross, then it follows that Christians must likewise live the crucified life since the same glory has been passed on to them by the Lord.

The Lord’s words to Peter in John 21:18-19, “signifying by what death he should glorify God,” speak clearly about this principle of the crucified life. If our lives exemplify unselfishness and self-sacrifice, or in other words, if we live the crucified life, it will not be so difficult for men to believe that we really have a crucified and risen Saviour.

The way of the cross is the way of life. That was why Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt 16:24-25). The world thinks of the cross as Christ’s shame and defeat, but in reality it is His glory and victory, and ours too if we belong to Him.

FORGIVENESS TOWARDS OTHERS

If Christ has died for our sins, and has forgiven us of our sins against Him, then we must also live a life of forgiveness towards others. This teaching is found in Ephesians 4:32, “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” The same teaching is found in Colossians 3:12-13. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies,

kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

The teaching that we must forgive because we are forgiven is found in Jesus’ comment on “The Lord’s Prayer” in the Sermon on the Mount. “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt 6:14-15). Similar sayings are recorded elsewhere, “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses” (Mark 11:25). “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4).

When Peter asked the Lord, “How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matt 18:21-22). In other words, we must always forgive. We are to forgive because we are forgiven (Eph 4:32). Buswell says, “*if we cherish unforgiveness in our hearts, it is an evidence that we are not born again, that we have never truly accepted Christ as our personal Saviour, as our Substitute upon the cross.*” If we have truly experienced the forgiveness of Christ, then we will live the crucified life and demonstrate the forgiveness of Him who died for us.

The scriptural doctrine of forgiveness on the basis of the atonement of Christ by which we have been forgiven, is not an impossible doctrine to practise. It is true that “there is no condemnation” to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom

8:1); but it is equally true that “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb 12:6).

It is important that those who exercise biblical discipline whether in church or in school, be motivated by love and not revenge. If a Christian in any circumstance feels that he might to any degree be motivated by revenge as he serves as a disciplinarian, he should by all means disqualify himself from that office, and give it to another.

There is a story about Leonardo da Vinci, the great painter. Just before he started his work on “The Last Supper,” he had a fierce quarrel with a fellow painter. Leonardo was so angry and bitter that he decided to paint the face of his enemy, the other artist, into the face of Judas, thereby taking his revenge. The face of Judas was thus one of the first that he finished, and everyone could easily recognise it as the face of the painter with whom he had quarrelled. But when he came to paint the face of Christ, he could make no progress. Something seemed to be holding him back, frustrating his best efforts. At length he came to realise that the thing which was hindering him was the fact that he had painted the face of his enemy into the face of Judas. He therefore painted out the face of Judas. It was only when he had forgiven his enemy that he succeeded in painting the face of Christ. The lesson is clear: We cannot paint the features of Christ in our life with the colours of hatred and vengeance. As the saying goes, “To err is human, to forgive divine.”

HOLY LIVING

Over and above the matter of forgiveness, the atonement of Christ should cause believers to live a holy life. This is vividly and explicitly taught by the Apostle Paul in Colossians 2:20-3:4, “Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world ... If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those

things which are above ... Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col 2:20-3:4). In another place, Paul says, "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:20; cf. 7:23).

The whole of Romans 6 is an argument for holy living on the basis of the atonement of Christ. "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (vv 10-11). "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor 5:14-15).

The atonement of Christ may not be taken as a licence to sin. Paul made this very clear in Romans 6:1-6, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life ... Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

A true believer who has experienced God's mercy and forgiveness in Christ will be careful not to abuse the grace of God he has received. He will not delight in living a sinful lifestyle. So-called Christians who wilfully and habitually lead a life of sin, taking the grace of God as a permit to sin

all they like, have never truly experienced the grace of God, and are not born again.

DECREE OF ELECTION

“What are the decrees of God? The decrees of God are His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 7).

God’s decrees include the decree of the election of some from among the fallen race of Adam to obtain eternal life. The doctrine of election is defined in the Westminster Shorter Catechism as follows, “God having, out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery [brought about by the fall] and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer” (Question 20).

When we think of God’s decree of election and of His decree to permit the fall, we should think in terms of their logical rather than chronological order. The decree of election to salvation should be considered as logically subsequent to the decree to permit the fall of man. In his *Institutes*, Calvin says, “Paul, by denominating Him ‘the second Adam,’ places the fall ... in an intermediate point between the ... [origin] of mankind and the restitution which we obtain through Christ; whence it follows that the fall was the cause of the incarnation of the Son of God.”

The logical order of the decrees is as follows: (1) Creation of man in God’s image, (2) permission of the fall of man, (3) election of some to eternal life, (4) atonement by Christ to secure the salvation of the elect, (5) gift of the Holy Spirit to convict the world, (6) regeneration of the elect, and (7) sanctification of the regenerate.

It must be concluded that God's determination to save a people should be considered as logically subsequent to His determination to permit man to sin. Furthermore, the decree to save a people, that is, the decree of election to eternal life, should be considered as logically prior to the decree to provide the atonement as the means of salvation. Christ did not die merely so that a people might happen to get saved, hypothetically; Christ died to save a people, most definitely.

“God does not deliberate or consult, but has once for all decreed before the creation of the world what he will do” (Calvin).

WHO WAS JOHN CALVIN?

John Calvin (1509-1564) was the great French reformer who wrote a Systematic Theology to educate the church with the fundamentals of the Christian faith. This Systematic Theology was called the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin's great theological work which has stood the test of time, and loved by many, was completed and published in 1536, when he was just 27 years old. He was greatly used of God to pastor the church in Geneva, Switzerland. He later founded a Bible College in Geneva in 1559 which produced an able successor in Theodore Beza (1519-1605). Beza not only defended the doctrines of God's sovereignty and grace as taught by Calvin, he also edited the Textus Receptus which became the Greek New Testament used by the King James translators.

C H Spurgeon paid this tribute to Calvin, “Among all those who have been born of women, there has not risen a greater than John Calvin. No age before him ever produced his equal, and no age afterwards has seen his rival. In theology, he stands alone, shining like a bright fixed star, while other leaders and teachers can only circle round him, at a great distance, with nothing like his glory or his permanence.

Calvin's fame is eternal because of the truth he proclaimed; and even in heaven, although we shall lose the name of the system of doctrine which he taught, it shall be the truth which shall make us strike our golden harps, and sing: 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory for ever and ever.' For the essence of Calvinism is that we are born again, 'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'."

CALVINISM VERSUS ARMINIANISM

Calvinism is Paulinism systematised. The five points of Calvinism may be easily remembered by the letters of the word TULIP which stands for (1) Total Depravity (or Total Inability), (2) Unconditional Election, (3) Limited Atonement (or Particular Atonement), (4) Irresistible Grace (or Infallible Grace), (5) Perseverance of the Saints (or Preservation of the saints). Salvation is all of God's work, not man's.

These five points were a response to the five points of Arminianism which taught that (1) man is not totally corrupted by sin, (2) man has the ability to choose God, (3) Christ died for all men potentially and universally, (4) man is capable of resisting God's call to salvation, and (5) a believer can become unsaved or lost again if he backslides from the faith.

A careful examination of these five points of Arminianism reveals the unscriptural assumptions and implications. If man has the ability to choose God and exercise his will in contradiction to God's, then it cannot be held that God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11). If man can independently exercise his will to believe in Christ, then it is in itself a work of merit in which he can be said to have cooperated with God towards his own salvation.

This surely robs God of His absolute glory and contradicts Ephesians 2:8-9.

If the atonement is, in its intention, universal, so that it is intended equally and in the same sense for all men, then either we are led to the doctrine of universal salvation, or the view that the atonement does not accomplish all that it was intended to accomplish. And if a believer can finally end up in hell, then there is no comfort in the thought that we have been “chosen in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4).

The Synod of Dort, Holland, in 1618-19, met for the purpose of counteracting Arminianism. From the Synod of Dort, we get the five points of Calvinism in response to the five points of Arminianism.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

“We are born lions, tigers, wolves and bears, until the Spirit of Christ tames us, and from wild and savage beasts forms us to be mild sheep” (Calvin).

Man in his fallen condition is condemned in his sin and has no ability whatsoever to gain entrance into heaven. “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one ... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:10-23). “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; ... For to be carnally minded is death; ... Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:5-8).

Left on his own, the natural, sinful man is destined to eternal destruction. If the Holy Spirit does not convict him of sin, he would be unconscious of his lost condition and would have no desire for the things of God. Man is so totally corrupted by his sin that he is incapable of choosing God. He is selfish and proud, and continually disobeys God. He has no strength whatsoever to keep the Ten Commandments. As a matter of fact, he breaks the Commandments every day.

Unless the Holy Spirit of God works in the heart of the totally depraved sinner, he will never come to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. As Paul has said, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom 9:16). A sinner saved by God's grace contributes nothing at all to his salvation. It is purely by God's mercy that a sinner is saved. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:8-9).

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

The doctrine of unconditional election follows necessarily from the doctrine of total depravity. If man is totally incapable of saving himself from sin, it follows that salvation can only come to him by the pure grace and election of God. God's election of man to salvation is not conditional upon any virtue, foreseen or otherwise, in fallen humanity. Our salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:8-10). The faith by which we are saved is "a gift of God." "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom 3:27-28). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according

to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Tit 3:5).

It ought to be understood that God’s decree of election is not at all based on foreknown faith. God did not look down through the ages to see just who would be good enough to believe in His Son, and then chose them on the basis of their faith. Such a notion does not glorify God but man, and is clearly erroneous.

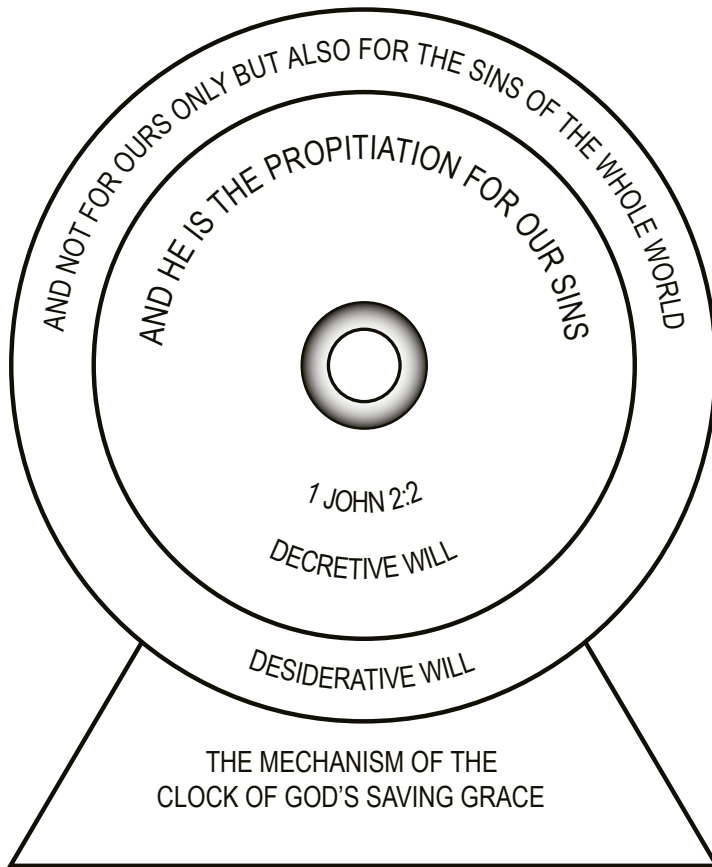
The Bible teaches that the foreknowledge of God is not passive but active. He knew us before time, and chose us even before we existed or did anything good or bad (Rom 9:11, 16). Ephesians 1:5 makes it quite clear that it was He who chose us directly and deliberately out of His own good will and pleasure, and not vice versa. As Jesus said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16).

Election in the Scripture frequently refers to God’s eternal and purposeful choosing of a people from among the sinful mass of humanity and appointing them to obtain everlasting life through His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Calvin, “Every part of our salvation depends on election.” Unconditional election, then, bases our salvation wholly upon the grace of God. As the saying goes, “If anyone is saved, God does all the saving.” “Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—that saved a wretch like me.”

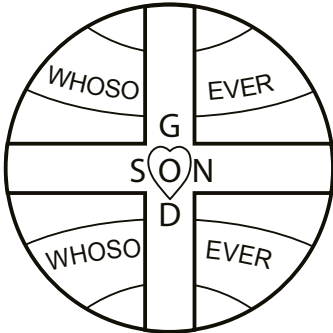
“We are believers because we have been elected” (Calvin).

LIMITED ATONEMENT

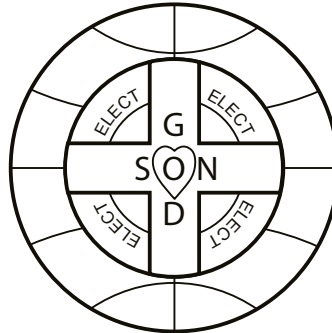
The doctrine of limited or particular atonement is succinctly expressed by Augustine, “Sufficient for all, efficient for the elect.” Calvin accepts this as correct in his commentary on 1



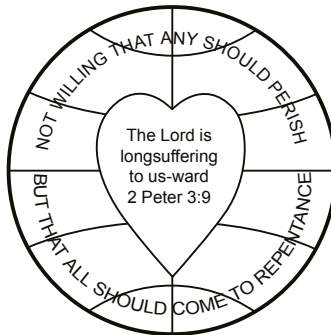
“Sufficient for All, Efficient for the Elect”



Calvin's View of John 3:16

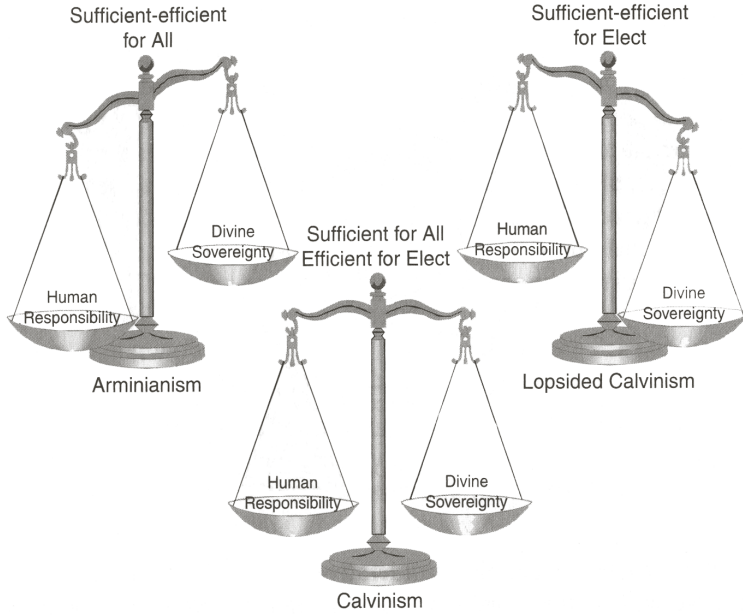


Lopsided Calvinist View of John 3:16



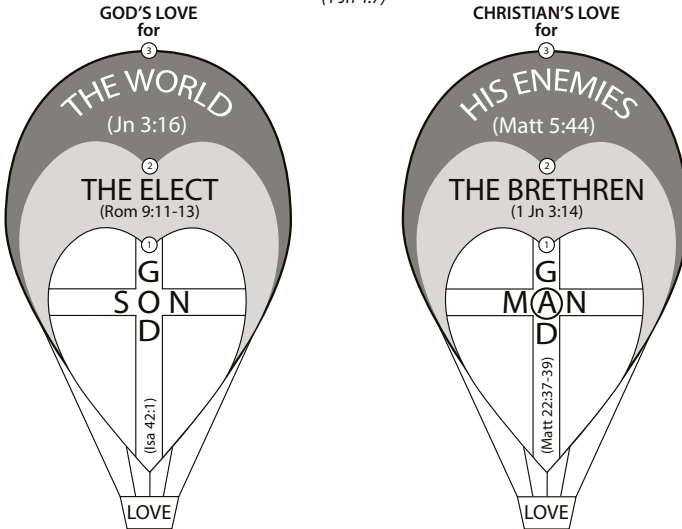
The heart represents God's Decretive Will in electing us, and the sphere His Desiderative Will towards all mankind.

Three Views on the Atonement



Three Degrees of Divine Love

"Beloved let us love one another, for love is of God and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God"
(1 Jn 4:7)



John 2:2, “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

The Calvinistic system of doctrine affirms the atonement of Christ to be universal in three respects—that it is sufficient, applicable and offered to all. There is nothing inadequate in Christ’s redemptive work on earth that would make it inapplicable to any member of the human race in any earthly circumstances. The atonement is absolutely infinite in its value and thus in its potentiality. No sinner will be lost for lack of a sufficient atonement. There is really no reason why any Calvinist should hesitate to use the words of Wesley’s great hymn:

Lord, I believe were sinners more
Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou hast the ransom fully paid,
Thou hast a full atonement made.

Although the atonement is universal or unlimited in its sufficiency, applicability and availability, it must be noted that the atonement is limited or particular in its intention, design, and ultimate results. It is not every single human being but only those whom God had elected that will be saved. There is a special sense in which Christ is the Mediator for His elect, and not for all. He said, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine” (John 17:9). Within the decrees of God, the atonement was intended to accomplish precisely what it does accomplish. It accomplishes the salvation of the elect of God; it furnishes the ethical and logical ground for common grace (Rom 3:25); and it renders the lost ethically and logically inexcusable (Rom 1:20).

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

“When Christ sets out to save a people, He saves them!” (Machen).

If God has elected to save a people, and has provided for the certainty of their salvation, it follows that He will infallibly accomplish that salvation. According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, “All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace. This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it” (10:1-2).

God calls His chosen ones individually to Himself. There are two kinds of call: the outward call and the inward call. The outward call is a general call of the gospel to both the elect and non-elect issued by the preacher which by itself does not save. If the sinner is to be saved, he must receive the inward call. The inward call is a special call whereby the Spirit convicts the heart of sin, and enables the sinner to understand the gospel, and to believe in Christ. The gift of faith is imparted at this time. The outward call can be resisted, but no one can effectively or finally resist the inward call (John 6:37, 44, Rom 8:14, 30).

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

“Once saved—always saved.” The elect of God will never lose their salvation because it is God who preserves them to the very end. God’s special providential preservation of His people will cause them to persevere in their faith to the very end. A person who is truly born again will reach heaven one day because God always keeps His promises and He never fails.

Jesus made this very clear in John 10:27-29, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

Concerning the perseverance of the saints, the Westminster Confession of Faith states, “They, whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

“This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof” (17:1-2).

One of Calvin’s repeated sayings is the exhortation, “Presume upon the veracity of God.” In simple modern English, we should say, “Take God at His Word.” Calvin says, “But, as for us, since we see that sinners are enjoined by the oracles of

God to entertain a hope of salvation, let us joyfully presume so far on His veracity as to reject all confidence in our own works, to depend solely on His mercy, and venture to cherish a hope of happiness. He who said, ‘According to your faith be it unto you,’ (Matt 9:29) will not deceive us.”

“God vouchsafes to those whom he has determined to call to salvation special grace” (Calvin). The God who has called us home will surely lead us safely home as He promised.

CALVINISM AND EVANGELISM

Christians are commanded and exhorted to preach the Gospel throughout the world to all mankind. God has promised emphatically and repeatedly that “whosoever” commits himself to Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, “whosoever” believes and trusts in Him, will infallibly be saved to an eternal life of blessedness. The doctrines of election and atonement do not contradict the Great Commission of Christ (Matt 28:18-20).

As a matter of fact, it is precisely because God has chosen some to be saved that makes the preaching of the gospel effective and fruitful. If God had not chosen anyone to be saved, no one would be saved. Man in his totally depraved condition can never and will never come to the Saviour on his own.

And so God graciously invites all men to salvation, and the Spirit makes them able to accept that invitation. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17). “God offers his word indiscriminately to the good and bad; but it works by his Spirit in the elect; ... as to the reprobate ... it renders them without excuse” (Calvin). We are to preach the gospel to every class of men, and assure every man that if he

would repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ he would be saved.

The Calvinistic doctrine of God's election and predestination gives great assurance in our preaching of the gospel and training of young people for pastoral, missionary, and evangelistic work. We have a very reassuring and joyful doctrine of evangelism and salvation: "God has chosen a people in Christ, from before the foundation of the world. He has provided in Christ for the certainty of their salvation, and for their progress in grace. He has made to all men the universal offer of salvation by faith in Christ. If, therefore, you will put your faith and confidence in Christ as your personal Saviour, you can know, with the infallible assurance of the Word of God, that you are one of His elect. "Take God at His Word!"

A CARNAL CHRISTIAN?

The teaching that there are two ways to heaven, the spiritual way and the carnal way, is wrong. To go to heaven, there is only the spiritual way. The carnal way is the way to eternal punishment. Paul warns, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal 5:19-21). A truly born-again person will not continue persistently in a life of sin.

It is true that a born-again child of God may backslide or fall into carnality. A believer does not become sinlessly perfect when he is saved. Although he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, his sinful nature remains. As such he is capable of falling into temptation and sin, and thus grieve the Spirit. David,

for example, committed adultery and murder at a very low point in his spiritual life (2 Sam 11-12), but he did not persist in living a sinful lifestyle. When he was rebuked, he immediately repented. Although David was forgiven by God when he confessed his sins, he had to face the consequences of his wicked deeds—he lost four of his sons (his baby son through Bathsheba, and three other sons—Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah).

The important point to understand is this: So long as a professing Christian is in the state of carnality, and shows no evidence of repentance in his life, then the question of whether he is truly regenerated in the first place may be raised. We are not to judge in the sense of pronouncing eternal destiny for God's judgements are inscrutable. Nonetheless, a person who claims to be a Christian and yet does not show the marks of grace should take heed to Paul's warning, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor 13:5). It is not the profession of faith but the possession of faith that saves.

WARNINGS AGAINST APOSTASY

The Scriptures are filled with warnings against apostasy. In Matthew 5:13, Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" Jesus used this illustration to show the futility of a false profession. The same truth is set forth in the example of the good seed which had no depth of root (Matt 13:6).

Peter also spoke strongly against those who not only deceive themselves, but also others concerning salvation. He says, "For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them

who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Pet 2:18-22).

We should not in any way minimise or fail to give the strongest emphasis to such warnings. It is he who continues to the end who will be saved (Matt 24:13; cf. Mark 13:13; Luke 21:19). Strong assurance of the immutability of the promises of God is brought out again and again in the epistle to the Hebrews, but we have in Hebrews 3:6 and 14 the repeated conditional clause, “if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end ... if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.” If we have true faith, we will remain sure and steadfast to the very end.

True faith will never quit; it never says die!

ELECTION

“Election is the source and beginning of all good works” (Calvin).

The word “election” simply indicates a choosing, a selection, an appointment. The nature and the purpose of the election must be determined in every case by the context. The word “election” is used in mainly these two ways in Scripture.

Although it is generally used to indicate an election to eternal salvation, it ought to be noted that it is sometimes used to indicate an election to special service. For example, when God said of Saul of Tarsus, “he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts 9:15-16). In this context, God used the word “chosen” (*ekloges*) with reference to a specific function which the great Apostle was to perform.

Another example can be found in Romans 9 where the word “election” is used with regard to God’s choice of the line of ancestry of the Messiah, rather than eternal salvation as such. When we read, “the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (v 8), the word “reckoned” comes from the same root and has the same general meaning as the word “elect.” Paul is referring to the fact that the Messianic line was to be perpetuated in Isaac, not in Ishmael. But this must not be taken to mean that Ishmael was necessarily among the reprobate, so far as eternal salvation is concerned. God’s grace is clearly seen in His reply to Abraham’s prayer for Ishmael his son: “And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, ... as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, ... But my [Messianic] covenant will I establish with Isaac” (Gen 17:18-21). The reference in Romans 9 to Jacob and Esau is similar, “(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her [Rebecca], The elder shall serve the younger” (Rom 9:11-12). It must be said here that Jacob’s election by God to perpetuate the Messianic line does not mean Esau’s rejection to eternal life.

“The end of our election is, that we may show forth the glory of God in every possible way” (Calvin). Paul taught this truth based upon the case of Pharaoh and the children of Israel. Paul wrote, “What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Rom 9:22-23). It is quite clear that Paul is here discussing God’s decree of election to eternal life for those whom He has chosen to be the objects of His mercy.

These words are an elaboration on the clear teaching of Romans 8:28-31, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things?”

The seven items enumerated in these verses are all of the greatest significance: (1) Love towards God; (2) God’s good providence; (3) God’s foreknowledge; (4) His predestination of the elect to sonship; (5) His calling of them; (6) His justification of them; (7) His glorification of them.

Their significance is well expounded by Buswell, “The seven items of this series form a closely woven fabric through which there are no apertures. Those who love God are those who have been called, predestinated, according to His [eternal] purpose; and they have been divinely appointed for all the benefits of grace, from justification through to glorification. There is no escape from this closely woven web. If one is

within it, he is securely within it, for there is no break in its meshes from the eternal decrees to eternal glory.”

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31). If we have accepted Christ as our personal Saviour, we can be absolutely certain of God’s unfailing promise and assurance of salvation. This must have been the thinking of Peter when he said, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10-11). In other words, if we genuinely accept Christ, we make sure of our calling and our election.

The doctrine of election is certainly a most gracious and encouraging doctrine to be taught in the Scripture, “If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:31-39).

God’s election of His people is an election unto holy living. This is taught by the Apostle Paul, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:4-6). “In whom [Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance [from God], being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:11-12).

God’s election to salvation should not be misconstrued as a licence to sin. Some might think in this way: “Since God has elected me to be saved, and His election of me is sure and secure, and I will never be lost, let me then sin all the more because the more I sin, the more God’s grace is manifested in me.” To such, Paul says, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:1-13).

MYSTERY OF PREDESTINATION

The Westminster Confession of Faith rightly states, “The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation, to all that sincerely obey the Gospel” (3:8).

Humility must be exercised whenever the doctrine of election and predestination is discussed. The doctrine is found in many parts of Scripture, and it would take many pages and many hours to study it. At any rate, the Bible student must be careful not to overstate this doctrine, and not to read it into all possible contexts contrary to the divine intention. When God is silent, we too better be silent was Calvin’s wise advice.

In Acts 13:48, we find an example of how some have misinterpreted and misapplied the doctrine of election. With reference to the preaching of the Gospel in Pisidian Antioch, we read, “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48). From the basis of the words, “as many as were ordained to eternal life,” some have argued that in that particular mission of Paul and Barnabas, every individual in that city who was among the elect of God was saved at that particular time. This thought has even been carried to the length of a doctrine of “burnt over ground.” Some have argued that missions to Western countries are futile, because such nations have already been evangelised. On the contrary, God has always kept the number of His elect wholly within His secret counsels, and

has never given us any grounds whatever for arguing that all the elect in any given situation have been saved.

We are always to preach the Gospel to every creature in any nation. Without God's election, evangelism would fail.

REPROBATION

It is a fact that not all men are to be saved by the atonement of Christ. Since God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11), then it follows necessarily that the final condemnation of those who are eternally lost is within the decrees of God (Prov 16:4). This is the doctrine of rejection, or what is traditionally called "reprobation" (from *reprobare* meaning "to reject"). The rejected are not lost simply because God foresaw that they would reject His grace and did nothing about it, but because God had decreed to permit them to reject His grace.

It should be stated most emphatically that the plan of salvation is not parallel with, nor symmetrical with the fact of reprobation. The saved are saved because it is "God that sheweth mercy" (Rom 9:16). No one can in any way contribute towards or work for his own salvation. Those who are saved are saved by the amazing grace of God. Nevertheless, the Scripture is equally clear that the reprobates are entirely blameworthy for their lost condition. Buswell rightly said, "The chargeable cause of the loss of the lost is in the lost."

The fact that the reprobates are to be blamed for their own lost condition is repeatedly emphasised in the Scriptures which declare that God is very angry with the finally impenitent because they have rejected His grace. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men

loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:18-19). “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess 2:10-12). From these Scriptures it is clear that God is angry with the lost and holds them responsible for their lost condition on the grounds that they have rejected His grace. “The reprobates are the authors of their own evil, and follow Satan as their leader” (Calvin).

DOUBLE PREDESTINATION

That God is not the chargeable cause of the loss of the lost the Scripture makes clear! “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? ... For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.” “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek 18:23,32; 33:11). He “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4). “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

One example of God’s great patience, waiting for sinners to repent before sending judgement is found in Romans 9:22-23. In this passage, we are told that God’s attitude towards Pharaoh was that He “endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might

make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.”

“The phrase, ‘double predestination,’ has frequently been used in connection with the doctrine of reprobation. If this means that both the salvation of the saved and the loss of the lost are most certainly within the eternal decrees of God, then there can be no reasonable escape from this conclusion. But if ‘double predestination,’ is taken to mean that salvation and loss are but two sides of one perfectly symmetrical pattern, and that God is the chargeable cause of the loss of the lost, just as truly He is the creditable cause of the salvation of the saved, then the meaning of such a phrase must certainly be rejected since it is wholly unsupported by the Scripture and clearly denied by the same” (Buswell).

That the reprobate is the chargeable cause for his own condemnation may be illustrated by Dr Timothy Tow’s banana skin story: Suppose I invite you to dinner and you break your knee cap on the way by tripping on a banana skin. Who is liable? You (the immediate cause), not me (the remote cause), is liable.

The salvation of the elect is sourced in God, but the reprobates are the authors of their own condemnation (Mark 14:21).

DECREES OF GOD

The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, “The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His own will, whereby for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass” (Question 7). The decretive will of God is clearly taught in Romans and Ephesians. From a study of Romans and Ephesians, we discover that our salvation is entirely of the Lord. If the Lord had not chosen us from before the foundation of the world, we would not be

what we are today. No man can believe in Christ if he had not been predestined, foreordained, pre-chosen by God the Father. Calvin's motto is, "Salvation is of the LORD" (Jon 2:9).

Then what about those who are reprobate? The son of perdition—Judas Iscariot—did he come under God's decretive will, under His predestination? Of course he did! Solomon says, "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov 16:4). Then, if God so decreed him to be a traitor to his Master, what else could he do? This argument is raised in Romans 9:19, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisteth his will?" But how can puny man question God? He is the Potter, we are but clay (Rom 9:20-23).

The case of Judas Iscariot is given this verdict by our Saviour, "The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born" (Mark 14:21). No doubt the decretive will of God had it that Judas would betray Jesus, but Judas in betraying His Master must bear his human responsibility. Why? Because when he betrayed His Master it came out of his own wicked heart to kill Jesus and not from anywhere else, except he gave way to Satan to direct him in his plot.

Thus our Lord says in another place, "It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:1-2). Human responsibility!

Of God's eternal decree, the Westminster Confession of Faith declares, "God from all eternity did by the most wise

and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established” (3:1).

That God is not the chargeable cause of the loss of the lost the Scripture makes clear (John 3:18-19, 36; 2 Thess 2:10-12). Yes, Judas was one of the privileged Twelve to be chosen (as an apostle), who lived with the Lord, heard His gracious words, and saw all His miracles. Nevertheless, the Lord called him a devil because of his unbelief and wilful turning from the Truth. Calvin said, “The devil, by his artifice fascinates the reprobate, when he renders God’s Word either hateful or contemptible.” The decretive will is a high mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Let Calvin conclude this study on the decretive will of God for us as follows: “For the will of God is the highest rule of justice, for this reason because He wills it. When it is inquired, therefore why the Lord did so, the answer must be, because He would. But if you go further, and ask why He so determined, you are in search of something greater and higher than the will of God, which can never be found. Let human temerity, therefore, desist from asking that which is not, lest it should fail of finding that which is.”

Therefore it is always wise not to speak nor speculate when the Bible is silent. “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut 29:29).

The doctrine of election and reprobation is a high and a deep doctrine. It makes God big and man small. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

CONVICTING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The convicting work of the Holy Spirit is promised by our Lord Jesus Christ in the farewell discourse. “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me” (John 16:8-9). The convicting work of the Holy Spirit in the world in general, which is God’s common grace, is a work upon the hearts of all men, a work wherein not only is the Gospel freely offered to all, but all are brought to a point of conviction that if they reject the grace of God thus offered to them, they are subject to the eternal wrath and curse of God because they have “not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18), and because “they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved ... but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess 2:10-12).

The Bible clearly teaches that the special convicting work of the Spirit will lead to the salvific conversion of the soul. This saving work of the Spirit is wholly inscrutable. It surpasses finite human understanding and reasoning. What we do know is that the Spirit, through God’s special grace, gives the elect faith to believe, and upon believing unites them to Christ (Eph 2:8-9, Rom 5:1-2). This is the effectual calling of God’s elect.

What is effectual calling? The Westminster Shorter Catechism answers, “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel” (Question 31). “It is the special work of God to turn to himself the hearts of men by the secret influence of his Holy Spirit” (Calvin).

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin through the written Word of God inspired and preserved, and through the living testimony of believers saved by grace. The Church must do the work of evangelism for it is the divinely appointed means of reconciling a lost world to Christ.

Christ is the eternal Word of God. His “goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Mic 5:2). He is “the true Light, which lighteth every man” (John 1:9). God can reach the most unreached people, even the most primitive. When missionaries preach the gospel, the Holy Spirit can bring conviction to men in the most unlikely places. The sovereign God prepares the hearts of His elect, and He also superintends the steps of the missionaries as they go forth seeking to save the lost, and brings the two together.

We are responsible for the light which we have to those who have it not. “So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand” (Ezek 33:7-8; cf. 3:17-18). Paul doubtless had these words in mind when he said to the elders of the church of Ephesus during their Miletus meeting, “I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house ... Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God ... by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:20, 26, 27, 31).

The salvation of the elect is an amazing mystery which we shall never comprehend. Those who are saved come from

the same stock of evil and wicked humanity. Even the worst specimen of fallen humanity, God has seen fit to save. His goodness is unfathomable and His wisdom incomprehensible. When God saves a people from eternal destruction, He saves them infallibly. The saved will never be lost because their God never fails. It goes without saying that election is the reason for evangelism.

LIGHT OF NATURE

“The glory of God is written and imprinted in the heavens. They give forth a loud and distinct voice, which reaches the ears of all men, a visible language” (Calvin).

The Scripture teaches that the light of nature is a factor in the convicting of the lost. In Romans 1:20, Paul says that the evidence is sufficiently clear from God’s creation so that those who reject Him are inexcusable. In Romans 10:18, he brings up a similar point when he asks, “But I say, Have they not heard?” He then quotes from Psalm 19:5 clearly indicating that the light of nature is a factor in bringing conviction. He then shows by way of contrast how much more blameworthy are those who have had the full revelation of the Word of God.

The Bible indicates that God revealed Himself to mankind at the beginning of human history, and furthermore, that He “left not himself without witness” (Acts 14:16-17). It is significant to note that the oldest religious traditions are the nearest to biblical theism. For example, ancient Chinese history which goes back over 4,000 years records that during the first three dynasties, Hsia, Shang, and Chou (c 2205-255 BC), the Chinese people worshipped only one God called *Shang Ti*—the Supreme Heavenly King. The Chinese were originally monotheistic and worshipped no idols. It was only much later that they turned polytheistic and idolatrous.

The Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit uses the light of nature or creation to convince man that God exists. There is generally among primitive peoples some trace or tradition of knowledge of the true God. The fathers of Reformed Theology appealed to the light of nature for its convicting influence. Calvin says, "He not only endued the minds of men with that which He calls the need of religion. He so revealed it in the whole creation of the world, and so openly offers Himself every day that they cannot open their eyes without being compelled to behold Him."

SALVATION OF OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

The Holy Spirit of God, the Third Person of the Trinity, has means of performing His work which are beyond our comprehension. The Holy Spirit does the work of convicting sinners of their sins, and leading them to Christ, not just in the New Testament but also in the Old Testament.

Consider how the Old Testament believers were saved. Abel, Enoch, Abraham, and other Old Testament saints were convicted by the same Holy Spirit. They were justified by faith, and thus we know that they are among the elect of God. Certainly no one can either believe or disbelieve without some knowledge. J Gresham Machen was right to say, "It is impossible for a man to believe with an empty head." How much knowledge is necessary for faith? The essence of a childlike faith is a simple surrender of oneself to the grace of God in Christ who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, who was buried, and who rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3-4). It is stated as a fact that Abraham was saved by faith for "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom 4:3, quoting Gen 15:6). It is also stated that Abraham believed in Christ, for Jesus told the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56).

God will somehow get the Gospel to every soul whom He has chosen to save. The salvation of the elect and the rejection of the reprobate must not be construed as a mechanical matter. God is personally supervising the affairs of every man (cf. Matt 10:29-31). Where one of God's elect is prepared to believe, God will see to it that he receives the Gospel in some form. God will not forsake His own. He will be just in all His judgements: "yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Rom 3:4).

SALVATION OF INFANTS

How about the salvation of those dying in infancy? Concerning this, we cannot be dogmatic, for the Scripture gives little light. The whole emphasis of the scriptural message of salvation is upon the presentation of the Gospel to those who are accountable. Consider all these positive statements declaring that there is no salvation apart from faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life" (1 John 5:12).

The Bible gives all the light we need to understand salvation and evangelism. On this basis, we can be sure that the elect who die in infancy are saved through the atonement of Christ, and are regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. David for instance was confident of the salvation of his child through Bathsheba that died, for he said "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam 12:23). We have many scriptural passages expressing God's care for children, and we may safely trust His loving care to do all things well (Rom

8:28). According to Calvin, “The mere promise of God ought to be sufficient to assure us of the salvation of our children.”

The Westminster Confession of Faith sets the boundaries with regard to how we are to view the salvation of infants and those incapable of hearing the gospel: “Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word” (10:3). Who then are the elect infants? Only the Lord knows, and we can trust His wisdom and His promises to do all things well for His people and ultimately to His glory!

MOTIVE OF MISSIONS

The motive of missions is indeed a solemn, even a fearful responsibility. Paul says, “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me” (1 Cor 9:16-17).

Paul’s words should not be taken to mean that if humanly speaking we fail to do our duty of preaching the gospel, we shall enjoy the bliss of heaven though with a lesser reward, while others who might have been saved by our efforts suffer eternal punishment. On the contrary, such Scriptures indicate that if we do not at all show a concern for the salvation of the lost, there is a possibility that we do not possess the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, and thus still unregenerate. According to Buswell, “Non-missionary Christianity is not genuine Christianity.”

The supreme motive of missions is the love of Christ which compels us (2 Cor 5:14). If then there is not enough of the

love of Christ in us so that we take our place in the vast missionary programme as spelt out in the Great Commission which Christ has given to His church in Matthew 28:18-20, then it is possible that we do not know what it means to be saved in the first place—our supposed faith is a spurious one.

Although the work of evangelism is entrusted to us believers, yet the regeneration of the lost does not depend upon our persuasiveness or effectiveness in evangelism, but entirely on the special grace and mercy of God. The work of soul-winning is not the work of the Christian, but of God. Christians merely serve as mouthpieces for God. Their duty is simply to broadcast the good news of salvation. It is the Spirit who does the work of convicting the unbeliever of sin, and converting him to become a child of God. With this knowledge, Christians can do the work of evangelism with great joy and confidence, knowing that God's redemptive programme cannot fail but that it is sure to succeed for He shall bring His chosen ones safe into His kingdom by faith in the gospel that is faithfully preached.

The chief purpose of Christians on earth is not evangelism but the glory of God. So we ought to glorify God in evangelism and in all that we do.

ILLUMINATION

The word illumination (or enlightenment) is derived from the word "light" (Greek *phos*) and the verb illuminate (*photizo*), and related nouns and adjectives occur frequently in the New Testament. There is also *lampro* (English "lamp") and related words. *Lampro* means "to shine." The words are almost always used figuratively.

The word "light" is used in Scripture with reference to the truth and grace of God. "For ye were sometimes

darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph 5:8-11). “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness [Gen 1:3; Isa 9:2], hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt 5:14,16). The Lord said to Saul of Tarsus, “Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:17-18).

The above references to illumination speak of the outward general call of the evangelist, and not to the inward special call of the Holy Spirit. When Christ is declared to be “the true Light, which lighteth every man” (John 1:9), it is clear that not every man is regenerated by the shining of this light. In Hebrews 6:4-6, it is indicated that some who have been “enlightened” or “illuminated” may “fall away” in such a manner that they can never be brought again to the point of repentance. Further, in Hebrews 10:32-39, it is definitely asserted that those to whom the epistle was addressed had been “illuminated” and had also endured severe persecution. Nevertheless, the biblical writer warns them not to draw back “unto perdition.” He expresses confidence that they are not going to fall away but rather that they are characterised by faith “to the saving of the soul.” Nevertheless he regarded his warning as necessary.

VOCATION

What is effectual calling? The Westminster Shorter Catechism answers, “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills; He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel” (Question 31).

The Holy Spirit works in a special way in the hearts and minds of God’s elect which will always remain inscrutable. The Spirit convinces and enlightens our minds. He successfully persuades, and He actually renews the will so that the act of saving faith takes place, not by the energy of our flesh, but by the power of God. This act of effectual calling is wholly of the grace of God and not the merit of man.

The effectual calling of the Spirit to salvation is taught in the following places: To the Corinthian Christians, Paul said, “ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Cor 1:26). Again, Paul writes to the Thessalonian Christians, “we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 1:11-12). Again, Paul writes to the Christians of Ephesus, “I therefore ... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, ... There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph 4:1, 4). To Timothy he wrote, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved

us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim 1:8-9).

The above passages teach us that though the outward general call goes out to all, whether believers or not, the inward effectual call is experienced only by believers. Regeneration is the result of effectual calling. The outward call must be accompanied by the inward call if it is to be effectual for salvation.

REGENERATION

Regeneration is the supernatural act of God, by which the elect man, who is spiritually dead, is imbued with new and eternal life by the supernatural power of the Spirit through the incorruptible seed of God’s Word. It is a single and sudden act of the Holy Spirit whereby the lost sinner is united with Christ and thus made a child of God.

Simply put, regeneration is to be born again. This is taught in Christ’s words to Nicodemus, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:3-8).

That regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, applying to us the benefits of the atonement, is the uniform teaching of the Scripture. This is doubtless the meaning which underlies Paul's reference to the "Spirit of life" who has delivered us from "the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). "The Spirit of life" is the life-giving Spirit who gives a new life in the new birth. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Tit 3:5-6).

The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God in His work of regeneration. Peter says that we are "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet 1:23). James exhorts, "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas 1:21). The instrument of regeneration is none other than the Word of God.

Regeneration and not reincarnation is the way to heaven.

THE NEW BIRTH

The new birth leads to a new life with a new character which is put on as a uniform is put on. "Put on the new man, which after [the image of] God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24). "Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col 3:10).

The new man, or the new character, has a new hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3).

Since the Holy Spirit is metaphorically referred to as living water (John 4:10-14; 7:37-39; Tit 3:5-6), it is not surprising that regenerate persons are metaphorically said to be baptised with the Spirit and to drink of the Spirit. “For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13).

The miracle of regeneration is spoken of in numerous other figures of speech. Ezekiel said, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezek 36:25-27). Since the Old Testament ceremonial worship included “divers washings” (Heb 9:10), it is not surprising that the new life of regeneration is referred to as a washing. “And such [evildoers] were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). It is thus not water baptism but spiritual baptism that saves. It is not physical but spiritual washing that comes from the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scripture that cleanses us from sin.

Water baptism is but an outward sign of an inward grace.

A NEW CREATURE

The regenerate person is said to be living in a new world. God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:13). “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17). Not only is it true that the born-again individual

has a new life, but everything in the universe is new. Having become “a new creature” (Gal 6:15), the regenerate person is like one who has been raised from the dead into a new life. The prodigal son has returned home, “was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:32).

A funeral has been held for us when we were baptised into the death of Christ, “that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:1-11, see also Eph 2:1-6, Gal 5:25).

New life in Christ is something money cannot buy.

SAVING FAITH

“Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel.” “Repentance unto life is a saving grace whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after new obedience” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Questions 86-87 cf. Larger Catechism, Questions 72 and 76; Confession of Faith, Chapters 14 and 15).

Saving faith is an act of man empowered by the Holy Spirit through an inscrutable work commonly known as “effectual calling.” The special grace of God imparts saving faith in those divinely chosen to be saved. Philippians 2:12-13 says, “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Ephesians 2:8-10 likewise says, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” The word “that” refers to both “grace” and “faith,” yet even the whole saving act of God. This fact is borne out by the verses which follow, “Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

The act of saving faith, energised by the Holy Spirit, must be regarded as an instantaneous act. To reach that point of faith, there must be a process of conviction and effectual calling. Once that point is reached, the process of growth in grace and knowledge and sanctification begins. “Faith is the resurrection of the soul” (Calvin).

No one is able to observe the precise moment when a lost sinner passes from death unto life. Our duty is to do all that is necessary for the Holy Spirit to bring conviction, and to induce the lost individual to make the positive commitment which is called for in the words, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31; cf. also John 3:16). The Word of God is like a seed which will take root, grow into a plant and finally bear fruit.

INSTANTANEOUS CONVERSION

We may define conversion as that definite change of direction which takes place at the moment when the individual

is regenerated and believes. As such it is instantaneous. Nevertheless, there are steps in the process of conviction and effectual calling which lead up to conversion, and there are steps in the process of maturing and sanctification which issue from conversion.

Take, for example, the case of Saul of Tarsus. Certainly at one moment he was an enemy of Christ rushing forward in his course to destroy the church. At the next moment he called Jesus, “Lord,” and was ready to obey. A careful reading of the record however will show that there were definite steps in the process of conviction leading to this instantaneous conversion. Paul tells us afterwards that he was impressed by the testimony of Stephen as recorded in Acts 22:20. The heroism of Christians as they suffered under persecution must have impressed him. That Saul was under conviction is also clearly implied by the words of Christ, “it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 9:5; 26:14). Saul may even have been among those who visited the empty tomb and could not explain the graveclothes lying there with the body gone. The very intensity of Saul’s persecution is a psychological evidence of a conflict of mind. Kicking against the goads is but a figurative expression for the convicted mind fighting against the evidence and resisting the conviction. But the elect of God will not be able to resist the conviction of the Spirit perpetually and successfully. He will finally surrender to God at some point in time.

We see then that even in the case of such a sudden conversion as that of Saul of Tarsus, there is a before and an after; there is a process. From this fact Christian parents and Christian workers may take encouragement for their patient and faithful endeavour. God has His timing, and His Word shall not return unto Him void, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper

in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isa 55:11). So keep preaching the gospel and living out your Christian faith to the glory of God. “There is no faith without God’s Word” (Calvin).

FAITH

The word “faith” in the Bible is used in two ways: (1) subjectively referring to our personal belief and trust in Christ (Eph 2:8), and (2) objectively to mean the Christian Faith or the body of fundamental doctrines as taught in the Holy Scriptures (Jude 3). Thus whenever we come across the word “faith” in the Bible, it does not always mean the act of believing. There are times when it refers to that which is believed. For example, “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” in Jude 3 is certainly a body of doctrine and not an act of the mind or heart. There are also times when the word “faith” is used both subjectively and objectively. For example, when John says, “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4), he is speaking not only of the act of believing, but also what we believe.

As Christians we have a body of doctrine, but more than a body of doctrine, we have a Person whose faithfulness is the very substance of the doctrine. When John writes the words of 1 John 5:4, there can be little doubt that he has in mind the words of Jesus recorded in John 16:33, “be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” The expression, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:2), is another instance of the objective faith, meaning the person—our Saviour—whom we have believed.

Hebrews 11:1 states, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The faith here under discussion is both subjective and objective. What we believe (subjective faith) in regard to Christ (objective faith) is “the substance of the things for which we hope, the evidence of the things we have not seen.” How simple and clear this is!

The system of truth to which we adhere, the truth which centres in our Lord Jesus Christ is the substance and the evidence for all the gracious promises of God in reference to unseen things to be realised in the future life. This is similar to Paul's argument as expressed in 1 Thessalonians 4:14, "For if we believe (subjective faith) that Jesus died and rose again (objective faith), even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring [in resurrection] with him." In other words, it is the simple basic truths of the Gospel which constitute the grounds of our future hope.

The Christian Faith is not blind.

FAITHFULNESS

"Faith is not a bare knowledge but carries along with it a lively affection, which has its seat in the heart" (Calvin).

Hebrews 11:2 says, "For by it the elders obtained a good report." That is, by their faith in the coming Messiah and in salvation through the sacrifice which He would make, the elders pleased God and set a good example for us to follow.

Take for example Abel. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (v 4). Abel was saved by looking forward to the fulfilment of God's promise of redemption through the atonement of Christ. By faith, He understood the gospel as given in the sin offering that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission (Heb 9:22).

The author of Hebrews continues, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (v 3). It is by what we believe in regard to Jesus

Christ—His life, His death, His resurrection, His deity and humanity—by this body of truth, that we can understand the doctrine of creation out of nothing. If the simple story of the Gospel is true, and is heartily accepted, then the mind would have no difficulty in believing in the scriptural doctrine of the creation of the universe.

It is important that we not only have faith in Christ, but also show that we are faithful to Him. True faith should translate into faithfulness in the life of the believer who is motivated by the Holy Spirit. When Paul says, “the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20), surely it refers to his faith that is alive and lived out in His life in obedience to God and His Word.

Again when we read the New Testament quotations from Habakkuk 2:4 (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38-39), “The just shall live by faith,” we have the richest possible significance of the word. Faith here means wholehearted commitment to, acceptance of, and loyalty in the perfect faithfulness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our Lord commands us, “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev 2:10).

JUSTIFICATION

“The just brings nothing before God except faith” (Calvin).

“Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone” (Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 33).

Justification is the forensic side of our salvation. It may be seen as God’s judicial declaration of our status of

righteousness in relation to His holy law on account of the atonement accomplished for us by Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of justification by faith is found in Paul's epistle to the Romans. In the first three chapters, Paul argues that all human beings—both Gentiles and Jews—are sinners and deserve divine judgement and condemnation. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).

No one can enter heaven by his own righteousness for man has no righteousness to begin with; he is absolutely corrupted by sin. The only way whereby man can be saved is by the pure grace of God through the justification by faith alone: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe ... Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom 3:21-26).

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom 3:27-31). These words are self-explanatory. If we believe in Jesus Christ without relying on our good deeds which are required of us by the law of

God, we are counted and declared to be “righteous” so far as God’s holy character and God’s holy law are concerned.

FAITH THAT WORKS

The Apostle James says, “faith without works is dead” (Jas 2:20). On a superficial reading, some might think that James is contradicting Paul. Careful study of the text however reveals that this is not the case.

What James has to say is perfectly harmonious: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can [this kind of] faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Jas 2:14-26).

It must be understood that James was not answering the question “What saves?” That question was answered by

Paul, “faith alone saves” (Rom 5:1). The question James was attempting to answer was, “What kind of faith saves?” And James’ answer was, “It is a faith that works that saves.” In fact, Paul taught the same when he rebuked sharply those who had the notion of a faith which produces no works. “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Rom 2:13). Paul even makes love greater than faith. “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Cor 13:13). Love is greatest because it is the fruit and the evidence of faith, but faith is the root, the absolutely necessary condition of justification and of all that follows in the process of sanctification.

True faith will result in a godly life.

SANCTIFICATION

“What is sanctification? Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 35).

The word “sanctification” means “being made holy.” Buswell says that sanctification has the basic idea of “a separation *from* relationships contrary to God’s will *unto* relationships harmonious with God’s will.”

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of God’s people. This work of the Holy Spirit is vividly described in Galatians 5:13-6:2. “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh [i.e., fallen human nature], but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself [Lev 19:18]. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one

of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye [otherwise] would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under [condemnation of] the law” (vv 13-18).

A Christian, though born-again, is still influenced by sinful tendencies and drives. But in his struggle against sin, the Holy Spirit of God is the dominating influence, restraining, correcting, and guiding him so that he would gradually become more and more like Christ. “Everyone’s advancement in piety is the secret work of the Spirit” (Calvin).

It is important that we do not confuse sanctification with justification. Justification by faith alone saves (Rom 5:1). Whereas justification is a one time act of God at the time of conversion, sanctification is an ongoing activity of God in the life of a believer after conversion. Justification is thus the basis for sanctification and not the other way round.

HOLY LIVING

Paul warns against the “works of the flesh.” “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:19-21).

Although the fallen human nature has not been eradicated in born again Christians, yet it is important that the life of true believers be not characterised by the works of the flesh. Those who are characterised by the works of the flesh are not to be regarded as truly regenerate persons.

Christians must subject themselves to the Spirit's work of sanctification. Sanctification most certainly means holy living. We must manifest the fruit of the spirit as evidence of our regeneration.

Christians must fill their minds with heavenly thoughts (Col 3:2). Paul says, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (Col 3:5-6). If we are children of obedience, then we must put on the "new man" (Eph 4:24) which involves "righteousness and true holiness." "The death of the flesh is the life of the Spirit" (Calvin).

We who are born again are born as little children in spiritual things. We need to learn patiently and carefully the implications of the walk of the Christian life. As born again people, the continuous work of the Holy Spirit will cause us to grow in holy living. However, we must also know that in this lifetime we will not be able to achieve sinless perfection. Yes, perfection is the standard which God has set before us, but we shall reach it only when we see our Lord face to face (1 John 3:2).

PERFECTION

God commands His people to be perfect. Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt 5:48). In these words, Jesus reflected the teaching of the Old Testament law. "Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev 19:2). "Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God" (Deut 18:13).

Indeed, as Christians we should strive towards perfection for this is the very purpose of the Scripture, "that the man

of God may be perfect” (2 Tim 3:16-17). The standard set before God’s people in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ is the absolute perfection of God Himself. It should be clear that “perfect” here means free from all fault, free from all sins of commission or omission. As creatures specially made in God’s image, it is God’s intention that we shall be perfectly free from all fault or blemish, as free as He is from defect.

God demands the highest standards of moral conduct from His children. It would be utterly illogical for us to think that God would expect from us any other standard than perfection. How ridiculous it would be if the Scriptures said, “Stop 90% of your stealing, lying, etc.!” It goes without saying that God demands 100%!

Know that the 10th commandment is the most demanding of all, “You must not have evil desires.” How absurd and immoral it would be if the Bible were to say, “You may entertain evil desires so long as you do not carry out your evil desires!” It goes without saying that the Lord requires us to be holy not just in our thoughts and feelings, but also in our deeds.

We may not be sinlessly perfect now, but that should not stop us from striving to be so—to be more and more like Christ our Lord and Saviour. “The highest perfection of the godly in this life is an earnest desire to make progress” (Calvin).

SPIRITUAL MATURATION

God’s standard is perfect holiness. But perfect holiness does not come immediately. At the present time, we are not perfectly holy even at our best. Perfect sanctification will be reached in the course of time. God, who is “from everlasting to everlasting,” has chosen to take time to carry out His purposes. One who enters the kingdom of heaven must enter it as “a little child.” Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you,

Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein” (Mark 10:15, cf. Matt 18:3; Luke 18:17). A little child must learn to walk and carry on in this sphere in which he is born. God has chosen to take the discipline of time for the maturing of those who are born again into His household.

One of the clearest expressions of the time involved in sanctification is found in Romans 8:18-25. Paul has just explained, “if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” He continues, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” The climax of this section is reached in verses 24 and 25. “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” The thought is not simply that we fold our hands and wait for the goal to be reached, but we wait it out, and fight it out, and continue the good fight of faith.

The Apostle Paul goes on, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” That sinless perfection is not attained in this life is made crystal clear by verses 22 and 23, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” These words describe regenerate Christians. We are not satisfied and we have no right to be satisfied with our present condition. We should always strive towards perfection, and we possess the glorious hope that perfection will eventually be realised when Christ returns (Phil 3:20-21).

A Christian will not find sin a delight.

FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

“Everything good in us comes from the Holy Spirit” (Calvin).

The filling of the Spirit is the complete control of the Spirit over the life of the Christian when he totally surrenders himself to the Spirit’s sanctifying work (Eph 5:18, Gal 2:20, 5:16). The Westminster Confession of Faith states, “Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And that they may be enabled thereunto, beside the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit to work in them to will, and to do, of his good pleasure: yet are they not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty unless upon a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them” (16:3).

What happens when we are filled with the Spirit? (1) We will produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-25). (2) We will be eager to share the gospel, and be effective in serving God (Acts 2:4, 4:31, 6:3-8, 7:54-55). (3) We will love His Word and His people (Acts 2:41-47). (4) We will enjoy coming to church to worship God, and have fellowship with other Christians (Eph 5:18-20).

What must we do to be filled with the Spirit? (1) We must confess and repent of our sins (1 John 1:9). (2) We must acknowledge our spiritual wretchedness and be fully dependent on God (1 John 1:10). (3) We must read the Bible daily and attend Sunday school or Bible study classes (1 Pet 2:2). (4) We must pray privately as well as corporately in church by attending prayer meetings (Heb 10:25). (5) We must have constant fellowship with Christians by attending fellowship meetings (Heb 10:25). (6) We must submit

ourselves to water baptism, and partake of the Lord's Supper. (7) We must serve the Lord with whatever gifts we have (1 Cor 12:4-11 cf Eph 4:11-13). (8) We must preach the gospel (Matt 28:18-20 cf Acts 8:4). (9) We must give to the Lord out of a cheerful heart (2 Cor 9:7). (10) We must be ready to suffer for Christ's sake (2 Tim 2:12, Matt 16:24).

SEALING AND ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT

Paul speaks of the actual presence of the Spirit in the life of God's people as a "seal" or mark of identification. In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, Paul refers to "he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." The "anointing" of the Spirit, referred to also in 1 John 2:20, 27 is undoubtedly the same spiritual fact as the "sealing" of the Spirit. The actual presence of the Spirit is a pledge of future blessings.

Twice in the epistle to the Ephesians the actual presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian is referred to as the "seal" of God (Eph 1:13, 4:30). Although the Holy Spirit is not directly mentioned in Revelation 7:2-4, this is doubtless the meaning of the "seal of the living God" in the faces of God's people.

The sealing of the Spirit also means that we are eternally secure in Christ (Eph 4:30). When God's people are said to be "sealed" by His Spirit, it means that they are His possession—they belong to Him. The word "seal" denotes ownership. The Lord has bought us with a price. That price was Christ's shed blood on the cross (Eph 1:14, Acts 20:28). God owns us completely, and we are indebted to Him eternally. Calvin says, "God, by pouring down upon us the heavenly grace of the Spirit, does, in this manner, seal upon our hearts the certainty of his own word."

There is an aspect of the anointing of the Spirit that concerns *service* and not salvation. The indwelling of the Spirit and the salvific anointing (1 John 2:20, 27) that comes with it at the time of regeneration is permanent and can never be removed. But the anointing of the Spirit which pertains to service is temporary and can be taken away. Such an anointing of the Spirit for service can be seen in the case of King Saul where the Spirit is said to “come upon” him (1 Sam 10:1, 6, 11:6). But when Saul sinned against God by despising and disobeying His commandments, the anointing of the Spirit upon Saul to be king of Israel was taken away from him and given to another, namely, David, God’s chosen (1 Sam 12:13-14, 15:22-23, 16:13-14). David too was in danger of having the Spirit’s anointing taken away from him when he sinned against God, but the Lord forgave him because he was quick to confess and repent of his sin (2 Sam 12:7, 13, Ps 51:11). It must be understood that the removing of the Spirit’s anointing for service does not mean the loss of salvation. Neither does the anointing of the Spirit for service indicate that the people thus anointed are also anointed for salvation (e.g., Num 24:2). These two aspects (i.e., for salvation and for service) of the Spirit’s anointing must be clearly distinguished. The anointing of the Spirit for salvation speaks of the Spirit’s residence *within* the person (i.e., indwelling, sealing), while the anointing of the Spirit for service speaks of His ministry *upon* the person (i.e., enabling, empowering).

GLORIFICATION

“Our salvation was begun by the sacrifice by which our sins were expiated, and finally completed by His resurrection” (Calvin).

The Westminster Shorter Catechism Questions 37 and 38 ask, “What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their

bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection? At the resurrection, believers, being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgement, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity.”

On resurrection day, all sin and corruption will be completely removed from us. We are not perfect yet, but we shall be when Christ returns. The Apostle John says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). “For ye are dead [representatively in Christ], and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:3-4). “Moreoever whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30).

The actual presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers guarantees our final and permanent perfection. So we read, “[He] hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Cor 1:22; cf. 5:5). “Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:13-14). The word “earnest” does not mean interest or dividends, but a down payment on the principal. It is a sizable sum of the payment, given in advance as security that the whole will be paid afterwards. God does not fail or lose His own. What God has promised, He shall bring to pass. This manifest presence of the Holy Spirit is the foretaste and guarantee of the fulness of our inheritance which we shall receive in the future life.

MEANING OF “CHURCH”

The English word “church,” like the German *kirche* and the Scotch *kirk*, is derived from the Greek adjective, *kyriakon*, which means “the Lord’s.” It may refer to (1) the Lord’s people in general, (2) any particular group of the Lord’s people, or (3) the building in which the Lord’s people worship (1 Cor 11:20, Rev 1:10).

The word translated “church” in the New Testament is *ekklesia*. This noun is related to the verb *ekkaleo* which means “to call out.” Although the term is used for a secular assembly (Acts 19:32, 41), in a specialised ecclesiastical sense, it refers to an assembly or a body of called-out people, separated unto God.

According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, “The catholic or universal church which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (25:1). The Apostle Paul regards the Corinthian Christians as part of the invisible church, “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1 Cor 1:2, see also Col 1:24).

The church is sometimes referred to in the Scriptures without the use of the word itself. The Apostle Peter for instance described the believers in this manner, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Pet 2:9–10).

BRIDE OF CHRIST

There is a mystical union between believers and Christ. This union is entered into when a person is born again. This mystical union is more than mere natural fellowship. It is a union of a supernatural order in the Holy Spirit. That is why in the Scriptures the true church is known as (1) the bride of Christ, and (2) the body of Christ.

Throughout the Scriptures, the marriage relationship is used metaphorically to signify the relationship between God and His people. In the Old Testament, Israel, as the people of God, is compared to a wife, and idolatry is frequently referred to as unfaithfulness to the marriage relationship. See especially the first three chapters of the prophecy of Hosea.

In a similar figure, Paul writes to the Church of Corinth, “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor 11:2–3).

The marriage relationship between Christ and His Church is described extensively in Ephesians 5:21-32. (See also 1 Cor 7; 1 Cor 11:1-16; 14:34, 35; 1 Tim 2:9-15; 3:11, 12; Tit 1:6; 2:5; 1 Pet 3:7.)

Ephesians 5:21 emphasises the need for Christians to submit themselves one to another in the fear of God. He then introduces the discussion of the marriage relationship with the exhortation in verses 22 and 23. A similar injunction is found in 1 Peter 3:1-2, “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the

wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.”

Paul continues his analogy, “Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph 5:24-25).

As it is natural that the husband should be the initiator in wedded love, so in the love between Christ and the Church, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Just as one naturally is grieved when love is not met with responsiveness, but rather with coldness, so Christ is grieved by spiritual indifference. The church is moved by the Holy Spirit to respond in love to the love of Christ. Mutual love is shown between Christ and His church. Christ displays loving headship, and the Church responds with loving submission.

Ephesians 5:26-27 states why the church should subject herself to the love of Christ, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

The love of Christ for His Church is also vividly expressed in these words, “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh [Gen 2:24; Matt 19:5]. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular

so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Eph 5:28–33).

Nowhere in Scripture is the love of Christ for His Church put in stronger or more moving terms than in Ephesians 5:25–33. “Love” here is not *philia*, the love of friendship, nor is it *eros*, the classical Greek word for love between husband and wife. It is *agape*, the deep, strong, broad, ethical, spiritual word for the love of God (Rom 5:5). This love is to be found not only in the individual, but also in the true Church, which, as a body, is bound up in mystical union with Christ.

The consummation of this marriage relationship between Christ and His Church is predicted in Revelation 19:6–9, “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” This marriage supper of the Lamb will be held after the rapture of the Church, and just before the final battle of Armageddon.

After the millennial reign of Christ on earth, after the final rebellion of Gog and Magog, after the final judgement of the Great White Throne, after the present universe is destroyed by fire, and after the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, will come the New Jerusalem from heaven upon the new earth, “having the glory of God.” “And there came unto me one of the seven angels ... and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Rev 21:9). John had the first glimpse of the holy and heavenly

city, the New Jerusalem, “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2, 10, 11).

BODY OF CHRIST

As the bride of Christ, the Church is also His body. The bride and body metaphors are really one. Several times in Ephesians 5:21-33, Paul mentions the two metaphors together. In verse 23, he says that Christ is “the saviour of the body” in His relationship as the Husband of the Church. Again in verse 28, the husband who loves his wife, loves “his own body.” Verse 30 reminds us that “we are members of his body,” and verse 31 quotes Genesis 2:24 as regards the marriage union.

The great spiritual lesson taught by the metaphor of the bride is the lesson of the purifying influence of the love of God in our hearts. Perhaps the strongest lesson taught by the metaphor of the body is the lesson of the mystical spiritual unity of believers, as members of the body of Christ (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25).

The unity of believers in the body of Christ is strongly emphasised by Paul: “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:22–23, cf. Col 1:18); “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph 4:2-6).

The purpose of the spiritual gifts which Christ has given to different members of His body is “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of

the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:12–13).

UNITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

The unity of the body of Christ means Christian peace (Col 3:15). What a glorious thought, the peace of Christ, that calm and poise of heart and mind which rest with a conscience completely yielded to God’s will!

However, this does not mean that the believer will not face any problems in his life. Paul for instance experienced great anxiety in Troas (2 Cor 2:12–13) and in Macedonia (2 Cor 7:5–6). Nevertheless, God will bless His people with His peace that only He can give when they live a life that is in complete harmony with the will of Christ.

The unity of the body of Christ thus calls for the purity of the members. If we are personally members of the mystical body of Christ, it follows that our entire being, including our physical bodies, are members of Christ. And we must take care never to use our bodily parts as instruments of sin. Paul says, “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost

which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:13-20).

INTERDEPENDENCE OF CHURCH MEMBERS

Paul twice says that we, as members of the body of Christ, are "members one of another" (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25). The most extended passage of Scripture dealing with the mutual interdependence of the members of the body of Christ is 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

For the Church to function and grow harmoniously, every member of the Church must recognise that he needs other church members to grow in the Lord. No member in the body of Christ is dispensable or is more important than the other. Every believer has a special gift and a special function within the body of Christ. Paul thus argued, "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members

should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor 12:15-27).

SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR CHURCH GROWTH

There are spiritual gifts for all the individual members of the body of Christ (Rom 12:6). Each believer has his own gift from God, one of one kind and another of another (1 Cor 12:6–8, Eph 4:7–8). The Holy Spirit Himself decides which gift or gifts a believer should have (1 Cor 12:11). Calvin rightly observed, “The gifts of the Spirit are not the gifts of nature.” A man who is effective and successful as an administrator in his secular occupation does not make him spiritually gifted to be an administrator of the church.

There are four lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament. The differences in these lists, and the manner in which each is given, suggest that no list is intended to be exhaustive, and that the gifts enumerated are not necessarily connected with particular offices or occupations.

The list in Romans 12:4-8 is as follows: (1) prophecy, (2) ministry (a very general term for service), (3) teaching, (4) exhorting (or consoling), (5) giving, (6) leadership, (7) showing mercy.

The list in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 is: (1) wisdom, (2) knowledge, (3) faith, (4) healing, (5) powers (probably meaning miracles), (6) prophecy, (7) discerning spirits, (8) languages (“tongues”), (9) translation of languages.

In 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 there is a double list. In the first covering of the ground we have (1) apostles, (2) prophets, (3) teachers, (4) powers (miracles), (5) healing, (6) helps, (7)

governors, (8) languages (“tongues”). As Paul goes over the ground again, we have no mention of “helps” or “governors” but we have the additional item of “translation.” It is thought that “helps” probably refers to several kinds of minor offices or ministries which developed in the early church. “Governors” is thought to indicate a differentiation in the eldership as between teaching elders (1 Tim 5:17) and ruling elders or governors of the church.

The list found in Ephesians 4:11 is very brief: (1) apostles, (2) prophets, (3) evangelists, (4) pastors and teachers. Each of these could be regarded as a special occupation or office.

Prophecy is the only spiritual gift found in all four lists. Apostles are mentioned in two of the lists (1 Cor 12:28–29; Eph 4:11). The gift of languages (“tongues”) and the gift of translation and healing are mentioned in the two lists found in 1 Corinthians 12. Teaching is found in the list in Romans 12, and in the second list in 1 Corinthians 12. In Ephesians 4:11 we find the gift called “pastors and teachers.” These two functions of shepherding and teaching are to be considered as one gift. Every pastor (shepherd) ought to be a teacher and every teacher ought to be a shepherd.

The office of the apostles is a very special one and is not perpetuated in the church. There were only 12 Apostles involved in establishing the New Testament Church, and the writing of the New Testament Scripture. There is no longer any need for apostles today since the Church is already established worldwide, and the Scriptures are already completed and canonised. Apart from the office of apostleship, “ministry” (Rom 12:7) might be considered a reference to the office of deacon. “Governments” or “governors” (1 Cor 12:28) could be a reference to ruling elders.

The gifts of the Spirit are manifold. We are not intended to have a complete list. The Spirit breathes where He chooses (John 3:8). Each member of the church is given at least one gift as evidence of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (see Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 7:7; 12:7; Eph 4:7). The manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the life of the redeemed individual is referred to as a “seal” (Eph 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22), a distinctive mark of genuineness as a member of the body. The spiritual gifts are not to be used in isolation. Paul says of himself and Apollos, “we are labourers together with God” (1 Cor 3:9). The gifts are for “the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12).

The sign gifts such as apostleship, miracles, tongues, healing etc are evidently not for all times and places in the church, and have ceased (1 Cor 13:8-10).

CESSATION OF THE SIGN GIFTS

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 is a most explicit passage on the cessation of the sign-gifts. Words of cessation, namely, “fail,” “cease,” “vanish away” are used. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge have ceased to exist. Before we deal with the cessation of tongues, let us deal with the cessation of prophecies and knowledge. Paul said that prophecies “shall fail,” and knowledge “shall vanish away.” The words, “fail” and “vanish away,” are the same word in Greek, namely, *katargeo*, which is a very strong word for cessation. It basically means “to destroy” (cf. 1 Cor 15:24, 26). The word *katargeo* (“to destroy”) is written in the Greek

passive. The passive voice indicates that something from the outside will cause prophecies and knowledge to cease. What is this external element? Verses 9-10 give us the answer: it is *to teleion*—"the perfect thing." What is this "perfect thing?" It is the completion of the Canon (i.e. the 66 books of the Holy Scriptures). When Paul wrote his epistle to the Corinthians, the New Testament was in the process of being written. Once the New Testament is completed—the last book written—the gift of prophecy, and of knowledge will cease. All the truths that God wants man to know concerning Him are found in the Bible. It is sufficient and authoritative. It is God's complete and final revelation to man (2 Tim 3:16-17, Rev 22:18-19).

Now, how about tongues? Paul wrote that tongues "shall cease." The word "cease" here is the Greek *pauo* which means "to stop." Unlike the gifts of prophecy and knowledge, which require an external element to cause their cessation, the gift of tongues will cease by itself (Greek middle voice). It will automatically fade away in the course of time when it has served its purpose. G F Rendal, formerly a charismatic, commented, "This purpose was fully achieved when it was fully admitted that the nations, as well as 'this people' (the Jews), benefited from Jehovah's salvation. When this fact was universally believed, accepted and no longer contested by anyone, this gift was no longer needed. ... Stars, as everyone knows, are visible and useful during the darkness of an unbelieving Israel who opposed the nations' salvation. The gift faded out very simply when the Gentiles' calling came to light. This is what finished off the last of my resistance." The gift of tongues will be withdrawn when it has fulfilled its purpose as a sign to unbelieving Jews (1 Cor 14:22). Is there today a need for God to convince Jews that the gospel is also given to Gentiles? There is no need. No longer are Jews preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, but Gentiles to Jews!

Does history confirm the early cessation of tongues? The famous church father—Augustine—wrote in the fourth century, “In the earliest time the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spake with tongues, which they had not learned, ‘as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, and to shew that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening and it passed away.” The great 16th Century Protestant Reformation and Revival, was not characterised by tongues-speaking, but powerful preaching. Luther, Calvin, and Knox did not speak in tongues.

Now, what does the word “perfect” in 1 Corinthians 13:10 mean? The word “perfect” in 1 Corinthians 13:10 does not mean Christ or heaven. How do we know this? We know this by determining how the word is used in its context. Usage determines meaning!

1 Corinthians 13:10 says, “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” It is very clear from this verse that there is a relationship between “that which is perfect” and “that which is in part.” The “perfect” will cause the “part” to cease. The question we need to ask first is: What is “that which is in part”? The answer lies in verses 8-9. Verses 8-9 tell us that the things partial are “prophecies,” “tongues,” and “knowledge.” All three sign-gifts are revelatory. They are supernatural gifts which communicate the Word and Will of God. Paul says that these revelatory gifts will eventually “fail,” “cease,” and “vanish away.” They will one day cease to exist, or be withdrawn from use.

The next question we want to ask is: When will this happen? This will happen when “the perfect” comes. Paul says that

prophecies “shall fail,” and knowledge “shall vanish away.” The words, “fail,” and “vanish away,” are written in the Greek passive. By so writing, Paul is telling his readers that something from the outside will cause the gifts of prophecy and knowledge to fail and vanish away. What is this external element? The answer is found in verses 9 and 10, “For we know (i.e. the gift of knowledge) in part, and we prophesy (i.e. the gift of prophecy) in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which in part (i.e. the gifts of knowledge and prophecy) shall be done away.” There is a cause-and-effect relationship between “that which is perfect” and “that which is in part.” It is clear from the context that the gifts of knowledge and prophecy are only temporary gifts, and not permanent. They will be removed once the perfect comes.

Now, what is this which is “perfect” that will cause the gifts of knowledge and prophecy to cease? The word “perfect” here is the Greek *to teleion* which literally means “the perfect thing.” This perfect thing is inseparably linked to the revelatory gifts of prophecy and knowledge. The cause-and-effect relationship between the perfect and the partial (i.e. prophecies and knowledge) points us to what the perfect is. The revelatory nature of prophecies and knowledge tells us that this perfect thing must of necessity be revelatory as well. It has to do with God’s revelation. The Greek word—*teleion*—being adjectival functions to describe. Here it describes God’s revelation. The revelatory gifts of prophecy and knowledge are partial, but this coming Revelation is perfect. The “perfect” is thus God’s Perfect Revelation. When God’s Perfect or Complete Revelation comes, the partial will be taken away. God has been revealing Himself to His people part by part through the prophets (cf. Heb 1:1-2), but there will come a time when He will completely reveal what He wants to reveal. When that happens, there will no longer be any need for prophecies and knowledge. When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, the New Testament was in the process of being

written. Prophecies and knowledge will cease when the New Testament is completed. When did this happen?

This happened when the last book of the Bible was written and completed, namely, the book of Revelation. God confirmed its completion by issuing a very severe warning in the last chapter of Revelation, verses 18 and 19: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” This effectively sealed and finalised God’s Perfect Revelation—the 66 books of Holy Scripture.

Now, we know that the word “perfect” in 1 Corinthians 13:10 does not mean the return of Christ because if Paul had that in mind, he would probably have used the clear and unambiguous “until he comes” which he did in 1 Corinthians 11:26, or “then the end will come” in 1 Corinthians 15:24. What is truly significant is the fact that the word “perfect” is used 18 times in the New Testament (Matt 5:48, 19:21; Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:6, 13:10, 14:20; Eph 4:13; Phil 3:15; Col 1:28, 4:12; Heb 5:14, 9:11; Jas 1:4, 17, 25, 3:2; 1 John 4:18), and not once does it refer to the second coming or to heaven. The word “perfect” is mostly used to describe spiritually mature Christians who live in accordance to God’s Word. At other times, it is used specifically to describe (1) the will of God, (2) the wisdom of God, (3) the Law of God, (4) the love of God, and (5) the humanity of Christ.

Therefore, the “perfect” refers to a book, and not to a person (Christ), an event (His return), or a place (heaven). The Holy Bible is the perfect Word or Revelation of God. It is absolutely authoritative, and totally sufficient for Christian

doctrine and practice (2 Tim 3:16-17). Revelation has ceased. Consequently, all temporary means of revelation, like the gifts of prophecy and knowledge, have been withdrawn. It is unbiblical to seek a word of prophecy or a word of knowledge today. We are to go straight to the Word of God to seek His will and wisdom.

One must also not neglect Paul's careful argumentation on why love is supreme in 1 Corinthians 13. Paul chides the Corinthians for placing the supernatural sign-gifts at a level that is above the virtues of faith, hope, and love. They got their priorities all mixed up. The gifts of prophecy, knowledge, and tongues are not as important as the virtues of faith, hope, and love. The sign-gifts are meant only for the apostolic age. They are temporary gifts, and will be phased out. What will remain and last throughout the church age are the Christian graces of faith, hope, and love. These virtues should be found in every Christian. The Corinthians should pay more attention to cultivating these virtues in their lives instead of fighting over who has the superior gift (1 Cor 12:1-21, 14:1-5). Of the three virtues, love is the greatest or most important because love will never cease. While faith and hope will both be realised or fulfilled at the time of Christ's return, love being a divine virtue will last forever. "Charity never faileth" (1 Cor 13:8). Love is eternal, and that is why it is "the greatest" (1 Cor 13:13). Paul is exhorting the Church to pay most attention to love because we are going to need it for eternity (cf. Matt 22:36-40).

The word "perfect" therefore must mean the Biblical Canon—the 66 books of Holy Scripture. If we take the term "perfect" to mean the second coming of Christ or heaven, we will throw into disarray Paul's careful and thoughtful argumentation in 1 Corinthians 13 on the superiority of faith and hope, and the supremacy of love over the temporariness and relative inferiority of the sign-gifts.

SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

In the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are presented under the general heading of "the means of grace." "What are the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption? The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are His ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation" (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 88).

The outward formal and physical act of baptism and the Lord's Supper do not convey any spiritual blessing or benefit. There is nothing magical about the ceremonies of water baptism and the Lord's Supper.

One proof that the sacraments are not held to be external instruments in themselves for the conveying of the grace of God is the fact that the Word and prayer are also said to be "outward and ordinary means" in the same sense as the sacraments. Consider the Westminster Shorter Catechism Questions 89 and 90: "How is the Word made effectual to salvation? The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation. How is the Word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation? That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives." In other words, it is *not the possession or the act* of carrying the Bible that shows that one is saved, but *the understanding and obeying* of its divinely inspired words with the help of the Holy Spirit.

With reference to the sacraments, the Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 91 teaches, “The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of His spirit in them that by faith receive them.” The sacraments are thus only outward signs of inward grace.

There are two specific manners in which the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a “means of grace.” Jesus said, “this do in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:24–25), with reference to both the bread and the cup. Paul adds, “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come” (v 26). So the Lord’s Supper is a “means of grace” in reminding the communicants of Christ, and in showing forth to outsiders the fact of His death on the cross. It is to be perpetuated in the world until Christ comes again.

The sacraments are not necessary for salvation, but are required and useful (1) as visual aids to assist human minds to know what is taught in the Holy Scriptures, and (2) as a public testimony to the outside world of the meaning of faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, the phrase, “means of grace,” must not be mechanically interpreted to mean that the sacraments themselves impart salvation. It must be emphasised that Independent, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches do not agree with the Roman Catholic error of salvation by works through the mechanical keeping of baptism and the mass.

So, what is a sacrament? A Christian sacrament is defined as “an holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible [sensory] signs Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 92). Calvin said,

“The sacraments are mirrors in which we may contemplate the riches of grace which God imparts to us.”

SACRAMENTS AS SEALS

The Sacraments are seals of the Covenant of Grace. The word, “seal,” designates a visible mark that proves the validity of the arrangement, covenant, or promise, which it is understood to signify (see Gen 38:18, 25; Exod 28:11; cf. 1 Kgs 21:8; Neh 9:38; Esth 8:8; Job 38:14; Jer 22:24; 32:10, 44; Dan 6:17). Even in our modern culture, an official seal is often used to authenticate an agreement or a testimony.

In the New Testament, the word “seal” is used metaphorically to mean a firm testimony (John 3:33). Christ spoke of the evidence of the truthfulness of His claims as the “seal” of the Father upon Him (John 6:27). The stone at the door of the tomb where Christ was buried was literally “sealed” with the official Roman seal (Matt 27:66). The statement that “The LORD will shew who are his” (Num 16:5) is said to be the “seal” upon the foundation of the truth of God (2 Tim 2:19). The Corinthian Christians are the “seal” of Paul’s apostleship (1 Cor 9:2). The love gift collected from the Gentile churches is a “seal” (i.e. the tangible evidence) of the genuineness of their faith (Rom 15:28). The powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers is the “seal” or evidence of their regeneration (Eph 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22).

The constant speaking of the sacraments as the seal of “Christ and the benefits of the new covenant,” is based upon the fact that Paul refers to the sign of circumcision as the “seal” of the justification by faith which Abraham had when he was still in the state of uncircumcision (Rom 4:11). Paul refers to baptism as “Christian circumcision” (Col 2:11–12). The Lord’s Supper is likewise an outward act of testimony, “showing forth the Lord’s death” (1 Cor 11:26). The sacraments are therefore the outward sign of our

relationship with Christ in regeneration. A sign does not save, it merely points to the Saviour.

A seal in itself does not mean anything unless it is actually backed up by substance and is finally validated. Lawyers explain to us that a seal affixed to a document is merely “presumptive evidence” that the document is valid and to be taken at face value. By way of illustration, the diploma of the Far Eastern Bible College bears a golden seal. Before the diploma is awarded, the seal may be attached to the diploma at any time when it is presumed by the custodians of the seal that the student will complete or has completed his studies, and that the diploma will eventually be validated.

The seal of a diploma illustrates how the sacraments can truly be regarded as seals of our standing in Christ. No sacrament occurs at precisely the same time in which the individual believes and is justified. “In the case of infant baptism, the seal is applied in the confident expectation and hope that the child will believe and be born again. In the case of those who come into the Christian faith as adults, not having been brought up in Christian nurture, and not having been baptised as infants, and in the case of all who partake of the Lord’s Supper, subsequent to the requisite self-examination (1 Cor 11:28), the seal is applied subsequent to the time when the individual is presumed to be born again. In no case does the seal accomplish that of which it is a sign, but in all these cases the seal is applied in obedience to the command of Christ, as an outward sign of the inward grace which is confidently expected in the case of infants, or believed to be actually received in the case of adults” (Buswell).

Since a sacrament is a sign wherein “Christ and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers,” there is thus no dispute about the fact that the sacraments represent that which accomplishes our salvation.

Calvin rightly observed, “All signs are as it were dead, except life is given them by the Word.”

MEANING OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

The Lord’s Supper is called the Lord’s Supper because it was instituted by the Lord Himself just before His death. The Lord’s Supper like Water Baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace. It is the external visible display of an internal invisible reality of our salvation. For example, when we go through the waters of baptism, we are publicly declaring what has already happened in our heart, namely, the washing away of our sins, our new life in Christ, and our hope in the future resurrection.

Note that Water Baptism and the Lord’s Supper do not save. They are just outward symbols of an inward reality. Just like the wedding ring. A ring does not make a person married. The vow to each other does.

Let us consider the meaning and significance of the Lord’s Supper. According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “The Lord’s Supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ’s appointment, his death showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.”

The institution of the Lord’s Supper is recorded for us in all three synoptic gospels in Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, and Luke 22:19-20. Paul discussed the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23-34. When we partake of the Lord’s Supper, we remember the Lord’s atoning work on the cross, and when we partake of it by faith, we receive spiritual help and blessing to live the Christian life.

Now, there are four different views on what the Lord's Supper means. Let us look at them one by one.

The Roman Catholic view of the Lord's Supper is called "transubstantiation." Transubstantiation teaches that the bread and the cup literally become the body and the blood of Christ. When the priest utters the words of Christ, "This is my body" and "This is my blood," the bread and the wine magically turn into the actual body and blood of Christ. Partaking of the bread and the cup actually means eating the real flesh and drinking the real blood of Christ. Sometimes they put the bread or the wafer into a monstrance to be worshipped. The wafer becomes God. This is idolatry. The Roman Catholic Church also teaches that each time the Eucharist is observed, Christ is crucified all over again. This goes against Hebrews 7:27 which tells us that Christ's sacrifice was but once and for all, and not repeatable.

When Jesus said in John 6:53 that we ought to eat His flesh and drink His blood, He did not mean a literal eating of His actual flesh and literal drinking of His actual blood. He was not advocating cannibalism. The context clearly indicates that His words ought to be understood spiritually. Jesus was speaking about spiritual eating and drinking. The body and blood point to Christ's work on the cross. Believe in Christ, and when He lives in you, you will be saved. The Roman Catholic view is thus heretical and idolatrous.

The Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper came from Martin Luther. Luther was a very devout Roman Catholic scholar and monk before he became a Christian. He said, "I was indeed a pious monk, and followed the rules of my order more strictly than I can express. If ever a monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it."

Although Luther is to be commended for his reformation of the church insofar as the doctrine of salvation is concerned, we regret to note that he did not reject totally the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation. It must be noted that Luther did not agree with the Roman Catholic view that the bread and cup literally and magically became the flesh and blood of Christ. He believed that the bread was still bread, and the wine was still wine. Nevertheless, he conceded that the physical body and blood of Christ were somehow present “in, with, and under” the bread and wine.

Luther’s view is called “consubstantiation.” Luther used an iron bar heated with fire to illustrate his point. The iron after it is heated remains iron, but now there is the element of heat, and the heat is in the iron itself, is with the iron, and is around the iron.

Again Luther, like the Roman Catholics, failed to understand that Jesus’ words concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood are to be taken figuratively or spiritually. Christ is not physically present in the bread and the wine.

Ulrich Zwingli was a Swiss Reformer who taught that the Lord’s Supper was simply a commemoration of the Lord’s work on the cross. In 1 Corinthians 11:24, Jesus said, “this do in remembrance of me.” Zwingli was correct to say that the bread and the cup did not contain but merely represented the body and blood of Christ.

Although Zwingli was correct to say that the bread and cup merely represented the body and blood of Christ, there was one shortcoming to his view: he failed to see the spiritual presence of Christ in the elements.

Calvin agreed with Zwingli that the elements represented the body and blood of Christ. Calvin used the words “symbols,”

“signs,” and “images,” to explain the meaning of the bread and the cup. Calvin also taught that the Lord’s Supper was a commemoration of Christ and His work on the cross.

Calvin rightly taught that the partaking of the Lord’s Supper had an additional significance. It was a spiritual exercise. The whole ceremony was sacred. All participants must observe it with great reverence and fear.

It is vital that members of the church partake of the bread and the cup with a worshipful attitude. The Corinthian Christian did not regard properly the body and the blood of Christ, and the Lord struck them with illness, and some even died (1 Cor 11:27-30).

When the Lord’s Table is observed reverentially and faithfully, there comes a special blessing from heaven. Such gracious benefits from God Calvin said cannot be explained, but experienced. So the Lord’s Supper is not just a commemoration; it is also a spiritual exercise.

There are four views on the meaning and significance of the Lord’s Supper: (1) Roman Catholic (transubstantiation), (2) Lutheran (consubstantiation), (3) Zwinglian (commemoration), and (4) Calvinistic (spiritual). The first two views are erroneous. The third view is true but incomplete. Calvin’s view is the biblical view in all its fulness.

The purity of the sacrament is vividly set forth in Paul’s injunction (1 Cor 10:14-22). What born-again Christian has not felt the very presence of the Holy Spirit of God in the mystical union of believers together with Christ at the communion table?

Paul emphasises that the Lord's table demands purity of faith and life. He draws the analogy, "Behold Israel after the flesh [i.e., historically]: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles [i.e. communicants of false religions] sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God." Paul was, of course, referring to literal idolatry, but anything which comes between us and God is, spiritually, an idol. Any false doctrine which amounts to the denial of salvation through the blood of Christ, is a form of idolatry. "Modernism" is not a form of Christianity, it is another religion; it is idolatry.

Paul continues, "I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." The two cannot be commingled. If it is the table of false religion, it is not the Lord's table.

Alluding to the metaphor of the marriage relationship, the metaphor which speaks of idolatry as unfaithfulness, Paul concludes, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"

Calvin, in his *Institutes*, draws the distinction between a true Church and that which is not a Church, in that a true Church, preaching the true Gospel, maintains the purity of the sacraments.

SACRIFICES AND SACRAMENTS

The Old Testament sacrifices were "sacraments" in that they were fully equivalent to the New Testament sacraments in their spiritual efficacy. "The sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were, for substance, the same with those of

the New” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 27:5). In and of themselves as outward actions, the Old Testament sacrifices accomplished nothing, but in their significance they represented the atonement which Christ was to accomplish on the cross. They are described as “shadows” (Col 2:17).

The Old Testament sacrifices are called the “copy” and “shadow” and “pattern.” The Old Testament priests are said to “serve unto the example [copy] and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount” (Heb 8:5). The Old Testament sacrifices are the “copy” of the things in heaven, but the atonement of Christ is said to be the actual sacrifice pertaining to the things of heaven itself (Heb 9:23). Which is better—the photo or the person himself?

There is a clear analogy between the Old Testament and New Testament “sacrifices” or “sacraments.” Paul himself made such a comparison in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8. And it is the same analogy of the Old Testament ritual to the New Testament sacraments which Paul has in mind when he writes, “ye are circumcised ... by the circumcision of Christ [or Christian circumcision]: buried with him in baptism” (Col 2:11–12).

We must conclude then that in the church, since the incarnation and the historical accomplishment of the atonement, there are but two sacraments, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and that these two sacraments embody all the meaning and all the efficacy of the divinely ordered system of worship previously ordained by the Lord.

WATER BAPTISM

According to Reformed theology, the word for baptism when used literally does not always imply submerging or

immersing. As a matter of fact, the meaning most common in the New Testament is the action of dipping and pouring or dipping and sprinkling. There is no objection to the thought that baptism may properly be performed by immersion, but we do not find in the New Testament even one instance in which it is clear that immersion was the mode used, nor do we find in the Old Testament ceremonial washings one instance in which immersion is implied.

In the Old Testament, the word “baptise” is used in the sense of dipping for the purpose of sprinkling. “And the priest shall dip (baptise) his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the LORD, before the vail of the sanctuary” (Lev 4:6, 9:9, 14:16). The dipping (not immersing) is tied to the act of sprinkling. Another example of dipping and sprinkling is found in Numbers 19, especially verses 7, 10, 13, 18 and 20 which give elaborate directions for the “water of sprinkling.”

When we read in Daniel 4:33 and 5:21, that Nebuchadnezzar “was wet with the dew of heaven,” the verb is *bapto*. Certainly the word does not mean that he was immersed.

From the above study of the Old Testament, we see that baptism does not necessarily mean immersion. What a word means is determined by how it is used in its context. In the Old Testament context of ceremonial or ritual cleansing, baptism is connected with the act of dipping and sprinkling.

There is no instance of baptism recorded in the New Testament in which it is clear that immersion was the method used. There are several instances in which immersion is quite excluded by the context. In Luke 11:38, we read that “when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed [literally ‘baptised’] before dinner.” It was customary for the Jews to wash, that is to baptise, themselves before

their meals. A fuller explanation is found in Mark 7:1-7. When the Pharisees saw that some of Jesus' disciples ate with unwashed hands, they were astonished. Mark explains, "the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash [or 'baptise themselves'], they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing [baptism] of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables." To wash a table by immersion would be problematic, to say the least.

We know from other Scriptures how the ancients were accustomed to washing their hands (e.g. 2 Kgs 3:11; John 2:1-11). The water for washing was kept in jars. A servant's duty was to dip and pour on his master's hands (2 Kgs 3:11) and feet also (Luke 7:44). When the Jews came from the market place it was their custom to wash themselves, and for this act Luke uses the word "baptise" (Luke 11:38).

It is abundantly evident from Luke 11:38 and Mark 7:1-6 that the word "baptise" did not necessarily imply immersion. John Sung—the great Chinese revivalist—rightly answered his Baptist friends, "More faith less water, less faith more water." Whether immersion or sprinkling, Baptist or Presbyterian, let there be no division over the mode of baptism, but a mutual love and respect for one another in the Lord towards the common goal of the Church to fulfil the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). Water more or less, the gospel is the best.

In Acts 8:26-39, Philip preached the good news of Jesus Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch from Isaiah 53:7ff. What was the water which they saw as they drove along? The region along that road is desert country (Acts 8:26) and there is no natural body of water available for immersion. Tertullian in his treatise, "On Baptism," refers to "the eunuch whom Philip

baptised in the midst of his journey with chance water.” The presumption is that it was not a lake or a deep pool of any sort, but a shallow pond beside the road such as is common in desert country after a brief downpour.

But what made the Ethiopian think of baptism? It is significant to note that the Ethiopian was reading Isaiah 53:7-8 when Philip met him. In the context of Isaiah 53, he might have read the words of Isaiah 52:15, “So shall he sprinkle many nations.” He might also be familiar with Ezekiel 36:25-27, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” As such, the Ethiopian could have known the Old Testament idea of ceremonial cleansing by the sprinkling of water, and so asked for baptism.

Now, it was the Ethiopian who was getting baptised, not Philip. Hence, the going down into the water was not a part of the baptising for both of them went down into the water. Neither did the coming up out of the water constitute any part of the baptising, for they both came up out of the water. The baptising was an act quite distinct from going down and coming up. Wearing sandals (the custom then), they doubtless stepped down into the water (it may have been a few inches deep) and Philip baptised the eunuch, doubtless by dipping and pouring or sprinkling, as suggested by many Old Testament passages.

Buswell was correct, observing that there “is not one instance in the New Testament in which baptism itself is said to involve the going down into the water, or a coming

up out of the water. In cases where movement to or from the water is mentioned, without exception, the baptism is an entirely separate action.”

It is highly unlikely that immersion was the baptismal practice in the days of the New Testament. For instance, on the day of Pentecost, “they that gladly received his word were baptised: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). Surely, in this case, baptism by immersion, with the limited water resources at hand, would have been extremely difficult for the apostles. On the other hand, baptism by sprinkling, after the manner of the Old Testament purifying ceremonies, would have been quite feasible.

In the conversion of Saul, and his subsequent baptism by Ananias in Damascus, when his sight was restored after Ananias’ prayer, he “arose, and was baptised. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened” (Acts 9:18–19). In the context, the most natural meaning of he “arose” is he “stood up and was baptised.” If the baptism had required him to go to another place where he could be immersed, most naturally he would have eaten first to get the physical energy he needed before going out. Again baptism by sprinkling, according to the Old Testament pattern, is the most natural way to understand the event here.

In the baptism of the household of Cornelius, as soon as Peter saw that the Holy Spirit had indwelt them, he said, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” (Acts 10:47). It was not a matter of going out to some pool or lake or river, but of someone bringing in water for the baptismal service.

The significance of the sacrament of baptism is stated plainly in Romans 6:1-5. Christian baptism represents the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It is through the Gospel of His death, burial and resurrection that we have the cleansing of our sins and the newness of life imparted to us in regeneration (1 Cor 15:1-4).

In Romans 6:1-5, when Jesus was “buried” (v 4), He was not put down in the ground and covered up. His body was carried into a rock-hewn sepulchre and, doubtless, laid upon a niche or shelf as the custom was. The physical nature of His burial in no way resembled immersion in water. The word “planted” (v 5) does not mean to plant by putting into the ground, but the word is from *phuo*, to sprout forth. The beginning of our Christian life, its germination, was in the acceptance of the death of Christ on the cross.

Baptism directly signifies our acceptance of the atonement of Christ accomplished on the cross. But since it is through the atonement that sin is remitted, or cleansed away, it is entirely appropriate that baptism should be referred to as a “cleansing” or a “washing.” Peter said on the day of Pentecost: “Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Baptism signifies the remission of sin through the atonement which Christ accomplished as that atonement is applied to us by the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 22:16, 1 John 1:7).

INFANT BAPTISM

Children are God’s gift to us (Ps 127:3). God Himself is interested in the physical and spiritual development of our children. His way of reminding us of His concern is in the ceremony of water baptism which is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace. Children of Christian parents are also recipients of this covenant sign and seal. Christian parents

ought to have their babies baptised as soon as possible. God is pleased with this act, and will bless both parent and child accordingly.

This is where a proper understanding of God's Covenant of Grace comes in. This Covenant of Grace is divided into two periods: (1) Old Testament and (2) New Testament. The central Figure of both Testaments is Jesus Christ. The people in the Old Testament were saved by looking forward to the cross (John 8:56), and we in the New Testament are saved by looking back at the cross. In the Old Testament, the ceremonies that identified the nation of Israel to God were the passover and circumcision. In the New Testament, since Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament, the passover and circumcision have been replaced by the Lord's supper and water baptism respectively (Luke 22:14–20, Col 2:11–12).

The Old Testament rite of circumcision and the New Testament rite of baptism are quite similar. Paul in Colossians 2:11-12 calls water baptism “the circumcision of Christ.” Water baptism is Christian circumcision. When a Jew is circumcised, he is telling people that he believes in Jehovah, and that he is a member of the nation of Israel. When a believer goes through water baptism, he is telling everyone that he believes in Christ, and that he is a member of the church. In the Old Testament, male babies when they reached eight days old were circumcised. Likewise in the New Testament, we baptise our babies as early as possible. They are within God's covenant promises. Although infants born to Christian parents are within God's covenant promises, it needs to be categorically stated that the Biblical view of infant baptism (as opposed to the Roman Catholic) is not baptismal regeneration. Water Baptism simply does not save, whether it is adult baptism or infant baptism.

Why were Jewish babies circumcised? And why are babies born to Christian parents baptised? It is because God is interested in the family unit. When God saves one in the family, He also desires to save all. God's covenant promises are given not only to the individual but also to those who are part of his household (Gen 17:7-14). This household concept is very important.

In the Old Testament, we find the following instances where God saved not only a person, but also his family from destruction. Consider the Old Testament teaching on household salvation as found in the case of Noah (Gen 7:1), of Abraham (Gen 17:12-13, 23, 27), and of Lot (Gen 19:16). God included their respective families in His work of salvation or deliverance.

The same household salvation teaching is found in the New Testament. When Peter and Paul preached the gospel, they called not only individuals to salvation but also their family members (Acts 2:38-39, Acts 16:31). Consider the following examples of household salvation: (1) Martha, Mary and Lazarus of Bethany (John 11:1), (2) Cornelius and his family (Acts 10:44-48, 11:14-16), (3) Lydia and her family (Acts 16:14-15), (4) the Philippian jailor and his family (Acts 16:31-33).

It must be said that salvation is not automatic. It does not mean that if one member of the family becomes saved, the rest automatically become saved. Each person of age must confess and believe in Christ for salvation. When we talk about household salvation, we are saying that God is deeply interested in the eternal destiny of our loved ones. We have a moral responsibility to preach the Gospel to them, and bear a Christlike testimony at home. When we prayerfully and diligently do our part, God will be faithful to do His part to bring them eventually to a saving knowledge of Himself. This general truth was observed by Calvin, "Those who are

baptised when mere infants, God regenerates in childhood or adolescence, occasionally even in old age.”

KEEPING THE SABBATH

The Sabbath command is a good law that comes from a good God. God requires of man to set aside one day a week for physical respite and spiritual refreshment. When we come to worship the Lord on Sunday, do we not find our bodies and spirits recharged for a new week of physical work and spiritual battle? The Sabbath is not a burden but a delight. It is not a holiday but a holy day (Isa 58:13–14).

Today, we keep the Sabbath on Sunday, the Lord’s Day (Rev 1:10, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 16:2) commemorating Christ’s resurrection. On this day, we gather for worship, fellowship, Bible study and evangelism.

While keeping the Sabbath, we do not keep it with a Pharisaical attitude. In Mark 2:23-24, the Pharisees charged Jesus and His disciples for breaking the sabbath. According to the Pharisees, the sabbath law was broken when the disciples plucked and rubbed the wheat grains in their hands. In their extra-biblical rabbinical laws, they listed the following as work forbidden on the sabbath: “The main classes of work are forty save one: sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, cleansing crops, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, washing or beating or dyeing it, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying [a knot], loosening [a knot], sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, hunting a gazelle, slaughtering or flaying or salting it or curing its skin, scraping it or cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters, building, pulling down, putting out a fire, lighting a fire, striking with a hammer and taking our aught from one domain into another. These are the main classes of work:

forty save one” (Mishnah, *Shabbath* 7.2). The disciples were considered to have done #3 and #5 of the 39 activities. Jesus was culpable because He did not stop His hungry disciples.

Was the Master wrong? It comforts us to know that our Lord is not a slave-driver, but a loving Master. Jesus and His disciples did not violate the Sabbath law. What they violated were the extra-biblical, man-made, foolish laws of the Pharisees.

In Mark 2:25-28, Jesus rebutted the accusations of the Pharisees by citing the example of David who ate of the shewbread that only the priests were allowed to eat. David was hungry, and Ahimelech the priest, knowing the law for sure, did not forbid David and his men to fill their stomachs (1 Sam 21:1–6 cf. Lev 24:9). Ahimelech “broke” the ceremonial law of Leviticus 24:9, but was blameless. David likewise “broke” that law by eating of the ceremonial bread, and was guiltless as well. If Ahimelech and David were innocent, how could Jesus be guilty? Moreover, Jesus Himself is the Lord of the Sabbath! The higher law of necessity overrides the lower law of ceremony. It ought to be noted that Jesus in this particular instance did not even depart from a God-given ceremonial law, but a man-made rabbinical tradition. The charges of the Pharisees were totally baseless and without merit. Jesus did not break the law but kept it perfectly—His active obedience.

Jesus laid down a wonderful principle for Sabbath-keeping when He said, “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath was instituted not as a burden but as a benefit to man. Thus any legalistic application of the Sabbath law contradicts its God-given role for man (cf. Luke 11:46).

The puritans, in their overemphasis on the doctrine of sanctification, became legalistic. Instead of stressing on the spirit of the law, they put an undue emphasis on the letter of the law. Calvin has rightly commented, “The point of it is that it is wrong to turn the sabbath to man’s destruction, since God instituted it for his sake. The Pharisees saw Christ’s disciples busy in a holy work, they saw them exhausted and famished by their journey, yet they are angry that these hungry men should refresh their weary bodies with a few grains of corn. Is it not an ignorant perversion of God’s will to demand the observance of the sabbath to man’s hurt when God intended it to help him?” What insight and wisdom!

How do we keep the Christian Sabbath, which is the Lord’s Day, holy? Here are instructions from the Westminster Larger Catechism:

“Question 116: What is required in the fourth commandment? Answer: The fourth commandment requires of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he has appointed in his Word, expressly one whole day in seven; which was the seventh from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since, and so to continue to the end of the world; which is the Christian Sabbath, and in the New Testament called the Lord’s day.

“Question 117: How is the Sabbath or the Lord’s day to be sanctified? Answer: The Sabbath or Lord’s day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God’s worship:

and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably to despatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.” (As Christians, we should not be working on the Lord’s Day unless they are works of necessity, e.g., doctor, nurse, policeman, fireman, soldier. A gynaecologist cannot tell his patient: “Please do not go into labour on Sunday!” In certain countries, their “Sabbath” is on a Friday. Is God angry at His people if they were to worship on a Friday?)

“Question 118: Why is the charge of keeping the Sabbath more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors? Answer: The charge of keeping the Sabbath is more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors, because they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but to see that it be observed by all those that are under their charge; and because they are prone oftentimes to hinder them by employments of their own.

“Question 119: What are the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment? Answer: The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment are, all omissions of the duties required, all careless, negligent, and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them; all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful; and by all needless works, words, and thoughts, about our worldly employments and recreations.” (Calvin wrote, “The Sabbath was not prescribed as a day of idleness, but a season when we should collect our whole energies for meditation upon the works of God.”)

It is interesting to note that the Westminster theologians did not give a list of specific do’s and don’ts in their exposition of the Sabbath command, but laid down a list of biblical

principles we might apply to ensure that we keep the Sabbath holy and wholly:

1. Put God first (Isa 58:13, Matt 6:33). “Worship is the mother of all virtues.”
2. The Sabbath is made for the benefit of man (Mark 2:27). Allowed on the Sabbath are the works of necessity, of mercy, of service to God.
3. Christian freedom and non-judgementalism (Rom 14:4–8, John 4:21–24). Sanctifying the Sabbath is an attitude or a spirit we must cultivate; a spirit of desiring to please God in all that we do, and be a good testimony for Him on the Lord’s Day, and every day of the week.

REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP

The worship of God in His house must be done in God’s way. “The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 21.1).

God requires us to worship Him in His way. Any worship not instituted by God will not be accepted. For example, Nadab and Abihu were punished by God because they “offered strange fire ... which he commanded them not” (Lev 10:1). God does not allow us to worship Him according to our whim and fancy. He requires us to worship Him according to the principles of worship He has set forth in the Scriptures.

The regulative principle involves two vital doctrines of the Christian faith. The first is the doctrine of God’s nature. 1 Corinthians 14:33 and 40 tells us that the God we worship is a God of decency and order, and not confusion. God is not

pleased with any form of worship that is chaotic, wild, and uncontrolled. Spiritual maturity is an important element. The more spiritually minded we are, the more sensitive we will be to the holiness of God. It is not so much a matter of rules and regulations, but of spirituality. If our hearts and minds are biblically tuned to God and His Word, we do not need anyone to give us a list of “do’s and don’ts,” we will automatically know what God wants us to be and what He wants us to do. We will naturally desire what God desires. 1 Corinthians 2:15-16 says, “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

The regulative principle also involves the doctrine of separation. This principle is taught in Romans 12:1-2. Although the Church is in the world, she must not be of the world, and that includes her form of worship. Say “No” to Contemporary Christian Music (CCM).

PART IV
ESCHATOLOGY
Knowing the End Times



THE LAST DAYS

There is a song that goes like this: “The world is a circle without a beginning, and nobody knows when it’ll ever end.” Is this true? Contrary to what man says, God tells us that the world has a beginning and one day will end (Gen 1:1, Rev 21:1).

The world that we live in will not last forever. It has an ending. The Bible speaks of “the last day.” The phrase “the last day” occurs six times in the Gospel of John. Jesus said that all that God has given Him, and everyone who has believed on Him shall “have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:39–40, see also 6:44, 54, 11:24, 12:48).

Paul used a similar expression in 2 Timothy 3:1, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”

Peter in 2 Peter 3:3 wrote: “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.”

Jude wrote, “How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts” (Jude 18).

James likewise warned against those who make money their god and live in the lust of their flesh, “Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days” (Jas 5:3).

People today are being deceived to believe that though the world has a beginning, it has no ending. This is a lie of the devil. The world has a beginning, and it will end one day. God in the beginning created it very good. Man rebelled against God and made it bad. And so, this world

is not getting better and better, but from bad to worse. It is becoming increasingly wicked. It will have an end. God will end it when He comes to judge this wicked world.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

As the new millennium was drawing nearer, there arose a hue and cry in the computer world that the sky was going to fall on them if a serious fault was not corrected. This terrible fault at first they called “The Millennium Bomb,” but later renamed “The Millennium Bug.” In order to correct the error, a billion dollars would not be enough to make the computer worldwide compliant.

The media scared the whole world reporting that planes would drop from the sky or collide in midair. Singapore Airlines (SIA) spent an initial \$50 million to bring their computers up to date, and how much more it had further spent is a good question.

But many Third World countries had no means to correct their computers. Nevertheless, they (including Russia) got out of the whole show unscathed. The whole business was a hoax. And it was a hoax also used by “holy” tricksters to empty their blind followers’ pockets and to fatten their own belly, when they announced Christ would return at the ushering in of the new millennium.

What man says about things unknown is always wrong. But what God says is always right (Rom 3:4). In regard to the signs of Christ’s Second Coming and of “the end of the world,” Jesus’ reply to His disciples involved the breakdown of four areas of human life, viz. the ecologic, economic, ecclesiastic, and diplomatic, which must be countered by the acceleration of the Gospel to the ends of the world—the evangelistic sign—and then Jesus would return to take over.

The physical forces will so break down that the Lord who created them must come also to save them. Isaiah 45:18, “For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.”

There are general signs in four spheres of human life that we can observe and conclude Jesus’ coming is imminent. First the ecologic. Ecology means “the study of the interaction of people with their environment.” Under this heading are mentioned pestilences and earthquakes. Synonymous with pestilences are plagues, epidemic, scourge, blight. For instance, we have epidemics like the mad cow disease in England. Half a million cows had to be destroyed. The sheep were also affected. Half a million sheep were consigned to the grave. Hong Kong chickens were destroyed by the millions for carrying a bird flu that killed six people. After that, the destruction of Malaysian pigs.

But a worse pestilence is the mowing down of millions of human beings. AIDS, a modern curse from God, unknown to us before 1980, is sweeping Africa and Asia. In the 20 years since AIDS was first diagnosed, it has claimed 22 million lives and has produced 13 million orphans, according to UN statistics. Another 36 million people are said to be infected. Sub-Sahara Africa has been by far the hardest hit by the pandemic (25.3 million) although statistics show it is spreading quickly through Asia (South and Southeast Asia, 5.8 million) and Latin America, mostly through unprotected sex, according to *The Straits Times*.

As for earthquakes, two mega quakes hit Turkey with loss of over 18,000 lives in the first. Two powerful ones toppled Taiwan, and immediately following, two shook the Philippines. Two is confirmation! (Ps 62:11).

Earthquakes are bigger and more frequent by 20 times in the 20th Century over the 19th. The 21st Century can only get worse. The Asian tsunami catastrophe on December 26, 2004 taking close to 300,000 lives is a case in point.

From the ecologic we come to the economic sign. This is where famines come in. The 1997 Asian economic crisis impoverished many East Asian countries. Terrorism and the war against it will inevitably affect world economy. We are now being braced for another spate of hard times.

Commenting on famine as a general sign of Jesus' Second Coming, Dr S H Tow observed, "Despite advances in modern agriculture and increased food production in the major agricultural countries, masses of the Third World people are starving or actually dying from under-nutrition. Ethiopia and parts of Africa bounding the Sahara desert are in the famine zone. It is said that every night a quarter of the world goes to bed hungry."

The vision of the opening of the first four seals in Revelation 6:1-8 tallies with our Lord's prophecy given on the Mount of Olives of what would be happening during the period after His ascension to heaven (Matt 24:6-8).

The galloping of the four horsemen of peace, war, pestilence and death would be as seen in a carousel, going and bobbing round and round. So, until the Second Coming of Christ there will be cycles of the same throughout the world. This is not narrowly confined to the last seven years of the Great Tribulation Week. These cycles of peace, war, pestilence and death are a feature of the last days, from Christ's Ascension to Christ's Second Advent.

A third sign of Christ's Second Coming is in the ecclesiastic. It occurs right in the church. Apostasy from the faith has brought in many false Christs and false prophets.

Many high churchmen today refute the very fundamentals of the faith such as the Virgin Birth of Christ and His Blood Atonement and Resurrection. Ninety percent of the bishops in England are modernists and liberals. Are these not false Christs and false prophets? 2 Peter 2:1 says, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." This is what our Lord says, wolves in sheep's clothing.

While false Christs and false prophets have taken over the Anglican Church, so have they now dominated the Charismatic denominations. Here is one startling report of the heretical and blasphemous teachings of one of America's leading Charismatic evangelists, Benny Hinn, as published in the Bulletin of Calvary Bible-Presbyterian Church, April 22, 2001. Benny Hinn says, "God has a body, soul, and spirit, Jesus has a body, soul, and spirit. Holy Spirit has a body, soul, and spirit. Christians are little gods ... Jesus at death became one with Satan ... Christians are little messiahs and little gods ... say 'I am a god-man ... The spirit-man within me is a god-man. ... I am a sample of Jesus ... a super being.' Say it! Say it! ... You want to prosper? Money will be falling on you from left, right, and centre. God will begin to prosper you, for money always follows righteousness ... confessing you are a sinner saved by grace only insults God ... Jesus could not have remained sinless without the Holy Ghost ... I'm gonna read one Scripture, and then I'm gonna preach, and the devil is gonna drop dead." Hinn has a worldwide following. He is a great deceiver, a false prophet, a blasphemer.

Another false evangelist is Rodney Howard Browne (“Laughing Revival”). Browne said, “Either You come down here and touch me, or I will come up there and touch You” (the prayer Browne prayed before he got the so-called “anointing”). Browne went on, “Stop praying now and let the joy bubble out your belly. Joy, Joy, Joy. Don’t pray! Laugh! ... You can’t have revival without stirring up the flesh. When revival comes, you will see manifestations of these three things in meetings: (1) the Holy Spirit, (2) the flesh, and (3) the devil. But, I’d rather be in a church where the devil and the flesh are manifesting than in a church where nothing is happening because people are too afraid to manifest anything. Don’t worry about it. And if a devil manifests, don’t worry about that either. Rejoice, because at least something is happening!”

“One night I was preaching on hell,” Browne said, “and laughter just hit the whole place. The more I told people what hell was like, the more they laughed. I’m just the Holy Ghost bartender. I just serve the new wine and tell them to come drink.”

The spirit of Browne is another spirit, a strange spirit and not the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth and not error (1 John 4:1); He is a Spirit of order and not confusion (1 Cor 15:33); He is a Spirit of wisdom and not madness (Isa 11:2).

Prominent “Televangelists” like Hinn and Browne are deceiving thousands and millions. Mark them. In Matt 12:36-37, Jesus warned against those who use words to deceive, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Beware of the Charismatic con-man!

Another false prophet is Oral Roberts, faith healer and founder of Oral Roberts University. Roberts claimed that Jesus told him God had chosen him to find an effective treatment for cancer. In a lengthy appeal, Roberts avowed that the Lord told him, “I would not have had you and your partners build the 20-storey research tower unless I was going to give you a plan that will attack cancer.” Roberts then said that Jesus instructed him to tell his partners that “this is not Oral Roberts asking [for the money] but their Lord.” The project was completed, but has since been “shut down and sold to a group of investors for commercial development.” And no cure for cancer was found. Deuteronomy 18:22 warns us of such charlatans, “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

On January 4, 1987, Roberts told his followers that if he did not raise eight million dollars by March, God was going to take his life. Comparing himself to the Apostle Paul, Roberts begged not to let Satan defeat him. Sometime later, Roberts’ son, Richard, took pen in hand to warn of his father’s impending doom. Without “the additional \$4,500,000,” explains Richard, “God will not extend Dad’s life.” He closed his letter with a hard sell. Sending a seed-faith gift will not only enable you to “stop Satan in his hate to bring you down,” it will also “help you get your hundredfold return.” Roberts raised the money and did not die. Roberts and his son have made God an extortioner. This is abominable. Did not the Apostle Peter warn, “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgement now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Pet 2:3).

God has warned us in His forever infallible and inerrant Word that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim 3:13). Beware of religious charlatans and tricksters! Be forewarned in order to be forearmed.

The fourth general sign of Christ’s return is in the breakdown of diplomatic relations between countries. Over a hundred wars have been fought with millions killed since World War II. But the crushing of two million Cambodians by Pol Pot is so soon forgotten! The total destruction of East Timor by Indonesia so recently seems a thing of the past.

There is much jockeying in the diplomatic spheres today to avoid a greater conflagration; USA and China on the Taiwan question, USA with North Korea, Israelis and Arabs over Palestine; USA with Iraq, etc. But the world is like sitting on a powder keg. When diplomatic talks fail the explosion that follows will usher in World War III. (This, Dr Walvoord of Dallas Seminary said, is the end of this age that must bring back our Lord.)

While all these things are at work, God’s children will counter with a great burst of missionary energy (Matt 24:14). This is the evangelistic sign.

This is markedly seen after World War II when the bulk of Singapore churches instead of being receiving churches, now have become sending churches. Most outstanding among Asian churches are the Korean. Truly they are the foremost missionary orientated church in Asia if not in the world. They have now 16,000 missionaries sent into 150 countries according to a recent missions report.

Accelerated Missions is our earnest plea while we labour waiting for the glad day of His Second Coming. The

increasing number of graduates from Far Eastern Bible College, now totalling 600 in the last four and a half decades, is another fulfilment of accelerated missions unto the coming of the day of Jesus Christ.

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

Before we consider the final world war that would end all wars, let us study the history of world superpowers through the prophescope of Daniel. The interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's forgotten dream is given by Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar was named the head of gold, the Number One. After him are lesser kingdoms, each deteriorating in glory.

The dream of Daniel 2:31-45 and the vision of Daniel 7:1-8 are actually one. One interprets the other. The difference between the two is only in perspective. While the unconverted eyes of Nebuchadnezzar could see the empires as great and monumental, like the statue of a king, to the spiritual eyes of Daniel the vision is given in the form of ferocious wild beasts. In this world of power struggle, a weak power is immediately gobbled by a strong power. "Big fish eat small fish!"

So when Babylonia came to the end of her glory, it was assimilated by Medo-Persia. When Medo-Persia had run its course, then came Greece through Alexander the Great. With Alexander's early death, the Grecian empire was divided to four generals as seen in the four-winged, four-headed leopard. Finally, there came up a ten-horned beast which undoubtedly was Rome, the iron power, that ruthlessly crushed all that came into its path, and stamped it to smithereens.

Though this fourth beast seems all-powerful with its ten horns, its counterpart in the great image of Nebuchadnezzar

are ten toes, part iron part clay (a newly constituted and revived Rome). As such, “the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken” (Dan 2:42-43). This reveals an inherent weakness in the horns. Herein lies the secret of its Achilles’ heel and its ultimate destruction.

There is an outstanding difference between Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and the Princely Prophet’s vision in an unexpected development (not recorded elsewhere). Look! Another horn, a little one and the eleventh, which has no equivalent in Nebuchadnezzar’s image! This little horn rose up and had three of the ten horns uprooted like the forceful extraction of three good teeth. To make sure what he said was understood, Daniel reiterated, “Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings” (Dan 7:23–24).

In verse 25 he brings in a new factor: “And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgement shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

Revelation 13:1-8 throws further light on this mystery of the little horn that became a great, boastful one. First of all we see many more details of the ten-horned beast, as it

were taking a close-up photo. Here are seven heads (not one as in Daniel) and one of its heads is as it were wounded to death. When the deadly wound to this head was healed, it drew great admiration from the whole world. Worship is now given to the beast, whose head-wound is healed, which must be identified with the little horn with eagle-eye, swell head and big mouth. The forty and two months given to the beast in Revelation 13 is the same as “a time and [two] times and the dividing of time” which is three and a half years given the little horn—to blaspheme God and them that dwelt in heaven and to persecute God’s children on earth and overcome them. “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8). These are the unbelievers of whatever colour, race or creed, and not exclusively the Jews according to some.

The extent of conquest of this end-time World Dictator will far exceed the conquests of Alexander, Napoleon or Hitler by a brilliant strategy. How does he do it? First, by peaceful absorption, as it is stated in Daniel 9:27, “And he shall confirm the covenant (of peace) with many for one week: and in the midst of the week (after three and a half years of peace) he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

Let us identify who that little horn will be. As the little horn comes out of the fourth beast which is the Revived Roman Empire it must be concluded that the end-time World Ruler will be a European, or of European descent. Might he not arise from the European Union or from the United States of America? We shall watch and see. Nevertheless, one thing is for sure, the Antichrist is a Fake Christ.

THE GREAT APOSTASY

Insofar as the ten horns are concerned it is further elaborated in Revelation 17:12-13. We see the coming together of the European Union as fast fulfilling this prophecy in Revelation, which has its beginnings in Daniel 7. For further identification of the seven-headed, ten-horned beast, read Revelation 17.

But who is the Mother of Harlots (Rev 17:5), also called Mystery Babylon the Great, the great whore? She has committed fornication with the kings of the earth and made the people of the world drunk with the wine of her fornication. She held a golden cup in her hand filled with the abominations and filthiness of her fornication.

What made the Seer wonder was the sight of her becoming drunk with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus. The angel said to John, "Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns" (v 7). In Scripture language, God's people are likened to the wife of Jehovah in the Old Testament (Isa 54:5). In the New Testament, the Church is a chaste virgin, the Bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:2). In Revelation, she is called the wife of the Lamb (Rev 19:7).

Now who can the woman be, the whore with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication but the unfaithful, apostate Church? The symptoms of infidelity to Christ are seen in some of the seven churches of Asia to which Christ has an admonition through John's pen. To leave the first love as in Ephesus, to hold the doctrine of Balaam as in Pergamos, to allow that woman Jezebel to teach and seduce God's servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols as in Thyatira, shows how easily corruption enters the Church. Let us examine our own church to detect if

any of these early blemishes have surfaced, and let us come together to get rid of these defects—in repentance!

By the time we come to the last days before Jesus returns we see before us a thoroughly corrupt Church. All commentators from the Reformers agree it is the Roman Church. The description of the woman can fit no other Church on earth. What chills the spine of the true Church of Jesus Christ is the vision of this Church being drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Has not the Roman Church, in all her domain during the time of the 16th Century Reformation put to death countless thousands of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? The Spanish Inquisition (1215) is another chapter of her nefarious deeds. Many were burned at the stake for possessing or distributing the Bible. The short reign of Bloody Mary of England (1555–58) saw 288 Protestants burned at the stake. The State Church of Great Britain under Mary is a daughter harlot whose mother lives in Rome.

A youngest daughter of the Mother of Harlots, who more blatantly prostitutes herself to the kings of this earth, is the Ecumenical Movement organised since 1948 as the World Council of Churches (WCC). The word “Christian” is not there because her ultimate aim is to unite all religions inasmuch as the word “Ecumenical” means all of the inhabited earth. Is the Ecumenical Movement and its organisation, the WCC, a chaste virgin to Christ or a harlot? The Mother of Harlots is surnamed Mystery Babylon the Great, and Babylon is Rome, as Chambers Dictionary defines: “Babylonian: Romish, popish (from the identification with Rome of the scarlet woman of Revelation 17).”

When Jerusalem became as Sodom (Rev 11:8) and Gomorrah (Isa 1:9) did God spare her? She was completely overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar under God’s righteous judgement. When the Harlot Church goes far beyond apostate Jerusalem in

her wickedness, she is righteously judged through the attack upon her by the scarlet beast she rode (Rev 17:16). Political power having made use of religious power until she is not needed will cast her aside like a menstruous pad (Isa 30:22)! Righteous judgement for the Mother of Harlots!

The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back real soon. The “mystery of iniquity” is already at work (2 Thess 2:7). “The day of Christ is at hand” (2 Thess 2:2). What must happen before Christ returns?

From 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 we discover that the Second Coming of Christ will be preceded by the coming of the Antichrist. The word “coming” (Greek *parousia*) occurs twice in these 12 verses. The first time in verse 1: “the *parousia* of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and the second in verse 9 which talks about the *parousia* of the wicked one (cf. v 8).

Before Christ returns, there will be a great rebellion, “a falling away first” (v 3). The words “falling away” come from the Greek *apostasia* (literally, “to stand away from”). It speaks of a rebellion against the Standard, the Truth, or the Law of God. It is a God-rejecting and Word-denying apostasy.

Now, who are the rebels, and against whom or what are they rebelling? Jesus reveals who they are in Matthew 24:10–13, “And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” In other words, those who fall away are those who call themselves “Christian.” By and large, the visible church in the last days will forsake the Faith. These people who profess to be Christians were never regenerated in the first place. They do not have true faith.

Who are they? Well they would be those who say: “I believe that Jesus Christ can bring me to heaven, but I also believe that I can get to heaven if I believe in other gods.” “I believe in Jesus Christ, but he is only a man, not God.” “I am a Christian, but I am also homosexual.” Paul describes them in verse 10: “they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” and verse 12: “who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Apostasy begets judgement. Since unbelievers stubbornly and repeatedly choose to reject God’s Truth, God gives them up to uncleanness, to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind (Rom 1:24–28). This is judicial hardening or blinding, a God-sent delusion (vv 11–12).

Now understand that it is not God that sends the lie. God is not a liar, and does not deceive. We understand this under the permissive will of God. Since they desire to believe in Satan’s lie, and be deceived, God allows them thus to be.

The end result will be condemnation (v 12). There will be a dividing of the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares. Those who have not truly believed in the Lord will apostasise and be condemned. True believers will never be lost—God will keep them to the very end.

Check ourselves: Are we truly saved? Have we sincerely and truthfully believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Or are we like the lawless one?

The word “lawless” occurs three times in 2 Thessalonians 2: verse 3, the man of sin or lawlessness; verse 7, the mystery of iniquity or lawlessness; and verse 8, the wicked or lawless one.

First, let us deal with the person of lawlessness. He is called in verse 3 the man of sin and the son of perdition; and in verse 8 the wicked one. This same term was used in John 17:12 of Judas Iscariot who betrayed the Lord. From this we see that the man of sin is an individual or a person, not an institution, a nation, a force or an influence. He is like Judas—someone who professes Christ but in all his deeds he undermines the Lord and works against Him; i.e. he is an Apostate (with a capital A). And in verse 4, he is described as one who “opposeth” Christ. He is the Antichrist (i.e. Counter-Christ): he wants to take the place of Christ, to usurp Him as Lord and King. He possesses the Satanic ambition to be God Himself (cf. Isa 14, Ezek 28).

In 2 Thessalonians 2:8 we are told that this particular Satanically-inspired person will be revealed. This Antichrist will imitate the coming of Christ. He will identify himself as the Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour, and deceive many. “You are looking for your coming Saviour, I am he,” he will say. The Lord’s warning in Matthew 24:4-5 applies, “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”

How will the Antichrist capture the allegiance and adoration of the whole world? Verse 9 tells us that he will be empowered by Satan to perform deceptive miracles. Today’s Charismatic miracle workers like Benny Hinn with all their signs and wonders are preparing the world to receive this false Christ. Be careful Christian, don’t be deceived. Know the truth and love the truth that you might be saved (v 10).

Know that Jesus Christ will not return until the Antichrist is revealed. But some may say, “I do not see the Antichrist to be here yet. So I can still enjoy myself, do what I like, since Christ’s coming is nowhere near.” Paul warns against presumptuousness for the Antichrist can appear at any time

(vv 5–6). For although the person of lawlessness has not yet come, the principle of lawlessness is already at work (v 7). In other words, this work of opposing Christ and His Church is already going on. For instance, the Thessalonian Church was already undergoing persecutions and tribulations (2 Thess 1:4).

1 John 2:18 informs us, “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” There are many antichrists in the world today. Satan will spare no effort to destroy or corrupt the Word of God, to hinder the Church from preaching the gospel, to attack God’s servants and His saints. So we must be ever diligent in preaching the Gospel, and ever vigilant in defending the Faith.

What prevents Antichrist from appearing right now is the work of the Restrainer (see 2 Thess 2:6, 7b).

Who or what is this Restrainer? There are several views: (1) the Law of God, (2) the Archangel Michael, (3) the Holy Spirit. The popular view is that it is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is presently doing this work of convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgement (John 16:8). He is not only active in the church, but also in the world in restraining evil, from letting evil run amok. Come to think of it, it is not just the Spirit, but also the Word of God, and the Lord’s angels that are doing the restraining work. So it could be a combination of these. So once the Lord withdraws His restraining hand, this sin-cursed world will take its natural course, and wickedness will reach its height with the wicked one leading the way.

Know that there will be two comings: (1) the coming of the Antichrist, and (2) the coming of Christ. Antichrist will first

come before Christ returns. And when Christ returns, He will destroy the Antichrist and his armies by “the spirit of his mouth,” and “brightness of his coming” (v 8).

ISRAEL A GREAT NATION

Israel is at the centre of three continents (Ezek 5:5).

Since the end of World War II, many young and vigorous nations have been born, one after the other, which were once colonies of the Great Powers. Among all these new nations there came into being on May 14, 1948 the State of Israel. The majority of Israel is made up of returnee Jews, after 2,000 years of exile.

In land area, Israel is one of the tiniest. The only country in the world, to which she can boast of comparative bigness, perhaps, is Singapore. Indeed, Israel is but a speck on the globe, a little dot on the world map. If you stand at a vantage point in the Holy Land on a fine day, say, on the hill of Samaria, you could see almost the four corners of the country. How does a tiny country like Israel become such a great nation as she is today? Israel is in the news, front page world news, more often than any other of the new-born nations. Israel is in the news side by side with the super powers, most frequent with the United States. How has little Israel gained such global prominence?

In an issue of *The Straits Times* (1981), the story was told of former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin meeting with former US President Ronald Reagan. This is what Begin said of a joke he cracked with the American President. Begin said Reagan told him he had three phones on his desk. One was white to call British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. One was blue to call France’s Francois Mitterrand. The third which was a red one was for God. But added Reagan, “I don’t use it too much, as long distance is so expensive.” Mr Begin

told his host he too had three phones. One was for Mrs Thatcher, one for Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and also one for God. “But,” added Begin, “I use it all the time as, in Jerusalem, it is considered a local call.”

Israel is a great nation because it is so closely linked to God. Israel is a great nation not by her own prowess; not because the Jews are a smarter people, a superior race. Israel is a great nation because that is what God had graciously promised Abraham, that his descendants would so become (Gen 12:2). The same promise that Israel would be a great nation He confirmed in Jacob (Gen 46:3) and with the Israelites under Moses (Deut 26:5). Israel’s greatness is solely from God. Now may we ask, “How does Israel become great?” Israel has become great by being God’s receptacle, God’s chosen vessel, to receive His Special Revelation.

Sin had polluted the whole world and blinded the eyes of the nations to the light of the truth. Instead of seeking the Creator God that had made them, they groped in the darkness of idolatry. This is particularly condemned by St Paul in the first chapter of Romans. In the midst of such Egyptian darkness, God came first to Abraham, and after several generations to Moses. God took Israel out of the land of their slavery and gave them the Law. This Law, which is summarised in the Ten Commandments, God delivered to Moses on two tables of stone. By the light of these two tables, Israel was delivered from the pollutions of the world, from sins against God and sins against her fellowmen. And it is through Israel that the moral Law, as given in the Ten Commandments, has become the pattern of all modern legal codes of the nations of the world. In Deuteronomy 4:5-10, Moses declared to Israel on the eve of their entry into the Promised Land to remind her of her holy obligations to greatness, “Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgements, even as the LORD my God commanded

me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgements so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.”

We who live under the justice of a good government in Singapore must remember the British who gave us our law. But, how did the British possess such good laws? Where did they get it? From the Bible and from the Law of Moses.

In contrast with little Israel, there is that gigantic country, China, the land of our ancestors. For hundreds of years until the Manchu Dynasty she had sunken into the depths of poverty and misery, of backwardness in science and technology. And all this because our ancestors had departed from the Creator God, being devoid of His Law. Our ancestors were steeped in idolatry, not knowing the Living and True God. Hence flourished all the social evils that grew out from their sins without restraint. As recent as the last two generations, the Chinese people did not enjoy such a divine right of man as the weekly Sabbath.

The weekly Sabbath had been enjoyed in the West with the advent of Christianity from time immemorial. The keeping of Sunday as a Holy Day was particularly strong in the days of the Puritans in Great Britain. How both man and beast rested from their servile work in the Light of God's Law! This is but one blessing that comes to the whole world from Israel, yea, even from the Law of Moses.

How is it we have no need to go to office or factory when Sunday, our Christian Sabbath, comes around? We in Singapore today are enjoying the blessings of a Law which God first gave to Israel! This law that distinguished Israel from the Gentiles, that made Israel great!

Israel is great not only because God's Law has been given through her, but also because God's Son was born a Jew, through the house of David from the stock of Abraham. The greatness of Israel is in her spiritual heritage. Through her is the Promised Seed given whereby all the families of the earth are blessed (Gen 12:3). We Christians must remember that we owe the Jews this great debt. Israel was not only, as St Augustine had said, the Librarian to the Christian Church. Through her has come to us the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, the only way to God. A young Jewess, the Virgin Mary, was the chosen vessel through whom Jesus Christ was born.

But alas! The Jews who were the very recipients of the salvation of God rejected Christ and had Him crucified. Their church leaders were not afraid of the guilt of their crime. They even challenged God to take the Blood of the Spotless Son of God upon themselves and their children (Matt 27:25). Of the Jews that believed in Jesus and were gathered together as a Christian community there were not more than 120. Apart from those 3,000 and 5,000 (Acts 2:41; 4:4) who believed the Lord at Pentecost, the rest of the Jews

rejected the Gospel. Therefore the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles. The Jews who rejected Christ were rejected of God. Hence their Diaspora or dispersion, their scattering, to the ends of the earth. Israel the great nation became a small nation, a stateless nation. By the mysterious decrees of God, Israel, like the olive branch, was cut off when they rejected the Saviour. The Gentiles who believed, like a wild olive branch, was grafted in her place.

Today, salvation is still given to the Gentiles, so this Gospel continues to be preached freely and without restraint to us who live in a free country like Singapore. But soon our time will be up when “the fullness of the Gentiles be come in,” i.e. when the predestined number of Gentiles to be saved will be counted. Then Israel, the outcast Olive branch, will be reinstated when “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom 11:26).

One reason why Israel must be reinstated is God’s unchangeable promise to Abraham. The promise given him and his descendants is forever vested in them. Another reason why Israel must be restored to her former glory is that the promise God gave to David of a throne that must remain forever must be fulfilled. And that throne to be set up again is by none other than Christ, the Messiah, David’s Greater Son, “and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called ... The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even forever” (Isa 9:6–7). In the light of these promises, no wonder we see Israel gathered back together to her land as a nation.

Israel is become a great nation again, a super power among the larger but weaker Arab nations. Satan does not like to see Israel restored to her previous greatness as in the days of

David and Solomon. Satan has therefore instigated the Arabs to fight Israel. Five wars were fought: In 1948 the Arabs tried to prevent Israel from becoming a nation but they failed. In 1956, there broke out the Second War. Again the Arabs were defeated. In 1967, Egypt, Syria and Jordan were gravely wounded in the Six-Day War. The fourth, in 1973, the Yom Kippur War or War of the Day of Atonement, again saw Israel victorious. All these victories against her neighbours were foretold by Isaiah, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod" (Isa 11:11-15).

The fifth war was waged over Lebanon, 1982 to 1985. Israel's invasion of Lebanon was foretold by the prophet Zechariah. "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down. There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled; a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;

Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them" (Zech 11:1–6).

How is it that the Arabs (like a platoon of soldiers charging on a teenage boy walking alone) were on the contrary thrown back one after the other like in a Kung Fu drama? The secret of Israel's greatness as a nation is God. And as God is behind the descendants of Abraham, His "friend," so has He helped Israel in the epic Entebbe raid, saving over 100 hostages hijacked by Palestine Arabs. Moreover God has enabled His chosen race to carry out the destruction of the atomic plant in Iraq.

Iraq retaliated in the recent Gulf War with Scud missiles, but to no avail. Israel continues to be helped by the United States, the greatest power in the world, in a new age of peace-making according to Daniel's prophecy. That Rabin had shaken hands with Arafat under Clinton's patronage surprised the world except students of prophecy. All this is in order that Israel might play her role in the coming of Jesus Christ. As Christ, like an airplane, needed Israel to land in the First Advent, and the aerodrome was the Virgin Mary, so must He need Israel, a restored nation, a second time to return to earth to judge the nations.

Israel is bound to be a great nation again, because God has set this seal upon her in Abraham (Gen 12:3). Thus those who have persecuted Abraham's descendants, the Jews, have lost out. Yea, they have been thoroughly extinguished. The sad ending of Hitler, Jew-hater and arch anti-Semitic, is notorious. Then there arose Nasser, who wanted to throw

every Jew into the sea before the Six-Day War. He soon died in the War's aftermath. How we thank God for Sadat, his successor, who so bravely stood alone to make peace with Israel. Sadat who fell a martyr for world peace died a glorious death.

With Israel's southern borders secure, she can face the enemy with her back to the wall. But war will erupt again culminating in the Battle of Armageddon. In this final Battle, the Messiah must come to save Israel. According to the prophecy of Zechariah on the climax of that last Battle: "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south" (Zech 13:8–14:4, cf Acts 1:11–12).

What is your attitude towards Israel? If you have that anti-Jewish feeling like the rest of the world, change over to be a lover of Israel. Make peace with Israel! Make peace with Israel because she is destined to be great. She will be the

greatest when our Lord comes back to earth, to sit on His father David's throne in Jerusalem. Jesus will rule this war-torn earth with peace for a thousand years. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev 20:4).

No more will there be a United Nations Headquarters in New York. The capital of the world will be shifted to Jerusalem, as seen by the Prophet Isaiah. "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa 2:3-4).

Israel, indeed, is destined to be a great nation when she turns to her Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, whom her people have blindly rejected all these centuries. Let Israel now say: Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.

THE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY

The anti-Israel millennialists like the amillennialists, postmillennialists, and so-called historic premillennialists err in their view of the nation of Israel. They say that God has cast away Israel because of her sin of rejecting her Messiah. Now forsaken by God, it is replaced by a new Israel:

the Church. All the promises God made to Israel is now transferred to the Church.

Is this true? Did God cast away Israel? Did He withdraw all the promises He had originally made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? The answer is No. God has not forsaken Israel. God's hand is still upon Israel to protect and preserve her. God must keep His Word. Although Israel has sinned against God by rejecting Christ, yet God will not and cannot break His Word. God will punish Israel for her sins, but God is true to His Word, and is faithful to the Covenant He had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God says in Psalm 89:3, 34-36: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, ... My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me."

The Lord reiterates the permanency of His promises to Israel in Jeremiah 31:35-37, "Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: f those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD." Man may break his promises, but not God. God's promises to Israel must all be fulfilled.

Paul himself questioned those who said that God has cast Israel away. "Hath God cast away his people?" (Rom 11:1). Answer: "God forbid!" In Romans 11:25-27, Paul predicted that one day "all Israel shall be saved." The anti-Israel

millennialists say that this Israel is the Church. This is a misinterpretation of God's Word. God means what He says and says what He means. If Paul was talking about the Church instead of Israel, he could and would have used the term "Church." He did not. He was not referring to the Church but to Israel (God's chosen nation) when he said "all Israel shall be saved."

The word "Israel" is used 70 times in the New Testament, and on every occasion it is used, it refers to the Jewish nation of Israel, not the Church. Israel is Israel, Church is Church. We must not confuse the two. The nation of Israel will one day be converted and will acknowledge Jesus as her Messiah. This will happen when Christ returns. Israel will be truly glorious in that day when the Lord sits on the throne of David in Jerusalem ruling over the whole world in fulfilment of all the Old Testament prophecies concerning her. And we are seeing God's promises being kept and prophecies being fulfilled today. Look at Israel today! She is back in her land in fulfilment of Isaiah 11:11-12. Israel must be back in her land before the Lord returns. This is one indication that the Lord is coming back very soon. The Lord will return soon to complete the restoration of Israel.

The anti-Israel view is problematic and questionable. If God has truly cast away Israel for her sins, then what makes the Church so sure that she will not be cast away also? Are we not as sinful as Israel? Have we not been as disobedient? Have we not broken the Ten Commandments, and do we not continue to break the Commandments? Should not God cast us away? God forbid! God is true to His Word, and will save us to the very end. When we sin, He will chastise us. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb 12:6). Believers are God's children. The Lord, true to His promise, will not and cannot cast His children away. Likewise, when Israel sins, God will

punish her. But Israel remains God's special and chosen nation. God will not cast her away. God's promises can be trusted.

The root problem with the anti-Israel millennialists is in their method of interpreting Scripture. How do they interpret prophecies in the Bible that have to do with Israel? They say these prophecies are not to be taken literally but spiritually.

How do they do it? For example, Zechariah 8:20-23 is a prophecy that will be fulfilled in the millennium. But the anti-Israel millennialists say: No, it is fulfilled by Christians and by the Church. Zechariah 8:20-23 reads, "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem (read "Church"), and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew (read "Christian"), saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." The anti-Israel millennialists say "Jerusalem" means "Church," and "Jew" means "Christian." Then how about Zechariah 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." This prophecy was fulfilled literally by the Lord Jesus Christ in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (cf. Luke 19:38). The fallacy of the anti-Israel interpretation of prophecy is obvious. If Zechariah 9 is literal, why should Zechariah 8 be spiritual?

How many verses will we misunderstand if we adopt this anti-Israel millennial method of interpreting prophecy? Not one or two, but 4,200! Observe this golden rule of hermeneutics, “When the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense.”

There are 4,200 verses in Scripture concerning the Second Coming of Christ. That amounts to the whole New Testament minus the four Gospels. That is a whole lot of Scripture! We thus cannot allow for the anti-Israel millennialists’ spiritualising away of Scripture to make it mean what it does not mean. God requires us to understand the Old Testament prophecies literally.

We have many prophecies in the Old Testament on the First and the Second coming of Christ. The prophecies concerning the First Coming of Christ were fulfilled literally. Isaiah prophesied, “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isa 7:14). Was this not literally fulfilled? Jesus was indeed born of a virgin. Micah 5:2 prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Was not Jesus born in Bethlehem? Virgin means virgin, Bethlehem means Bethlehem. If the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Christ’s First Coming were fulfilled literally, why do we then say that the prophecies concerning His Second Coming are fulfilled spiritually? It does not make sense. If the First Coming prophecies are literal, then the Second Coming prophecies must be literal as well. God means what He says, and says what He means. Israel means Israel; Zion means Zion; Jerusalem means Jerusalem.

So, we reject the anti-Israel millennial view of the end-times, and its erroneous method of interpreting biblical prophecy.

THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL

The vision of the 70 Weeks came to Daniel in the year 537 BC, 69 years after he was carried captive to Babylon (606 BC), and one year before Cyrus, King of Persia and conqueror of Babylon, decreed freedom to the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

This princely prophet who subdued kings and lions was of greater personage than the highest royalty. He was God's ambassador to every ruling kingdom, he was Israel's spiritual leader during their years of exile. Throughout the dark nights of her captivity, Daniel not only kept in touch with Jehovah the Lord God Almighty by prayer and supplication, but also by study of the Sacred Scriptures. That portion of Holy Writ that particularly struck him was Jeremiah's prophecy on Israel's Babylonian captivity to last 70 years (Jer 25:9–11; 29:10). As this was the sixty-ninth year, the prophet was gripped with a spirit of expectancy—what hopes and fears in the face of a new Day that was fast dawning!

Like the watchman in Ezekiel's vision, yea, like Ezekiel himself (Ezek 33:7), Daniel remained faithful all these seven decades as God's watchman. He was the porter who stood at the door of the sheepfold serving the Shepherd as he entered in or led the sheep out. Unlike an hireling, he did not flee in the hour of danger (John 10:12).

Dr Chia Yu Ming, China's first theologian, was like Daniel. In August 1948, when he left to attend the First Congress of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) in Amsterdam, the Communists were hard on the heels of the Nationalist Army fighting a rearguard action. The Chiang Kaishek regime was about to collapse. Yet he submitted to God's will to return to Nanking. He said he had a duty, as a spiritual leader of China, to return to watch over the flock of the Chinese Church. He was in his early 80s, like Daniel.

There is need of a witness to kings and governors from among the spiritual leaders of a nation.

How did Daniel approach the Lord in that hour of transition, waiting the coming of a new day? By earnest prayer and supplication (v 3). He confessed first his sins and then the sins of his people, accepting the lot of their captivity as righteous judgement from God's hand because they had broken the Law which Moses gave to their fathers. Their exile and wanderings with the desolation of Jerusalem were a "curse poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses" (v 11). This curse is given in Deuteronomy 28 which climaxes as follows: "And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people ... And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you" (Deut 28:64-68).

Today, Israel is back in her homeland. She has won five wars against her Arab neighbours, but has been plagued by the Palestinians whose territories Israel had seized in the Six-Day War (1967). Now she is making peace with them. But, according to prophecy, there will be no peace until Messiah comes. The need of Israel to humble herself in prayer and supplication to the God of their Fathers is far greater than what they are trying to achieve by diplomacy. No peace until

peace is made with God (Rom 5:1). This formula is always right, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (Jas 4:8).

Indeed, as Daniel sought the Lord’s forgiveness both for himself and his people in captivity and for Jerusalem’s restoration, suddenly Gabriel flew swiftly to him about the time of the evening oblation (3 pm). This Gabriel was the same who centuries after appeared to the Virgin Mary to announce the birth of the Saviour through her (Luke 1:16–35). Daniel 9:24-27 records the message delivered by Gabriel to Daniel: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

While Daniel was thinking that the consummation of the 70 years’ exile according to Jeremiah’s prophecy would usher in the Messianic Kingdom, God rather revealed what would happen to Israel in seventy times seven prophetic years hereafter. A new Day indeed was coming when Messiah

shall judge this sinful earth and bring in righteousness, but not until seventy times seven prophetic years had passed.

Now, some confusion has resulted in the minds of Bible students due to the translation “weeks” in verse 24: “seventy weeks are determined.” The Hebrew word so translated does not mean a week of days but rather a seven, like the English word “dozen,” meaning 12 of anything. What Daniel actually said in Hebrew was “seventy sevens are determined.” This is to say God was telling him it would not take 70 years but seventy times seven to consummate His saving-work with Israel. This was a cryptic way of saying, 490 years.

This period of 490 prophetic years is required (1) to finish the transgression, i.e. to remove the transgression from God’s sight; (2) to make an end of sins, i.e. to put a stop to the course of sin (Rev 21:3–4); (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity, i.e. to atone for sins of the people (Zech 12:10, Jer 50:4–5, 34); (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, i.e. to give true righteousness and enduring peace (Jer 31:33–34); (5) to seal up the vision and prophecy, i.e. to fulfil all the prophecies of the Scriptures (Matt 5:17–18, Heb 1:1–3); and (6) to anoint the most Holy, i.e. to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1–4).

Daniel’s prophetic programme consists of $(7 \times 7 = 49 \text{ years}) + (62 \times 7 = 434 \text{ years}) + (1 \times 7 = 7 \text{ years}) = 490 \text{ years}$. When will it begin and when will it end? From the command to rebuild Jerusalem down to Messiah the Prince are 483 years $(69 \times 7 \text{ years})$. The prophetic years here are to be understood as 360-day years (according to the Jewish calendar, rather than the 365-day years of the Gregorian calendar). This understanding of the prophetic year as comprising 360 days is supported by the time period as described in Revelation 11:2-3.

The 69 weeks or 483 years will begin with the issuing of the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 BC (Neh 2), and ending with the crucifixion of the Messiah in about AD 30. The 69 weeks is divided into two parts: (1) the 49 years which saw Jerusalem rebuilt (Neh 6), and (2) the 434 years which ended with the crucifixion of Christ. Forty years after Christ was crucified saw Jerusalem destroyed by Titus the Roman general. According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, as many as a million Jews were massacred. The surviving Jews were cast out of their land, and scattered to all four corners of the earth.

Between the 69 weeks and the final 70th week, there is an interval: a period of God's patience (2 Pet 3:9). But when the time is up, the 70th week will commence with the Antichrist making peace with Israel (Dan 9:27), and finally conclude with the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:16).

With the cutting off of the Messiah the "prophetic clock" seemed to have stopped ticking. In Daniel's "prophescope" what is in the distant future is brought into focus, viz. the last or seventieth week. With reference to that prince earlier mentioned, he would be the Antichrist, the last World Dictator: "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week." Commentators generally say this covenant is with the Jews, but we view that it is with Gentile powers too, as many as come within his orbit. In this covenant he brings Jews and Arabs together.

But after three and a half years, he shall cause "the sacrifice and the oblation to cease and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate." Bible students generally conclude that since there would be the Old Testament sacrifices revived, the temple by this time would be rebuilt. In our opinion it is not necessary as it would move mountains to do this with the Muslims holding tightly to the

Mosque of Omar and Al Aqsa Mosque nearby which occupy the traditional site of the temple. In our opinion, the temple would not be rebuilt because there is no mandate to do so, as in the previous building of both Moses' tabernacle and Solomon's temple, yea, even in the rebuilding of the temple by decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1,2). Not even David could build the temple (1 Chron 28:3). Nor can any ascend the holy hill of God except his hands are cleansed and his heart purified (Ps 24:4). The rebuilt temple is rather the millennial temple in Ezekiel 40 to 48.

What we have said above is corroborated by certain orthodox rabbis who contend that the rebuilding should be left to the Messiah who will construct the temple on judgement day. To orthodox Jews the temple mount is so sacred that rabbis have forbidden the faithful to walk on the grounds and objected violently to archaeological digs exposing the foundations of the original temples.

How about the prediction that the holy place will be desecrated (Matt 24:15)? Does not the holy place refer to the temple?

The question of the desecration of the revived Jewish sacrifices in the holy place is solved if we can learn a lesson from history. Remember the returnees from Babylonian exile to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Joshua? Before they rebuilt the temple they first made the altar and sacrificed "in the open" (Ezra 3:2-3). Could not some fanatic Jews force their way to a corner of the temple mount and build an altar hastily, as in the times of Zerubbabel and Joshua and sacrifice thereon? This would so infuriate the Arabs who own Jerusalem's temple mount that to maintain an equilibrium in his peace plan the Antichrist must step in to desecrate it as an atonement to the Arabs.

Now, if it is asked, “What about Paul’s prediction that ‘the man of sin and son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God’ (2 Thess 2:3–4)?”, our answer can be his intrusion into the Jerusalem Great Synagogue in West Jerusalem. This is the Jews’ holiest place, a half-way house to the temple to come.

No one may build God’s temple without His mandate. King David himself could not build it (1 Chron 28:2–6). It was to Solomon that the mandate was given. He built the first temple. The same principle applies to the building of the second temple. The divine mandate was given to Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest (Zech 4:9–14). To whom has been given the mandate to build the third temple? Not to any man but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who will build a millennial temple when He returns to rule for a thousand years after the Great Tribulation (Ezek 40–48).

RESURRECTION AND RAPTURE

All Christians one day will either be resurrected or be raptured. This has to do with the believer’s life hereafter—life after death, and life after life. This blessed hope of the believer was taught by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis for the resurrection and rapture of the saints. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, Paul wrote, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” Christ is the Prototype of the resurrection. His resurrection

ensures the resurrection of all who belong to His kingdom. Adam was man's representative head in the very beginning. In the garden, Adam fell into sin, and all of mankind fell with him and came under the judgement of death on account of his sin (Gen 2:16–17, 3:1–7). But God was gracious, and promised a Saviour in Jesus Christ (Gen 3:15). Christ, the greater Adam, was man's Representative Substitute, and all believers, on account of His death on the cross shall receive the gift of eternal life and live forevermore (Rom 5:12–21). "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

All believers, like Christ their Saviour, shall be resurrected one day. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:53–57).

Before the wrath of God befalls this wicked world, not only will there be a resurrection of believers who have already died in Christ, but also a rapture of believers who are still alive on earth when Jesus returns in the clouds. The word "rapture" is the Latin translation of the Greek word *harpazo*, "caught up," in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (cf Acts 8:39, 2 Cor 12:2, 4).

The taking up of the saints to heaven while they are still alive is not something that has not happened before. In the Old Testament, we have the examples of Enoch and Elijah who were taken up while they were still alive (Gen 5:24 and 2 Kgs

2:11). Both Enoch and Elijah did not experience death, and in the last days when Jesus returns, there will be believers who will not taste death, but will be caught up suddenly to meet the Lord in the air. This is the blessed hope of New Testament believers.

Paul calls the rapture a “mystery” (1 Cor 15:51). Now, the word “mystery” (Greek *musterion*) is used 27 times in the New Testament to refer to truths that were not explicitly known in the Old Testament but now clearly revealed in the New Testament. It is now clearly revealed that when the last trumpet is blown, the saints will all be changed in a micro-second (1 Cor 15:52). What does the trumpet sound here mean? The trumpet sound means two things: (1) it is a call to worship (Rev 11:15–17), and (2) it is a call to war (Rev 11:18). The saints are called to worship God in heaven, and the angels are called to pour out God’s wrath on the earth.

When the last trumpet is blown, “we shall all be changed. ... For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:52). In other words, the mighty hand of the Lord will resurrect the bodies of the departed saints, and the living believers will be raptured, and all will receive their glorified bodies that will last forever.

Concerning the time of the rapture, the five views are: (1) Pretribulational: the rapture will happen before the seven-year Great Tribulation period; (2) Mid-tribulational: the rapture will happen in the middle (i.e. when it reaches three and a half years) of the Great Tribulation period; (3) Pre-Wrath: the rapture will happen at the three-quarter-point of the Great Tribulation period; (4) Post-tribulational: the Church will go through the Great Tribulation, and the rapture will happen only at the end of it; and (5) Partial: very spiritual believers will be raptured in the beginning, not so

<p>THE LORD RETURNS TO EARTH KING OF KINGS, LORD OF LORDS</p>	<p>HE REIGNS 1000 YEARS</p>	<p>FINAL JUDGMENT</p>	<p>"BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW" Rev 21:5</p>
<p>The Lord shall descend from heaven, the dead in Christ shall rise first, we shall be changed. 1 Cor 15:52 1 Thess 4:16-17</p>	<p>Believers caught up to meet the Lord in the air; appear at Judgment Seat of Christ - 2 Cor. 5:10 a) Judgment Seat of Christ b) Wedding Supper of the Lamb - Rev 19:9</p>	<p>Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints - Jude 14 All Israel shall be saved - Zech 12:10 Rom 11:26</p>	<p>NEW HEAVEN NEW JERUSALEM NEW EARTH</p> <p>PREPARED FOR THOSE WHOSE NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE - Rev 21:27</p>
<p>ANTICHRIST RULES Rev 13</p> <p>GREAT TRIBULATION (7 Years)</p> <p>ARMAGEDDON</p>	<p>OT Prophecies fulfilled. "Paradise regained" a) Lord's Prayer answered. c) We shall reign with the Lord for 1000 years. - Rev 5:10; 20:6 d) Israel restored, as the head of the nations.</p> <p>GOD'S KINGDOM COME</p>	<p>Satan loosed, deceives nations. God's fire consumes them. Rev 20:7-9</p> <p>EARTH BURNT UP</p> <p>2 Pet 3:10</p>	<p>GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT "every man according to their works" - Rev 20:13</p>
<p>Full Redemption of Saints and Creation Romans 8:22-23</p>	<p>Satan bound, cast into bottomless pit Rev 20:1-3</p>	<p>Lake of Fire PREPARED FOR SATAN AND HIS FOLLOWERS Rev 20:10-15</p>	<p>LAKE OF FIRE PREPARED FOR SATAN AND HIS FOLLOWERS Rev 20:10-15</p>

An Eschatological Timetable

spiritual ones will be raptured in the middle, and the carnal ones will only be raptured at the end of the Great Tribulation period.

The Partial rapture view which advocates multiple raptures is untenable for a couple of reasons: (1) the rapture is stated as a single event that takes place at the last trump, and (2) the Great Tribulation period would be a sort of Protestant purgatory if believers have to go through the Great Tribulation. The Post-tribulation rapture view is also untenable because it would mean believers have to suffer the wrath to come. This contradicts 1 Thessalonians 5:9 which says that believers are not appointed unto wrath.

The only tenable views are the Pretribulational, Mid-tribulational, and Pre-Wrath rapture views. We should be charitable and not be dogmatic over which of the three is the correct view. Whether it is “Pretrib,” “Mid-trib,” or “Pre-Wrath,” the most important thing is to be sure that when Christ finally comes in the clouds, we will be caught up to meet Him in the air. We need to be sure of our salvation. But if you have no assurance of salvation, it is like a traveller studying three or four airline flight schedules from Singapore to New York, but has not bought his ticket. Whichever plane is leaving now, this very hour, how can he join the flight? O to be stranded when others in your family are gone above!

What will the resurrection body be like? The answer is found in the resurrection of Christ who is “the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). When the Lord Jesus rose from the grave, His resurrected body was a physical one. He was not a ghost, phantom, or spirit. He had flesh and bones (Luke 24:36–43). He could be touched (John 20:20). He had the ability to consume food (John 21:12–15).

The resurrection body of Christ had all the above physical or natural characteristics, yet at the same time it had the following metaphysical or supernatural abilities: being able to enter into a room which was completely locked and bolted (John 20:19, 26), and being able to appear and disappear all of a sudden and be transported to another place in a moment (Luke 24:31).

Such a resurrected body is described in several ways in the classic chapter on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. The resurrected body is described as (1) incorruptible (1 Cor 15:42), (2) glorified (1 Cor 15:43), (3) powerful (1 Cor 15:43), (4) spiritual (1 Cor 15:44), and (5) heavenly (1 Cor 15:47). This body cannot be plagued by disease, will never get sick, does not age or decay, feels no pain, never gets hungry or thirsty, or become tired or weary. More significantly is the fact that sin will be completely and finally removed from this body once and for all. It will no longer sin or be tempted with sin. It is truly a super and a sinless body.

What a glorious day it will be when we finally enter into glory with our glorified bodies!

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Jesus warned that there will come a time “when there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt 24:21). The Great Tribulation will be a terrible period of time and is referred to in the Scriptures with these 11 other terms: (1) The day of the LORD (Isa 13:6–9), (2) The indignation (Isa 26:20, 34:2), (3) The day of God’s vengeance (Isa 34:8, 63:1–6), (4) The time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer 30:7), (5) The overspreading of abominations (Dan 9:27), (6) The time of trouble such as never was (Dan 12:1), (7) The seventieth week (Dan 9:24–27), (8) The time of the end (Dan 12:9), (9) The great day of His wrath (Rev 6:17), (10) The hour of His

judgement (Rev 14:7), and (11) The end of this world (Matt 13:40, 49).

The term “tribulation” speaks of a time of affliction and calamity. It is a time of divine punishment and destruction. The prophet Isaiah described it most vividly, “Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man’s heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible” (Isa 13:6-11).

The prophet Joel gave another terrifying picture, “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations” (Joel 2:1–2).

The Great Tribulation will last for seven years. The seven years are divided into two equal halves of three and a half years each. The first half is a time of peace howbeit a temporary and man-made one. It will begin when the Antichrist makes a peace treaty with Israel which will end

the wars that plague Palestine till this day. This covenant between the Antichrist and Israel is predicted in Daniel 9:27. Israel will be allowed to sacrifice and worship in peace for three and a half years but after three and a half years, the Antichrist will break the peace treaty and persecute Israel (Dan 9:27b).

The Antichrist will stop all worship of Jehovah and order the whole world to worship only him. He will set himself up as God. The whole world will be mesmerised when he receives a fatal wound and yet becomes alive again (Rev 13:4). The Antichrist deceives the world by imitating the resurrection of Christ. The world will be so amazed by the power of the Antichrist that they will worship him as God, “And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” (Rev 13:4). The Antichrist filled with Satanic pride will blaspheme against the living and true God, and this he will do for the next three and a half years, until the seven years are up (Rev 13:5–6).

There is another man, the false prophet, who will assist the Antichrist to commit evil. He is described as one like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon (Rev 13:11). In other words, he looks religious and pious outwardly, but inwardly he is full of lies, evil and wickedness—a wolf in sheep’s clothing. The false prophet will make the world worship the Antichrist, and will deceive the world with his miracles, even making fire to come down from heaven, an imitation Elijah (Rev 13:12–14).

In Revelation 7:2, it is written, “And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea.” What specific reason is given for this enforcement of peace by restraining the four angels holding the wind? That which is revealed

to us is the sealing of the 12 tribes of the children of Israel. Twelve thousand from each tribe makes a total of 144,000. In prophetic numerics, 12 is the number of representation, so it may stand for a bigger number. Another observation is that the tribe of Dan is left out and Levi, the priestly tribe is counted in. The tribe of Ephraim is subsumed under the name of Joseph. (To understand this selection of the tribes one must first learn the names of the 12 tribes and that Joseph is represented by two sons, viz, Ephraim and Manasseh which increases them to 13.) To make the number 12, one tribe must be left out and that tribe, as stated above, is Dan. Why Dan? John Sung says Dan is excluded because it worshipped idols (Judges 18). However, the Scriptures are silent on this point and we must therefore remain silent. This is one of Calvin's hermeneutical principles.

What is the meaning of sealing the foreheads (Rev 7:3)? According to Ezekiel 9:1-6, it means sealing upon the persons God's protection in the midst of terrible destruction. Thus these 144,000 Israelites (Israelis), who are called "the servants of our God" are specially chosen to accomplish God's purpose during the Great Tribulation to come. Some say they are Jewish evangelists. These are Christian Jews who acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, therefore they come under God's "particular providence." These are they described in Matthew 10:16-20 who will be given divine utterance as they are brought before government authorities, and who will confound their accusers. There is an increasing number of Jewish Christians who declare Jesus as their Messiah. Are these not they who make up the 144,000?

As to the order of the salvation of the Jews or Israelites, Paul tells us in Romans 11 in a parable that after the Jews rejected Christ, salvation was given to the Gentiles. The rebellious branch of the olive tree was cut off and cast away and in its place was grafted in the Gentiles, represented by the wild

olive branch. But when “the fullness of the Gentiles be come in,” that is, when the last Gentile predestined to be saved is counted and the Gentile Church is full, then will Israel the olive branch be grafted back. “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom 11:26).

The sealing of the 12 tribes of Israel being completed, we must accordingly see the completion of salvation of the Gentiles. Chronologically speaking, the sealing of the 12 tribes and the following vision of “a great multitude, which no man can number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” who stood before the throne in heaven must refer to some universal great event that occurs from out of the earth. These myriads of people are clothed in white robes holding palms in their hands which reminds us of the Triumphal Entry and the singing of Hosannas. Now, when this great multitude praised God and the Lamb for Salvation, all the angels of heaven and the 24 elders prostrated before God and echoed with a sevenfold doxology.

Who is this great multitude that suddenly appears before the throne of God, and from whence have they come? One of the elders gave the answer: that they had come out of the Great Tribulation. They came out of hunger and thirst, and from the heat of the shining sun, with tears in their eyes. From this description, these are they who have landed in heaven from going through a great tribulation on earth. It is the salvation of our body. This is called the Rapture (not rupture) which means a forceful catching away (1 Thess 4:13–18). This is our blessed hope. We shall be delivered from the wrath of God to come.

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which

is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months” (Rev 11:1–2).

The measuring of the temple and the altar with the worshippers therein to the exclusion of the court without, which is given to the Gentiles may be taken to mean God’s assured protection of the devout Jews (who have not become Christians) from persecution by the Gentile power—and this during the second three and a half years of Daniel’s seventieth week.

An analogy may be drawn from Ezekiel’s vision of Jerusalem in the last days of Babylonian destruction. In Ezekiel 9 is recorded how six men carrying a slaughter weapon were commanded to slay all the living in the city, both old and young. But before this extermination was to be carried out, another man clothed in linen equipped with a writer’s inkhorn was ordered “to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezek 9:2–4). Those who are devoted to the Lord are “the apple of His eye, and hidden under the shadow of His wings” (Ps 17:8). “Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling” (Ps 91:9, 10).

In the midst of persecution, the Lord knows how to protect His own from harm and danger. Without the Lord’s permission, Satan cannot touch the Lord’s people.

Now, while Jerusalem in the last days (of three and a half years) will be under Gentile domination, the Antichrist World Dictator holding sway, God will send His two witnesses to testify to the power of the living and true God. Some identify them to be Elijah and Enoch, but others Elijah

and Moses. One reason for Moses is the plagues he brought down on Egypt are mentioned as in his power to enact again. Besides, it was Moses and Elijah who appeared together at the Mount of Transfiguration, not Enoch.

As preachers, they will bring to the world both good news and bad news. The bad news is that God is going to judge the world by His wrath. The good news is there is still salvation in Christ Jesus for those who would believe on Him and repent of their sins. Just like John the baptiser, they will call for repentance for the day of the Lord is at hand (Luke 3:7–8).

Now, it is God's purpose to let them flourish only for a short season, and then be killed by the Antichrist. Their bodies will lie in the city plaza of Jerusalem and all over the world by live telecast on television will men see their dead bodies displayed for three and a half days. During this display all who dwell upon the earth will make merry and send gifts one to another because these two prophets had tormented them by their miracles of punishment. But suddenly they stood up alive and great fear fell on all who saw them. Then called a loud voice from heaven, "Come up hither," whereupon they rose up and were carried into the air by a cloud. All the people stood dumbfounded.

Then the City was shaken by a terrible earthquake that tore down a tenth part of its construction. Seven thousand people were crushed to death by this big Quake. All the rest of the people glorified God as they trembled with fear.

The second half of the Great Tribulation will see Israel come under persecution as never before.

Who is the woman in Revelation 12:1? In prophetic language, woman or wife in the Old Testament represents Israel with

God as her husband (Isa 54). In New Testament language, woman or bride represents the Church with Christ as the Bridegroom. So, some think this woman is Israel. Others think it is the Church.

We believe the woman of Revelation 12 is Israel inasmuch as in Joseph's dream of Israel's future, he saw the sun, moon and 11 stars making obeisance to him. Joseph became prime minister of Egypt, an adumbration of Israel in days to come to play the role of the premier nation of the world. That is, when Jesus of the stock of Abraham and David's greater son, will rule the world for a thousand years in what is called the millennium.

Now who is the Child? Inasmuch as Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, who is of Israel, this Child must be our Saviour, for He is One "to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Rev 12:5).

Who is the red dragon? The dragon is also called "that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan" (Rev 20:2). Red signifies bloodshed, and is not Satan called a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). The great red dragon, having seven heads and 10 horns and seven crowns upon his heads shows how powerful and successfully clever he is in working out his schemings through the nations.

That he tried to devour the Child harks back to his trying to kill baby Jesus through King Herod. That the Child was caught up unto God and to His throne is a picture of His preservation during the 33 years of ministry on earth till the day of His death, resurrection and ascension. The Lamb of God, Lion from Judah, is infinitely more powerful than the red dragon and that old serpent.

Now, leaping across the centuries to the last years of this age, when Israel will come in full view and will be involved with all the hostile nations surrounding her, we are given to understand spiritual forces are also simultaneously clashing in conflict. There is war in the heavenly regions between Michael the Archangel and his angels against the dragon and his angels, demons unnumbered! This is astral-theology!

Satan is a spent force before the holy presence of God. Remember how he had accused Job (Job 1). Seeing that he has but only three and a half years left before his final defeat, Satan went all out, like the *Kamikazes*, to persecute Israel. But to the woman were given two wings that she might fly to the wilderness. The wilderness, indeed, is a cryptic name of the promised land as used by Moses in his demand to Pharaoh, "Let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert [wilderness], and sacrifice unto the LORD our God" (Exod 5:3, cf. 5:1).

When the Jews were gathered back in their Homeland, the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood, but the earth helped the woman and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

In Isaiah 43:2, the prophet Isaiah talks about God's protection over His people. We believe, in times of utmost testings, God will break through from heaven to save His people. As He caused the Red Sea to divide and allowed Israel to go over dry land, so will He cause the earth to swallow the flood that Satan will send to drown His people.

What is Satan's flood but death and destruction, but we know Israel is a land of rock caves in the Negev (the southern desert) which stretches all the way into the Land of Edom, all

the way beyond the Dead Sea region. Daniel 11:41 confirms this “... these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.” (Edom, Moab and Ammon form the Land of Jordon today.) The rock caves are good hiding places from floods of hail and fire.

In the final battles of Armageddon leading up to Jerusalem and into the Judean hills, Zechariah calls, “And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.” (Zech 14:5–7). “And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God” (Zech 13:8–9).

Satan, knowing that his time of judgement is now come pursues all the more “to make war” with the remnant of the woman’s seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ—these are the believing Jews!

ARMAGEDDON

The sin-cursed world is desperately looking for peace, but there can be no peace but war! We are living in a war-torn earth. Are we dreaming of peace and prosperity on earth in this lifetime? Banish the thought! Remember we are but pilgrims. We are not citizens of this world, but of the world

to come. “This world is not my home I am just a passing through.” Peace will come, but only when the Prince of peace returns to judge this world and rule the world for a thousand years.

Who can forget September 11 (9–11)? An earthshaking tragedy with worldwide repercussions struck the most powerful nation in the world. Since then, America and the world have declared war against terrorism! Surely, terrorism ought to be condemned, but would the world become a safer and better place to live in? The Scriptures paint a bleak scenario of the future, “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matt 24:7). There will be a whole lot of hatred and not love in the world, “And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another ... And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matt 24:10, 12).

What is going to happen? The Bible tells us! The Bible speaks of War! A War that will end all wars—Armageddon.

“Armageddon,” the sound of it echoes ominous! The meaning of the Hebrew is “Hill of Slaughter.” It is a broad plain you can see as you stand on Mt Carmel, Haifa, looking across eastwards, the plain of Esdraelon. It is the way of warring nations from time immemorial. Pharaoh Nechoh rode through this plain to fight the Assyrian king (2 Kgs 23:29). So will the Oriental forces coming down against Israel meet at Armageddon. In this case, Armageddon is the last stop before assault on Jerusalem, the target of end-time nations. The world is not heading towards Utopia but Armageddon. God will judge this wicked world on that final day. How will it come about?

In Daniel 2:31-34, we see Nebuchadnezzar’s image speaking of six kingdoms in world history—four have passed, the fifth

is now here, the sixth and final one will come soon. Let us review the dream: we have (1) the head of gold which is the Babylonian empire (Dan 2:37–38), (2) the breast/arms of silver which is the Medo-Persian empire (2:32), (3) the belly/thighs of brass which is the Grecian empire (2:32), (4) the legs of iron which is the Roman empire (2:40), (5) the feet/toes of clay and iron which is the Revived Roman empire (2:41–43), and ultimately (6) the Stone from heaven which is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who will set up His diamond kingdom on earth (2:44).

Today, we see the emergence of a revived Roman empire: European Union and USA, partly strong and partly broken (2:42). Partly strong because they are the political, economic, and military superpowers of the world and yet vulnerable; partly broken because they are no longer united under one emperor, Caesar, but under many kings. They are united and yet divided.

From this revived Roman Empire will come the Antichrist. The Antichrist is a man of blasphemy (666) who makes himself God (Rev 13:18). 1 John 2:18 warns of the end-time Antichrist, “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” This Antichrist will succeed in bringing about world peace—but it is a self-serving and temporary peace. The turmoil in the world today is due to the trouble we see in the Middle East, between Israel and the Palestinians. Whether one likes it or not, it all boils down to Israel. Commenting on September 11, *The Straits Times* (September 18, 2001) reported: “Arabs point to ME [Middle East] strife as root of attacks.” Israel is the centre and cause of it all. Israel is the key to understanding prophetic Scripture.

Israel is looking for peace. Will peace come? Yes, but it will be a false peace. Daniel 9:27 says, “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” Sixty-nine weeks have passed, we are entering the 70th week of Daniel which will last for seven years comprising two halves: three and a half years of peace, three and a half years of war, engineered by the Antichrist. In the middle of the seven years, Antichrist will break the peace treaty and persecute Israel. World War III begins. It is a three-and-a-half-year war that begins in the middle of the Tribulation week.

What is the scenario like? Ezekiel 38:1-8 tells us, “And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee. Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.”

Ezekiel speaks of a Mid-tribulational War involving (1) the Northern nations, viz. Gog/Magog (38:2 cf. vv 14–16) which are countries north of Israel (Russia, Armenia, Turkey), (2) the Eastern nations (v 5a) which are Persia (Iran), her neighbours (Iraq and Afghanistan), and all Arab nations east of Israel, (3) the Southern nations (v 5b) which are Ethiopia and Libya representing the African nations. This war against the Antichrist will be fought in the land of Israel (Rev 16:12–16). They will attack the Antichrist (vv 8–9) and the Antichrist will defeat them (Dan 11:36–45).

However, after fighting off the nations, the Antichrist will turn against Israel. He will set himself as God, the abomination of desolation, and persecute the Jews (Dan 9:27, Rev 12:6, 13–14). This will last for three and a half years. World War III will reach its grand finale at the end of the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 14:16–20 is a picture of total bloody carnage along the whole length of Israel. From the battlefield of Armageddon in the north near Haifa to the southern desert, even to Eilat on the Red Sea, this 200-mile river of blood rises as high as touches the mouth of a horse (about 5 feet above the ground). This preview of Armageddon teaches a lesson on the theology of war: that it is God who uses the wrath of men to execute His divine purposes according to His counsel, to His own glory. Amen.

What will happen at the end of the seven years? Revelation 16:12–16 tells us, “And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto

the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”

The Antichrist is now world ruler, but there are nations that are against him, viz. the kings of the east (v 12). These will fight the Antichrist in a final showdown at Har Megiddo, the hill of slaughter. What is the battle scenario like? In the sixth vial, we see war breaking out in Iraq, the Euphrates dried up and the way open to invasion by “kings of the east.” It appears to have taken three years for such a climax to be reached. The word “east” is applied to all lands eastwards of Israel, even Syria is comprehended in this term (2 Kgs 13:17). All the Arab and Muslim countries east of Israel (Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, extending to China) in full alliance can be a menacing force against little Israel now under the aegis of the end-time World Dictator. Even Russia and the northern nations, if they swoop down to join the Orientals, coming through the Euphrates would be counted as “kings of the east.” We see here a final showdown of nations. When this happens, Christ will return with His saints to destroy the Antichrist and the armies of the world (Rev 19:11-21).

The Lord Jesus Christ will ride on a white horse down to earth. In His triumphal entry to Jerusalem the first time, Jesus rode on an ass. This signified His humility as a slave (the ass or donkey is a slave animal), and be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2:8). In His second coming, Jesus will no more come as a Lamb but as a Lion from the tribe of Judah. No more need He suffer as when He first came to earth, but as the conquering King of kings and Lord of lords. Riding on a white horse, He comes in a second

triumphal entry by His own might and power, in a victory march over His enemies (Rev 19:11-16 and Zech 13:8-9, 14:1-4). The same Word of God that created this world, will one day destroy it.

What is Armageddon's aftermath? The Scriptures tell us that the Lord "treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev 19:15, cf.14:14-20). At the same time, the Lord will personally save His own as prophesied in Zechariah 13:8-9, 14:1-4.

The enemies of Christ will come to a terrible end (Rev 19:17-19). The Antichrist's last-ditch stand against Christ and His saints is of no avail. By a word from His mouth all their weapons of war shall be totally paralysed. Here is a glimpse of this terrifying scene of destruction, "And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour" (Zech 14:12-13). It will certainly be D-day—a day of Doom, Death, and Destruction—for the Antichrist and all who stand against Christ.

Is this bad news to you? Well this is bad news only if you do not have the good news. You can escape from the coming judgement by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. As Christians, how should we live today? In the light of Christ's soon return, let us reorder our lives. Let us not love this world. This wicked world gives only false hopes. Let us love instead our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our only hope. Many a time, we are so caught up with the things of this

world—money, career, cars, houses, properties, investments, leisure, sports etc. How to be ready when Christ comes back? 1 John 2:15-17 commands us, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” Live not for this sin-cursed world of Satan, but for the glorious Kingdom of Christ that is to come. There will be no peace in this world, until the Prince of peace returns.

THE MILLENNIUM

At the end of World War III, the beast and the false prophet would be “cast alive” into a lake of fire burning with brimstone (Rev 19:20). This time, the Angel comes down from heaven who has the key to the bottomless pit, i.e. Christ, or Michael the Archangel, and with a great chain in His hand, lays hold on the dragon, the old serpent and binds him a thousand years, and casts him into the bottomless pit. He shuts him up and sets a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years be fulfilled, and after that he must be loosed for a little season.

The term “millennium” literally means “1,000 years.” It is a word that all Bible students, and all Christians should be familiar with. Although the term itself—“millennium”—is not found in the Bible, the concept of a 1,000-year reign of Christ certainly is. It is found in Revelation 20:1-7, “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand

years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.” Six times in this passage, the phrase “a thousand years” appears. This is an important event, and we need to pay attention to it.

What is the millennium all about? This period very clearly has to do with the worldwide reign of Christ, together with His people. In verse 6 we read, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” In Revelation 5:10, we are told that the Lord “hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” The saints are not yet ruling on the earth. They are presently waiting for the Lord’s return, and it is only when the Lord returns that the millennial reign will begin and last a thousand years.

There is some measure of confusion over what the millennium is all about. There are three main views on the millennium: postmillennialism, amillennialism, and premillennialism. Which view is correct?

Postmillennialism is the view that Christ will come after the millennium. Postmillennialists have an optimistic view of

the world. They say that the world will become better and better, until it reaches perfection. Through human effort, the world will eventually be peaceful, harmonious, and prosperous. After the world has experienced these wonderful conditions of peace, harmony and prosperity, Jesus would return.

This view is held mainly by the modernists who deny the doctrine of sin, who believe that man is inherently good and that man is capable and good enough to create a heaven on earth. Another group of postmillennialists are the reconstructionists or theonomists. They say that Christians should be active in politics in order to influence or reconstruct the laws of a country by making them more Christian or Biblical. They believe that wicked society needs to be reconstructed by Christians. Through the preaching of the Gospel, more and more people will become Christians. When Christians dominate the world, it will become a better place and Christ will return.

Is the postmillennial view correct? Does the Bible paint for us an optimistic picture of the world and of the end times? The answer is found in Jesus' rhetorical question, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). The Christian population in the world just before the Lord returns will be relatively small.

The Bible tells us that man is not morally good nor inherently capable of transforming the world into a better place. There are many attempts by man to live in peace with one another. But each attempt has ended in failure. The world has a history of about 6,000 years. Out of these 6,000 years, the world has known only 300 years of peace. In this century alone, we already have two world wars. When we read the newspapers, do we see the world becoming kinder, gentler, and more peaceful? No, we see fightings, riotings, killings,

cheatings, thefts, rapes, murders all the time. This is because the world is inhabited by sinful men, born in sin, and bent on sinning. Man has no ability whatsoever to make this world a good place to live in. He certainly has the ability to make the world a sophisticated place (we have cars, computers, aeroplanes etc.), but not necessarily a peaceful and happy place for living.

The world is not getting better and better, but from bad to worse. Jesus Himself painted a pessimistic view (Matt 24:6-8, 2 Tim 3:1-4). Jesus said that the last days will be like “the days of Noah” when “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Luke 17:26 cf. Gen 6:5).

Will the world be filled with Christians just before Christ returns? Jesus said, “Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt 7:14). True believing Christians will not be in the majority but in the minority before Christ returns.

Postmillennialists have a wrong view of the world. We reject the postmillennial view of the end times.

Amillennialism literally means “no millennium.” Amillennialists teach that there is no future 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth. The 1,000 years of Revelation 20 is not literal but symbolical. It is not referring to a physical but a spiritual reign of Christ. The reign of Christ is not an earthly but heavenly one. Some of them say that the millennium is right here and now. Christ is presently ruling over the whole world from heaven through the Church.

Is this correct? Are we right now living in the millennium? If so, then Satan and his demons should not be in this world. Revelation 20:2-3 tells us that Satan will be chained up

during the millennium. Do we see this to be the case now? Is Satan at this time bound? If so, then why is there so much Satanic activity today? And if Satan is now chained up, then the Apostle Peter would be wrong to say that Satan is now on the prowl. Peter's warning in 1 Peter 5:8 is applicable today, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." We are clearly not in the millennium yet.

The amillennialists say that there is no future rule of Christ on earth. Is this true? Revelation 20:6 says, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Note the future tense: "will reign" and "shall reign." The Apostle John was talking about a future, and not a present reign.

Will this reign be in heaven or on earth? Scripture interprets Scripture. In Revelation 5:10, we are told very clearly that Christ and His saints will reign on earth. Is this the case right now? Do we see Christ physically on earth ruling over the whole world right now?

Clearly this has not yet happened. We are still waiting for this great event to come. And it will happen when Christ returns to judge this world, put all His enemies under His feet, and rule over this whole planet for a millennium. Jesus reigns spiritually in the hearts of all believers today, but one day He will reign literally and personally over the whole world.

Premillennialism is the view which teaches that Christ will return before the millennium. Christ must return to judge His enemies, restore Israel, and rule over the whole world from Jerusalem for a thousand years.

The Bible tells us that the world will become increasingly wicked culminating with the evil rule of the Antichrist who will set himself up as God, and demand worship from all. During the seven-year Tribulation period, he will persecute Israel (Jer 30:7). The Church will not be present during this time, but would have been raptured, snatched up in a micro-second to be with Christ in heaven (1 Thess 4:16–17).

During this Tribulation period, God will pour out His wrath upon the unbelieving inhabitants of the earth. It will end with Christ returning to earth with His saints to fight the Antichrist and his armies, destroying all of them at the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:16, 19:11–21).

Jesus will then begin His millennial reign on earth. He will sit on the throne of David and govern the whole world from Jerusalem, the political and religious capital of the world. The earth will be rejuvenated. The land will be peaceful and productive, and the life-span of man will increase (Isa 65:20).

The people of this world are looking for peace on earth. We will have true peace on earth only when the Lord Jesus Christ—the Prince of peace—returns.

Of the three views on the millennium, the premillennial view is the biblically correct view. There is also a clear distinction between Israel and the Church.

Who will reign with Christ for a thousand years? First in the list are they who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus Christ and His Word, who had not worshipped the beast nor his image nor received his mark on their foreheads, nor in their hands. This should include martyrs of every age, which are seen in the opening of the fifth seal (Rev 6:9–11). These will reign with Christ on earth (Rev 5:10) for a thousand years. These were among those in the first resurrection,

not reincarnation (1 Thess 4:13–18)! They have suffered for Christ. Our Lord's promise to the Apostles in Luke 22:28–30 is true, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

That this one thousand years will not be in heaven but on earth is numerously predicted by the Old Testament prophets. We quote a few passages:

(1) With the deceiver of nations under chains so that he cannot instigate them to fight, there shall be no war. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa 2:2–4). This passage on Christ's peaceful reign on earth is also recorded in Micah 4:1–3.

(2) In the millennium, man will live to a ripe old age. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall

not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (Isa 65:20–22).

(3) The curse placed on the physical world (Rom 8:20-22) will be removed. Isaiah foresees the coming deliverance during the millennial reign, “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD” (Isa 65:25).

(4) With the earth all at peace (Isa 2:4), the chief occupation of the nations shall be worship of the Lord Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, the capital of the millennial kingdom. “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD” (Zech 8:20–22, see also Zech 14:16–20).

In the millennium, creation shall groan and travail no more (cf. Rom 8:22).

Headquarters in New York City shall be no more, and Jerusalem will take its place by virtue of Christ’s seat of government being established there, many Old Testament prophecies on His millennial rule must needs focus on the restoration of Jerusalem. Apart from Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-4, here is an extended description of Restored Jerusalem according to Zechariah 8:3-8, 22, 23: “Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth;

and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness. ... Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”

That people from the whole world will be led by Jews to come to the Lord in Jerusalem is beginning to be fulfilled in our day is reflected in an increasing number of pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. About 95% of the tourists to Israel today are there as pilgrims. Jerusalem today is a flourishing city. Are these not signs that Christ will soon come to take over His inheritance. It goes without saying that Jerusalem is God’s city of peace to the world in the fullest sense only when Christ the Prince of peace returns to sit on David’s throne.

THE LAKE OF FIRE

Now let us leap across the thousand-year span of time to the end of the Millennium: “... Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to

gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them” (Rev 20:7–9).

Now Magog is the second son of Japheth born after the Flood (Gen 10:2). It is thought Magog was the progenitor of the ancient Scythians or Tartars, whose descendants predominate modern Russia (Ezek 38:2, 39:1). Ezekiel has two chapters (38 and 39) on Magog in which Gog is called the chief prince of Meschech and Tubal. Meschech and Tubal are also descended after Magog from Japheth. Gog and Magog, the mortal enemies of Israel, are defeated by the Holy One of Israel. At the instigation of Satan, Gog and Magog become the leading assailants against the beloved city, undoubtedly Jerusalem. But they are consumed by fire sent down from heaven.

With Gog and Magog’s defeat, the devil is at last consigned to the lake of fire, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev 20:10). This is the second death (v 6) or everlasting death which our Lord thrice declared is hell (Mark 9:43–48). The Seventh Day Adventist doctrine of annihilationism or extinction (accepted by neo-evangelical theologians today) is contrary to Revelation’s revelation and in direct opposition to our Lord’s warning. The fact that the beast and false prophet are found still tormented in the lake of fire after one thousand years proves there is no annihilation.

At the end of the millennium, not only will the devil be cast into the lake of fire to be punished forever, it is revealed to John the vision of the great white throne that all the finally impenitent will likewise be punished.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:11–15).

In contrast with the first resurrection which was for the saved and to reward them according to their works, this is the second resurrection where none is found in the Book of Life but rather in the books of death. Naked in their sins they, who are like the devil their father, are judged according to their works and, not found in the Book of Life, they are cast into the lake of fire. Death and hell are cast in together, sealing their sad fate forever and ever. There is no annihilation but everlasting torment. Let our Lord’s warning in Mark 9:43 to 48 confirm what is reiterated here, again: “And shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever” (Rev 20:10). The Greek words for “forever and ever” mean “to the ages of the ages,” that is, “never ending cycles of time.” “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord,” Paul reiterates, “we persuade men” (2 Cor 5:11). God “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). Amen and amen!

THE REALITY OF HELL

Can a loving God send people to hell? There are many so-called evangelicals today who question God’s judgement of sinners in a place called hell. Clark Pinnock of McMaster

Divinity College in Canada says, “Let me say at the outset that I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine. ... How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely, a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God.” What blasphemy! Pinnock denies the existence of hell, and advocates annihilation for the finally impenitent. There is a tendency for annihilationists to become inclusivists. At the Evangelical Theological Society meeting in Boston in 1999, Pinnock argued that Jesus is not the only way to heaven. A person can get to heaven without knowing Christ. What does the Bible say? “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). That name of course is JESUS.

Another example is Billy Graham who takes the fire out of hell. To the question “What is hell?” Graham answers, “The only thing I could say for sure is that hell means separation from God. ... That is going to be hell. When it comes to a literal fire, I don’t preach it because I’m not sure about it.” Unbelievers are already at present separated from God. Are they going through hell right now? Some of them may be enjoying the earthly pleasures of life right now. Hell is surely not simply a separation from God. It is more than that; it is a literal place of torment and suffering. But Graham says he, like most people, has “a hard time believing God is going to allow people to burn in literal fire forever.” What does the Bible say? Make no mistake about it; the Bible says that hell is a place of punishment “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44, 46, 48). In Luke 16, the rich man in hell said, “I am tormented in this flame.”

Those who deny the existence of hell, or eternal punishment in hell do so because they assume that (1) people are generally good, and deserve better, and (2) God is all love, and only love. Let us examine these assumptions one by one in the light of the Bible. The Bible is God's Perfect Word, our sole and supreme authority of faith and practice. It is not what man says, but what the Bible says that counts.

Are people generally good, and so ought not to be punished forever in hell? God says that if we think that we are generally quite decent and upright people, we deceive ourselves (1 John 1:8). We may see ourselves to be good and decent people, but not God (Gen 6:5, Jer 17:9). God says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one, There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one ... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:10–12, 23).

But some may say, "I am not so bad. Surely I do not deserve hell." Jesus in Matthew 5:22 says, "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgement: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (i.e. Idiot), shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool (lit., Moron), shall be in danger of hell fire." In verses 27-28, Jesus continues, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

How many of the Ten Commandments have we broken already? When we break one, we break all (Jas 2:10).

Some may argue, “I have done a lot of good works to help people. Don’t they count for anything?” All our seemingly good deeds are “as filthy rags” to God (Isa 64:6). God sees our hearts, and He knows the selfish motives behind our display of righteousness. No amount of good works we do can ever save us from our sins. Only Jesus saves.

The Bible says that all of us are born in sin (Ps 51:5) and bent on sinning. What is the penalty of sin? “The wages of sin is death.” It is eternal punishment in the lake of fire. If we as human beings send criminals to jail or to death depending on the severity of the crimes they have committed, and yet do not see ourselves as being unloving or unkind for doing so, why do we accuse the thrice holy God of being unloving or unkind for punishing those who break His laws? To accuse God of cruelty for sending sinners and law-breakers to hell is not only fallacious, but malicious. If we can punish criminals, why can’t God? This leads us to our second point.

Is God only love, with no justice? Of course not! The world has a warped concept of love. Love is all candy and no pain. We are told by so-called experts in child psychology that if you love your child, you would not use the cane to teach right from wrong. What does God say? “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov 13:24).

Solomon received such wisdom on child discipline from God Himself. And do you know why God says, “Use the cane”? Consider Proverbs 23:13-14, “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.” How true it is! How many a delinquent son or daughter has ended up being in jail, or dead?

God is love, and it is precisely because He loves us that He sent His only begotten Son (the Lord Jesus Christ) to die a most painful and cruel death on the cross to save us from our sins (John 3:16; Rom 5:8). Jesus paid the penalty of our sins on the cross to redeem us. He shed His precious blood on the cross so that our sins might be washed away. He died and was buried, but on the third day rose from the dead so that we might have life through His name.

God loves you. Christ died for you. But you know what the problem is? We hate God and we reject Him. To reject Christ is an unforgivable sin. All kinds of sins are forgivable, but the sin of unbelief in rejecting Christ as Lord and Saviour is unpardonable.

God is love but He is also a God who is holy. The Lord is Saviour, but He is also Judge. Sin must be punished. And the greatest sin that anyone can commit is to reject Christ. The greatest sin demands the greatest punishment: eternal damnation in the lake of fire.

We end up in hell not because God sends us there, but because we ourselves choose to go there. God does not delight in the sufferings of people (Ezek 33:11). “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). God desires you to live, to enjoy Him, to be in heaven! Hell indeed is a horrible and terrible place. It is a place of intense darkness inhabited by the devil and his demons. It is a place where tormenting worms do not die, and the fire cannot be put out. It is a place of great pain and suffering where people will be weeping and gnashing their teeth. God does not want us to go there. Perhaps one reason why God made hell is so as to shock us into heaven.

The only way out of hell, and into heaven, is the way of Christ.

THE JUDGEMENT OF THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

We often hear this saying, “Crime does not pay.” And this is very true. Thieves and robbers, kidnappers and murderers, and all criminals shall not escape the long arm of the law. In Singapore, drug traffickers receive the death penalty. Other offenders are jailed and caned. If we as human beings know how to punish those who break the law, how much more God who is holy and just!

The Bible tells us that there will be a judgement of sinners. Hebrews 9:27: “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement.” There is no reincarnation. There is no purgatory. There is no second chance. Every man will have to face his Creator after he dies and be judged for what he has done on earth. For those without Christ, it is called the judgement of the great white throne (Rev 20).

Man’s Creator, who is also Judge, is described in Daniel 7:9-10 in vivid terms, “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgement was set, and the books were opened.” This Judge is none other than the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son ... And hath given him authority to execute judgement also” (John 5:22, 27).

What will man be judged for? He will be judged for all the sins he has committed against God and against man. No

one can escape this judgement. John said in Revelation 20:12 that he saw “the dead, small and great, stand before God.” Whether tycoon or beggar, prince or pauper, everyone will have to give an account of himself to God.

How will sinners be judged? The Judge will judge by the book. There are several books that will be opened. One such book is the book of words. Matthew 12:36-37 says, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” So, be careful little mouth what you say. Speak no vulgarities, do not slander, do not lie. Do we speak against Jesus Christ and His words? John 12:48 says, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” So, be warned those who say Jesus is not God or that the Bible is not perfect.

Sinners will also be judged according to the book of works. Ecclesiastes 12:14 says, “For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” And when our works are judged, we will find that the works which we thought were good were actually evil because we have fallen short of God’s holy standards. “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Our good works in the sight of God are as “filthy rags” (Isa 64:6), for “there is none righteous, no not one, ... there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom 3:10, 12). Jesus said, “If you look at a woman to lust after her, you have committed adultery.” “If you hate your brother you have committed murder.” O be careful little hands what you do. O be careful little feet where you go. O be careful little eyes what you see. Man may not know the evil we have done, but God knows!

Not only are there the book of words and the book of works that will judge sinners for all they have said and done, there is also the book of the will. This has to do with the conscience, the motives, the secret intentions of the heart. The sin of the heart is the most serious of all. God has revealed Himself so clearly to man in His creation (Ps 19:1), so fully in His Son (Heb 1:1-3), and so perfectly in His Word (Ps 19:7). And yet man chooses to reject and rebel against Him. Man willfully suppresses the truth and even corrupts the truth by spelling the name of GOD backwards, making Him DOG.

And so we read of God's judgement against such reprobates in Romans 1:18-23, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things."

The judgement of God against all the finally impenitent is eternal destruction in a place of torment called the lake of fire (Rev 20:10). It is a place where Satan and his demons will be, including the Antichrist and the false prophet. They will be tormented day and night forever. The torment shall never end.

The only way sinners may escape this judgement to come is to be found in the book of life. How may a sinner have his name written in the book of life? The sinner cannot write it himself. The sinful, wicked and corrupt are not qualified to write in this holy book. Only one person can write in it, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. If a sinner wants his name to be written in the book of life, he must bow himself to Jesus and say, "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me a sinner, save me from the wrath to come. I believe in thy death and resurrection for me. Be thou my Lord and Saviour." When such a humble prayer is made, the Lord Jesus will hear and will not turn away. "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Ps 34:18). "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom 10:9).

FORGIVEN

Sins Forgiven

Heaven to See

Sins Forgiven

Not Hell 'twill Be

Sins Forgiven

Forever to Live

Sins Forgiven

Only Jesus can Give

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

The judgement of believers and that of unbelievers are quite different. Unbelievers who die without Christ are judged

for their sins, but saints who die in Christ will be judged for their service at the Bema/Judgement Seat of Christ.

In New Testament times, the Bema is a judgement where rewards are given. Athletes who have won a race are crowned with a wreath at the Bema. Likewise, every Christian will one day stand before the judgement seat of Christ to receive “the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” Those who have served the Lord with pure motives will receive prizes for their faithful work. Those who have served the Lord with impure motives will receive no reward. Thus in heaven, there will be those who have and those who have not. Those who are not rewarded will still have their salvation for that cannot be lost, it is God’s work won for them by Christ.

Although only some will be rewarded, yet the atmosphere will be a joyful one. It may be likened to a graduation ceremony. Those who have studied hard will graduate *summa cum laude* (with highest praise), or *magna cum laude* (with high praise), or *cum laude* (with praise), and there are those who simply graduate without *laude*, without praise. Those who are not rewarded will regret that they did not serve the Lord as well as they should, but nonetheless there will be no sorrowing for they are grateful to the Lord for saving them from their sins.

Do you wish to participate in this graduation? The only way is to be enrolled in the University of Life where Jesus is the Principal. There are no academic prerequisites. The only qualification is your confession. If you will humble yourself and confess your sins before the Principal (Jesus Christ) and accept Him as Lord and Saviour, you may be received as a student and eventually graduate from this University. No one dies in the University of Life whose Principal is Christ.

BURIAL OR CREMATION?

Burial (not cremation) is the biblical way of putting to rest the body of those who have been called home to be with the Lord. The reasons are based on Scripture and Doctrine. We shall first examine the practice of cremation in the light of Scripture, and then present the doctrinal reasons why we ought to bury and not cremate.

Cremation is the ancient method of disposing the dead by burning. It was practised by the Canaanites in the time of the Old Testament. It was not only a heathen practice but also a sign of divine judgement.

Dr John J Davis in his book, *What About Cremation?*, said that cremation “was both early in origin and widespread in geographic scope. For the most part, it was associated with pagan ideas about the essence of life or mythical beliefs regarding the afterlife.” Cremation is tied to the heathen practice of offering human sacrifices. God commanded the Israelites not to follow this cruel and hateful practice in Deuteronomy 12:31. For the heathens, cremation was the way to send off both the living and the dead to the netherworld. Is it no wonder that non-Judeo-Christian religions like Hinduism and Buddhism also practise cremation?

The Jews regarded the act of cremation as a form of idolatry. Israel in keeping herself distinct from the heathen nations, and in obedience to the command of separation, practised burial instead of cremation. To prove that the divinely sanctioned method is burial and not cremation, the Jews cited Deuteronomy 21:23 (see also Gen 23:19, 35:8; Deut 34:6; 1 Kgs 11:15, 22:37, Ezek 39:15).

Cremation is also a sign of judgement. In the Old Testament, cremation was done to dishonour or punish those who

had sinned against God. Achan, for his sin of idolatry, was punished by fire (Josh 7:15, 25).

Fire is a symbol of God's judgement. When the wicked priests (Nadab and Abihu) offered strange fire before God which He commanded them not, "there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD" (Lev 10:1–2). God destroyed the homosexual cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with brimstone and fire (Gen 19:24). The nation of Moab too faced God's fiery judgement (Amos 2:1–2).

In the New Testament, we find the same teaching that fire and burning point to God's judgement and disapproval. In Acts 19:18-19, the newly converted believers renounced their heathen past by burning all their books on witchcraft and sorcery. Peter prophesied that God would destroy the whole universe one day by fire, "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Pet 3:7). At the judgement of the great white throne, all the fallen angels and all the finally impenitent will be cast into the lake of fire for eternal punishment (Rev 20:14–15).

In both Testaments, believers have always been buried. The Old Testament patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) were all buried (Gen 25:8–10, 35:29, 49:33, 50:1–13). The same is true in the New Testament: John the baptiser was buried (Matt 14:10–12), Lazarus was buried (John 11:17), Stephen was buried (Acts 8:2), our Lord Himself was buried (John 19:40–42).

The Bible is clear that burial is the acceptable practice for both Jews and Christians. Calvin wrote, "Burying has been held as a sacred custom in all ages; for it was a symbol of the last resurrection."

There are two doctrinal reasons why as Christians we should bury and not cremate. We bury because of (1) the doctrine of the resurrection and (2) the doctrine of the body.

As Christians, we believe in the bodily resurrection. Burial is meaningful to the Christian because it points to the future resurrection. This was certainly what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he said, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom 6:4-5). When we bury the human body, it is like sowing a seed into the ground; at the appointed time, it will sprout out of the ground as a plant. God will one day raise up our body just as He raised Christ’s (1 Cor 15:42-44).

Cremation, on the other hand, with all that fire and burning, would only evoke thoughts of punishment and judgement. Would not the message on the Christian’s blessed hope of a future resurrection be contradicted by rolling a casket into the furnace? The fire gives a picture of hell, not heaven. Clearly, cremation illustrates the eternal destiny of unbelievers, and not of believers. The hideous sight of a body stoking up the furnace will only bring more sorrow and grief to the bereaved, not hope and comfort.

On the other hand, “The rites of burial arouse us to the hope of resurrection and everlasting life” (Calvin). But such a testimony of hope in the resurrection is lost when we cremate our dead.

The Bible teaches that man consists of two parts: (1) the body and (2) the spirit (Gen 3:19, Luke 23:43, 46, Eccl 12:7). The spirit relates to God (John 4:24, Rom 8:16) while the body

allows man to subsist on earth. For Christians, the body is also the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). Although at death, the spirit will be separated from the body, both will be rejoined at the time of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:44). This awakening will happen when Christ returns. So the body is an important part of man and must be treated carefully even at death.

The Jews understood the doctrine of the resurrection and of the body (cf. John 11:24), so they treated the body of their departed loved ones with great care. Consider the following Jewish burial procedure:

1. Eyes of deceased closed by eldest son or next-of-kin (Gen 46:4).
2. Body washed (Acts 9:37).
3. Body anointed with spices (John 12:7, 19:39, Mark 16:1, Luke 24:1).
4. Body wrapped in cloth (Matt 27:59, John 11:44, 19:40).
5. Body not to be mutilated (Lev 19:27-28, 21:5, Deut 14:1).
6. Body carried to a tomb on a wooden bier (2 Sam 3:31).
7. Body is placed in a simple grave, cave, or rock-cut tomb (Luke 23:53).

The Church kept to the Jewish and biblical practice of burial. Dr Davis noted that “the early church practiced inhumation and rigorously opposed cremation. Prompt burials followed death and a special memorial service was conducted the third day following the believer’s death. The choice of the third day was a means of reaffirming belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the ultimate resurrection of all believers. ... The overwhelming consensus of early church writers and leaders was that cremation was associated with rites that were incompatible with many basic tenets of their faith.”

NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

The heaven and the earth that God created in Genesis will one day be obliterated. This truth is mentioned in Revelation 21:1, “for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” This is a repetition of Revelation 20:11. The passing and fleeing away of the first heaven and the first earth undoubtedly refers to the destruction of this physical world we live in, which consists of the earth, the atmospheric heaven and the sea. This sphere of man’s livelihood which was good and very good (Gen 1:31) in the beginning before sin contaminated it cannot be inhabited anymore by a new society of sinless perfection after the Great White Throne Judgement. In view of the space (stratosphere and ionosphere) immediately above the earth being also contaminated by the clutter of space junk now orbiting and by man’s audacious landing on the moon, the solar system will be destroyed inasmuch as other planets are also invaded and polluted by puny man’s uncanny machines.

This is generally predicted by Peter, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet 3:10-13).

But Peter was merely echoing Isaiah 65:17, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” That heaven and

earth shall pass away is repeatedly declared by our Lord in His sermons (Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 16:17, 21:33) further confirms Peter's statement and throws light on Revelation 20:11, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." and 21:1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

Heaven and earth are temporal, but one thing is for sure, the words of the Lord are eternal, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt 24:35), forever infallible and inerrant. Praise the Lord!

That the burning up of the earth is total is seen in the statement, "and there was no more sea." Now the earth is made up of 75% water as part of its ecology. Human life on earth cannot go on without this aquatic provision and sustenance on the land he tills. Not only agriculture, but also industry and manufacture.

In the new ecology of perfected saints with glorified bodies like our Risen Saviour's, the former pattern of livelihood is past. Hence there is no need of the sea or ocean any more. The new man who now can enjoy God forever is given a new environment where God and man live together. This will be a world of perfect happiness, oblivious to death, sorrow, pain, and weeping. The only water that is needed, figuratively speaking, is the water of life freely provided. That is to say, our happiness in the new earth is constant fellowship with the Lord. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev 21:7). This emphasis of a Christian living a victorious life and not being merely saved as by fire (1 Cor 3:15) is the Spirit's eighth reminder to the hearer of Christ's messages to the seven Churches.

By contrast, to the unconverted this exhortation of a victorious life to the faithful is followed up with the warning, “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev 21:8). The first resurrection is life; the second resurrection is death.

NEW JERUSALEM

Now, inasmuch as the Church building is where a Christian congregation meets to worship God, so our new abode with Christ is that great city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God (Rev 21:10). This “great city” is a cube, 12,000 stadia (furlongs), that is 1,500 miles, on every side. The wall is 144 cubits thick (one cubit, the measure of a man’s forearm, is 18 inches). This holy city is like the precious stone of jasper, clear as crystal. What a contrast to a dark Taoist and Buddhist temple or a Roman Catholic Church festooned with images, crucifixes and relics amidst flickering oil lamps in murky darkness!

This City has a high wall with 12 gates guarded by 12 angels. The names of the 12 tribes of Israel appear on these gates. The wall of the City stands on 12 foundations “and in them the names of the 12 apostles.” (Judas Iscariot’s name cannot be seen there, and in his stead, the apostle Paul’s, to be sure!)

The foundations of the City wall are garnished with all kinds of precious stones. The first foundation is jasper. The second is sapphire, a sparkling blue. The third is chalcedony, named after Chalcedon in modern-day Turkey, and is an agate stone. The stone having stripes of various colours is basically sky-blue. The fourth foundation is emerald. The fifth is sardonyx, combining red and white. The sixth is sardius, of a reddish tint. The seventh, chrysolite, which

according to Pliny is gold in colour and transparent. The eighth foundation, the beryl, is deep sea green. The ninth foundation, topaz, is a transparent yellow-green stone. The tenth foundation, a chrysoprasus, is another kind of green. The eleventh, a jacinth, is reddish orange and the twelfth, which is amethyst is purple. All these colours add up to the beauty of the rainbow so as to enhance the beauty and glory of God. The 12 gates are 12 big pearls while the street is paved with transparent pure gold. The New Jerusalem: the most beautiful ever built.

Now, the foundation of foundations is none other than Jesus Christ as Paul reminds us. To the Corinthian Church, the apostle says, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor 3:11–17). By heeding Paul’s injunction above, we see that the New Jerusalem, which is built in such jewel-sparkling splendour, abounds with deep spiritual meaning. And inasmuch as dwellers in the City are perfected saints, do not these precious stones reflect all the Christian virtues and graces that we must exhibit through our Lord Jesus Christ?

Thus Isaiah comforts a restored Israel: “O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with

sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee” (Isa 54:11–14).

LIFE IN HEAVEN

The aspiration of the psalmist in Psalm 46:4-5 becomes a reality as the Apostle John is shown a pure river of life, clear as crystal, flowing out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev 22:1).

On either side of the River in the street thereof is the Tree of Life which bears 12 kinds of fruit every month, and the leaves are the healing of nations. This is to remind the perfected saints of Christ, being the true Tree of Life, who also had healed them of their diseases (Ps 103:3, Isa 53:5).

What shall we do in the new earth and new heaven? Just play harps of gold as some Christian songs tell us? An English poet said, “If all the year were a holiday, to play would be as tedious as to work.” There is plenty of worshipful activity in heaven, but we shall have many other things to do also, as we are declared His servants and we shall serve Him (Rev 22:3). How about heavenly choirs? Will there be rehearsals and practices? If there be a plucking of the fruits from the Tree of Life, will there be a picnicking by the River and eating of those fruits, not because we are hungry, but because we enjoy them together in fellowship? Just as our Lord ate “a broiled fish and an honeycomb” after His resurrection, not because He was hungry, but rather to prove a point (Luke 24:42, 43). Dr Buswell humorously said he would have plenty of work to do in heaven: he would be reading Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

O yes, how we would need eternity just to get acquainted with all the patriarchs and saints both of the Old and New Testaments, and with the heroes of Church history. But our main work is to serve the Lord and to behold His face. While we wait at His beck and call, we are not idle. Milton says, “They also serve who only stand and wait.” O the wonderfulness of that new life in and under God, that becomes newer and happier each day. “Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before.”

Remember, the Church is the bride of Christ. Marital love is the highest joy of human life, yea, that first love between a man and a woman. Sad to say, in a world of sin, such love is often short-circuited. Sin spoils it, and hence the tears and separations and divorces.

In heaven, there will be no marriages (Luke 20:35). One central theme of life is to be “married” to the Lord. This word cannot be used in the sense of the individual but of the corporate. To love Him with an ever increasing first love—what greater happiness than this?

Many have experienced the joys of love at first sight, the joys of a happy home though not without tears. But the greatest joy ever to be imbibed is the joy of salvation newly received from the Lord, of being saved from hell and everlasting punishment. Nevertheless, the greatest in the salvation experience is to worship Him and sing praises to His Name. “Worship is the mother of all virtues” (Augustine). The thrilling ecstasies of worship were experienced by those in the Singapore Pentecost of 1935, in the John Sung Revival. That was a foretaste of heaven, of the new life in the new heaven and the new earth.

As we are shown all these glories to come, as we are taught the true meaning of life on earth that must be promoted

to the heavenlies, so will we hear the Saviour calling out of the Celestial City, “Behold I come quickly, blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (Rev 22:7). Let us go out to evangelise the lost around and beyond and bring them in before it is too late (Matt 24:14). Accelerate missions, hasten His return!

HEAVENLY WORSHIP

St Augustine said, “Worship is the mother of all virtues.” Why is worship the mother of all virtues? It is because worship involves a personal relationship with a thrice holy God.

Worship changes lives. But please know that it is not any kind of worship that will bring about a changed life. It must be true worship of the only living and true God that will bring about a holy life. Jesus in John 4:24 said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” So if we want to worship God truly and properly, we must first be born again (born of the Spirit), and we must worship Him according to His ways as taught in the Scriptures (in truth), and not in our own ways.

Are we worshipping God truly and truthfully? We engage in false worship when (1) we worship idols, or ourselves, and (2) when we are still in the depth and guilt of sin, not yet washed by the precious blood of Christ. So before we talk about worship, we need to ask ourselves this question: Am I still an unbeliever, still outside of God’s kingdom and not part of God’s family? Be reconciled to God, make peace with Him, believe in Christ and you will be saved. It is only when we are God’s children that our worship of God would be acceptable. “God wishes first of all for inward worship, and afterwards for outward profession.” (Calvin)

We are now worshipping God on earth. But do you know that there is also worship in heaven? Worship is something that will not end. Even when we pass away and enter into the next life, worship continues. In the book of Revelation, we get a glimpse of what worship in heaven is like.

It is troubling that the worship service in many churches today is of the casual, frivolous, flippant type. It is not heavenly but earthly worship. A good worship service according to popular Christianity is that it must be filled with energy, excitement and entertainment. The Church is supposed to be in the world but not of the world, but today we find the Church both in the world and of the world.

Christians must worship God not according to Hollywood but according to the Holy Word. Our worship must not be earthly but heavenly.

What is heavenly worship? Worship is a very serious and solemn exercise. In the book of Revelation, we find worshippers falling prostrate, faces to the ground in humble submission to God (Rev 4:10, 5:8, 14), displaying reverential fear. If we are required to conduct ourselves most decently and properly before secular dignitaries, how much more ought we before our God who is the King of kings and Lord of lords! Calvin warned, “What contempt will be incurred if we do not preserve dignity in the Church, by conducting ourselves honourably and becomingly!”

Do we know the God we worship? There are people who think of God as a glorified Santa Claus. He smiles all the time, and gives anything you ask for or want. Who is God? What is God? The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.” If we know who God truly is, and the kind of person He is,

and what He is characterised by, we will be very careful to worship Him correctly. You will not want to offend Him. You will not want what you want in worship, but what He wants and requires.

When we worship God, we are really worshipping Him (Rev 4:11). We worship Him for Who He is—His nature and His attributes and His marvellous deeds to the children of men. We find the people in heaven worshipping His Holiness (Rev 4:8a). He is three times holy—God the Father is holy, God the Son is holy, and God the Spirit is holy. The holiness of God should cause us to realise our sinfulness, our need to confess and repent of our sins. To worship Him correctly involves coming before Him with clean hands and pure hearts. We come before Him to beg for His mercy and grace. We come before Him not proudly but humbly. We do not want to be like the self-righteous Pharisee who prayed, “I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess” (Luke 18:11-12). We ought to be like the penitent publican who prayed with his head bowed, not daring to lift his eyes towards heaven, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

Calvin was right to observe, “There is no worship of God without sincerity of heart,” and “No one rightly worships God, but he who is taught by His Word.”

We also find the saints in heaven worshipping His Almightyness (Rev 4:8b). God is all-powerful, all glorious, all-majestic. He is sovereign and controls all things. When we worship, we must submit to His will. When we pray, we pray not according to our will, but according to His will. “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The prayer of Jabez (1 Chron 4:9-10) is not a secret code. There is no magic formula in prayer, e.g. chant certain words repeatedly in a certain way and God must give what you ask for. Such arrogant and presumptuous prayers God will not hear, nor will He answer. James 4:2-3 says, “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” Our almighty God says in Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God.” Ecclesiastes 5:2 says, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.” If God is almighty, then let us always pray, “Lord, no matter what, let Thy will be done.”

The Lord is also worshipped for His Pre-existence (Rev 4:8c): “which was, and is, and is to come.” He is the I AM THAT I AM. He is the God of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Kingdom to come—the Millennium. We ought to worship the Lord in light of His return, with a spiritual and heavenly mind and heart, and with eternity’s values in view. May we never worship Him falsely with a carnal, worldly, and earthly mind and heart concerned only for things of this world, for prosperity, health, and success in business. We should rather pray for God’s grace to be spiritually prepared when Christ returns.

In heaven, worship is characterised mainly by adoration. These are the features of our worship in heaven:

1. Praise. We praise the Lord for Who He is and for what He has done. Angels and saints will praise Him (Rev 5:11–14).
2. Thanksgiving (Rev 11:17–18). We will thank God non-stop because we will be so filled with eternal gratitude.

3. Singing. Heaven will be filled with music and song (Rev 5:9). We will sing a new song. The word “new” here is “new” in terms of quality. Worship in the Old Testament was good, worship in the New Testament is better, but worship in heaven will be best. “New” here does not mean singing in “tongues” (charismatic gibberish). The words are distinct, and full of meaning (Rev 5:9–10).

Note that there is no confession of sin, no petition, no supplication, no intercession for one another. All these are what we do while we are still on earth, when our sinful nature is still with us. In heaven, all sins will be removed, there will be no more diseases, tears, pain, etc. We will have our perfect and glorified bodies. No need for confessions, petitions, supplications, intercessions.

Let us worship God with a heavenly mind and we shall live a heavenly life on earth in preparation for eternal life in heaven when Jesus finally returns or when He calls us home.

“Heaven is a wonderful place, filled with glory and praise.” Will you be there? Make sure! Make peace with the Lamb! Worship Him now, and you will worship Him forever more. Amen.

THE CERTAINTY OF CHRIST’S RETURN

Are there scoffers out there who laugh at the concept of a doomsday? 2 Peter 3:3-4 has already described for us what people at large will be thinking before the world comes to an end. “Nothing has changed. The world did not end. Christ did not come. Let’s eat, drink, and be merry. Don’t worry, be happy.”

But read Paul’s warning in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. The Asian Tsunami that claimed 280,000 lives occurred on a clear blue, business-as-usual day. Peace one moment, death the next.

Mr Eio Eng Hua of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (Singapore) testified: “I cheated death by half an hour! It was Sunday morning on 26 December 2004 in Sri Lanka. I was driving to Colombo on my way to attend a church service from my resort located near Kalutara (37 km away). The sky was blue and the road was clear. It was a relaxing drive. I had to pass an area known as Moratuwa where on both sides of the road you can see hundreds of wooden houses with zinc roofs usually occupied by the lower income people here. That stretch of road is about 5 km. It was about 9 am when I drove past that place. There was nothing abnormal or unusual at that point in time.

“When I returned from Colombo about one and a half hours later, to my horror, I saw tree trunks, branches, debris and household items spread over the 5-km stretch of road. What was more shocking was that 80% of the houses on both sides of the road were flattened! People were running wild and screaming. I didn’t know what was happening. It was later on that I learned that at 9.30 am the killer waves—tsunamis—had wiped out the homes of the poor residents in that area. It was as if some weapon of mass destruction had exploded there. Many people were either killed or missing, and others badly injured. If not for God’s grace, the killer waves could also have ‘swallowed’ me. It was a matter of half an hour difference.”

How can we be sure that Jesus will return? We know for certain that Christ will return and that the world will end one day because of these three divine assurances. First, we have the assurance of prophecy (2 Pet 3:1–2). One quarter of the Bible is prophecy. The Bible contains many prophecies concerning Christ’s First Coming, as well as His Second Coming.

Consider the prophecies of Christ's First Coming: In Genesis 3:15, God promised that a Saviour will appear one day from the seed of a woman, and will crush the serpent's head. In Genesis 17, God revealed that this Saviour will come from the seed of Abraham. In 2 Samuel 7:12, 13 and 16, we are told that He will be a King from the line of David who will sit on His Father's throne. In Isaiah 7:14, it is clearly revealed that this Son will be virgin born, and is God Himself—Immanuel. In Micah 5:2, we are told specifically the city in which He would be born—Bethlehem. In Isaiah 53, it is prophesied that He will suffer and die for the sins of His people.

There are over 300 prophecies in the Bible concerning Christ's First Coming, and all have been fulfilled to the jot and tittle. History attests to the fact that Jesus did come, and Scripture affirms that He was born of a virgin, lived a perfect, sinless life, and as a Lamb without spot and blemish, died a sacrificial death on the cross, shed His precious blood to redeem mankind from sin. He was buried, but on the third day, rose again from the grave, appeared to His disciples over a period of 40 days, and then ascended to heaven and is now sitting at the right hand of God, waiting for His Father's timing to send Him back to earth, this time to judge it.

The Bible also contains many prophecies with regard to the Second Coming of Christ. If all the prophecies of Jesus' first coming have all come to pass, we can be very sure that all prophecies concerning His Second Coming will also come to pass. While you have time, make peace with God, and be reconciled to Him. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Believe on Christ today!

We know that the world will be destroyed one day because the world had already gone through a worldwide cataclysm in the Genesis Flood. In 2 Peter 3:5-7, we have the assurance of a biblical and historical precedent.

The certainty of a future worldwide judgement and destruction is confirmed by a historical and global cataclysm in the Genesis Flood. The scoffers of today are like those in the days of Noah. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He warned the wicked people in his day to repent. God was going to send a great flood to destroy them if they did not. As he preached, he built the ark. Now, in those days there was no rain (Gen 2:5). That the whole earth could be flooded was inconceivable. The people all laughed and scoffed at Noah and his family. For a hundred years, Noah preached, and the ark steadily took shape. No one would repent. They all scoffed at the preaching of Noah until the day God shut the door of the ark. That day, water from above, and water from below drowned the whole earth. All scoffers were destroyed. The scoffers today will suffer the same fate if they do not repent. God had destroyed the world by water the first time. He will destroy the world one more time, and this time it will be by fire. Those who laughed at Noah laughed no more when the Flood came.

Some of us Christians may be asking: “The Lord said He will return to take us home. Did He forget His promise?” God will not and cannot forget His promises. One of the most assuring words of Scripture is the word “Remember.” It is used many times in the Old Testament with reference to God. It is a covenantal word. God has made many promises to His covenant people: to Israel and to the Church, and He kept reminding His people that He will keep His promises (2 Pet 3:9, 13). We can be sure of Jesus’ return simply because He has promised to return. God will keep His covenant promises. John Calvin has rightly said that God is more interested in keeping His promises than in making them.

It has already been 2,000 years since Jesus made His promise to return. We have already entered the 21st Century. Why has Jesus not returned yet? The answer is in 2 Peter 3:9, “The

Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” The promise to return to redeem His own and to destroy the finally impenitent was not made once or twice but many times in the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus Christ meant every word that He had said, and would carry out what He had predicted and promised.

INVITATION

You know, there is a great wedding dinner coming! It is great because it is going to be the wedding dinner of the King—a royal banquet. This banquet is not only going to be great, it will be the greatest because it is the banquet of no ordinary king, but the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and the Prince of princes. And do you know what? You are invited! Here is the Lord’s invitation in Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Where will this wedding dinner be? Which restaurant? Well, it will be in heaven. Name of the restaurant? It is the Heavenly Restaurant of the New Jerusalem. When will it take place? It will take place when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to receive His bride.

In Revelation 19:7-9, we have a glimpse of the marriage supper of the Lamb: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

Our Saviour-King is coming back very soon. The wedding dinner is about to begin. All must be punctual because the Bridegroom will come on time. Latecomers will not be entertained. You must book your seats. Your name must be in the Book of Life. You must get your wedding garment—the bride cannot appear without her gown of righteousness.

Do you have this gown of the righteousness of Christ? If you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as your Lord and Saviour, He will give you this precious gown lovingly and freely.

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (Rev 22:20-21).

APPENDICES



Appendix A

DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM IN REFORMED THEOLOGY

The Contribution of J. O. Buswell to the Millennial Debate¹

*Jeffrey Khoo**

I. Introduction

Hear a Jewish proverb: “The nations of the world wish to irritate the Lord, but they can’t. What do they do? They vex Israel instead.” This seems to be the case not just in the political but also theological arena especially in the field of eschatology.

Covenantalism and Dispensationalism are the two main systems of theology in evangelicalism today. Insofar as eschatology is concerned, amillennialism is the most prevalent view among covenant theologians. There are those who take a postmillennial view (e.g. the theonomists), and there are some who are premillennial. Dispensationalists, on the other hand, are always premillennial.

The millennial debate today focuses on these three main issues: (1) Is the millennial reign of Christ a physical or a spiritual reign? (2) Will it happen before or after the Second Coming of Christ? And (3) what is Israel’s place in the millennium? The debate is particularly controversial when the nation of Israel is brought to bear. Historic premillennialists, amillennialists and postmillennialists believe that Israel has been replaced by the Church, and that prophecies relating to Israel must be interpreted in ecclesiastical and not Jewish terms. Dispensational premillennialists, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of the nation of Israel in the study

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of the end times, and how Jehovah will restore His chosen nation to greatness when Messiah returns.

As noted, there are two types of premillennialism: the historic and the dispensational. Historic premillennialism agrees with dispensational premillennialism that there will be a literal millennium of Christ's rule on earth after His return. But apart from this, both offer somewhat opposite eschatological perspectives on how God will fulfill His redemptive plan. Most reformed scholars who take the premillennial view are historic premillennialists. However, there are those who are reformed, and yet hold to the dispensational premillennial view of Israel and of the end times. This position is unfortunately much neglected in the perennial millennial debate. The late James Oliver Buswell (1895-1977) of Faith Theological Seminary² (Bible Presbyterian) is perhaps the most prominent reformed scholar who took a dispensational premillennial view. My paper intends to revisit Buswell's *Systematic Theology*³ and demonstrate how dispensational premillennialism is compatible with covenant theology.

2 In 1956, Buswell left Faith to found Covenant Theological Seminary, in St. Louis, Missouri.

3 When Buswell taught Systematic Theology at Shelton College and Faith Theological Seminary, he sensed the need for a new Systematic Theology textbook that would reflect a reformed and yet premillennial view. In 1949 he wrote, "I do not know of any great scholarly Systematic Theology which takes the premillennial view. This is a lack which must be supplied in the future" (J. O. Buswell, "Our Textbook in Systematic Theology," *The Bible Today* 42 [1949] 156). He eventually supplied it in a sizable two-volume work entitled, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, published by Zondervan in 1962. His section on eschatology is 283 pages long. (The book has been reprinted by Christian Life Publishers, Singapore, and obtainable from FEBC Bookroom, email: febcbrm@febc.edu.sg; or Covenant Seminary Bookstore, covsembk@swbell.net.)

II. Buswell and the Bible Presbyterian Church

Buswell graduated with a B.A. from the University of Minnesota, a B.D. from McCormick Theological Seminary, an M.A. from the University of Chicago, and a Ph.D. from New York University. In 1926, he was appointed third president of Wheaton College, a post he occupied with distinction until 1940 when he joined Carl McIntire's Twentieth Century Reformation Movement, and the new Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC). McIntire appointed him president of National Bible Institute (later Shelton College) in New York City. At the same time, he taught Systematic Theology at Faith Theological Seminary in Wilmington, Delaware.

Buswell's alignment with Carl McIntire and the BPC is significant since they were like-minded in three ways: (1) both were Presbyterians and covenant theologians,⁴ (2) both were fundamentalists,⁵ and (3) both were premillennialists. It is well-documented that one of the reasons why the BPC was formed was because the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) refused to tolerate McIntire

4 Buswell and McIntire were both trained in PCUSA schools—McCormick and Princeton respectively. The latter however completed his studies at Westminster Theological Seminary after the secession.

5 Both took a militant stance against liberalism. Buswell admired Machen for his biblical scholarship and fundamentalism, and influenced many Wheaton students to study at Westminster (and later Faith). See Edward L. Kellogg, "Wheaton College and the OPC," *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (ed. Charles G. Dennison and Richard C. Gamble; Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986) 445-447; and Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991) 96. George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 45-46. McIntire on the other hand was Machen's student. He battled faithfully with his mentor against the liberalism that was in the PCUSA and Princeton. See George M. Marsden, "The New School Heritage and Presbyterian Fundamentalism," in *Pressing Toward the Mark* 169-182. See also Blakely Baynes Hurst, "Confessionalism and Revivalism in the Singapore Bible Presbyterian Movement," *The Burning Bush* 3 (1997) 69-83.

and Buswell's premillennial view.⁶ It must be noted that in the 1937 controversy, the OPC confessionalists were not averse to historic premillennialism but to dispensational premillennialism. Hart and Muether wrote, "The most important feature of fundamentalism that played havoc in the division of 1937 was dispensational premillennialism."⁷ Both McIntire and Buswell held to a premillennialism of the dispensational type. They saw no reason why dispensational premillennialism could not fit into reformed theology. It is the soteriology of dispensationalism⁸ that contradicts reformed theology, not its eschatology. The split was in part due to the OPC's failure to recognize this.

It is unfortunate that accounts written on the 1937 split have invariably portrayed the Bible Presbyterians as being less than reformed for adopting a dispensational premillennial view in eschatology. Till today, we find Orthodox Presbyterians facetiously labeling Bible Presbyterians

6 See David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* (Greenville: Unusual Publications, 1986) 323-325.

7 D. G. Hart and John Muether, *Fighting the Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1995) 43.

8 Although dispensationalism today has largely departed from the Scofieldic and Chaferian view of law and grace, it nevertheless differs from covenant soteriology in its understanding of federal headship and its relation to the pre- and post-fall covenants, infant baptism, limited atonement, the active obedience of Christ, the indwelling ministry of the Spirit in the OT, and the content or substance of faith the OT saints had in how they "saw" Christ (cf. John 8:56).

“dispensationalists.”⁹ It must be said that McIntire and Buswell were not dispensationalists, neither did they favor dispensationalism as a theological system. They were clearly Presbyterian and hence covenantalists. Their commitment to covenant theology can be seen in their reaffirmation of “the system of doctrine set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms in the form in which they stood in the constitution of the Presbyterian Church” during the first Bible Presbyterian Synod meeting of June 4, 1937.¹⁰ However, the BPC in an attempt to identify its distinctive eschatological position within the reformed tradition saw it necessary to add these words (in parenthesis) to chapter 23.1 of the *Confession*,

God hath appointed a day (*which word in Scripture in reference to the last things may represent a period of time including the thousand years following the visible, personal*

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- 9 For instance, Hart and Muether (*Fighting the Good Fight* 48-49) repeatedly referred to McIntire and Buswell in such a way. Marsden (“Introduction: Reformed and American” in *Reformed Theology in America* [ed. David F. Wells; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997] 9) inaccurately said that it was McIntire’s “dispensationalism” that caused him to split from Machen (see also Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* 43-44). D. G. Hart, unfortunately, labeled McIntire and the Bible Presbyterian Church likewise in his book *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 163-165. That Hart is antagonistic towards both fundamentalism and dispensationalism may be telling of his interpretation of the events that happened in the OPC-BPC split of 1937.
- 10 *A Brief History of the Bible Presbyterian Church and Its Agencies* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.) 61. On page 10 of the same book, it is unequivocally stated, “The Bible Presbyterian Church is a confessional church, standing without apology and reservation for the historic Christian faith and for that great body of doctrine on which the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. stood consistently from its inception in colonial times until the destruction of the witness in 1936 by judicial decision. The Bible Presbyterian Church is prominently and pronouncedly a doctrinal church, and finds that doctrine most purely and adequately expressed in the great Confession of Faith issued by the Westminster Assembly of 1647.”

and premillennial return of Christ), wherein he will judge the world, in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given to the Father. ...¹¹

Premillennialism is thus a theological distinctive of the BPC. Although the parenthetical statement does not state explicitly the type of premillennialism held, history attests to the fact that it is premillennialism of the dispensational kind.

In the OPC-BPC split of 1937, Buswell not only teamed up with McIntire, but also Allan MacRae, also a dispensational premillennialist.¹² “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). When the secession took place, MacRae knew he could no longer remain as professor at Westminster. He joined McIntire and Buswell and became the president of Faith Theological Seminary. MacRae’s editorial work in the *New Scofield Reference Bible* (1967) clearly evinces his dispensational premillennial leanings. MacRae employed a literal hermeneutic towards OT prophecy,¹³ and believed that “there is to be a great outpouring of God’s wrath upon

11 *The Constitution of the Bible Presbyterian Church* (n.p.: General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church, 1989) 27, 29.

12 See Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (3d ed.; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987) 503-506.

13 Unlike historic premillennialists who like the amillennialists and postmillennialists employ a “spiritualizing” hermeneutic. See MacRae’s examination of postmillennial and amillennial objections to premillennialism in “A Glorious Future,” in *Biblical Christianity: Letters from Professor Allan A. MacRae* (Singapore: Christian Life, 1994) 201-218; see also his OT commentaries, *The Prophecies of Daniel* (Singapore: Christian Life, 1991) and *Studies in Isaiah* (Hatfield: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1995). See also his other letters in *Biblical Christianity*, viz. “The Scofield Bible” 60-61; “The New Scofield Reference Bible” 61-63; “Prediction or Analogy in Hosea 11:1” 113; “Daniel’s Seventy Weeks” 182-183; “More Comments on Daniel’s Seventy Weeks” 184-188; “Isaiah 66:12-24 and the Millennium” 191-192; “Premillennialism and Ordination to the Christian Ministry” 193-194; “British Israelism,” 263-264.

the earth between the rapture and coming of Christ with His saints to establish His kingdom.”¹⁴ He too had strong views on Israel’s place in God’s plan of salvation.

McIntire, Buswell, and MacRae were covenant in their theological system, but in the area of eschatology, they had adopted the dispensational premillennial view. It must be said that all dispensationalists are premillennialists, but not all premillennialists (even dispensational or pro-Israel ones) are dispensationalists. There exists a group of covenant theologians that are distinctly dispensational premillennial. Since it is Buswell who has written a *Systematic Theology*, he is perhaps the best source in any attempt to learn more about this neglected strand in reformed theology.

III. Buswell’s Hermeneutics

Buswell employed the classical method of Bible interpretation, namely, the analogy of Scripture. He wrote,

It is a principle of biblical interpretation that in setting forth any doctrine we must take into consideration all portions of Scripture bearing upon the subject. Generally speaking, no one passage of Scripture gives the whole of any doctrine with all its qualifications and ramifications.¹⁵

14 MacRae, “Pre-Tribulation Rapture,” in *Biblical Christianity* 187. MacRae believed that *apostasia* in 2 Thess 2:3 refers to “the departure of the Church, which I expect will take place before the revelation of the ‘man of sin’” (“*Apostasia* [Apostasy] in 2 Thessalonians 2:3,” *Biblical Christianity* 136-137).

15 Buswell, *Systematic Theology* 1.388.

He believed that the Bible as the infallible and inerrant Word of God is its own best commentary.¹⁶ He emphasized the need to ascertain the meaning of words by how they have been used in Scripture and in history. Context, he stressed must not be ignored when determining what a word means. The context involves not only the immediate context, but also the context of the book in which a text is found, and ultimately the context of the entire Bible.¹⁷ He also stressed the importance of paying attention to grammar and historical background in any attempt to understand what God intends to communicate in His Word.¹⁸

Buswell rejected any idea of a double sense or double fulfillment in Scripture. He wrote emphatically, “Sound hermeneutics must reject double fulfillment.”¹⁹ For support, he quoted the *Westminster Confession*, “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (*which is not manifold but one*) it may be searched and known by other places which speak more clearly.”²⁰

Buswell’s method of biblical interpretation may thus be classified as the historical-grammatical-canonical type. The analogy of Scripture as understood by him was not just

16 Ibid. 1.24-25. Buswell wrote, “... the Bible interprets itself. Not only does each successive book in the time in which it was written presuppose the Biblical books which went before, but the earlier books in many passages were clearly intended to point forward to Scriptures which were to come later. The rule is then, give the Bible an opportunity, ... to interpret itself.”

17 Ibid. 1.25.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid. 2.401

20 Ibid. Buswell wrote, “I place emphasis on the words, ‘which is not manifold but one.’ The notion that so specific and definite a prediction as that given in Matthew 24:15 ff. and Mark 13:14 ff. could be of double meaning must be vigorously rejected.”

that of antecedent but also subsequent Scripture. Biblical revelation must be studied not only diachronically but also hyperchronically. Since God's mind transcends time and space, the fullness of the divine intent must take into consideration His subsequent revelation in the Scriptures.²¹

Buswell's single meaning *cum* fulfillment hermeneutic can be seen in his interpretation of Jesus' Olivet discourse (Matt 24-25; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36). According to Buswell, the Olivet discourse predicts two destructions of Jerusalem: an immediate one which occurred in AD 70 by Titus (Luke 13:34-35; 19:43-44; 21:20), and a distant one which will usher in the *parousia* (cf. Zech 12:2; 14:1-9; Revelation 19).²² Buswell explained,

In distinguishing two destructions of Jerusalem, the one fulfilled in 70 A.D. and the other still in the future, we must carefully avoid double interpretation. It is true that the general statement that Jerusalem would be destroyed, such as is found in Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6, is capable of any number of fulfillments, but recognition of a general, non-specific prediction is not the same as accepting the method of "double fulfillment" exegesis. Luke's statements that in connection with a particular future destruction of Jerusalem the enemy would surround it with armies (Luke 21:20) and would build a wall around it (Luke 19:43) were so very specifically fulfilled in the destruction of the city by Titus in A.D. 70 that double fulfillment is impossible.

21 Contra "the analogy of antecedent Scripture" by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 90, 134-140, 145, 161.

22 Buswell called his approach the "double lens perspective" in contradistinction to the "double fulfillment" view (*Systematic Theology* 2.363).

Moreover, these particulars are radically different from those given in Zechariah 14. Zechariah predicts that the Messiah will come and “His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains ...” (vv. 4, 5). The prediction given by Zechariah in chapters 12 to 14 contains numerous other details, such as the fact that the Messiah will appear to Israel and “they shall look upon me whom they have pierced” (12:10; cf. Rev. 1:7). There will be mourning and repentance throughout the land of Israel (12:10-14). These data make it clear that the destruction of Jerusalem predicted in Luke 21:10 and 19:43, 44 is not the still future destruction predicted by Zechariah.²³

Buswell saw the prediction of the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem only in Luke, and not in Matthew and Mark. Jesus’ Olivet discourse was given in response to the disciples’ question concerning these three events (Matt 24:3; Mark 13:3; Luke 21:7): (1) “These things” refers back to Jesus’ prediction of the temple’s destruction (Luke 21:6 cf. 19:43-44); (2) “What shall be the sign of thy coming,” that is, the *parousia* or Second Coming of Christ; and (3) “What shall be the sign ... of the end of the world” which is clearly eschatological. Buswell said that (2) and (3) should be identified as “one complex of events” in the eschatological future.²⁴ Jesus in answering the question of “these things” expected the disciples “to distinguish between the destruction of the temple (which eventually took place in A.D. 70) and the still future eschatological complex.”²⁵

²³ Ibid. 2.363-364.

²⁴ Ibid. 2.364.

²⁵ Ibid. 2.365.

Buswell further argued that Luke's reading, "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies" (21:20), should not be equated with Matthew-Mark's "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation ...". Buswell's reason for so saying is due to the absence of the identifying clause, "the abomination of desolation as spoken of by Daniel the prophet" in Luke. Similarly, the Matthew-Mark version makes no reference to Jerusalem being surrounded with armies.²⁶ In light of this, Buswell concluded that "Luke 21:20-24 is a different section of the Olivet discourse from that which is given in Matthew 24:15-28 and Mark 13:14-23."²⁷

As can be seen from his treatment of the Olivet discourse, Buswell viewed biblical prophecy from what he termed a "double lens" and "cosmic" perspective.²⁸ To Buswell prophetic passages are complex, but not confused. The biblical writers did not see prophecy as a blurry whole. They understood the eschatological complex to be chronologically distinguishable. A single prophetic text or passage in its distinctive or respective parts or verses can depict both immediate and distant scenarios. Buswell said that the best example for such a "double lens perspective" is 1 John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." On this verse,

26 Buswell pointed out that Tatian's Diatessaron placed Luke 21:20, 22 and Matt 24:15-28 in two separate paragraphs one following the other indicating that they are two separate, distinguishable events. Buswell also cited *The Scofield Reference Bible* for support. The note under Luke 21:20 in the Scofield Bible reads, "Verses 20 and 24 are not included in the report of the Olivet discourse as given by Matthew and Mark ... Luke 21:20-24 refers to the siege by Titus, A.D. 70, when the city was taken, and verse 24 literally fulfilled. ... In Luke the sign is the compassing of Jerusalem by armies (Luke 21:20); in Matthew (24:15) and Mark (13:14) the sign is the abomination in the holy place (II Thessalonians 2:4)" (ibid. 2.368).

27 Ibid. 2.371.

28 Ibid. 2.296, 409.

Buswell commented, “John does not blur, but rather sharply distinguishes the present from the future. Just as there are now antichrists, so there will be that particular Antichrist of the future.”²⁹ Having a “double lens perspective” involves looking at prophecy from a “cosmic perspective.” By “cosmic perspective,” Buswell was speaking of the “foreshortening of the prophetic view.”³⁰ He explained,

There are many scriptural predictions in which details, known to be separated by long intervals, are spoken of in one scene of vast perspective. For example, when Ahaz refused to ask for a “sign,” Isaiah, as it were, presents a wide-lens view, not for Ahaz, but for the house of David as a whole (Isaiah 7:10-16). The messianic predictions of Isaiah 9:6,7 and Isaiah 11:1-16 include a sweep of events from the birth of Christ to the time when He will destroy the kingdom of the Beast “with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips” (Isaiah 11:4; Revelation 19:21).³¹

Matt 25:31-46 is another example of a prophetic scene that should be taken in cosmic perspective. Jesus’ prediction of the judgment of the nations, or of the “sheep and the goats,” should be looked at from the viewpoint of a “wide lens” camera.³² According to Buswell, the events mentioned therein, do not occur in a day but cover “the entire sweep of the eschatological complex from the ‘signs’ which

29 Ibid. 2.296.

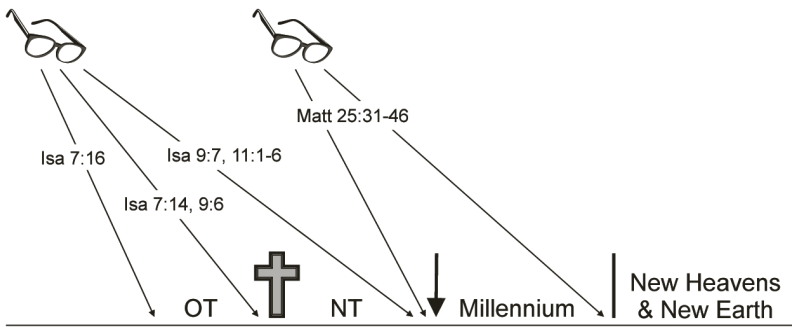
30 Ibid. 2.409.

31 Ibid. It ought to be noted that Buswell rejected the double fulfillment view of Isa 7:14 so popular nowadays. He did not believe that there was any fulfillment of Isa 7:14 in the time of Isaiah. He saw that prophecy of the virgin birth to be strictly Messianic, fulfilled only in Christ (ibid. 2.42-44, 518). See also my paper, “The Sign of the Virgin Birth,” *The Burning Bush* 1 (1995) 5-33.

32 Buswell noted that “Events which the New Testament clearly describes as separated by an extended interval of time are occasionally presented by the Old Testament prophets without any indication of such an interval” (*Systematic Theology* 2.417).

immediately precede the rapture of the church, all the way through the millennial period to, and including, the final judgment of the Great White Throne as described in Rev 20.³³ In other words, the separation begins at the rapture, when the “sheep” will be taken, and the goats finally judged at the Great White Throne at the end of the millennium. Between the separation of the sheep and the goats is a span of slightly over a thousand years.³⁴

The following chart illustrates Buswell’s “double lens” and “cosmic” perspective,³⁵



The “Double Lens” or “Cosmic” Perspective

Buswell’s hermeneutical consistency can be seen in his literal or plain sense interpretation of the two resurrections in Rev 20:4-6. Buswell believed that the two resurrections are distinct and separated by the millennium. The first resurrection precedes the thousand years and is the resurrection of the righteous (i.e. the saints who have already died, and those who are still alive) at the time of the rapture (1 Cor 15:23).³⁶ The second resurrection is often referred

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Buswell believed the rapture will occur at the middle of the great tribulation week (ibid. 2.450).

³⁵ Ibid. 2.409, with personal modifications.

³⁶ Ibid. 2.492-493.

to as “the resurrection of the unrighteous dead.” Buswell considered such a designation erroneous. According to him, the second resurrection will include not just all the unregenerate, but also post-rapture believers. He believed this to be so because

the Scripture seems to indicate that Israel as a whole, and many mortals from among the Gentiles (Romans 11:2; Isaiah 66:20) will be saved after the resurrection of the righteous, after the rapture of the church; and some of these (Daniel 11:32-35) will die for their faith after the resurrection of the moment of the rapture, before the Antichrist is destroyed. ... It follows, therefore, that among those raised from the dead who stand before the Great White Throne there will be both righteous and unrighteous.³⁷

Buswell was against the amillennial and postmillennial view that the first resurrection is something other than what it plainly connotes. He argued that the word *anastasis* (“resurrection”) “always means resurrection whenever it is found in the New Testament.”³⁸ Buswell employed Dr. Wilber B. Wallis’s argument in support of the plain meaning of Rev 20:4-6.

[M]y esteemed colleague, Dr. Wilber B. Wallis ... calls attention to the fact that in verse 6 it is stated of those who have part in the first resurrection that “they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him the thousand years.”

The most common opinion among those who reject the plain meaning of this passage is that the millennial reign

³⁷ Ibid. 2.509.

³⁸ Ibid. 2.494. Luke 2:34 may be the only exception, but as Buswell had noted, the words “rising again of many” could mean a literal resurrection.

of the saints with Christ simply refers to the condition and functions of the blessed dead in heaven during the present age. Dr. Wallis points out that if the saints in heaven are “priests,” as those who reign with Christ are explicitly declared to be, then it is appropriate for us to seek to communicate with them. It is of the very essence of priesthood that the priest is in sympathetic fellowship with the people for whom he serves. (See Hebrews 4:15, 16; 5:1, 2). The doctrine of the priesthood of the saints in heaven would open the door for prayers to the dead, or at least communication with them, and requests for their intercessory prayer.

During this present age, believers in this world are all priests, intercessors. The priesthood of all believers on earth is a fundamental doctrine of Protestantism. It has been shown from the Scripture, however, that believers living in this world at the present time are not reigning with Christ. It is in the Millennium, after the Lord’s return, after the resurrection of the righteous, that we shall be both priests and kings in Christ’s earthly kingdom.³⁹

Buswell also quoted Alford who pointed out the absurdity of eisegetically spiritualizing what God had intended to be plain. Alford commented on Rev 20:5,

As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. ... —if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave;—then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I

³⁹ Ibid. 2.494-495.

suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain: but if the second is literal, then so is the first, which in common with the whole primitive Church ... I do maintain, and receive as an article of faith and hope.⁴⁰

As a reformed scholar, Buswell's hermeneutic was in keeping with the *Westminster Confession* which states that Scripture is its own inspired commentary, and that it has only one meaning. Buswell thus believed that Scripture should interpret Scripture in a consistent and uniform manner. His literal hermeneutic thus stood opposed to the spiritualizing method of historic premillennialists, amillennialists and postmillennialists especially with regard to biblical prophecies pertaining to Israel.⁴¹ Buswell would probably also object to the complementary hermeneutics of progressive dispensationalists. His exegesis of certain prophetic passages as we have seen above, and will see later, did not show him to believe that a single prophecy could contain a spiritual (already), as well as a literal (not yet) meaning.

IV. Buswell's Concept of the Kingdom

Buswell defined the word "kingdom" generally as "the domain of a king," or "the sovereign rule of God."⁴² This domain "may designate *the territory* of a king with all the people in it, or it may designate *the government* of which the king is the head."⁴³ He saw the Kingdom of Christ as one, but

40 Ibid. 2.495-496. Buswell then interacted with key amillennial and postmillennial scholars, viz. Hodge, Warfield, Allis, and Machen, and showed how they were simply agnostic over this whole passage.

41 Ibid. 2.424. Buswell qualified that literal exegesis "does not exclude the recognition and interpretation of figurative language." His antagonism towards a spiritualizing hermeneutic of anti-Israel millennialists is clearly seen in his review of Oswald T. Allis's *Prophecy and the Church* (see *The Bible Today* 39 [1945] 361-363).

42 Buswell, *Systematic Theology* 2.346, 367.

43 Ibid. (italics mine).

having two distinct phases—a present and a future. Christ is presently King over (1) His universal kingdom (i.e. over all creation and creatures),⁴⁴ and (2) His spiritual kingdom (i.e. the Church militant on earth).⁴⁵ Thus the kingdom of God spoken of in such passages as John 3:3-5, Rom 14:17, and Col 1:13 refers to the present phase of God’s kingdom which involves His salvific rule in the heart of regenerate people. But Buswell did not stop there as would amillennialists; he went on to state that there will be a future visible kingdom of Christ,⁴⁶ and that this future kingdom, contra historic premillennialists and postmillennialists, “is in a real sense Jewish and Davidic.”⁴⁷ The triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem, according to Buswell, was a manifestation of Christ’s kingship, and that kingship was “stated as Israelitish and Davidic in specifically prophetic terms.” This kingship has yet to be realized for “Christ is *not now* exercising the governmental functions of an effective king here on the earth.”⁴⁸ In order to exercise His full governmental functions, Christ must sit on the throne of His father David and reign over the house of Jacob.⁴⁹

Buswell clearly consigned the physical reign of Christ over the nation of Israel and the whole world to a future time. He argued that the clause in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy kingdom come,” refers to “an event in time” in the eschatological

44 See his exposition of the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt 13:24-30) (ibid. 2.349-340).

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid. 1.357.

47 Ibid. 2.347. He cited the following OT prophecies as proof: Isa 9:6-7; 22:22-23; Jer 30:9; Ezek 37:24; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Ps 89:3-4; 132:10-11.

48 Ibid. 2.352.

49 Ibid. Besides Luke 1:32-33, see also Matt 9:27; 21:9; 22:41-46; John 7:42; Acts 2:25-36; 13:22-23, 34, 36, 38; 15:16; Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 5:5; 22:16.

future (Rev 11:15).⁵⁰ He went on to clarify, “the fact of Christ’s present spiritual kingdom and the fact that He is eternally the King over the entire universe and that in a sense the world is now His kingdom,—these facts do not disprove the predictions of a kingdom of Christ’s which is to come in this world in the future.”⁵¹ When Christ returns to reign on earth (Rev 5:10), His saints will reign with Him (Rev 20:6). All Christians are both priests and kings, but the exercise of those respective offices are *not simultaneous*. Buswell agreed that the priesthood of believers in this present life is clearly taught in the Scriptures. However, he contended that nowhere in Scripture is it taught that Christians are “kings” at this present age.⁵² As far as Buswell was concerned, “the reigning of believers with Christ is always to be regarded as a condition subsequent to His Second Coming.”⁵³

VI. Buswell’s View of Israel and the Church

In defining the Church, Buswell quoted the *Westminster Confession* which states, “The visible church, which is also catholic or universal ... consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”⁵⁴

Unlike dispensationalists who see the Church as beginning only in the NT, at Pentecost (Acts 2), Buswell saw the Church as having its roots in the OT. In the OT, the

50 At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the heavenly voices declare, “The kingdom of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.” Buswell viewed the word “become” (*egenonto*) as designating “an event in time” (*Systematic Theology* 2.351).

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid. 2.352-353. Buswell preferred the textual reading of *basileian* (kingdom) rather than *basileis* (kings) in Rev 1:6 and 5:10.

53 See Buswell’s exegetical arguments in *Systematic Theology* 2.353-361.

54 Chap. 25.2. Buswell, *Systematic Theology* 1.418.

Church as a visible theocratic organization in the world manifested itself first in the nation of Israel. He saw in Israel the characteristics of a church. He thus concluded that it “is quite correct to refer to the visible people of God, as organized in national Israel, as the *Jewish church*.”⁵⁵ Like the NT Church, Israel was a “separated” group, a “chosen” people, a “called out” congregation.⁵⁶ Another ecclesial feature of the nation of Israel was its provision for the *excommunication* of unbelievers within the nation (Gen 17:14; Exod 12:15, 19 cf. 1 Cor 5:2-5).⁵⁷

Buswell further stressed that Israel was and still is a “national entity,” and thus should not be confused with what is commonly known as “church” today.⁵⁸ When talking about the church, he clearly made a distinction between the “church of Israel” and the “church as organized from the day of Pentecost onward.”⁵⁹ Against non-dispensational millennialists who argue that the Church has replaced Israel especially from 1 Pet 2:9 where the Church is described as “a *royal priesthood*” which reigns with the greater David who sits enthroned in heaven as her great High Priest, Buswell wrote,

The phrase, “a royal priesthood,” ... does not prove that we are kings in this present life any more than such phrases as “the royal navy,” “the royal guard,” prove that the members

55 Ibid. 2.489.

56 Ibid. 1.420. That was why Stephen could refer to Israel as “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38). Buswell also brought up the point that the author of Hebrews translated *qhl*, “congregation,” with the word *ekklesia*, “church,” “in the midst of the *church* I will sing hymns to thee” (Heb 2:12, quoting Ps 22:22).

57 Ibid. Buswell explained, “The person cut off from the people was in a spiritual and ecclesiastical condition directly analogous to the condition of one who is suspended or excommunicated from the role of communicants.”

58 Ibid. 1.419.

59 Ibid.

of these services are “kings.” The priesthood of believers in this present life is clearly taught, *but the reigning of believers with Christ is always to be regarded as a condition subsequent to His Second Coming.*⁶⁰

To Buswell, the “church today is not a nation in any literal sense of the word, but it was a nation prior to the time of Christ.”⁶¹

How did Buswell understand Rom 11:25-32? Did he consider the term “Israel” there to mean the “Church?” Did he see “Israel” to mean simply and only the Jewish race as distinguished from the Gentiles so that when Paul spoke of “Israel” he meant only *Jewish* Christians without any thought of it as God’s chosen “*nation*?” Buswell evidently saw a distinction between Israel and the Church when he wrote,

Paul declares very positively that Israel as a whole, that is, as a nation, will be saved “after the fulness of the Gentiles comes in” (Romans 11:25-32). ... “the fulness of the Gentiles” means the conclusion of the “times of the Gentiles” referred to by Christ as recorded in Luke 21:24, and that this period also includes the completion of what we sometimes call “the Gentile church,” that is, the church as constituted in this present age. ... or, in other words, to the rapture of the true church.⁶²

Buswell did not take the salvation of “all Israel” purely in the spiritual or ecclesiastical sense. The term “Israel” here should not be taken to mean simply “spiritual Israel” (i.e. Church), or “elect Israel” (i.e. Jewish believers) but ethnic, national Israel. This can be readily seen in this commentary of his:

60 Ibid. 2.353.

61 Ibid. 1.420.

62 Ibid. 2.463, 516

The transition from Jewish church to Gentile church is clearly discussed in Romans 11 and in Galatians 3 and 4. The outstanding points which Paul makes are these: (1) There is a definite continuity between the two in that a “remnant” of Jews, including Paul himself, are in the church of this age (Romans 11:1-5). (2) Israel as a whole, *apart from this remnant*, is blinded and cut off from the Abrahamic promises of grace, but they will be grafted in again into their Abrahamic tree, after “the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11, especially vv. 25, 26). (3) Gentile Christians have their position in grace as being grafted into the Abrahamic tree (Romans 11, *passim*). “If ye [Gentiles] be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise [which was made to Abraham]” (Galatians 3:29, see vv. 7, 8). Paul constantly refers to himself as the apostle to the Gentiles.⁶³

The Gentile church will be raptured prior to the salvation of Israel. But the repentance and restoration of national Israel will occur only at, and after, the Messiah’s glorious appearing.⁶⁴ Israel as a nation will be “born in one day” (Isa 66:8). This prophetic promise, according to Buswell, “is a reference to the turning of Israel as a whole unto the Lord, after the rapture of the church, as Paul predicts in Romans 11:26.”⁶⁵ The ethnic, land, throne, and temple prophecies and promises God made to Israel will find fulfillment in Israel when Christ returns.

63 Ibid. 2.487-488.

64 Ibid. 2.463.

65 Ibid. 2.502. Anti-Israel millennialists argue that the “nation” must refer to the “church” in light of Isa 66:19-20 which speaks of the “nation’s” extensive missionary activity among the Gentiles (cf. Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Buswell, on the other hand, disagreed: “Isaiah 66:19, 20 refers not so much to the present missionary age, although these statements can be so implied, but ... directly and literally to the early years of the millennial reign of Christ during which people in isolated places, who had not accepted the mark of the Beast nor yet accepted Christ, will be evangelized.”

Therefore, as regards Israel and the Church, we find Buswell differing from dispensationalists by acknowledging the presence of the Church in the OT. We also find him disagreeing with anti-Israel millennialists who see no place for the nation of Israel in God's salvific plan; who explain all the prophecies of Israel in terms of the Church. Consistent with covenant theology which stresses the covenant faithfulness of God to His covenant promises, Buswell saw a continuity in God's covenant dealings with His Church visible, first in the nation of Israel (the Jewish Church which also includes Gentiles), and then in the NT body of saints (i.e. the Gentile Church which includes Jews). As such, it ought to be noted that he is a true covenantalist *vis-à-vis* the amillennialists, postmillennialists and historic premillennialists who claim that God has withdrawn His covenant promises from Israel and transferred them to the Church. Did not the covenant-faithful Jehovah say the covenant He made with David and with Israel was valid for all time (Ps 89:3-4, 34-36)? Is not the faithfulness of God one of the distinctive emphases of reformed theology?

Buswell went on to explain in the light of Isaiah 65-66 just how God is going to save Israel. In Isa 65:1-7, God will chastise Israel for her rebelliousness, and will use the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy (cf. Deut 32:21). This describes Israel's condition "at the then present time and to the sending of the Gospel to the Gentiles (Romans 10:19-22)."⁶⁶ In Isa 65:8-10, God promises Israel that despite her unfaithfulness, He "will not forsake His covenant but that He will confirm it in the preservation of a remnant."⁶⁷ Buswell explained,

⁶⁶ Ibid. 2.515.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

that God has promised to preserve His covenant by preserving a faithful remnant is the basis of Paul's extended argument in the 11th chapter of Romans. The restoration to which Paul refers is eschatological from the New Testament point of view. It will not take place, he says, "until the fullness of the Gentiles comes" (Romans 11:25, 26). ... the phrase, "the fullness of the Gentiles," refers to the completion of the church as constituted for this present age, or in other words, to the rapture of the true church. ... Jahweh will be faithful and Israel will ultimately be restored in a permanent way.⁶⁸

Isa 65:11-16 consists of admonition, denunciation of sins, and a brief word of encouragement. It is significant to note that Buswell identified the "servants" of verses 13-15 not with Israel, but the Church. He wrote, "The reference to 'my servants' in contrast with Israel ... contributes, of course, a general truth but might be particularly applied to the age of the church in which 'the Jews' as a whole and in general are in a state of 'blindness' (Romans 11:25), ...".⁶⁹

Isa 65:17-25 speaks of the creation of "the new heavens and the new earth," and the restoration of national Israel in the eschatological future. When God said that "the former troubles are forgotten" (65:16), He was not saying that it will be His gracious covenant with Israel that will be forgotten, but rather Israel's "bad name" (65:15). There will also come a time when there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. The former experiences of a sin-cursed world will be completely wiped out (Rev 21:4). This will be fulfilled, not in the millennium, but the new heavens and the new earth. However, verses 20-25 that follow describe not the

68 Ibid. 2.516.

69 Ibid.

new heavens and the new earth, but the millennium that precedes it. Buswell wrote,

My suggestion is that verses 20-25 are a distinct subparagraph within the section in which Isaiah, having mentioned the new heavens and new earth, hastens to reassure his people that God will not at any time forget Jerusalem. His point is that sins will be forgotten but that God's covenant with His people and with Jerusalem will not be forgotten. Verses 17-19 may be abbreviated and paraphrased, "I will make new heavens and a new earth in which the former troubles are forgotten, but Jerusalem will not be forgotten. The Jerusalem of the new heavens and the new earth will be completely free from blemish."

The essence of verses 20-25, according to my interpretation, would be, "Jerusalem will also enjoy a period of blessedness under a perfect government on this earth."

In other words, from my point of view, endeavoring to understand the New Testament doctrine of eschatology, and such data as is given on the order of events, I suggest that the Jerusalem of Isaiah 65:17-19 is the new Jerusalem of the new heaven and the new earth, while the Jerusalem of Isaiah 65:20-25 is the Jerusalem of the millennial kingdom of Christ. ...

Some have argued that such an interpretation of Isaiah's material does violence to the unity of the passage. I would reply that this is not the case, but, on the contrary, it is quite consistent with Isaiah's method of shortening the prophetic view and presenting different incidents, widely separated

in time, in a broad cosmic perspective for the purpose of spiritual admonition.⁷⁰

... I would urge that we are strictly in harmony with correct principles of exegesis if we understand Isaiah 65:17-25 as homiletically unified, eschatological material for the encouragement of Isaiah's people, but we are quite justified in saying that in the light of other Scriptures which do give some information in regard to future eschatology, Isaiah 65:17-19 refers to the new heavens and the new earth, whereas Isaiah 65:20-25 refers to the Millennium.⁷¹

Isa 66:7-9 refers to the birth of a nation. What nation is it? Buswell commented that in light of Zechariah 12-14 and Romans 11,

we may apply these words of Isaiah's to the turning of Israel to the Lord after what Paul calls "the fulness of the Gentiles," and, ... I understand these words, particularly the words of Zechariah 12:10-13:1 and Romans 11:24-27, to refer to the future time, subsequent to the rapture of the church when Israel as a whole and as a nation will accept Christ as their Messiah.

Isaiah 66:10-14 is an eschatological passage in the sense that it predicts restoration, peace, and blessedness for Israel. Isaiah does not state at what time these predictions will come to pass, but they may well be accomplished during the millennial reign of Christ.⁷²

In summary, Buswell's belief that God had not cast away His people rests on these two reasons as found in Romans 11:

70 Ibid. 2.518.

71 Ibid. 2.518-519.

72 Ibid. 2.519-520.

(1) There remains “a remnant according to the election of grace” and therefore there is a continuity. (2) There is to be a future restoration of literal national Israel as a whole; the branches now cut off will be grafted in again.⁷³

Evidently, Buswell saw a future for Israel as a nation on the basis of God’s covenant promises to her in the OT. The Gentile Church currently fulfills the duty of an evangelist, a duty the Jewish Church had before performed until her failure in the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. For her spiritual failure, Israel temporarily suffers “blindness” until “the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom 11:25). In the eschatological future, Israel, as God’s chosen, will be restored spiritually and nationally (Rom 11:26).⁷⁴

VI. Buswell’s Approach to the Book of Revelation

Buswell insisted that the Book of Revelation must be interpreted like the other books of inspired Scripture. The same laws of hermeneutics employed in other portions of Scripture apply also to the last book of the Bible. In opposition to those who propose a special hermeneutic for the Apocalypse, Buswell wrote,

In grammatico-historical hermeneutics, every book and every section of every book must be recognized for what it is, and what it intends to say. ... [T]here is one science of hermeneutics and that within this grammatico-historical

73 J. O. Buswell, “Book Reviews,” *The Bible Today* 39 (1945) 363.

74 Insofar as the temple of Ezekiel 40-48 is concerned, Buswell believed it to be eschatological. He suggested that it might be a description of the new heavens and new earth, but qualified that such a view is by no means essential to premillennialism (*Systematic Theology* 2.537). He also said that there is no inconsistency whatsoever in the dispensational premillennial view that Ezekiel’s temple will be a literal feature of the millennium. I personally believe that Ezekiel 40-48 describes a literal temple in the millennium (cf. Zech 14:16-18); see Timothy Tow, *Prophescope on Israel* (Singapore: Christian Life, 1992) 132-134.

science each particular writing must be recognized for what it claims to be, or what it proves to be when carefully examined. In other words, I would vigorously deny that we need any special hermeneutics for prophecy or for figurative language, other than what is included in the grammatico-historical method.⁷⁵

The apocalyptic hermeneutic that we find increasingly popular today in both liberal and evangelical circles would thus have found no place in Buswell's approach to the book of Revelation. Buswell's view finds similar expression in Robert L. Thomas who said that the only objective and legitimate approach to Revelation is the grammatical-historical method.⁷⁶ Buswell was against allegorical exegesis and speculative theology. He said that the exegete of Revelation must endeavor to find the "plain meaning" of its contents on the basis of the historical-grammatical method.⁷⁷

Buswell adopted the futurist approach to the book of Revelation. The Apocalypse is "a revelation *about* Jesus Christ, but it refers to a *future time* in which Christ will appear."⁷⁸ Insofar as authorial intent is concerned, Buswell said that the Apostle John clearly "intended the title of his book (i.e. *Apokalupsis Iesou Christou*) to be understood as signifying the visible glorious Second Coming of Christ to this earth."⁷⁹ The Second Coming will be preceded by a literal seven-year tribulation period that consists of two halves of three and

75 Buswell, *Systematic Theology* 2.426-427.

76 Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7* (Chicago: Moody, 1992) 35.

77 Buswell, *Systematic Theology* 2.425.

78 Ibid. 2.427. Buswell considered the letters to the seven churches as primarily historical, written to the actual churches named. The many timeless admonitions in those letters are nevertheless still applicable to the churches today. He considered Scofield's notion that the seven letters were seven stages of church history "fanciful and speculative" (ibid. 2.428).

79 Ibid. (parenthesis mine).

a half years each.⁸⁰ The seventieth week will commence at the signing of a peace covenant engineered by the Antichrist between Israel and her enemies (Dan 9:27).⁸¹

Buswell was certain about the seals, trumpets, and vials of Revelation being chronologically sequential, and not synchronically repetitious.⁸² He believed that the seals and trumpets will occur prior to the resurrection of the saints at the middle of the tribulational week.⁸³ He believed the seals represent a picture of a stage in the history of the redemption of the church, and the sixth seal refers to the terrific cosmic disturbances Jesus spoke of in His Olivet discourse (Matt 24:6-7; Mark 13:7-8; Luke 21:9-12).⁸⁴ He also suggested that the six trumpets fall on the first half of the tribulation week, and that the seventh will occur at the mid-point of the week.⁸⁵ Buswell was however unable to ascertain the actual time in which the seals and trumpets will start taking place. As to the vials, he saw them as the Wrath of God poured out at the final half of the tribulation week.⁸⁶

Buswell took the mid-tribulational view of the rapture of the church. According to him the “last trump” of 1 Cor 15:52 is to be identified with the seventh and last trumpet of Rev 11:15. The Church Age (“the times of the Gentiles,” Luke 21:24) ends at this moment. The two witnesses, having prophesied for 1,260 days (i.e. the first three and a half years), will be killed by the Antichrist at this juncture.

80 Ibid. 2.452-453.

81 Ibid. 2.378-383, 452-453.

82 Ibid. 2.430. His reasons for so stating are found on pages 431-434.

83 Ibid. 2.434

84 Ibid. 2.435-436.

85 Ibid. 2.442.

86 Buswell wrote, “the vials of wrath are poured out within this three and one half year period, the latter half of the ‘seven.’” In another place, he wrote, “in a special sense ‘the Wrath of God’ begins with the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:18)” (ibid. 2.431, 436).

Their resurrection three and a half days later will also see the Rapture of the Church taking place (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16-17).⁸⁷ The Wrath of God is poured out only after the Church is raptured.⁸⁸

The outpouring of God's Wrath in His vial judgments at the sounding of the seventh trumpet inaugurates the earthly kingdom of Christ. The Lord begins His reign by destroying His enemies—the Beast, the False Prophet, and their armies (cf. Matt 13:30).⁸⁹ This will take three and a half years culminating in a final battle where Christ will wipe them all out by divine fiat. Satan, the mastermind behind the whole rebellion, will be bound with a great chain and cast into the abyss for a thousand years. As opposed to amillennialists, Buswell saw the binding of Satan as described in Rev 20:1-3 not as a present reality but future event.⁹⁰ During the millennium, the nation of Israel as an earthly people will, for the first time since her regathering (Isa 11:11-12), dwell securely in the promised land under the protection of Christ their Messiah. Christ will sit on the throne of David with Jerusalem as His capital, ruling over the whole world with the assistance of the resurrected saints.

Is Christ sitting on the throne of David right now in the Church Age? According to Buswell, Christ's reign on the throne of David is still future, and not fulfilled yet. He said, Christ is not now exercising the governmental functions of an effective king here on the earth. He is not enforcing the moral law of God or administering the affairs of the nations

87 Ibid. 2.390-391, 456.

88 Ibid. 2.457.

89 Ibid. 2.471.

90 Ibid. 2.486. From pages 486-490, he refuted the arguments offered by amillennialists concerning how Satan is currently bound.

of the world as a king administers the affairs of a realm in which he actively rules.⁹¹

Buswell was also convinced that the earthly kingdom of Christ on David's throne was not only future but also strictly "Jewish and Davidic."⁹² He did not think of Jesus sitting right now at the Father's right hand to be a fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:12-14). Buswell thought of Christ's sitting at the Father's right hand as the resumption of His royal omnipotence which He temporarily gave up (but always possessed) at the time of the incarnation.⁹³ Christ's enthronement together with His Apostles to judge the twelve tribes of Israel according to Buswell is an event of the eschatological future.⁹⁴ Buswell would thus differ from progressive dispensationalists who see Christ as sitting on the throne of David at this present age albeit in a spiritual sense, their acknowledgment of Christ's future literal reign on the throne of David in the millennium notwithstanding.

VII. Buswell a Reformed Theologian

Buswell's system of theology belonged to that of the reformed school. As a true and consistent reformed scholar, he was a five-point (TULIP) Calvinist as compared to a Calvinistic dispensationalist who is a four-pointer (TUIP), having rejected the third, namely, Limited Atonement.⁹⁵ He also rejected the doubly limited (TULLIP) version of the hyper-Calvinist who denies common grace, rejects the

91 Ibid. 2.352.

92 Ibid. 2.347. Buswell also pointed out that the "Davidic kingship of Christ is not a matter of favoritism to one people above another, but 'they were entrusted with the oracles of God' (Romans 3:2). Just so the future kingdom of Christ is to have historical continuity with the chief channel of revelation (See Romans 9:6; Rom 11:25-36)" (ibid. 2.348; he went on to elaborate on this from pages 348-361).

93 Ibid. 2.348.

94 Ibid. 2.353-354.

95 Ibid. 2.136-147.

genuine offer of the gospel, and teaches that the atonement is sufficient and efficient only for the elect. Buswell taught that the atonement is limited only in its design and intention; it is not limited however in its sufficiency and applicability.⁹⁶

Buswell also explained the biblical history of redemption in terms of covenant theology which basically limits the biblical dispensations to two—the period before and after the Fall—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace respectively (Rom 5:12-21).⁹⁷ In his exposition of covenant theology, he followed quite closely the two-covenant grid of the Westminster Standards, and so did not see any need for what has been called “the covenant of redemption.”⁹⁸ He strongly believed that the key to understanding “the biblical system of doctrine concerning man the sinner” is covenant and not dispensational theology.⁹⁹ He opposed the classical dispensational idea that salvation in the OT

96 Ibid. 2.141-144.

97 Quoting Webster’s dictionary, Buswell defined Covenant Theology as, “The theological system which rests upon the conception that before the fall, man was under a covenant of works, wherein God promised him (through Adam, the federal head of the race) eternal blessedness if he perfectly kept the law; and that since the fall man is under a covenant of grace, wherein God, of His free grace, promises the same blessings to all who believe in Christ (the federal head of the church)” (ibid. 1.307).

98 “[T]here is no ground whatever for a distinct and separate covenant of redemption in the *Larger Catechism*, and certainly there is none in the *Confession or the Shorter Catechism*” (ibid. 2.123).

99 Ibid. 1.308.

is obtained by legal obedience.¹⁰⁰ Buswell affirmed that justification by faith is “God’s only way of dealing with sinners in any dispensation.”¹⁰¹ Buswell thus saw the unity and continuity of God’s unfolding plan of redemption under the covenant of grace: By grace through faith in Christ alone is the unbroken soteriological theme throughout the Scriptures. Revised and progressive dispensationalists may not share the view of their classical forebears that the dispensations are ways of salvation, but their generally discontinuous soteriological system is still evinced by their statement that the dispensations are not “different methods of administering the so-called Covenant of Grace.”¹⁰² By this definition, Buswell though dispensational premillennial was neither “dispensational” nor a “dispensationalist.” Unlike dispensationalists, Buswell agreed with D. H. Kromminga that “a literal Millennium in the Scripture does not contradict the many Scriptural references to the covenants

100 Ibid. 1.314-315. See also Timothy Tow, *The Law of Moses and of Jesus* (Singapore: Christian Life, 1986). Buswell also mentioned the *inadvertent* mistake of covenantalists who at times spoke as if they were “dispensationalists” in saying that perfect obedience to the law was the condition of salvation in the OT. See his discussion under the heading “‘Dispensationalism’ in Hodge and Calvin,” *Systematic Theology* 1.316-319. He wrote irenically, “We who adhere to ‘covenant theology’ or ‘reformed theology,’ we who strongly emphasize the unity of the covenant of grace should approach our brethren who teach, ‘dispensationally,’ that there was an age of divinely ordained meritorious soteriology before Christ, and that ‘legal obedience’ was ever ‘the condition of salvation’—we should approach them with greater persuasiveness if we humbly remembered that this ‘dispensational’ idea of eternal life offered by means of legal obedience is inadvertently found in the writings of some of our greatest reformed theologians” (ibid. 1.318-319 cf. 2.110-113 on the active obedience of Christ). Indeed in covenant theology, legal obedience for salvation was valid only under the covenant of works when man was still morally perfect. Classical dispensationalists would have done well if they had not extended their concept of legal obedience beyond the Fall.

101 Buswell, *Systematic Theology* 1.316.

102 Doctrinal Statement of Dallas Theological Seminary, Article V, “The Dispensations.”

of God; and that it does not contradict the Biblical unity of the covenant of grace.”¹⁰³

VIII. Conclusion

A reformed view of redemptive history that takes seriously the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His covenant promises requires one to understand that God meant what He said, and that He intends to fulfill His promises to Israel literally. Reformed ecclesiology defines the church as having two distinct parts: (1) the *church universal* which comprises all the elect (both Jews and Gentiles) since the Fall, and (2) the *church local* (a mixed multitude of Jews and Gentiles as found in Israel in the OT and in the church in the NT) which comprises both genuine and false believers. Although national Israel possesses certain ecclesial characteristics of the church local, it is not the NT church. Israel is still very much a nation, and God continues to deal with her in that way. The very existence of Israel today in Palestine attests to that fact. Thus the OT ethnic/land/throne/temple prophecies and promises God made to Israel must find fulfillment in strictly Jewish and Davidic terms, not at this present age, but in the age to come.

The dispensational premillennial view of the end-times is unfortunately rarely found in reformed circles. J. O. Buswell is probably the only reformed scholar who has articulated such a position in a Systematic Theology. Some might mistake Buswell for a historic premillennialist, but he certainly does not fit into that category because he did not

103 See Buswell's review of Kromminga's *The Millennium: Its Nature, Function, and Relation to the Consummation of the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) in *The Bible Today* 42 (1948) 30-1. However, he faulted Kromminga for failing "to distinguish the coming of Christ for His saints in the rapture before the outpouring of the Wrath of God upon the world."

replace Israel with the Church, and did not hold to a post-tribulational view of the rapture (contra Ladd).

Neither can Buswell be classified as a progressive dispensationalist. Although as a covenant theologian, he saw more continuity than discontinuity in God's redemptive plan, his hermeneutical approach to biblical prophecy was much closer to the literal approach of revised or normative dispensationalism than to progressive dispensationalism. He also did not see Jesus fulfilling His earthly office as King on the throne of David presently, which he averred was yet future.

It is interesting to note that Buswell played a significant part in the "dispensational" history of Dallas Seminary. John F. Walvoord is arguably the greatest dispensationalist Dallas has ever produced. However, if it were not for Buswell, Walvoord might never have gone to Dallas, and Dallas might not have risen to such prominence without Walvoord's leadership in his many years as president. Walvoord shared how a talk with Buswell led him to decide on Dallas as the place to go for his theological studies,

Upon my graduation from Wheaton, the choice of seminary was before me. In the East a prestigious seminary with a long history, large faculty, and a great reputation was open, but I had heard about a new school in Dallas, later to be called Dallas Theological Seminary. It was obviously evangelical and had sixty-five students and only a few faculty members, none of them with earned doctor's degrees.

In my confusion I went to Dr. J. Oliver Buswell, president of Wheaton College, for guidance. He listened to my story and said quietly, “I think you’ll get a good education at Dallas.” This settled the matter for me.¹⁰⁴

Buswell’s recommendation of Dallas Seminary reveals the respect he had for the dispensational premillennial school. Generally speaking, he fit the *sine qua non* of dispensational premillennialism as defined by Ryrie.¹⁰⁵ Buswell saw a distinction between Israel and the Church, employed a literal hermeneutic towards biblical prophecy, and as a reformed theologian believed that God’s redemptive plan would ultimately redound to His glory.¹⁰⁶

As a covenant theologian and yet adopting a dispensational premillennial view of the end times, Buswell offers a significantly different perspective that has unfortunately been, by and large, ignored or neglected by scholars from both ends of the dispensational-covenantal continuum.¹⁰⁷

104 John F. Walvoord, “God is Faithful,” (<http://www.ccci.org/gl-men/stories/walvoord.html> [accessed July 14, 2000]).

105 Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody, 1995) 38-41.

106 *The Westminster Confession of Faith* states, “God ... [works] all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory” (chap. 2.1).

107 For instance, Buswell is conspicuously absent in Stanley Grenz’s synopsis and analysis of the millennial debate—*The Millennial Maze: Sorting Out Evangelical Options* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992). The index of Mal Couch’s *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996) contains no entry for Buswell either. Neither did the contributors of an earlier work edited by Robert G. Clouse, *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977)—cite Buswell. Millard J. Erickson in his book—*A Basic Guide to Eschatology: Making Sense of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) interacts with Buswell’s rapture position, but in his discussion on premillennialism, he focused on Ladd who is the chief representative of the reformed-premillennial view. He did not however interact with Buswell’s hermeneutical and eschatological scheme. It appears that Erickson too did not seem to think that there could be a reformed school that might be deemed dispensational premillennial.

Mal Couch rightly proposed that dispensationalists should begin to pay more attention to the soteriological strength of covenant theology, and that covenantalists, on the other hand, should start looking at the great tribulation and millennial reign of Christ literally which is indeed the forte of dispensationalism.¹⁰⁸ I believe Buswell's *Systematic Theology* could serve as a bridge for such a meeting of the minds.¹⁰⁹

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108 Mal Couch, "Premillennialism and the Jewish Connection," a paper presented at the 51st Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 17-19, 1999, Danvers, Massachusetts.

109 As a Bible-Presbyterian minister, I am reformed, and hold to the covenant system of theology. In the area of eschatology, I hold to a premillennial view that sees a distinction between Israel as God's chosen nation and the Church as the spiritual body of Christ. As regards the rapture, I take the pretribulation view.

Appendix B

DISPENSATIONALISM EXAMINED

Jeffrey Khoo

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many” (Rom 5:14-15).

There are some students of theology who misunderstand that premillennialism (i.e. the doctrine that Christ will return to destroy this present evil world system so as to set up His kingdom here on a renewed earth and rule a thousand years) is dispensationalism. In so doing, they have failed to realise that there are three main schools of theology, namely, (1) the dispensational, (2) the reformed-amillennial, and (3) the reformed-premillennial schools. All dispensationalists are premillennialists, but being premillennial does not necessarily make one dispensational. Premillennialism is also the eschatological view of a group of reformed scholars. J O Buswell’s, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, represents the reformed and premillennial faith. It must be categorically stated that the reformed or covenantal belief of God’s plan of salvation does not militate against a premillennial understanding of the end-times. The Bible-Presbyterian Church and the Far Eastern Bible College are thus not dispensational, but reformed and premillennial.

What is “Dispensationalism”?

What then is dispensationalism? The word “dispensation” comes from the Greek *oikonomia* (literally “house law”)

which means “stewardship,” or “administration.” For a time, dispensationalists were not able to agree among themselves whether a dispensation is a period of man’s stewardship, or a period of God’s administration. Lewis Sperry Chafer, for example, said that a dispensation is “a stage in the progressive revelation of God constituting *a distinctive stewardship or rule of life.*” Charles C Ryrie, on the other hand, explained that in a dispensation, “God is ... *administering its affairs according to His own will* in various stages of revelation in the process of time.” So, is a dispensation a human stewardship or a divine administration? It took quite a while before it was finally agreed that it is both. The doctrinal statement of Dallas Theological Seminary (*the dispensational school*) defined the dispensations as “stewardships by which God administers His purpose on the earth through man under varying responsibilities.”

How did Dispensationalism Come About?

Dispensationalism may be traced to J N Darby (1800-1882) who was an ordained minister of the Church of England. Darby, however, was dissatisfied with the strict clericalism found in that Church, and joined a group of like-minded men who did not see the need for a trained, and an ordained ministry. Everyone was a “pastor” and could preach and teach the Word regardless of whether he was equipped to do so or not. He became one of the important leaders of the Plymouth Brethren movement. Having a prolific pen, Darby left behind at least 53 volumes (each volume containing about 400 pages) of his writings. He interpreted the Bible in terms of a series of dispensations.

C I Scofield (1843-1921) was closely associated with the Plymouth Brethren, and through them he received Darby’s teachings. Scofield was so enamoured with Darby’s dispensationalism that he systematised his theology. In 1909, he published his Reference Bible which promoted and

popularised dispensational theology. He compartmentalised the Scriptures into neat dispensational sections. This made it an extremely attractive Study Bible.

Dallas Theological Seminary, under its founder Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952), became *the* School to champion dispensational theology. Till today, it is unashamedly dispensational. Its dispensational distinctive is clearly spelled out under Article V of its doctrinal constitution where covenant theology is unequivocally rejected. [Covenant theology sees only one unifying dispensation (better termed “covenant”) since the fall of Adam when God promised a divine Saviour who will save His people from sin (Gen 3:15, Rom 5:12-21)].

What are the Dispensations in the Bible?

Scofield divided the Bible into seven dispensations: (1) Innocence (Gen 1:26-3:24), (2) Conscience (Gen 4:1-7:24), (3) Human Government (Gen 8:1-11:26), (4) Promise (Gen 11:27-Exod 18), (5) Law (Exod 19:1-Acts 1:26), (6) Grace (Acts 2:1-Rev 19:21), and (7) Kingdom (Rev 20:1-22:21).

It must be said that there is nothing wrong in seeing dispensations in the Bible. Covenant theologians like Charles Hodge, and Louis Berkhof have their own dispensational schemes but all under the umbrella of the covenant of grace. There are not seven dispensations, but only two: (1) the dispensation (or covenant) of works (Gen 1:1-3:14), and (2) the dispensation (or covenant) of grace (Gen 3:15-Rev 22:21). God instituted the covenant of grace in Gen 3:15. The Lord Himself was the first Preacher of the Gospel when He declared, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” The Lord promised a Saviour from the seed of a woman—the virgin-born Son of God—who will save His people from sin (Isa 7:14, Matt 1:21-

23). The covenant of grace consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament. They differ in administration, but not in substance. The Mediator of both Testaments is the same, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6, Acts 4:12). The means of salvation is also the same—by grace through faith (Hab 2:4, Rom 4:9-25, Gal 3:7-9, Heb 11:6).

The problem with dispensationalists is in their *application* of their theological system. For example, they draw very sharp lines between each of the periods, and especially so between the dispensation of law and of grace. They say that the dispensation of law and of grace do not mix. Since law and grace are like water and oil, what God has given in the dispensation of law, namely, the Moral Law (i.e. the Ten Commandments) is not applicable to those living in the dispensation of grace. The Law has been abrogated, and is therefore not binding to those who live in this age of grace. The question remains: How can the Ten Commandments which is a reflection of the divine character and holy demands of God not be binding to us today? Till today, the Law functions as a sword to slay the reprobates in their stubborn rebellion against God (Rom 3:19-20). But to Christians, the Law becomes a torch to light up the righteous paths they ought to take in this dark and sinful world (Josh 1:7-8, Neh 9:13, Ps 19:7, 37:31, 40:8, 119:33, 34, 97, 105, Prov 6:23, Rom 7:12,22). [For an excellent refutation of the dispensational view of the Law, read Dr Timothy Tow's *The Law of Moses and of Jesus* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1986)].

Dispensationalists today are beginning to see the weakness of their traditional dispensational divisions. They now reduce the dispensations to three: (1) Law, (2) Grace, and (3) Kingdom. Others prefer to term them (1) Old Testament, (2) New Testament, and (3) Millennium. However, the problem of application still exists. They continue to insist that the

Moral Law as a whole has been cancelled, but its *principles* still apply. This begs the question: Is not the Moral Law a set of principles for godly living? This is simply an attempt by dispensationalists to have their cake and eat it too.

Dispensational Antinomianism

The dispensational aversion to the Moral Law has led some dispensationalists to advocate that salvation involves receiving Jesus only as Saviour, but not as Lord. This has to do with the “Lordship Salvation” debate. The whole controversy arose when John MacArthur Jr wrote his book—*The Gospel According to Jesus*—where he propounded that a person must accept Jesus both as Saviour and as Lord in order to be saved. In his book, he attacked Dallas Theological Seminary for teaching that it is not necessary and even unreasonable to impose the need to surrender one’s life to God as an added condition of salvation. Out of Dallas came two rebuttals; one from Zane Hodges—*Absolutely Free*—which represents the *radical* non-Lordship position, and Charles Ryrie—*So Great Salvation*—which represents the non-Lordship view. Hodges’ radical non-Lordship view which is tantamount to easy believism is to be rejected. Both Ryrie and MacArthur have their valid points. Both are really speaking of the same thing but from two different perspectives; a case of Paul (Rom 4:2-3) and James (Jas 2:21-23).

Reformed theology teaches that saving faith (*fides salvifica*) consists of these three factors: The (1) knowing (*noticia*) of the Word of God, (2) agreeing (*assensus*) to the Word of God, and (3) willingness (*fiducia*) to obey the Word of God. Romans 10:9 says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the LORD Jesus (which means SAVIOUR), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Saving faith is not only intellectual (i.e. of the mind), it must also be volitional (i.e. of the heart). Therefore, the salvation equation is neither (1) Faith + Works

= Salvation, nor (2) Faith = Salvation – Works, but (3) Faith = Salvation + Works.

Dispensational Calvinism

Most dispensationalists are four-point Calvinists. The point they reject is the third point—Limited Atonement. They believe that the atonement of Christ is *unlimited* in both its sufficiency and efficiency. Christ died sufficiently and effectively for the whole world, though only the elect are saved. This is no different from the Arminian view of the atonement. The Calvinistic expression of the atonement is that the cross-work of Christ is “sufficient for all, efficient for the elect.” [For elaboration, read the “Desiderative (Will of God),” by Timothy Tow, in *The Clock of the Sevenfold Will of God* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1991), 40-6].

There are also dispensationalists who believe that the atonement is unlimited in the sense that it includes non-soteriological aspects like the restoration of the physical or created world order during the time of the millennium. Christ’s atonement made it possible for the lion to live peaceably with the lamb during that time (Isa 11:6-7, Rom 8:22-23). It is true that the whole troubled creation is groaning for God’s redemption. But redemption will come only when Christ returns to set up His millennial kingdom. The problem here is not in that teaching but in the unnecessary dispensational imposition of an eschatological point onto a soteriological system.

Dispensational View of the Church and Israel

Dispensationalists see a *distinction* between Israel and the Church. According to His eternal counsels, God is dealing with two groups of His people throughout biblical history, namely, (1) Israel as a nation, and (2) the Church as the body of Christ. This position is taken because dispensationalists employ literal/normal hermeneutics in their interpretation

of prophetic Scripture. The prophecies and promises of the Bible which God has given to Israel must find fulfilment in Israel. Such passages should be taken at face value, and not spiritualised away to refer to the Church. The golden rule of interpretation is this, “When the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense.” For example, God promised David that his son will have a physical throne and kingdom (2 Sam 7:12-13). Thus, Christ—the Son of David—must sit on the throne of his father one day to rule over the whole earth (cf. Acts 1:6). And Christ will do just that when He returns to rule over a rejuvenated world in the millennium. The nation of Israel occupies a prominent place in God’s plan for the last days. He has not given up on Israel. Israel being the natural branch will be grafted back to the good olive tree at the divinely appointed time (Rom 11:24-26). This is one thing we can *agree* with the dispensationalists; they are *correct* in their *eschatology*. [Read Timothy Tow, *Proplescope on Israel*, with a foreword by John C Whitcomb (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1992), for a discussion on Israel’s place in the end-times].

What Constitutes Dispensationalism?

The *sine qua non* (i.e. essential elements) of dispensational theology are the (1) distinction between Israel and the Church, (2) literal interpretation of prophetic texts, and (3) unifying principle of the glory of God. We, as reformed-premillennialists, can agree to all three points. For us, the point that may cause some difficulty is the third, but the *Westminster Confession of Faith* 2.1 states, “God ... [works] all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, *for His own glory*.”

Therefore, have we as Bible-Presbyterians become dispensational? No, because we do not hold to a dispensational scheme but a covenantal one. Covenant theology is succinctly expressed in our doctrinal

constitution—*The Westminster Confession of Faith*—in Chapter VII, “Of God’s Covenant with Man.” Neither would dispensationalists accept reformed-premillennialists as belonging to their camp. This is because dispensationalists do not agree that the dispensations are “different methods of administering the so-called Covenant of Grace.” Dispensationalists see the divine goal as the glorification of God, while covenant theologians see the divine goal as the salvation of man. To us, the glory of God is not so much the goal but the *result* of God’s salvific work. Dispensational theology is a *discontinuous* system; it uses a chopper to cut up the Bible into separate pieces. Covenant theology, on the other hand, is a *continuous* system; it uses a needle with a scarlet thread to tie up the whole Bible. Although we accept the premillennialism of dispensationalists, we categorically reject their theological grid.

Appendix C

GOD'S HOLY LAW

Timothy Tow

“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:15-17).

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto

the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen 3:6-15).

In these days of widespread lawlessness, affecting even the Christian Church to our shame and pain, it is not only timely, but urgent, for us to preach on God’s holy Law. This Law God has given to mankind through Moses in the Ten Commandments.

Before we go into this subject, let us learn a lesson from the fortunate state of our nation under God, Singapore that we love. Though one of the smallest nations, Singapore is known throughout the world. We have a good many firsts. We have the tallest hotel, and at the Bird Park I was told we have the highest man-made waterfall in the world! We are the biggest port and we have the best airline. We are the richest in Asia next to Japan, but if you do not believe me, just look into your CPF account! How is it that a tiny nation like ours has become the envy of bigger nations, and the praise of those who respect us? The answer to this question is good government, and a corollary to this is a law-abiding people.

When God created man and put him into the Garden of Eden, which was Paradise, or Heaven on Earth, here was the perfection of perfections of good government. But to live happily in Paradise, man must obey his Creator. A holy God must have a consecrated people, a people absolutely obedient to His holy Law. To deviate in the least from His will or holy Law is disaster. So, the first thing that God did to the first

man and woman after bringing them into the world was to tell them the vital importance of obeying His holy Law.

This He did by setting up two trees in the Garden, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:16-17).

Now, we know the tragic sequel to this primeval event, how Eve under temptation and Adam by deliberation ate of the forbidden fruit. By the way, that fruit was not the apple as the world blindly believes and repeats. Yes, even ministers in high government misquote this portion of the Bible.

Now, the Lord God is a just God. He did not say “thou shalt not touch” as Eve reported. All He said was “Thou shalt not eat of it.” It is dangerous to add to God’s Word or to take away from it. At any rate, both man and woman had eaten of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and in so doing they brought death into the world. They broke the holy Law of God. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12).

That man should obey God absolutely as expressed in the Commandment not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is known in theological language as the Covenant of Works. That is to say, if man would do all that God commands him, then he can live as long as he keeps on obeying Him. Thus Moses promises the Israelites life in the Promised Land if they will refrain from their old Egyptian ways and keep themselves from the heathen practices of the Canaanites and fully follow the Lord. “After the doings

of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD” (Lev 18:3-5).

The Covenant of Works is not only transacted openly between God and man in a verbal statement, but invisibly inscribed upon the human heart. We are given a conscience that tells us inwardly that if we do good, God will bless us, and conversely, if we do bad, God will punish us. “Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath ... which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom 2:6-15).

But man has broken the holy Law of God. Man has sinned, and God’s Word declares, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4). “For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal 2:16). “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (Jas 2:10).

Man having failed to keep the Covenant of Works, he is expelled from the Garden. He not only has to die, but also to live a life of toil and sweat, and woman must suffer pain in childbirth. Man has lost his right to live. To redeem him from death, God has to work on man’s behalf by sending a Saviour. This is foretold in Genesis 3:15 when God said to the Serpent, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise

thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” By the death of the Virgin-born Son of God on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins (His heel is bruised), Satan, who has brought us into death, is crushed. This work of Christ in delivering us from sin and death and restoring life everlasting to us is called “the Covenant of Grace.” “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8-10). “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23).

There are many in the world today who are working their way to heaven by deeds of charity. Some Church-goers think that by offering money they will find compassion from God. This is like the Buddhist concept of earning a place in the Western Paradise by helping the poor; like the Roman Catholic buying indulgences, or doing penance. This will never save you. The way to life is not through works, but through “repentance [from sin] toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Are you trusting in your good works and righteousness which the Bible declares to be “filthy rags” (Isa 64:6)? For we are only condemned by God’s holy Law.

Since we are saved by grace through faith, and not by works, “do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the Law” (Rom 3:31). The Covenant of Grace in no way abrogates God’s holy Law, i.e., the Ten Commandments. Rather, it confirms. The Ten Commandments are the full expression of the moral law of God. The moral law of God emanates from the holy character of God, like the sun’s rays radiating from the sun. They are the foundation of human society, for without this law it would result in crime and anarchy, rebellion and chaos.

Inasmuch as God changes not, so His character changes not, and His law changes not. Indeed, all the laws of nations and governments insofar as they are just are founded on His holy Law.

One moral law that stems from the Sixth Commandment is given through Noah: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man” (Gen 9:6). When a man commits murder, our Singapore law decrees that he be put to death. There is no other alternative. This law is inherited from Great Britain, which was a devout Christian nation in times past. This stabilises our society. But today, Britain has veered from her Christian past. Capital punishment is done away with. What is the result? Murders are rampant and on the increase, and that is the same with every other country that has done away with the Sixth Commandment and capital punishment. The holy Law of God, says Calvin, is a sword that restrains evil, and must remain always. When it is done away or bound by man’s willful foolishness, crime and corruption multiplies. Woe to the nations that take lightly the Law of God.

But what is the relationship between the Christian and the holy Law of God? There is a school of theology known as Dispensationalism that says that since the law is done away with by the coming of Christ, we are no more under the law. Therefore the Ten Commandments are abrogated together with the ceremonial and statutory laws of the Old Testament. When the Ten Commandments are taken lightly, antinomianism results. Chambers defines antinomianism thus: “The belief that Christians are emancipated by the gospel from the obligation to keep the moral Law—a monstrous abuse and perversion of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith ...”. One moral law, namely the Sabbath law of the Fourth Commandment, is particularly abused. To the Dispensationalist the Lord’s Day is the same as any other

day. They are not careful to keep it holy, i.e. to separate it for a Day of holy rest and worship. As a result, we find no peace on weekdays, since we spurn the peace He gives when we keep the Lord's Day.

The Ten Commandments remain a restraint to Christians, to keep us from sin. The Ten Commandments, says Calvin, is also like a whip, especially to our flesh, to urge us, like a tardy animal, forward to its work. We need the Law to keep us straight. It is also a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Christians walking in its light are kept from stumbling into sin. Christians, having the new life of God in them by the new birth, love this law and meditate on its virtues, ever willing to do His will by His holy Precepts. Jesus says, "If you love Me, keep My Commandments." And John says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). Hence the Ten Commandments are taught to candidates for baptism in the Catechism Class. The Ten Commandments are basic to the Christian Faith.

The holy Law of God springs not only from His holiness but also from His love. The Ten Commandments, according to Jesus' exposition, may be briefly summed up in the Great Commandments. The First Tablet relates to our duty towards God, so it is comprehended in "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt 22:37). The Second Tablet that relates to duty to our fellow men is comprehended in "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Yea, on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. God's Law is balanced by God's love. By way of contrast, ancient Chinese law allowed a father to kill his son. Muslim law punishes a thief by cutting off his hand. Moses' Law, which is given by God and tempered with love, yea even mercy, punishes a sheep stealer,

for example, with paying double compensation if the stolen animal is returned, and four-fold if it be not returned.

What Law in all the world is there greater than this? So Moses asked the Israelite nation that had received God's holy Law on mankind's behalf, "And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deut 4:8-9). Our response: "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Ps 119:97). The whole Bible is God's holy Law. Let us not only keep His holy Law, but treasure it forever in our heart by constant reading and meditation.

In these days of widespread lawlessness affecting even the Christian Church to our shame and pain, it is not only timely, but urgent, for us to preach on God's holy Law.

Jesus says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt 5:17-18).

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Appendix D

FAITH: TRUE OR FALSE?

Timothy Tow

“Faith” is one topic we often hear discussed, though we are living in a materialistic world. It is a topic we enter into when we are perplexed by life’s many problems. Faith in God seems to be a logical solution to our problems after all!

The text of this message: “Faith: True or False?” is found in Hebrews 6:4-9 as follows: *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.”*

The Scripture we have read describes the character of a false faith. By showing us what is false, we see the true faith more clearly. Now, there are those who go to church week after week. But it is God from above who can look into our hearts, and it is He who will divide us into those who have the true faith, and those who have the false faith. The Apostle likens the two types of faith to two types of earth. The preaching of the Word of God is like rain that comes down on earth. The good earth produces good fruit. In our church compound, we have planted some Pisang Rajah. Because the earth is good it brings forth very sweet fruit. But then we have also

very poor soil, where the fruit it produces is sour. Here is a picture of true faith and of false faith.

True Faith versus Unfounded Faith

Now let us consider some aspects of the false faith. First, the false faith may be called an “unfounded faith,” When you get into trouble, some rich old lady might try to comfort you thus, “It will be alright so long as you have faith.” What faith? “So long as you have that feeling, you know, that faith in you!” “Whether you have faith in Kwan Yin, or faith in Mohammed, or faith in yourself, so long as you have got that faith, you’ll be alright!” This sort of faith is like a ship carrying an anchor, but with a six-foot chain. In time of trouble, you cast the anchor to find it dangling in the air! There is no foundation. This is a false faith.

The Apostle Paul says, “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Your faith must have a foundation, and that foundation is the Rock—Jesus Christ. Is your faith anchored in Jesus Christ? Anything less is a false faith.

Perhaps you are a free-thinker. Realise that you have an unfounded faith in yourself that will never bring you salvation, except you come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus says that whoever will hear His words and do them will be like building his house upon a rock. That Rock, let me say it again, is Jesus Christ. Whatever trouble that comes into our lives can never shake us. A free-thinker can no more be confident in himself when trouble comes!

True Faith versus Implicit Faith

The second type of false faith is known as “implicit faith,” This is a Roman Catholic term. The word “implicit” comes from the Latin word meaning “to fold”. It is a blind faith. “You cannot have understanding in matters of faith,” that is what

the Roman Catholic Church says. “You can, only implicitly. You must rely entirely on us, the priests, who have studied the Scriptures. We are the ones to tell you what to believe and what not to believe.” So, in earlier days, for anyone to read the Bible or expound the Bible, there would be the risk of being burned at the stake. Implicit faith is blind faith. A false faith, my Roman Catholic reader!

A fellow pastor told me that when he went to Medan recently, he found the Church there has become quite degenerate. The people have the Bible, but they never open it. When he quoted the most famous verse in the Bible, and asked them if they knew it, they replied, “Where is it? They have never heard nor read John 3:16. These inside the established Church of the Bataks have also been led by blind pastors. “Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?” (Luke 6:39). The true faith is not the implicit faith, the faith that is folded up, the faith that is blind. The true faith is founded on knowledge. The true faith is explicit faith. That is the open faith, unfolded faith, when it is declared to you by the preaching of the Bible.

The Bible is an open Book. When it is well explained to us we say, “This is logical faith, this is founded on fact.” Now, we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ at Easter. Did He not show Himself ten times to the Apostles in order to establish the fact that He is risen from the dead? Therefore, He is able to save us to the uttermost! Ours is an open faith, and not a blind, “implicit” faith. Do you have it?

True Faith versus Ritualistic Faith

Thirdly, the false faith is a “ritualistic faith.” For example, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration: Except it is sprinkled with the holy water by the priest of the Roman Catholic Church, they declare, every unbaptised baby, when it dies, goes to hell! Every baptised adult, if he has committed a

mortal sin and has not made confession, when he dies, he goes to hell! This kind of ritualistic faith is a false faith.

Jesus says, “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, which is corroborated by Paul in I Corinthians 12:13, he cannot be saved. Not the ritualistic faith of man-made holy water, but rather, the Spirit-baptised faith. You must be born again by the water of the Spirit. Can you say that?

The saving work of the Holy Spirit is like rain. It may come in a storm, or it may come in a drizzle. Nevertheless, the rain comes to revive our hearts so parched and dried up by sin. I pray that you may have a Spirit-baptised faith, not ritualistic faith, as you read on.

True Faith versus Undigested Faith

The false faith is that faith called “undigested faith,” “This people come to Me and they draw nigh unto Me with their mouths and they honour Me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me” (Matthew 15:8). They come to church and they sing hymns, they read in the responsive reading, but their thoughts are far away from God.

Their hearts are never touched. Calvin says those who have Christ on their lips and Christ in their minds can merely give mental assent to the truth. This is not saving faith. You were brought up in the church. You do not have idols. And you say, “Our parents were Christians but we don’t go to church now,” “Do you believe the Bible?” “Yes, every word.” “Who is Jesus Christ?” “He is the Saviour of the world.” “But is He your Saviour?” You cannot say! Undigested faith, mere mental assent, is a faith that is false. True faith must be absorbed into your inner-most being. True faith is digested faith.

Once I went to hospital to baptise a 12-year old Sunday School student of Life Church. This young boy was dying of a heart disease. He knew that his days were numbered. After I baptised him he died within one week. Now, when I baptised him with a borrowed bowl from the nurse, a bowl full of water, he looked with sparkling eyes, “Pastor, need I also drink the water?” This shows a faith that reaches down to the stomach! Jesus says, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you.” That’s it! It must go into the whole system, it must be a digested faith. You have eaten Jesus!

The Jews could not understand: “What, He’s teaching cannibalism? Eating somebody’s flesh?” The Lord did not mean it literally, but spiritually. “You must have a part with Me, that My death and sufferings on the cross become as food received into your body.” Do you receive Jesus with joy and gladness as you eat a hearty meal? I thank God He died on the cross for my sins; and by believing, all my sins are forgiven and I am on my way to heaven. As simple as that, “If you will”—as simple as that—“if you will take it.” You see, the trouble with us is like some patients when they go to see a doctor. They take the medicine home but put it on the shelf after only one sip. They have no faith in the doctor. “Undigested faith” is false faith! O may you receive Christ fully and heartily now!

True Faith versus Self-Deluding Faith

Then, there is that false faith called “Self-deluding faith.” False, deceiving faith. You think that you believe but you don’t. In the last verse of the second chapter of John, when Jesus Christ was in Jerusalem and did many miracles, the crowds believed on Him for the miracles they had seen. But Jesus did not believe them. Jesus did not commit Himself to them because He knew them through and through. When the Lord Jesus Christ fed the five thousand with the five

loaves and two fishes, all of them applauded, “Marvellous, marvellous!” One of them was Judas. “Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,” he yelled. He believed Jesus for the things that are of the flesh. Some people come to church because there are some advantages to be gained.

Do you believe Jesus for some of these advantages? Now, when Jesus repudiated the five thousand who came the next day for material gain, we see Judas’ faith turn sour. “Self-deluding faith.” As for Peter, he said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God”— the Saviour of the world. So, when Peter was professing his faith with a burning heart to Jesus, there walked away old Judas, sulking. Judas was deluded in the first instance. Self-deluding faith is not the true faith.

Self-deluding believers! When testing comes will you say to the pastor, “God doesn’t answer my prayer, why should I attend your church?” We can never come to God like this. We can only kowtow before Him confessing our sins. We are beggars, not choosers. Beware of self-deluding faith!

True Faith versus Self-Preserving Faith

Finally, but by no means exhaustive, is the “self-preserving faith.” What is the self-preserving faith? That is taught again by the Roman Catholic Church. If you don’t work your salvation well enough you cannot go to heaven. You need the merits of saints and martyrs, of Mary and Jesus to help you to go to heaven. Salvation depends on your works! That is the saddest news of the Gospel that can ever be preached to me, if going to heaven depends on the good I have done.

Spurgeon says, “If my garment of salvation needs but one stitch from me, I’m lost.” This self-preserving faith is a false faith. The true faith is the God-persevering faith in me that

saves. It is the Spirit of God working within us, persevering in us, that is the true faith. The God-persevering faith is the faith that will carry us to heaven, that gives us peace and security, that gives us assurance of life everlasting. Jesus says, "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28, 29).

Praise God for this hymn, "He will hold me fast: for my Saviour loves me so, He will hold me fast." So Paul can say, "For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." That is the Protestant faith and the true faith. That is the reason why when other people are crying and upset, we can remain calm, for we know that, come what may, the Lord will never let us down. Come what may, He is going to persevere in me to see me through. Once saved, praise the Lord, He will not allow me to be lost. Once saved, always saved!

I may stray from Him, but He will not let me for long. He will always bring me back to Himself. Praise the Lord, salvation is not what we can do. Salvation is all in Him, but we need more faith!

What is the work of God that we must do? Jesus says, "The work of God is that you believe on Him whom He has sent." Some of you have come from a background of implicit faith, of a ritualistic faith, of an undigested faith, of a self-deluding faith or self-preserving faith. Let go, and let Jesus take over! This is the true faith! This is the saving faith. This is the faith that saves you now, and forever. Amen.

Appendix E
BAPTISMAL REGENERATION EXAMINED
Jeffrey Khoo

The doctrine of baptismal regeneration teaches that baptism is essential for salvation. Those who teach this doctrine say that faith in Christ is not enough, one must go through the rite of water baptism if one is to receive salvation. Thus, their salvation formula is: Faith plus baptism equals salvation.

The question we want to ask ourselves is: “Does the Bible teach this?” This paper seeks to answer this question. Is baptismal regeneration tenable on the basis of principles of Bible interpretation, theology and context?

Principles of Bible Interpretation

Fallacious doctrines stem from equally fallacious interpretation. The Bible means what it says and says what it means. It is, therefore, imperative that we rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Tim 2:15). If we do not interpret Scripture accurately, we may fall into the danger of adding to or subtracting from God’s Word.

The sixty-six books of the Bible, both the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, are the inspired, infallible, inerrant and authoritative Word of God. The Old Testament and the New Testament are an organic unity. They are inseparable. They belong together. They are intrinsically connected. This fact is succinctly expressed by these two couplets: “The Old is by the New explained, the New is in the Old contained,” and “The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is by the New revealed.” Jesus Himself regarded the Old Testament as the Word of God (Matt 5:17-18). He explained the things concerning Himself to the Emmaus disciples from the Old Testament (Luke 24:27). It is, therefore, crucial to realize that if any doctrine is to be formulated, it must

find basis not only in the New Testament but also in the Old. Sadly, those who teach baptismal regeneration fail to apply this. Most of the arguments offered are taken from so called “proof texts” from the Gospels and Acts. Some of these verses are Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16. These verses seem to support the idea that water baptism is essential for salvation. However, in biblical interpretation, formulation of any doctrine must find basis not just in the Gospels and Acts, which are historical books but also in the Epistles, which are essentially doctrinal in nature, and in the Old Testament.

The Gospels and Acts, being historical in nature, primarily record for us what Jesus and the Apostles did and taught. Declarative statements are usually given without explanation or exposition. The Epistles are the books which deal with doctrine. The Epistles articulate what Jesus declared, and explain the significance of the Old Testament concerning Christ. Those who teach baptismal regeneration have failed to recognize the need to reconcile their doctrine with the Epistles, particularly Romans and Galatians. In the process of presenting their doctrine of baptismal regeneration, they have interpreted the verses out of context.

Another important principle in biblical interpretation is that Scripture must not be made to clash with Scripture. The Bible does not contradict itself. In Romans, Paul in no uncertain terms emphasized the fact that salvation is by grace through faith. “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17). If we say that water baptism is essential for salvation, why then did not Paul mention baptism as a requirement? Paul should have said, “The just shall live by faith and through baptism.” But nowhere in the entire book of Romans did Paul elevate the rite of water baptism to the level of the faith we must have in Christ in order to be saved. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul makes it very clear, “For by grace

are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Then, how about James 2:20 which states that “faith without works is dead”? The proponents of baptismal regeneration say that “works” here include water baptism. Now, it is vital to interpret the Bible in its proper context. A knowledge of the historical context would play an important role in helping us to interpret the Epistle of James. The historical context can be seen in chapter 1:26-2:13 and 4:1-11. James was addressing a people who called themselves Christian but showed no repentance in their lives. The argument that water baptism is essential for salvation cannot be argued from here because baptism is not even mentioned in James. We, therefore, cannot equate “works” with “baptism”. If we do, we will make James say what he did not say.

It is equally important to note the authorial intent of James. James was rebuking sin. He was not giving a discourse on the importance of baptism for salvation. What James was trying to drive at was that if a person says he has faith, his life must manifest the marks of grace. True faith will result in a changed life shown by good works but good works are not the means whereby a man obtains salvation.

The proponents of baptismal regeneration have started on a wrong premise for interpreting the Bible. They have failed to allow Scripture to speak for itself. Rather, they have read into Scripture and thereby teach a doctrine which is contrary to the historic Christian faith.

Theological Grounds

The doctrine of baptismal regeneration is an attack on the very heart of the gospel and the work of Christ. To say that baptism is essential for salvation is equivalent to saying that Christ’s death on the cross was not sufficient to save sinners

because anyone who wants to be saved must, on his part, go through the waters of baptism. Paul calls this “another gospel” (Gal 1:8-9). Paul warned, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” It is, therefore, of utmost importance that we understand the doctrine of salvation. In Galatians, Paul warned the Christians against a group of false teachers called Judaizers who taught that in order to be saved, one must not only believe in Christ, one must also be circumcised. Paul called these people “false brethren”.

In Romans, Paul contended with the Judaizers very fiercely. Paul argued very strongly that salvation is not by works but solely by grace through faith. In chapter 4, Paul answered the question, “Was Abraham justified by faith or works?” Paul pointed out that “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6). Paul further argued that salvation did not come because Abraham was circumcised. Abraham was saved “Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also; and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised” (Rom 4:10-12). Abraham was, thus, saved before circumcision! It is important to know that the New Testament sacrament of water baptism is identified with the Old Testament rite of circumcision (Col 2:11-12). Abraham was justified by faith alone. It is the same for New Testament believers—*Sola Fide*. Faith is the only requirement for salvation.

What then is water baptism all about? According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism question ninety-four: “What is Baptism?” The answer is “Baptism is a Sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost doth signify and seal our engrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord’s.” Baptism cannot save. It is a sign and a seal (Gen 17:11; cf. Rom 4:11). They signify and visibly represent the things that should have already taken place in the heart, namely, faith, conversion, forgiveness of sin, communion with Christ, etc. The sacrament of water baptism is a means of grace. It serves to help sinful people understand in pictorial form the spiritual truths concerning salvation. Baptism is, thus, “an outward sign of an inward grace.” That is why Paul said, “But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter” (Rom 2:29; Deut 10:16). Paul saw baptism as an expression of faith in Christ. To the Corinthians, he said, “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor 1:17). If the gospel and baptism are both essential for salvation, then Paul should have said, “Christ sent me both to preach and to baptize.” It is important to see the sacrament of water baptism in the correct theological perspective.

The doctrine of baptismal regeneration apparently suggests that a person has the ability to decide whether he wants to be saved or not. An explanation concerning the doctrine of man and of sin is needed here.

Man has no ability whatsoever to save himself from sin. After the Fall, man became totally depraved. The heart of man is completely corrupted by sin (Jer 17:9). Man is dead in sin (Eph 2:1). Man is not able to respond to spiritual things (1 Cor 2:13-14). Given the choice, man will choose to reject Christ rather than believe in Him. “As it is written,

there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Rom 3:10-11). How then can man be saved? It is only by the grace of God. God, before the foundation of the world, chose some to be saved (Eph 1:3-11). He made salvation possible by sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for sinners (John 3:16; Rom 5:8). Knowing that we cannot and will not come to Him by ourselves, He draws us to Himself (John 6:37, 44). Even the very faith to believe was given to us by God. And having saved us, He continues saving us to the very end (Rom 8:28-39). This is a wonderful truth. It not only comforts our hearts, it also gives all the glory to God. Salvation is by grace from beginning to end and not by works. Charles H. Spurgeon, “the prince of preachers,” said, “If my garment of salvation requires only a stitch from me, I am lost!” Baptismal regeneration is such a stitch.

Contextual Grounds

In order that the arguments for baptismal regeneration be valid, they must of necessity find consistency in the Bible where every person saved were saved after they were baptized. However, this is not the case. Baptism is not mentioned in Acts 4:4; 9:35; 11:21; 13:12, 48; 14:1; 17:4, 12, 34 when the people, after hearing the gospel, believed and were saved. Although, it is not stated that they were baptized, we are not saying that no baptism occurred. The point Luke was trying to drive at was that salvation came by way of faith alone — they “believed”.

Consider the example of Cornelius in Acts 10:44-48. Peter was directed of the Lord to preach the gospel to Cornelius, a centurion. Acts 10:44 tells us that “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard the word.” Note that the Holy Spirit indwelt Cornelius and his household before baptism (Acts 10:47-48). Romans 8:9 says, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of

his.” Are those who teach that water baptism is essential for salvation saying that Cornelius was not saved before he was baptized? The fact that Cornelius received salvation before baptism is confirmed by Peter’s report to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 11:15-17. Peter reported that Cornelius received the baptism of the Holy Spirit just as the Apostles had received theirs at Pentecost. This was the basis on which Peter concluded that salvation was also given to the Gentiles. Therefore, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and not water baptism, causes regeneration.

Consider Acts 19:1-6. In this incident, we find a group of John’s disciples. They were baptized with water by John but did that baptism save them? The answer is obviously in the negative. Paul had to instruct them concerning the way to salvation which is in Christ alone. That is why Paul had to ask this searching question: “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” This verse and the subsequent verses tell us that Paul’s concern was not whether they had already been baptized with water but whether they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration is associated with Holy Spirit baptism, not water baptism. The physical act of water baptism does not and cannot save.

In the process of arguing against the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, we are not saying that the ordinance of water baptism is not important. Indeed, baptism is commanded of the Lord. However, it must be stated categorically that baptism is necessary unto obedience but not necessary unto salvation. Dear reader, do you belong to a church which teaches that water baptism is necessary for salvation? Please understand that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles did not teach this. The Apostle Paul made it very clear: “The just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17). “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9). If you

do belong to such a church, the Bible commands separation and withdrawal from false churches (2 Cor 6:14-18; 1 Tim 6:3-5; 2 Tim 2:16-21; Eph 5:11). Do you love the Lord? Jesus said, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23).

Appendix F
THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR
Timothy Tow

Introduction

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” As the Apostle John warns of false spirits and false prophets, more so does our Lord the same, yea, even false Christs “shall show great *signs and wonders*; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt 24:24). Peter adds with “false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies” (2 Pet 2:1), while Paul rounds up the list with false apostles (2 Cor 11:13), false brethren (2 Cor 11:26) and false witnesses (1 Cor 15:15).

Furthermore, our Lord likens these agents of falsehood in the parable of the Good Shepherd to thieves and robbers, strangers, hirelings and wolves. But His sheep will not follow them. The sheep with keen discernment between the master’s voice and the voice of a stranger will keep out of harm’s way. Conversely, the Apostle John concludes, “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. *Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error*” (1 John 4:6). Hereby is the test: if you say, “Amen,” to the preaching of the Truth, you have the Spirit of Truth. If you reject the preaching of the Truth, you have the Spirit of Error!

The Spirit of Error

Now, Jesus says He is the Truth (John 14:6). If anyone attacks His Person, like the Docetists in John’s day denying His humanity (1 John 4:3), he is the tool of the Spirit of Error. When Arius, forerunner of today’s Jehovah’s Witnesses, in the fourth century denied the full Deity of Christ, he was also used by the Spirit of Error. Throughout the long centuries,

the Spirit of Error has made the salvation of a man's soul not by the sole grace of God, but by the complicated system of works by Mary, martyrs and saints, etc., etc. Of more recent history there have arisen the modernists and liberals who reject His infallible, inerrant Word, with the latest so-called Neo-Evangelical scholarship that hypocritically speaks of a "limited inerrancy." It is the Spirit of Error that counters the inerrancy of the Bible, yea, even the living Word who is Jesus Christ. But we believe the Word to be infallible and inerrant to the jot and tittle, and hereby reaffirm our faith on this doctrine of doctrines.

The Spirit of Truth

While Jesus is the Truth, the Spirit of Truth is *Another Comforter* whom the Lord, before His departure, promised to send to His Church (John 14:16). The Spirit of Truth is the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Holy Trinity (Matt 28:19). He proceeds from the Father (John 15:26). He manifested Himself in power at Pentecost by giving utterance in many languages to the Apostles in order to expedite the Great Commission of the ascended Lord (Acts 2). He is sent to indwell believers and to teach and guide the Church into all truth (John 14:17; 16:13). The mark of the Spirit of Truth is that He will not speak of Himself, but rather testify of the Son. He shall glorify the Son, for He shall receive of the Son and show it to us (John 16:13, 14). The Holy Spirit, being holy, "will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit is not a frivolous Spirit intoxicating the Church with hysterical laughter or with barking like dogs or roaring like lions.

The Holy Spirit does not receive our prayers as the Father and the Son. His function rather is to make "intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:27). As He is sent from the Father by the Son (John 15:26), He is also

called the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9). He is Comforter or Counsellor indeed, and no Jester.

Pentecostalism a New Phenomenon since 1901

In the light of what we have briefly studied of the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error, and of the various manifestations of the latter in the course of Church history, it is our purpose to examine a new phenomenon that has arisen in the Christian Church since the beginning of this century. Whereas in the centuries earlier the Spirit of Error has attacked the Person, Work, and Word of Christ; now in the last days, the attack is directed, ironically, against the Spirit of Christ in the name of the Holy Spirit. This is the greatest mischief perpetrated by the Spirit of Error, yea, even Satan himself.

Starting out as Pentecostalism, this seemingly movement of the Spirit has developed into a New-Pentecostalism which is now known as the Charismatic Movement. Of its beginning, the *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1978) says, "A number of fundamentalist Protestant sects that emphasise Spirit baptism as an experience different from conversion and evidenced by speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1-13) [were the beginnings of Pentecostalism]. They also teach the inspiration of the Bible, salvation by conversion and revival, instantaneous sanctification, divine healing; and claim to be a restoration of original Christianity.

"Early Pentecostal meetings were characterised by outbursts of ecstatic enthusiasm featuring healings, speaking in tongues and motoric movements. Pentecostalism began as an outgrowth of the Holiness Movement. In 1901 a Bible School called Bethel College was started at Topeka, Kansas, by Charles F. Parham, who using no textbook but the Bible, drilled his students in Spirit Baptism teaching ...

“One of the converts, William J. Seymour, brought the teaching to Los Angeles in 1906 where he founded the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission on Azusa Street. Seymour, a black with only one eye, was described by one who attended his mission as being ‘meek, plain spoken and no orator,’ in short, not a very charismatic personality. Despite his unimpressive appearance, the results of the Azusa revival attracted national attention ...

“Pentecostalism became an international movement early in its history ... Recent developments have excited a lively interest in Pentecostalism. Its impressive growth while the major Protestant churches have been declining has caused concern in many circles. The fact that higher social classes are being attracted to its teachings—coupled with the building of attractive modern Church buildings, accredited colleges (such as Oral Roberts University), orphanages and other institutions—has also brought increasing public attention. In the post-World War II period a spate of new ‘independent’ Pentecostal groups has appeared, including the New Order of the Latter Rain, Wings of Healing, the World Church, the Gospel Assemblies, and the Full Gospel Fellowship of Ministers and Churches, International. In addition to these, practically every major denomination, including the Episcopal, Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches, now has its own charismatic element ...”.

Charismatics and Roman Catholics since 1967

According to *The World Christian Encyclopaedia* (1982 edition), as of 1980 there were 100 million people in the world who claimed to belong to the charismatic-pentecostal *movement*. What is more significant is that since 1967 the charismatic experiences have leapt across the fence of Protestantism into the Roman Catholic fold. What began as pockets of tongue-speaking has now spread like a prairie fire, as we will see later in this discussion.

In the early 1970s the Jesus People Movement, a young people's movement, swept America and parts of Europe. It was about this time that Christian rock music began to be popular among these Charismatic young people. This new Contemporary Christian Music, as it came to be called, has spread to mainstream Christianity.

From Charismaticism to Ecumenism

As to the spread of Charismatic practices into the Roman Catholic Church, its strength can be seen in such meetings. In 1975, 10,000 Catholic Charismatics gathered at the Vatican in Rome and received blessing from the Pope. In 1977, a Charismatic meeting of 45,000 was held in Kansas City and its chairman was a Roman Catholic. At the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelisation, July 22-26, 1987, at New Orleans at which 35,000 to 40,000 attended, 50 percent of the conferees were Roman Catholics. Thus, the blossoming of the Charismatic Movement into a full-fledged Ecumenical Movement with an ever-increasing Roman Catholic population has taken place in a matter of two decades. Furthermore, David W Cloud, who was an eyewitness of the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit, says, "the charismatic movement is sweeping Asia and forms one of the most serious challenges to our missionary work and that of other fundamental preachers."

Now, while it is admitted that not a few members, lay people, in the Charismatic Movement are born again Christians that love the Lord, it is the leaders of the movement whose doctrines and practices energised by the Spirit of Error that must be refuted.

In making our refutation, we would borrow in part the Statement on the Charismatic Movement issued by the Far Eastern Bible College, Singapore, as follows: "We see this Charismatic Movement as a counterfeit of the work of the

Holy Spirit, being in essence Satan's confidence trick and end time deception. Everywhere denominational distinctives are being dismantled and Christians of every sort, Protestant and Roman Catholic, evangelical and liberal, believers and unbelievers, are drawn together in ecumenical fellowship — all in the name of the Holy Spirit.

“We see in the Charismatic Movement an insidious force aiding the ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT which is fast moving toward the formation of OIKOUMENE or ONE WORLD, Satan's counterfeit of ‘the Kingdom of God.’ A movement that brings Protestantism which was liberated from the darkness of Roman Catholicism through Luther in the sixteenth century now back to Rome is undeniably a movement of the Spirit of Error.”

The Error of Tongue-Speaking

Now this Charismatic Movement makes tongue-speaking the evidence of Spirit baptism which is required of all Christians. And tongue-speaking is the chief phenomenon that is stressed in the coming together of Protestants and Catholics. We affirm there cannot be such a gathering of those who have the truth of salvation and those who are bound by a false tradition, but by the insidious working of the Spirit of Error. This insidious working of the Spirit of Error has now ripened into the Togetherness Statement of Evangelicals and Roman Catholics (ECT) since March 29, 1994, whereby the work of Martin Luther bringing in the Sixteenth Century Reformation is all but lost.

And inasmuch as the Word of Truth declares that tongues shall cease (1 Cor 13:8), and historical evidences during a thousand and nine hundred years of Church history show that Biblical tongues have ceased, it behoves us to conclude that tongues today are not from the Spirit of Truth but from the Spirit of Error. In the mighty Pentecost of Singapore 1935

when the Holy Spirit caused 2,000 to be soundly converted through Dr John Sung, we spoke no tongues but sang hearty praises to the Lord. The speaking of tongues was forbidden by the doctor in his North China campaign.

At Shihkiachwang in Hopeh the Band stepped on charismatic territory again, for the meetings were held at the AOG Church (Assemblies of God). John Sung pointed out to them an anomaly. These who stressed on tongue-speaking as a sign of the Holy Spirit nevertheless had never repented of their sins. These so-called Holy Spirit filled ones were exhorted to come forward to confess their sins. Therefore Dr Sung stressed again, "What a sinner needs is not the gift of tongues but the gift of salvation. Too many who claimed to have the Holy Spirit ended up having an unholy spirit! Instead of being filled by the Spirit, they were felled by the Spirit."

That Biblical tongues have ceased is in full accord with the great Confessions of Faith of the Protestant Churches, and with the position of the Reformers. Charismatic tongue-speaking is not of the Spirit of Truth but from the Spirit of Error because it is often artificially induced through human agents, being unintelligible, jabbering utterances bringing confusion. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace ..." (1 Cor 14:33). Even if, for argument's sake, tongues have not ceased, these tongue-rattling ones are silenced by Paul's advice to the confused Corinthian Church, "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (1 Cor 14:19). To speak with understanding is to be energised by the Spirit of Truth, to speak in a tongue of 10,000 syllables of repetitious unintelligibility is to be energised by the Spirit of Error. I have a new Christian friend who has been sucked into the tongue-speaking section of the Anglican Church. He tells

of his taking lessons in tongue-speaking under the tutelage of his pastor. On request he jabbered away in a repetitious monotony of “ecstatic utterance.” Several young people from the same church, now delivered, have similar “ecstatic utterances,” all learnt from their pastor. Whether this is from the Spirit of Truth or the Spirit of Error, judge ye!

The Error of Divine-Healing

The next phenomenon stressed by the Charismatics is divine healing, miracle-working, showing off with “great signs and wonders.” Charismatic leaders like German-born Reinhard Bonnke, who had visited Singapore on two occasions, have made wild claims of healing, “causing the blind to see and the lame to walk.” To make such claim is not of the Spirit of Truth but of the Spirit of Error. A young Charismatic star of Singapore, Rony Tan by name, goes even to the extent of holding “miracle rallies,” also “making the blind to see and the lame to walk.”

Such bombastic display of pseudo-miracle power cannot come but by the Spirit of Error; inasmuch as our Lord and the Apostles had healed, but never by a miracle rally of the sick. If such faith-healers claim to be followers of the apostolic pattern, let it be known that “signs and wonders” were only those of an Apostle (Acts 5:12). These were given the Apostles to enable them to confirm the Infant Church (Mark 16:20). When the Church was established, the working of signs and wonders through healing was no longer needed. It therefore passed with the age of the Apostles, though there is a healing ministry by elders according to James 5.

We affirm that these Charismatic faith-healers, apart from snatching the glory of Christ for their own megalomaniacal ends, are deceivers, deceiving others and being deceived themselves. This blindness to those who claim to open the eyes of the blind is ludicrously published in Bonnke’s own

after-campaign report, wherein a young lady “testified” how after the evangelist’s prayer, one of her eyes, not very successfully operated on, had now received a clearer vision. Nevertheless the same young lady also stated she would go for an operation of the other eye. Now, if the faith-healer was of the Spirit of Truth, he should have healed both eyes. Since he did not, he was of the Spirit of Error. “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deut 18:22).

At the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit, Bonke boasted of how he scared a white salesman to repentance in a music shop in Africa with Jesus coming out of his eyes. This is what our Lord meant when he warned of “false Christs, inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt 24:24).

Now, from the healing ministry has erupted a hypnotic power whereby devotees are “slain by the spirit.” As shown on television, the latest and most powerful “worker” is Benny Hinn. With a swish of his hand, twenty, thirty, forty “frontliners” would be floored by an unseen power. This, it is claimed, is the working of the Holy Spirit. The significant thing of these who are “slain in the spirit” is that they all fall *backwards*, not forwards. “For the Lord hath poured upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; the prophets and rulers, the seers hath he covered” (Isa 29:10).

Falling backwards as a result of some unseen power occurred also in the days of Wang Ming Tao. Let Wang Ming Tao, China’s greatest saint, who was once a charismatic but got out of it in good time answer this enigma of being “slain in the spirit.” In his book, *These Fifty Years* (in Chinese), part of which I have translated and incorporated in mine, *Wang*

Ming Tao and Charismatism, he says: “There is another danger linked with the Charismatic Movement, viz., many seekers for the charismatic gifts are transgressors in speech and walk by their abnormal, unruly and irresponsible conduct. During a meeting some would get up and dance, some would clap and shout, and there are others who behave most unseemly and offensively. When counselled, they would reply they are acting in deference to the Holy Spirit. Should any ask them how the Spirit would cause them do such a thing, often one of their group would cite King Saul’s prophesying at Naioth and how he stripped off his clothes and lay naked for a day and a night (I Samuel 19:18-24). They admit that to lie naked is a loss of face. The Holy Spirit could cause Saul to do such a thing. But could He not cause us to do something special? Should the Spirit cause us to lose face, to be a laughing stock, we would be willing to suffer shame for the Lord’s sake. Not too long ago I saw how a charismatic leader used this same passage of Scripture about Saul in a magazine to prove that when the Holy Spirit fills a believer he can behave unseemly before other people.

“What a monstrous error is this! How they have misinterpreted to such an extreme this Scripture passage! Now, when Saul lay naked, he was not under the blessing of God but rather under His punishment to his shame. We should know that Saul at this time was long rejected for disobeying God. God had meantime anointed David King. God’s Spirit had departed from Saul and an evil spirit had come upon him. For envying David, he tried to kill him. David had to run for his life to escape Saul. At last he came to Samuel. When Saul came to know about this, he sent men to take David. But it turned out that three times men were sent to take him, three times these men prophesied by the Spirit of God when they came to Samuel. They could not lay hands on David. Finally this Saul, monster of monsters, went himself to take David, but who could imagine that before he

could get his quarry, he was overturned with disgrace. Not only did the Spirit of God cause him to speak but also meet with what the three messengers did not experience — for a day and a night he lay down naked. Not only should we not seek Saul’s experience but rather flee from it ...”.

Now, out of the practice of “slaying in the spirit” has erupted a new hysteria called “holy laughter” and out of the “holy laughter” a newest mania of barking, crowing, meowing and roaring of animal voices known as the “Toronto Blessing.” This so-called “blessing” has burst not only on Christendom but also taken centre stage of the world. It becomes sensational news to the curious, and to the gleeful chuckle of enemies in the world. “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up” (Hos 8:7).

Let Dr Frank McClelland and Dr Bert Oatley-Willis in their booklet, *The “Toronto Blessing:” Christian Faith or Charismatic Feeling?* (April 1995) present their observation of the whole show:

“The following eye-witness report is by a colleague of the authors, Don Morley. It is acknowledged that no two services can ever be the same, but what Don has written gives a fairly typical picture of a Toronto Vineyard Christian Fellowship meeting. The authors, and other acquaintances, have also attended with the purpose of making first-hand investigation and they confirm the validity of Don’s observations. One difference is that the Toronto Vineyard has now moved to larger premises.

“[Don Morley’s report:] On October 20th 1994 we went to the Vineyard Fellowship to witness the so-called ‘Toronto-Blessing’, held in a warehouse type building near the

airport. There were about 400 people in the main hall, plus an overflow room. A survey by the leader indicated representation mainly from the United Kingdom and the United States.

“Other countries represented were Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Holland, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Most areas of Canada were represented, but only a relatively few visitors from Toronto itself. The home congregation, when asked to stand, numbered less than twenty. This proved what we knew—that the ‘Toronto Blessing’ has little impact here.

“What we observed was sickening and diabolical. Many times we felt like walking out and had to force ourselves to stay. For the first forty-five minutes a band with two soloists led the singing. The people were standing and singing with them to deafening rock type music. The songs were about worshipping the Lord, but the music and behaviour seemed to be opposed to the Lord’s honour. During the singing the crowd was progressively aroused.

“In all, only about four different songs were used but each was repeated over and over—the chorus of the first song being sung thirty times. There was much arm waving, shouting with horrifying screams and, when the music volume was lowered, the drone of what must have been ‘tongues’ could be heard. By the end of the singing many of the crowd were exhibiting spasmodic, uncontrollable bodily ‘jerks’, which continued for the rest of the evening. When the leaders were speaking and one of these spasms occurred they either made a loud shout, or their words came out as a shout.

“Apparently this evening marked nine months since these ‘happenings’ began and they felt they had now ‘come to birth’. Between two of the songs, one of their own women went off

in a screaming account of the movement coming to birth. Here screams and actions were so realistic that for a time we thought she was actually experiencing labour pains.

“Four people were called forward to testify, but they had very little to say except that since receiving ‘the blessing’ they had a love for everyone. One man declared he had received the gift of prophecy that afternoon. He also said when he saw people lying on the floor after receiving ‘the blessing’, he wanted to lie on top of them to share it.

“One woman was so overcome by the spasms she appeared to be very drunk and could hardly walk. Here testimony time was taken up by her and the leader making jokes about her appearance of drunkenness. The crowd laughed hilariously so that it resembled a comedy show. Following each ‘testimony’ the leader prayed for them and they fell into a trance, one man later roaring like a lion ...”.

The Error of Prophesying

Let it suffice to conclude with a third and last analysis of charismatic prophesying. With the closing of the New Testament canon, God’s revelation to man was complete. And the Apostle Jude has said, “The faith was once [and for all] delivered unto the saints.” No preacher is to add any word as directly received from God to the Sacred Scriptures nor to take any away from it. But the stress on visions, voices and prophecies by Charismatic leaders has gone so haywire that it encourages some dauntless charismatic suitor to tell the young lady with whom his heart is inflamed, “The Lord told me last night that I should marry you today.” I would advise the harassed young lady to reply, “But the Lord did not tell me, neither last night, nor this morning.”

David W Cloud—the discerning fundamentalist reporter—who listened to dozens of prophecies, so-called direct

revelations from God, like the prophecies received by Old Testament prophets, at the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit, July 1987, declared that his own feelings were best described by a man named Neil Babcox, pastor of the Pentecostal Word of Life Church (Carbondale, Illinois), until his leaving the Charismatic Movement. Consider the testimony of this man who once gave such prophecies himself and who believed in such things: "Prophetic messages were quite common at our Church. In fact, whenever we assembled to worship, spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy, were foremost in our minds. Even though we followed no prescribed liturgy, there was an unwritten order of worship that always included the opportunity for one to prophesy according to the proportion of his faith (Romans 12:6) ...

"Our prophecies seldom if ever predicted the future. Instead they took the form of fervent exhortations or simple words of comfort. Generally they consisted of various biblical phrases and fragments pieced together like a patch-work quilt. Often they focussed upon such theme as the imminent return of Christ or God's forgiving love. Most of the time the prophecies were spoken in the first person as if God Himself were addressing us, but occasionally the phrase 'thus saith the Lord' was used even as it was by the prophets of the Bible ...

"There was something distinctly romantic about the notion of prophesying. There you are, standing in succession to the prophets of the Bible. Samuel and Elijah saw your day coming and were glad. True, your lips are unclean, but they have been touched by a live coal from off the altar. Like Isaiah, you have heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And you responded, 'Here am I. Send me! ...'

“Yes, it was all very romantic. But gradually, what had started as a romantic venture, an idealistic quest for spiritual gifts, was slowly imperceptibly changing. Into what, I wasn’t sure. ALL I KNEW WAS THAT THE EXCITEMENT AND ROMANCE OF PROPHEYSING WAS TURNING INTO AN UNEASY SENSE THAT THE PROPHECIES I HEARD, INCLUDING MY OWN, WERE HARDLY WORTHY OF THE NAME. THE IDEA THAT THEY WERE THE WORDS OF THE LIVING GOD WAS BEGINNING TO SEEM PAINFULLY LUDICROUS. Would the romance now become a comedy of errors, or a tragedy, perhaps? At any rate, one thing was certain: this burden of the prophets was becoming a crushing, onerous weight. And I couldn’t help wondering if the weight which I was carrying was not the burden of the Lord at all, but some foreign yoke of bondage ...

“IN MY CASE THERE WERE FOUR SIMPLE WORDS THAT PLAYED A DECISIVE ROLE IN CHANGING MY HEART: ‘THUS SAITH THE LORD.’ To me, these were most unsettling words. And the more I comprehended their meaning, the more I understood what the prophets meant when they spoke them and what the Holy Spirit meant when He inspired them, the more unsettling they became ...

“‘Thus saith the Lord.’ WHAT ABUSES I HAD SEEN OF THOSE WORDS! WHAT BITTER FRUIT I HAD SEEN BORN BY MEN AND WOMEN SPEAKING THESE WORDS! I have seen people married on the basis of guidance received from personal prophecies only to be divorced a week later because of a terrible scandal. Many lives have been harmed by such prophetic guidance. What actions, what conduct, have been countenanced by a ‘thus saith the Lord’ ...

“The moment of truth came when I HEARD A PROPHECY SPOKEN AT A CHARISMATIC CHURCH I WAS VISITING. I WAS SITTING IN THE CHURCH TRYING TO WORSHIP GOD WHILE DREADING THE APPROACH OF THAT OBLIGATORY MOMENT OF SILENCE WHICH SIGNALLED THAT A PROPHECY WAS ABOUT TO BE SPOKEN. THE SILENCE CAME, AND SOON IT WAS BROKEN BY A BOLD AND COMMANDING ‘THUS SAITH THE LORD!’

“Those words triggered an immediate reaction. Conviction, like water rising against a dam, began to fill my soul. ‘Listen my people ...’ [the prophecy commenced]. Until finally, the dam burst: ‘THIS IS NOT MY GOD,’ I CRIED WITHIN MY HEART. ‘THIS IS NOT MY LORD!’” (Neil Babcox, *A Search For Charismatic Reality—One Man’s Pilgrimage*, pp. 49-59).

What Babcox cried out in his heart that night about the Charismatic prophecies, reflect exactly the cry of my own heart [reiterated David W Cloud] as I heard the blasphemous prophecies in New Orleans. This is NOT my Lord and my God speaking! It is NOT the Holy Spirit, but a false spirit. These are hard words to those caught up in this movement, but this is a discernment based on the teaching of the Word of God and the fruit of the Charismatic movement, and should not be taken lightly by anyone.

What is said by David W Cloud of the charismatic prophecies he heard at the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit 1987 can be said of John Wimber in his Australian campaign also in 1987 in a self-proclaimed, “Third Wave of the Holy Spirit.” Speaking extra-Biblically “words of knowledge” as a direct revelation from God, he prophesied in Sydney, according to Andrew Shead, how “hundreds of millions” will turn to the Gospel and AIDS will be cured. This will be brought about by the display of *signs and wonders*. Ironically,

our Lord has preempted Wimber's trademark of *signs and wonders* in Matthew 24:24, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great *signs and wonders*; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

So, by "power evangelism," that is, preceded by *signs and wonders* of healing and tongue-speaking, slaying in the spirit, and now barking and roaring, the muted voices of dogs and lions, Wimber's disciples will impress hundreds of millions of people, and AIDS will be cured in these last days. But does our Lord say so? Rather pestilences (and AIDS is a pestilence) will be sent in judgment, and the Church will be lukewarm like Laodicea (Rev 3:16), "and because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt 24:12).

Nor will there be mass conversions in hundreds of millions but rather the command to accelerated missions by the age-old Great Commission, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt 24:14). There is no charismatic power to missions and evangelism, for the power is in the Gospel itself, and it is by the foolishness of preaching and not sign-power that it will go forward (Rom 1:16, 1 Cor 1:23, 24).

The Spirit of Truth who would guide us into all truth by His Holy Word the Bible has no part indeed in any of the above extra-Biblical prophecies which cannot come but by inspiration of the Spirit of Error. Nor does the Spirit of Truth have any part in miracle rallies or divine-healing lapsing into "slaying of the Spirit," mass hysterical laughter, and in barking and roaring.

Conclusion

Let us hear the prophet Jeremiah, “Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD” (Jer 23:31, 32).

Jesus says, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt 7:15-23).

In conclusion, let us hear the Word of the Apostle John again, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. ... We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:1, 6).

[Rev (Dr) Timothy Tow was President of the Far Eastern Council of Christian Churches (FECCC). The above is based

on a message delivered at the Second National Conference of the Indonesian Council of Christian Churches, Jakarta, November 26, 1987, brought up to date.]

Appendix G

CHARISMATIC TONGUES EXAMINED

Jeffrey Khoo

“Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue” (1 Cor 14:19).

The Charismatic Movement has popularised tongue-speaking in many churches. Some claim that tongue-speaking has brought revival to the church, while others observe that it has caused confusion instead. Should Christians speak in tongues today? What does the Bible teach concerning tongues?

A Supernatural Gift of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the One who enables a person to speak in tongues (1 Cor 12:4, 8-10). It is He who decides which gift or gifts a Christian should have (1 Cor 12:11). If it is not the will of the Holy Spirit that a person should have the gift of tongues, he will not have it even if he seeks it through much prayer and fasting. Paul has made it very clear that not everyone will have the same gifts: “Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” (1 Cor 12-29-30). These rhetorical questions expect the answer, “No.” Not everyone will have the gift of tongues, and be able to speak in tongues.

It is also important to note that when the gift of tongues is given to an individual, the Holy Spirit supernaturally enables him to speak in tongues. One does not need to go through any speech training in order to exercise the gift. Tongue-speaking is not letting one’s tongue “roll” in super-quick *hallelujahs* till one gibbers. Such self-induced and self-

taught tongues are not biblical tongues. The ability to speak in tongues is God-given, not man-made!

Foreign Languages or Ecstatic Utterances?

The first instance of tongue-speaking was at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit filled the disciples of Christ, and they began to speak “with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). The Greek word *glossai* (tongues) means “languages.” The Apostles at Pentecost were supernaturally empowered to speak in foreign languages they had not previously learned. This is proven by the fact that when they spoke in tongues, the people were amazed because “every man heard them speak in his own language (literally, “dialect”),” and questioned among themselves, “Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue (dialect), wherein we were born?” (Acts 2:6, 8). Who were these people who heard the Apostles speak? They were “Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues (languages) the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:9-11). Luke the inspired historian would have us know that when the Apostles spoke in tongues, they spoke in foreign languages or ethnic dialects. Tongue-speaking is not ecstatic speech or gibberish. The gift of tongues is the gift of languages.

It is readily admitted by many modern tongue-speakers that the tongues they speak are not human (i.e. foreign languages) but angelic tongues (i.e. ecstatic utterances, cf. 1 Cor 13:1). As far as we know from Scripture, whenever the angels spoke, they did so in human languages, namely, Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. In any case, it ought to be understood that Paul was using hyperbolic speech here. A hyperbole is

an intended exaggeration to drive home a desired point. Paul was not saying that he is able to speak in angelic tongues (or that there is such a thing as tongues of angels), or understand all mysteries, have all knowledge, or move mountains. He is saying that even if he can do all those things, but does not have love, he is a big zero. To understand 1 Cor 13:1-2 other than this is to miss Paul's point.

The confusion over tongue-speaking is not new. Paul found absolute confusion over the use of spiritual gifts in the church at Corinth (1 Cor 12-14). The gift of tongues was abused by the Christians there. Every member in church wanted to speak in tongues. Obviously, some did not have the gift, but pretended to have it by speaking ecstatically.

It needs to be clarified that the "unknown tongue" (so KJV) Paul speaks of is not ecstatic speech but foreign language (1 Cor 14:2). It is "unknown" in the sense that the gifted man is able to speak in a foreign language he has never learned or heard before, and that it is unintelligible to the hearer who does not know the language spoken. In ordinary circumstances, when a person speaks in tongues in his own native church, no man understands; only God understands since He understands all languages (1 Cor 14:2). Thus the one who speaks in tongues edifies only himself since without an interpreter or translator, he is the only one who understands what he is saying (1 Cor 14:4). Paul emphasized the importance of understanding; "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (1 Cor 14:19).

The central idea Paul was trying to get across was that edification (1 Cor 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26) comes by way of understanding (1 Cor 14:2, 7, 9, 14, 15, 16, 19). Paul said that prophesying is superior to tongue-speaking. The gift of

prophecy is the gift of being able to foretell and forthtell the will and word of God. When the prophet speaks, he speaks to his own people in their own native tongue. The members of the church benefit from the words spoken because they are able to understand the message given.

The Apostle makes this very clear by using the illustration of music (1 Cor 14:7-8). Music is music only when there is a tune or a melody. How does one expect to appreciate music when the pianist plays only one note throughout, or a random string of notes that does not make up a tune? So unless one speaks in a language that others can understand, one is wasting one's breath (1 Cor 14:9). A language has grammatical forms and syntactical structures comprising of nouns, verbs, conjunctions, prepositions, adjectives etc. As Paul said, "There are, ... so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification" (1 Cor 14:10). When a person prays in tongues, he prays with his heart as well as with his mind (1 Cor 14:15). In other words, he knows what he is saying and can identify the language he is speaking. A genuine tongue-speaker will be able to analyse the language he has spoken by identifying the different words he has used, and their respective meanings. The Holy Spirit is perfect. The gifts that come from Him are perfect. The gifted tongue-speaker when given the supernatural ability to speak in a foreign language will be perfectly proficient in that language he is enabled to speak. He will be able to write out the content of his speech, list the vocabulary, and demonstrate the grammatical-syntactical relationship of the words. Are modern-day tongue-speakers able to do this?

A Sign-Gift

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (1 Cor 14:22). What did Paul mean when he said that "tongues are for a sign?" In verse 20, Paul chided the Corinthians, "Brethren, be not children

in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.” In other words, Paul was telling them, “Know your Bible! Don’t you see the purpose of tongues?” Paul then drew their attention to the Old Testament. In verse 21, the Apostle cited Isa 28:11-12b. The context of Isa 28 is that of judgment. The Israelites have repeatedly refused and stubbornly rejected the clear admonitions of the Lord through His prophet. Since they would not heed the word of the Lord spoken to them in their own native tongue, namely, Hebrew, they would now have to hear it in another language, namely, the Assyrian. “But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken” (Isa 28:13). It was a word of judgment against the unbelieving Israelites.

Therefore, tongues were a sign to unbelieving Jews. The Jews thought that they were the only people to whom God extended salvation. This was a misconception. The gift of tongues was meant to correct this erroneous idea. Consider Peter’s experience in Acts 10. The Lord wanted Peter to preach the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile. As a full-blooded Jew, Peter would have nothing to do with a Gentile. But the Lord spoke to Peter in a vision commanding him three times to eat the foods the Jews classified as unclean (Acts 10:11-16). This was to prepare Peter to minister to Cornelius, an unclean person in the eyes of the Jew. When Cornelius sent for Peter, Peter in obedience to the Lord went to see him, and the Scripture says, “While Peter yet spake these words the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed (i.e. Christian Jews) were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God” (Acts 10:44-46). When Peter returned to Jerusalem, he

was summoned by the Council to account for his visit to a Gentile home. His fellow Apostles and Elders were angry with him because he preached the gospel to Cornelius. How did Peter vindicate himself? Peter told them the whole story, how God spoke to him, and how the Spirit led him to Cornelius' house. Peter testified, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). Peter saw Cornelius and his household gloriously saved as evinced by their speaking in tongues just as he did at Pentecost. Peter went on to say, "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift (i.e. the Holy Spirit) as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17). What was the response of the Jerusalem Council who took Peter to task? "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). Herein is the purpose of the gift of tongues—a sign to unbelieving Jews. To Peter and the Jerusalem saints, it was a sign of confirmation, but to those who refuse to believe, it is a sign of judgment.

Is there still a need for God to convince Jews that the gospel is also given to Gentiles? There is no need. No longer are Jews preaching the gospel to Gentiles, but Gentiles to Jews! What then is the purpose of tongues today? Since it has accomplished its purpose, has it been withdrawn?

Have Tongues Ceased?

The Apostle Paul, in the first century, told the Corinthians that revelatory gifts such as prophecy, tongues, and knowledge, will cease: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away" (1 Cor 13:8).

Before we discuss the cessation of tongues, let us deal with the cessation of prophecies and knowledge. Paul said that prophecies “shall fail,” and knowledge “shall vanish away.” The words “fail,” and “vanish away” are the same word in Greek, *katargeo*, which is a very strong word of cessation. It basically means “to destroy” (cf 1 Cor 15:24, 26). The word *katargeo* (to destroy) is written in the Greek passive voice. This indicates that there will be an outside agent which will cause prophecies and knowledge to cease. What is this external element? Verses 9-10 give us the answer: it is “the perfect thing” (*to teleion*). What is this “perfect thing?” It is the completion of the canon (i.e. the 66 books of the Bible). When Paul wrote his epistle to the Corinthians, the New Testament was in the process of being written. Once it is completed—the last book written—revelation will cease. All that God wants man to know concerning Him and us is found in the Bible. It is sufficient and authoritative. It is God’s complete and final revelation to man (2 Tim 3:16-17, Rev 22:18-19).

How about tongues? Paul wrote that tongues “shall cease.” The word “cease” here is the Greek *pauo* which means “to stop.” Unlike the gifts of prophecy, and knowledge, which require an external force to cause their cessation, the gift of tongues will cease by itself (Greek middle voice). It will automatically fade away in the course of time when it has served its purpose. G F Rendal, a former Charismatic, commented, “This purpose was fully achieved when it was fully admitted that the nations, as well as ‘this people’ (the Jews), benefited from Jehovah’s salvation. When this fact was universally believed, accepted and no longer contested by anyone, this gift was no longer needed. ... Stars, as everyone knows, are visible and useful only at night. When the sun rises they disappear. So it is with the gift of tongues. It was only useful during the darkness of an unbelieving Israel who opposed the nations’ salvation. The gift faded out very

simply when the Gentiles' calling came to light. This is what finished off the last of my resistance" (*I Speak in Tongues More Than You All*, 80-1).

Does history confirm the early cessation of tongues? The famous Church Father, Augustine, wrote in the fourth century, "In the earliest time the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spake with tongues, which they had not learned, 'as the Spirit gave them utterance.' These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, and to shew that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening and it passed away" ("Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John," Vol VII, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, VI, 10). The greatest revival of the Church since Pentecost, namely, the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation, was not characterised by tongue-speaking, but powerful preaching. Luther, Calvin, and Knox did not speak in tongues.

The Apostle Paul was trying to drive this point home: the sign gifts which belong to the Apostles (2 Cor 12:12) will pass away. They are temporary gifts. The Church should not pursue them. Christians should rather seek after these three Christian graces: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor 13:13). The temporariness of the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge is contrasted with the permanency of the virtues of faith, hope, and love. It is crucial to note Paul's three-tier argument: (1) Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge will cease upon the completion of the Bible, and passing away of the Apostles; (2) Faith, hope, and love are virtues which will remain throughout the entire Church Age; (3) Faith and hope will be realized when Christ returns. But the greatest of these is love because love, being a divine virtue, will remain forever.

The table below sums up the whole discussion. What are the differences between Biblical tongues and Charismatic tongues?

Biblical Tongues	Charismatic Tongues
Spirit-empowered, and supernaturally given (1 Cor 12:11).	Self-induced and humanly taught.
Foreign languages or dialects (Acts 2:6).	Ecstatic utterances or gibberish.
Involves both spirit and mind (1 Cor 14:15).	Involves the spirit but not the mind.
There is order (1 Cor 14:40).	There is confusion and chaos.
Provides edification (1 Cor 14:5).	Promotes ecumenism (<i>Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement</i> , s.v. "Charismatic Movement," by Peter Hocken).
Given only to some according to the will of God (1 Cor 12:30).	Given to all according to the will of man.
Temporary gift of the Apostolic Age (1 Cor 13:8).	Permanent gift of the Church Age.
Comes with the gift of interpretation (1 Cor 14:13).	Does not necessarily come with the gift of interpretation.
Given only to Christians (Mk 16:17; Acts 8:13,17).	Given to professing Christians and Roman Catholics (<i>Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements</i> , s.v. "Catholic Charismatic Renewal," by F. A. Sullivan).
Always controlled (1 Cor 14:27-28).	Often wild, and hysterical.
Least of the spiritual gifts (1 Cor 14:5).	Best of the spiritual gifts.
Sign to unbelieving Jews (1 Cor 14:22).	Sign of personal spirituality or holiness.

It may be clearly seen, in the light of Scripture, that the tongues of the Charismatic Movement are not the same as the tongues of the New Testament. They are not from the same Holy Spirit. God will not confuse His Church for He “is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Cor 14:33). What is the solution to the Charismatic confusion? The key is love, for love “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth” (1 Cor 13:6).

Appendix H

HYPER-CALVINISM IN THE LIGHT OF CALVIN

Jeffrey Khoo

Introduction

Calvinism is that system of doctrine derived from the great French theologian—John Calvin (1509-64)—author of the famed reformed manifesto called *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536). What then is Hyper-Calvinism? The prefix “hyper” (Gk: *huper*) means “above” or “beyond.” Hyper-Calvinism is thus a twisted form of Calvinism that goes beyond what Calvin in accordance to Scriptures had taught. So, it is necessary to identify the aberrant doctrinal distinctives of Hyper-Calvinism to prevent any misrepresentation of true Calvinism. The errors are basically two: (1) denial of common grace, and (2) denial of the free offer of the gospel.

Definition of Common Grace

Common grace must be distinguished from saving grace. When we talk about saving grace we are referring to the Holy Spirit’s regenerative work on the sinner through the Gospel of Christ reconciling him to God (Rom 3:24, Eph 2:8-9). On the other hand, common grace is God’s favourable bestowal upon all of mankind those things necessary for creaturely existence on this sin-plagued earth (Ps 145:9, 1 Tim 4:10). These non-soteric blessings include the gift (1) of time for man to repent (Rom 2:4, 2 Pet 3:9), (2) of the conscience for sin’s restraint (Gen 20:6, Rom 2:14-15), (3) of intelligence, and talent for the arts and sciences (Exod 31:2-11, 35:30-35), and (4) of rain, sunshine etc, for all to enjoy (Matt 5:44-45, Acts 14:16-17).

Hyper-Calvinistic View of Common Grace

Hyper-Calvinists reject the doctrine of common grace. According to them, God hates all unbelievers, and works

all things towards their destruction.¹ One of the favourite proof texts cited is Mal 1:2-3 (Rom 9:13). This passage does speak of God hating the wicked, but the Hyper-Calvinistic interpretation is flawed because of *its failure to distinguish between common grace and special grace*.

Calvin's View of Common Grace

Did Calvin teach common grace? There is no question that he did. Consider his words in his *Institutes* 2.2.14, "The power of human acuteness also appears in learning these [i.e. the arts] because all of us have a certain aptitude. ... Hence, with good reason we are compelled to confess that its beginning is inborn in human nature. Therefore this evidence clearly testifies to a universal apprehension of reason and understanding by nature implanted in men. Yet so universal is this good that every man ought to recognize for himself in it the peculiar grace of God." Consider also *Institutes* 2.2.15, "When we come upon these matters in secular writers, let that admirable light of truth shining in them teach us that the mind of man, though fallen and perverted from its wholeness, is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God's excellent gifts. If we regard the Spirit of God as the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to dishonor the Spirit of God. ... Shall we deny that the truth shone upon the ancient jurists who established civic order and discipline with such great equity? Shall we say that the philosophers were blind in their fine observation and artful description of nature? Shall we say that those men were devoid of understanding who conceived

1 Hyper-Calvinism is represented in the literature of the Protestant Reformed Churches (USA), namely, *The Standard Bearer*, the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, and by the books of Herman Hoeksema, Herman Hanko, David Engelsma, and others published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association. See *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, s.v. "Hyper-Calvinism," by Peter Toon.

the art of disputation and taught us to speak reasonably? Shall we say that they are insane who developed medicine, devoting their labor to our benefit? What shall we say of all the mathematical sciences? Shall we consider them the ravings of madmen? No, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without great admiration. We marvel at them because we are compelled to recognize how preeminent they are. But shall we count anything praiseworthy or noble without recognizing at the same time that it comes from God?"

In his *Institutes* 2.2.16, Calvin makes a distinction between common grace and special grace, "We ought to understand the statement that the Spirit of God dwells only in believers (Rom 8:9) as referring to the Spirit of sanctification through whom we are consecrated as temples of God (1 Cor 3:16) [special grace]. Nonetheless he fills, moves, and quickens all things by the power of the same Spirit, and does so according to the character that he bestowed upon each kind by the law of creation. But if the Lord has willed that we be helped in physics, dialectic, mathematics, and other like disciplines, by the work and ministry of the ungodly, let us use this assistance" [common grace].²

In Mal 1:2-3 (cf Rom 9:13) God said, "... I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, ...". This statement has to do with God's special grace, not common grace. He chose to save Jacob rather than Esau. However, God's refusal to bestow on Esau His special grace does not negate His bestowal of common grace on both elect and reprobate. Calvin indeed saw a

2 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed John T McNeill, trans Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 273-5; parentheses mine. Calvin's concept of common grace is also found in 1.3.1-3, 1.4.2, 1.5.3-4, 1.5.7-8, 1.11.12, 1.13.14, 1.17.1, 2.2.12-27, 2.3.3, 2.7.1, 3.2.32, 3.7.6, 3.9.3, 3.14.2, 3.20.15, 4.10.5, 4.20.1-4, 4.20.9-11. See also H Henry Meeter, *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism*, 6th ed, rev Paul A Marshall (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 50-6.

distinction between special grace and common grace: “the Jews are reminded of God’s gratuitous covenant [special grace], that they might cease to excuse their wickedness in having misused this singular favour [special grace]. He does not then upbraid them here, because they had been as other men created by God, because God caused his sun to shine on them, because they were supplied with food from the earth [common grace]; but he says, that they had been preferred to other people, not on account of their own merit, but because it had pleased God to choose their father Jacob [special grace].”³ The reprobate receive the blessings of common grace, not because of God’s decree of reprobation, but because of His goodness and kindness (Matt 5:45, Acts 14:17, 17:28, Rom 1:19, Jas 1:17). His decretive will (i.e. special grace), and desiderative will (i.e. common grace) must be clearly distinguished or else we may seriously misrepresent the character of God.

Definition of the Free Offer of the Gospel

What is the free offer of the gospel? It is the Calvinistic view that the gospel is to be preached to all indiscriminately, and that God sincerely invites everyone, elect and reprobate, to repentance and salvation in Christ.

Hyper-Calvinistic View of the Gospel Offer

Hyper-Calvinists deny that there is such a “well-meant” offer of the gospel by God. In their view, God does not desire the repentance of the reprobate. They do not believe that God is capable of loving the whole world, yet effectively saving only those whom He had already chosen before the foundation of the world. This does not necessarily mean that Hyper-Calvinists do not believe in preaching the gospel to all people (Matt 28:19-20). What it does mean is that in their

3 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, trans John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, nd), 5:464; parentheses mine.

preaching the gospel, the love of God may only be applied to the elect, and not the reprobate. Thus, they consider it wrong in evangelism to tell someone, “God loves you,” not knowing whether he is elect or reprobate. They would rather say, “God loves the sinner,” in their mind applying it only to the elect. So the “world” of John 3:16, for example, is the world of *the elect only* (i.e., “For God so loved the *elect*, that He gave ...”).

Calvin’s View on the Free Offer of the Gospel

Did God sincerely offer the gospel of Christ to the world at large? Calvin answered in the affirmative. Consider his comments on the term “whosoever” in John 3:16, Acts 2:21, Rom 1:16.

On John 3:16, “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,” Calvin commented, “The outstanding thing about faith is that it delivers us from eternal destruction. For He especially wanted to say that although we seem to have been born for death, sure deliverance is *offered* to us by the faith of Christ so that we must not fear the death which otherwise threatens us. And he has used a general term, both *to invite indiscriminately all* to share in life and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers. Such is also significant in the term ‘world’ which He had used before. For although there is nothing the world deserving of God’s favour, He nevertheless shows He *is favourable to the whole world when He calls all without exception* to the faith of Christ, which is indeed an entry into life.”⁴

On Acts 2:21, “that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” Calvin commented, “So however much a man may be overwhelmed in the gulf of misery there is

4 John Calvin, *The Gospel According to St John 1-10*, trans T H L Parker (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1993 reprint), 74. Italics mine.

yet set before him a way of escape. We must also observe the universal word, ‘whosoever’. For God *admits all men to Himself without exception and by this means invites them to salvation, ...* Therefore since *no man is excluded from calling upon God the gate of salvation is set open to all*. There is nothing else to hinder us from entering, but our own unbelief.”⁵

On Rom 1:16, “the gospel of Christ ... is the power of God to every one that believeth,” Calvin commented, “God does not work effectually in all men, but only when the Spirit shines in our hearts as the inward teacher, ... *The Gospel is indeed offered to all* for their salvation, but its power is not universally manifest. The fact that the Gospel is the taste of death to the ungodly arises not so much from the nature of the Gospel itself, as from their own wickedness. By setting forth one way of salvation, it cuts off confidence in every other way. When men withdraw from this one salvation they find in the Gospel a sure evidence of their ruin. When, therefore, *the Gospel invites all* to partake of salvation without any difference, it is rightly termed the doctrine of salvation. For *Christ is there offered*, whose proper office is to save that which had been lost, and those who refuse to be saved by Him shall find Him their Judge.”⁶

There is no question that Calvin has a doctrine of common grace: “Paul makes *grace common to all* men, not because it in fact extends to all, but because it is *offered to all*. Although Christ suffered for the sins of the world, and is *offered by*

5 John Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles 1-13*, trans John W Fraser and W J G McDonald (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1989 reprint), 62.

6 John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, trans Ross MacKenzie (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1991 reprint), 27.

the goodness of God without distinction to all men, yet not all receive Him."⁷

Calvin's View of God's Love for the Reprobate

Does God, in a certain sense, love those whom He had not elected? Or are His feelings toward the reprobate pure hatred? Calvin did see God as loving all men in general, while at the same time loving the elect in a special way. Calvin pointed out the various degrees of God's love in his exposition of Mark 10:21 where Jesus is said to love the rich young ruler. Calvin explained, "... since *God loves all His creatures without exception*. It is *therefore important to distinguish degrees of love*. So far as relates to the present place, it is enough to hold in sum that God embraces in His fatherly love only His children, whom He regenerates by the Spirit of adoption, and that, because of this love, they are accepted at His judgment seat. According to this sense, to be loved by God and to be justified before Him are synonymous. *But sometimes God is said to love those whom He neither approves nor justifies*. The preservation of the human race is dear to Him (the preservation which consists in righteousness, justice, moderation, prudence, loyalty, temperance), and therefore He is said to love the social virtues; not that they merit salvation or grace, but because they aim at something which He approves. ... Thus the question which might be put is answered, that Christ loves the proud and hypocritical man, although there is nothing more hateful to God than these two vices. For there is no absurdity in God loving the good seed which He has sown in some natures, while rejecting the persons and their works on account of their corruption."⁸

7 Ibid., 117-8. See also "Free Offer of the Gospel," in Graham Miller, *Calvin's Wisdom* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), 119-20.

8 John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke*, vol 2, trans T H L Parker (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1989 reprint), 257-8.

On 1 Tim 4:10, "... God, who is Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe," Calvin commented, "... God's kindness *extends to all men*. And if *there is no one without the experience of sharing in God's kindness*, how much more of that kindness shall the godly know, who hope in Him. Will He not take special care of them? In short, will He not keep them in all things safe to the end?"⁹ On 2 Peter 3:9 where God says He "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," Calvin commented, "This is His wondrous *love towards the human race*, that He *desires all men to be saved*, and is prepared to bring even the perishing to safety. ... It could be asked here, if God does not want any to perish, why do so many in fact perish? My reply is that no mention is made here of the secret decree of God by which the wicked are doomed to their own ruin, but only of His loving-kindness as it is made known to us in the Gospel. There God *stretches out His hand to all alike*, but He only grasps those (in such a way as to lead to Himself) whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world."¹⁰

Ezekiel 18:32, and 33:11, reveal the heart of God toward the reprobate, "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." How can the Hyper-Calvinist then say that there is no measure of love whatsoever in God for those whom He had not chosen to save?

9 John Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, trans T A Smail (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1991 reprint), 245.

10 John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St Peter*, trans William B Johnston (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1989 reprint), 364.

Conclusion

Hyper-Calvinists are unable to see how God can be gracious to all, and yet at the same time be gracious to some; and willing to save all when He had already willed that only the elect would be saved. To them, it is a contradiction that God Himself cannot reconcile. It must be categorically stated that there is absolutely no contradiction in the gospel offer, and in the grace God shows to both the elect and reprobate. It behooves Calvinists to properly understand those concepts by distinguishing God's decretive will from His desiderative (from "desire") will as Calvin himself did. Dr Timothy Tow explains this aspect of God's will, "It is God's character not to exult like Nero in the torture and death of his Christian subjects, nor like Hitler exterminating six million Jews with a stone-dead heart, but the very opposite. God is good. God is love. So it is in Himself to see sinners turn to Him in repentance, for He is not willing that any should perish.

"Thus when we read John 3:16, the most famous verse in the whole Bible, 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,' we take the plain, simple sense that salvation is offered to all mankind. John 3:16 expresses the desiderative will of a God of goodness, to both the good and the evil (Matt 5:45). But there are the Hyper-Calvinists who see God's goodness only on the elect, that they cannot but conclude the world (*kosmos* in Greek) to be the world of the elect. John 3:16 is not a universal offer of the Gospel but a limited one. This is like holding a sale for a departmental store with a restrictive sign under the word SALE—'only buyers can enter'! Now, if these Hyper-Calvinists know there is an aspect of God's will known as the Desiderative, their blind spot on God's Abounding Grace would be removed. 'I counsel thee to buy of Me ... anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see' (Rev 3:18). ... By the desiderative will of God we will see clearly

what is succinctly stated by Augustine on the effectualness of Christ's death—'sufficient for all, efficient for the elect' ...

"Now, when we see the desiderative will of God applies to all men, we will be the more zealous to spread the Word to as wide a field as possible. We will not like those Hyper-Calvinist Baptist ministers, when approached by William Carey to support his mission to India, be heard saying, 'God had predestined whom He would save. He doesn't need you!' How like the Sale in that departmental store we have mentioned above that has a restriction beneath the big sale sign: 'Only buyers can enter'!

"But our God is not static. Our God is dynamic. Our God is not a computer. Our God is Controller of the universe and Comforter to the Church, yea, even to you and me, who says 'And him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37). God's grace is not bound, but abounding. John 3:16 is God's universal offer to salvation to everyone who believes. When you believe, you will soon know from Scripture you are elect."¹¹

If Hyper-Calvinists must insist on denying the reformed doctrine of common grace and of the free offer, they insist against Calvin, and would justifiably have to wear the title "Hyper." We hope they would shed it.

11 Timothy Tow, *The Clock of the Sevenfold Will of God* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1991), 40-6.

Appendix I

ARMINIANISM EXAMINED

Jeffrey Khoo

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Romans 8:29, 30).

Arminianism is that system of doctrine propounded by James (Jacobus) Arminius (1560-1609) and his followers. Arminius studied for four years in the University of Geneva under the tutelage of Theodore Beza (1519-1605), the successor of John Calvin. He was against the Calvinistic doctrines taught in Geneva, and shortly after he passed away, his disciples formulated the five theses of the Remonstrance or the five points of Arminianism (1610) which were: (1) Free Will, or Human Ability, (2) Conditional Election, (3) Universal Redemption, or General Atonement, (4) Resistible Grace, and (5) Insecure Faith.

What is the biblical doctrine of salvation? Is Arminianism a scripturally valid presentation of God’s salvific work? There is a need to evaluate the doctrines of Arminius in the light of Holy Writ.

Human Ability or Total Depravity?

Arminians believe that although man is sinful, he is not in a state of utter spiritual helplessness. He possesses a free will. He is able in and of himself, independent of all others, to decide whether he wants to believe in Christ or not. The faith he exercises when he believes in the gospel is entirely his. Faith is not God’s gift to him, but his gift to God. In

this way, he contributes to his salvation. Thus, the work of salvation is not totally God's. Man has a part to play in his personal salvation. If he does not exercise that faith which is intrinsic to him, God cannot save him even if He wanted to.

What does the Bible teach concerning man's free will? Is there any spiritual goodness in sinful man that may cause him to turn to God? Yes, man had a free will in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall. Adam and Eve, our first parents, were created perfect and good in the Garden (Gen 1:26-31). Although they were morally innocent and without sin, they were still not in a state of eternal spiritual sonship. In other words, they still did not possess eternal life. If they wanted eternal life they must work for it. The Lord placed them under probation in the Garden. They were subjected to a test.

What was this test? The Lord placed two special trees in Eden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:8). The Lord then commanded man, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat (including the tree of life, cf. Gen 2:8, 3:22): But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen 2:16-17, parenthesis mine). Man was given a choice: to obey God by eating of the tree of life, and obtain the reward of eternal life, or rebel against Him by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and incur the punishment of eternal death. Adam and Eve, given absolute freedom of will, chose to disobey God by partaking of the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:1-7).

From that time onwards, man became sinful. What was the extent of his sinfulness? It was total! Man became utterly corrupt. There is no goodness at all in man. What became of man after the Fall? Gen 6:5 records, "And God saw that

the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Jer 17:9 reiterates the extreme wickedness of man, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

Being wholly infected with sin, is man able to do good and to choose God? The Apostle Paul in Rom 3:10-12 says, “There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Man’s freedom of choice has been forfeited since the Fall. He is absolutely helpless in matters spiritual, and vain are his attempts to gain eternal life through his own efforts. As the prophet Isaiah says, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee: for Thou hast hid Thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities” (Isa 64:6-7). The Bible teaches human inability and total depravity.

Election: Conditional or Unconditional?

According to Arminians, the doctrine of election ought to be seen as God’s choice of certain individuals to salvation on the basis of His foreknowledge of their positive response to the gospel when it is preached to them. It has to be explained that election, as understood by Arminians, was not God’s initiative but man’s. God chose man because man first chose Him. God elected in the sense that He being all-knowing knew beforehand those in human history who would believe the gospel out of their own free will. It is conditional election since God chose the people He knew would independently come to the saving knowledge of the gospel without any

action or motivation on His part. God's foreknowledge was not an active but a passive one. Man has himself to thank for being elected to salvation.

If the election of God was conditional, then man has every reason to boast of his salvation. Glory is not only due to God but also to man. What does the Bible teach concerning man's salvation? Eph 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Paul gives us to know that not only salvation but also the faith to believe is God's gift.

Is it true that we are the ones who have chosen God? Moses told Israel, "The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people: for ye were the fewest of all the people: But because the LORD loved you ..." (Deut 7:7). There was nothing worthy in Israel that warranted God's choice of her as His special nation. God chose her in spite of her lowly status because He loved her. Israel did not choose God. Rather it was God who chose her. The same is true with the Church. Jesus made this very clear when He told His disciples, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). God is the One who is entirely responsible for our salvation. He chose some to be saved from eternal damnation before the foundation of the world out of His own good will and pleasure (Eph 1:4-5). Election is not dependent on the foreseen obedience of man but on the independent sovereign will of God.

In Rom 9:11-13, Paul demonstrated this truth by citing the example of Jacob and Esau. God chose Jacob and not Esau. Why did God prefer Jacob over Esau? Was it because Jacob was morally a better person? The answer is no. Paul explained, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of

Him that calleth” (Rom 9:11). The sons of God were elected “according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph 1:11).

Acts 13:48 makes it very clear that man’s belief is a result of God’s election, not the other way round: “and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” The election of God was thus unconditional. God’s sovereign will in election is clearly spelled out in His declaration to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Rom 9:15-16).

Universal Redemption or Limited Atonement?

Arminians argue that when Christ died on the cross, He died for all men without exception or distinction. Christ’s atoning work was intended and designed to save everyone but the sinner is saved only if and when he appropriates it for himself. In other words, the redemptive work of Christ only made it possible for sinners to be saved, it did not in any way secure their salvation. Salvation is dependent on the sinner. It is up to him to either accept or reject the redemption offered by Christ. It was God’s responsibility to provide salvation but it is man’s responsibility to *procure* it.

What is the scriptural teaching on the atonement? Does the Bible teach a limited or unlimited atonement? The Bible teaches that the atonement of Christ was intended to save a particular group of people, namely, the elect. The angel Gabriel, announcing the birth of Christ, said that Jesus will “save *His* people from their sins” (Matt 1:21). And who are His people? They are those whom the Father has chosen to be saved, who form the Church, for Christ “loved the church, and gave Himself for it” (Eph 5:25). Christ both procured and secured the salvation of the elect. He had in mind His

chosen ones when He died on the cross. His atoning work on the cross was specifically and specially for them. Jesus Himself indicated this when He said, “I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 6:38-39).

Having understood that the atoning work of Christ was definite and positive in both its design and accomplishment—He died in order to procure and secure the salvation of the elect only—it needs to be explained that Christ did, in a certain sense, die for the world. Augustine said that Christ’s death was “Sufficient for all, efficient for the elect.” Dr J O Buswell, himself a Calvinist, explained that the atonement of Christ was unlimited or universal in that it was *sufficient, applicable, and offered* to all. There is no disagreement with the Arminians here. The disagreement with them lies in the fact that the Arminians do not see the atonement as being limited or particular in its *design and intention*. They regard the atonement of Christ as being sufficient and efficient for the world generally. Neither is it right to go to the other extreme that the atonement of Christ is sufficient and efficient for the elect only, as avowed by hypercalvinists.

It is because Christ did die for the world sufficiently that John was able to offer the gospel to all when he wrote, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Does the word “world” here mean the world of the elect only? Are unbelievers the objects of God’s love? Calvin understood God’s love here to be universal. On “For God so loved the world,” Calvin wrote, “faith in Christ brings life to all, and that Christ brought life to all, because the Heavenly father loves the human race, and wishes that they should not perish.”

Did Calvin understand this love of God to apply only to the elect? Calvin's commentary on 2 Pet 3:9 which is a parallel text to the above revealed that he did not. On "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," Calvin wrote, "So wonderful is His love towards mankind, that He would have them all to be saved, and is of His own self prepared to bestow salvation on the lost. But the order is to be noticed, that God is ready to receive all to repentance, so that none may perish; for in these words the way and manner of obtaining salvation is pointed out. Every one of us, therefore who is desirous of salvation, must learn to enter in by this way." That is why Jesus in John 3:16 "employed the universal term *whosoever*, both to invite all indiscriminately to partake of life, and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers. Such is also the import of the term *world*, which He formerly used; for though nothing will be found in the world that is worthy of the favour of God, yet He shows Himself to be reconciled to the whole world, when He invites all men without exception to the faith of Christ, which is nothing else than an entrance into life."

God's desire for all men to be saved comes under His "desiderative will." Murray and Stonehouse, former professors of Westminster Theological Seminary, explain this aspect of God's will, "This will of God to repentance and salvation is universalized and reveals to us, therefore, that there is in God a benevolent lovingkindness towards the repentance and salvation of *even those whom He has not decreed to save*. This pleasure, will, desire, is expressed in the universal call to repentance" (italics mine).

It may, however, be asked: If God does not desire that any should perish, how is it that the majority of the people do in fact perish? Calvin replied, "To this my answer is, that

no mention is here made of the hidden purpose of God, according to which the reprobate are doomed to their own ruin, but only of His will as made known to us in the gospel. For God there stretches forth His hand without a difference to all, but lays hold only of those, to lead them to Himself, whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world.”

Augustine’s formula, “Sufficient for all, efficient for the elect,” was affirmed by Calvin in his commentary on 1 John 2:2, “And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

In discussing the third point of Calvinism, namely, limited atonement, we are addressing the intent, not the extent of the atonement. It needs to be reiterated that a correct understanding of Calvin’s doctrine of the atonement requires one to accept that the atonement of Christ is “sufficient for all, efficient for the elect.”

Grace: Resistible or Irresistible?

In regard to the matter of calling, the Arminians say that it is the Holy Spirit who issues the outward and inward call as the gospel is preached. The Spirit does His best in persuading every sinner who hears the gospel to embrace it. That is all the Spirit can do—to prompt the sinner to believe. If the sinner refuses to receive the gospel there is nothing the Holy Spirit can do about it. His convicting work can be effectively thwarted and finally frustrated. His regenerating work is dependent on man’s response to the gospel by faith which is sourced in the sinner himself, and does not come from God. God can thus fail in His efforts to win a person to Himself. The grace of God can be resisted, rejected, and frustrated by men.

The Bible informs us that the inward call of the Holy Spirit is so powerful that it cannot be effectively resisted. When

a person hears the good news of Jesus Christ, he receives the outward call from the preacher to believe in the gospel, but the inward call issued by the Spirit is that which saves the individual. Jesus made this very clear when He said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14). Man cannot come to God unless he is called, led, and drawn by the Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit beckons a sinner to accept the gospel, he may fight it for a season but will finally succumb to His grace for “whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” The process of God’s redemptive work and plan can neither be discontinued nor hindered. Once God has predestined someone to be saved, He ensures that this person is thoroughly saved through the process of calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification. The chain of salvation cannot be broken.

This leads us to our final question: Can a Christian fall from grace?

Insecure Faith or Perseverance of the Saints?

Arminianism advocates the loss of salvation to those who subsequently fail to uphold their faith. There is therefore no assurance of salvation for the Arminian. He must always be on his toes. There is no such thing as a *backslidden* Christian. A person who becomes cold towards his walk with God loses salvation. He needs to reconfess Christ and be saved again. If he does not repent in his lifetime, he is eternally lost.

If man is the author of his own salvation, it is logical to see why he can have no assurance that he will ultimately be saved. By his own strength, he tries his level best to stay Christian. But he finds that he does not always succeed in warding off temptations or keeping away old habits. The Christian life is not always victorious. The Christian is not sinlessly perfect. The Apostle Paul himself testified that he faced tremendous spiritual struggles as a Christian. He shared, “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. ... For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do ... I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom 7:14-16, 18-19, 21-23). Arminians argue that Paul was referring to the time when he was still an unregenerate man. He was not describing his present experience as a believer. If Paul was indeed writing about his past experience as an unbeliever, it is strange that he wrote his testimony throughout in the present tense. This strongly suggests that Paul was really speaking of his experience at that point in time as a Christian and as an Apostle.

Augustine called Rom 7:14-25, “The Christian Struggle.” Although Paul went through such struggles he was never in doubt of his salvation. He had the assurance of salvation because He knew it was God who was keeping him, and God never fails. Paul himself said, “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus.” In Rom 8:35-39 Paul states unequivocally that nothing whatsoever “shall

separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The love that Paul speaks of here is not our love for God but God’s love for us. We are protected by the love of God forever. Jesus assures all Christians that it is He who gives them “eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:28).

“Once saved always saved” is not licence to sin. For Paul issued this exhortation to Christians, “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). This is human responsibility. Paul then went on to say, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). Herein is divine sovereignty. As Christians we can do nothing without God. All true believers, under God’s preservation, will persevere in their faith to the very end (Matt 10:22, Mark 13:13). A person who is truly born again will never be lost. All glory be to God.

The five points of Arminianism were found wanting in scriptural validity, and were rejected by the Synod of Dort in 1619. The Synod formulated five points to explain the biblical doctrine of salvation. As already discussed, in contradistinction to Arminianism, the five points are (1) Total Depravity, (2) Unconditional Election, (3) Limited Atonement, (4) Irresistible Grace, and (5) Perseverance of the Saints. These five points became known as the five points of Calvinism, and are rooted in the Holy Bible, in particular, the doctrines of Paul. As Rev (Dr) Timothy Tow says, “Calvinism is Paulinism systematized.” The acronym, TULIP, helps us to remember the five points.

Appendix J
A PLEA FOR A PERFECT BIBLE
Jeffrey Khoo

The Bible controversy today is hotting up. The controversy ironically involves the simple question of whether the Church today has a perfect Bible. Fundamentalists today cannot agree on this very basic question. The issue concerns the biblical doctrine of verbal plenary preservation.

VPI and VPP

King James Version (KJV) fundamentalists who affirm the *verbal plenary inspiration* (VPI) of the Bible, and believe in a perfect God who has given His Church a perfect Hebrew and Greek Text underlying the King James Bible are being labelled “extreme” and dangerous” by non-KJV fundamentalists. Since when has believing in a perfectly inerrant Bible in the original languages ever been considered such? Are 21st century fundamentalists recanting their belief in verbal and plenary inspiration that their 20th century forebears fought so hard to define and defend against the modernists? These Neo-fundamentalists are saying: We had a perfect Bible then, but we do not have a perfect Bible now! The danger in fundamentalism today is the failure among fundamentalists to affirm the *verbal plenary preservation* (VPP) of the Scriptures.

Apparent Discrepancies or Scribal Errors?

Anti-VPP fundamentalists would deny that God’s people today have the perfect Word of God. According to them our Bible today contains scribal errors. However, such errors are so insignificant that they do not affect the spiritual truths taught in the Scriptures. This sounds rather neo-evangelical, doesn’t it? Anti-VPP fundamentalists appear to be quite sure that 2 Kings 8:26 (Ahaziah is 22 years old) and 2 Chron 22:2 (Ahaziah is 42 years old), and 2 Sam 8:4 (700 horsemen) and 1

Chron 18:4 (7000 horsemen) are *true contradictions or errors*. Although some might concede that the reformers “are quick to consider many of these contradictions as merely apparent,” they prefer not to see them as apparent discrepancies but “scribal errors.” If they are indeed scribal errors, surely there must be manuscripts that reflect the correct reading. Surely God could not have possibly allowed the corruption to be so devastating that not a single manuscript would reflect the autographical reading.

Anti-VPP fundamentalists say they are able to correct the errors found in our present Bible by a collation of various manuscripts. But where are the manuscripts? Why did the Masoretes—the keepers of the purity of the OT Scriptures—refuse to correct these “scribal errors?” Was Jesus wrong when He said that the Hebrew Scriptures the Jews had at the time when He was on earth, which were not the autographs, were word perfect to the jot and tittle (Matt 5:18)? Interestingly, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* lists no variants. If this is the case (i.e., there are no extant manuscripts that reflect the correct reading), then they could be *actual and factual* errors committed by the original inspired writers and not necessarily scribal, could they not? Is this not a serious problem? Would this not lead to a denial of VPI? Anti-VPP fundamentalists ape the neo-evangelicals when they say that it is of no consequence whether such discrepancies are simply scribal errors or true factual errors since they are so “minor;” they deal with numbers, names, dates, and places, and hence do not affect our salvation since the gospel is not impaired by such “errors.” Is this correct thinking? I submit that if they proceed with this line of thinking and of judging the Bible, crying “error, error, error” here and there, they are no better than the neo-evangelicals who say that our Bible is only inerrant in a limited sense (see “Discrepancies in Scripture,” in *The Battle for the Bible* by Harold Lindsell, 161-184).

The Autographs Not Lost

No one denies that scribal errors were committed during the work of copying Scripture. But the question is: Did God allow any of His inspired words in the autographs to be lost during this transmission process?

Although the Church does not have the autographs (the very first scripts) today, she has the apographs (copies) which reflect the autographs. Providentially speaking, the autographs were *neither lost nor destroyed*. Was God careless in preserving His Scripture? Can He even allow “minor” corruptions? 17th century theologian—Francis Turretin—wrote, “It will not do to say that divine providence wished to *keep it free from serious corruptions, but not from minor*. For besides the fact that this is gratuitous, it cannot be held without injury, as if lacking in the necessary things which are required for the full credibility of Scripture itself. Nor can we readily believe that God, who dictated and inspired each and every word to these inspired (*theopneustois*) men, would not take care of their *entire* preservation. If men use the utmost care diligently to preserve their words (especially if they are of any importance, as for example a testament or contract) in order that it may not be corrupted, how much more, must we suppose, would God take care of his word which he intended as a testament and seal of his covenant with us, so that it might not be corrupted.” Turretin does not deny scribal errors in the *copying process* but he says that “even if some manuscripts could be corrupted, *yet all could not*.”

By faith, we believe in God’s promise that He will allow none of His words to be lost. Psalm 12:6-7 says, “The *words* of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt *keep them*, O LORD, thou shalt *preserve them* from this generation for ever.” Jesus declared in Matthew 24:35, “Heaven and earth shall pass

away, but my *words* shall not pass away.” In Matthew 5:18. Jesus promised, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, *one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass* from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

Closest and Purest

There are some other fundamentalists who believe that the purity of the Scriptures has been purely *maintained*, but not finally *attained* in the Traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text and Greek Textus Receptus underlying the KJV. The Dean Burgon Society statement which declares that “the Texts which are the *closest* to the original autographs of the Bible are the Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text for the Old Testament, and the Traditional Greek Text for the New Testament underlying the King James Version.” They take the word “closest” to mean that the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures that underlie the KJV are *not completely inerrant* since they contain so-called “scribal mistakes.” It must be clarified that the word “closest” in the Dean Burgon Society statement does not at all mean that we have an errant text or that the text is not the same as the original writings. The Dean Burgon Society statement must be understood in the *context* (i.e., the battle against Westcott and Hort) in which the statement was phrased. Westcott and Hort had puffed up their cut-up Greek text as being closest to the original since they based it on the 4th century Alexandrian manuscripts, which Dean Burgon had dismissed as “most corrupt.” The term “closest” seeks to *correct and counteract* Westcott and Hort’s view on the identity of the true text. The term “closest” also distinguishes between the autographs (past and “lost”) and the apographs (present and existing). VPP fundamentalists do not deny that the autographs and apographs *though distinct are the same*. The *paper* may be different, but the *contents* are the same.

The word “closest” should be interpreted to mean “purest.” Dr D A Waite, President of the Dean Burgon Society, likewise understands the statement to mean “that the words of the Received *Greek* and Masoretic *Hebrew* texts that underlie the *King James Bible* are the *very words* which God has preserved down through the centuries, being the *exact words* of the *originals* themselves.” This declaration is entirely consistent with the fundamental doctrines of VPI and VPP.

Such a high view of Scripture grants believers *maximum certainty* with regard to the authenticity of the inspired words of Scripture. And such certainty can only be had if the doctrine of the special providential preservation of the Scriptures is upheld. Dr E F Hills wrote, “if we believe in the special providential preservation of the Scriptures ... we obtain *maximum certainty*, all the certainty that any mere man can obtain, all the certainty that we need. For we are led by the logic of faith to the *Masoretic Hebrew text*, to the *New Testament Textus Receptus*, and to the *King James Version*.”

Does the Lord want His people to be certain about His inspired words? Listen to what the Lord says, “Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, That I might make thee know *the certainty of the words of truth*; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?” (Prov 22:20-21). Be sure of this: God wants us to have certainty concerning His words, and we can be certain of God’s words only if we apply the logic of faith consistently.

Which Textus Receptus?

If there exists a perfect TR, then which of the many editions of the TR is perfect? It must be affirmed that all the editions of the TR being from the pure stream of God’s preserved text are *pure*, no doubt about it. But which is the *purest*? It is the TR underlying the KJV. Dr Hills takes the same view

concerning the KJV and TR. Hear Dr Hills himself, “The texts of the several editions of the Textus Receptus were God-guided. They were set up under the leading of God’s special providence. Hence the differences between them were kept down to a minimum. ... But what do we do in these few places in which the several editions of the Textus Receptus disagree with one another? Which text do we follow? The answer to this question is easy. We are guided by the common faith.

“Hence we favor that form of the Textus Receptus upon which more than any other *God, working providentially*, has placed the stamp of His approval, namely, the King James Version, or more precisely, the Greek text underlying the King James Version.”

Like Dr Hills, we believe that all the TR editions are pure, but there is one that is purest—the one underlying the KJV. Dr Hills said that the King James Version “ought to be regarded not merely as a translation of the Textus Receptus but also as an independent variety of the Textus Receptus.” Is not the Greek Text underlying the KJV the Textus Receptus? Whose TR? Not completely Erasmus’s, Stephen’s, or Beza’s, it is *a new edition* of the TR which reflects the textual decisions of the KJV translators as they prayerfully studied and compared the preserved manuscripts. According to the Trinitarian Bible Society, “The editions of Beza, particularly that of 1598, and the two last editions of Stephens, were the chief sources used for the English Authorised Version of 1611. ... The present edition of the *Textus Receptus* underlying the English Authorised Version of 1611 follows the text of Beza’s 1598 edition as the primary authority, and corresponds with ‘The New Testament in the Original Greek according to the text followed in the Authorised Version,’ edited by F H A Scrivener.”

Special Providence Not Static But Dynamic

It ought to be noted that God’s providential preservation of His Scripture is *not static but dynamic*. The deistic heresy that God inspired His Word but did nothing to preserve it must be rejected. Dr Timothy Tow rightly said, “If Deism teaches a Creator who goes to sleep after creating the world is absurd, to hold to the doctrine of inspiration without preservation is equally illogical ... inspiration and preservation are linked one to another. Without preservation, all the inspiration, God-breathing into the Scriptures, would be lost. But we have a Bible so pure and powerful in every word and it is so because God has preserved it down through the ages.”

I believe God providentially guided the KJV translators to produce the purest TR of all. The earlier editions were individual efforts, but the TR underlying the KJV is a corporate effort of 57 of the most outstanding biblical-theological, and more importantly, Bible-believing scholars of their day. And as the Scripture says, “in a multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Prov 11:14). The KJV translators had all the various editions of the TR to refer to, and they made their decisions with the help of the Holy Spirit. I believe the Lord providentially guided the King James translators to make the right textual decisions. As such, I do not believe we need to improve on the TR underlying the KJV. No one should play textual critic, and be a judge of God’s Word today. *God is His own Textual Critic*. I accept God’s special providential work in history during the great 16th Century Protestant Reformation.

Why the TR Underlying the KJV?

Now the question remains: Why the TR underlying the KJV and not Luther’s German Bible, or the Spanish Reina Valera, or the Polish Biblia Gdanska, or the French Martin Bible, or some other language Bible? Now we do not deny

there are faithful and reliable versions that are accurately translated and based on the TR, nor do we discount the need for foreign language Bibles, but here is Dr Hills's reply to the question: "God in His providence has abundantly justified this confidence of the King James translators. The course of history has made English a world-wide language which is now the native tongue of at least 300 million people and the second language of many millions more. For this reason the King James Version is known the world over and is more widely read than any other translation of the holy Scriptures. Not only so, but the King James Version has been used by many missionaries as a basis and guide for their own translation work and in this way has extended its influence even to converts who know no English. For more than 350 years therefore the reverent diction of the King James Version has been used by the Holy Spirit to bring the Word of life to millions upon millions of perishing souls. Surely this is a God-guided translation on which God, working providentially, has placed the stamp of His approval." This is in keeping with Jesus' words, "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit ... Wherefore *by their fruits ye shall know them*" (Matt 7:17-20).

I believe the purity of God's Word has been *faithfully maintained* throughout the whole transmission of the Traditional/Byzantine/Majority/Received Text, and is *fully represented* in the Apographs of the Hebrew Masoretic Text for the Old Testament and the Greek Textus Receptus for the New Testament underlying the KJV. So I agree with David W Cloud, in his paper quoting E F Hills, that "the KJV is accurate in all textual matters, *and if there is a difference between a KJV reading and any certain edition of the Received Text, we follow the KJV*" (i.e., the TR underlying the KJV). I also agree with Dr Hills who warned, "We must be very cautious therefore about finding errors in the text of the King James Version, and the same holds true also in the

realm of translation. Whenever the renderings of the King James Version are called in question, *it is usually the accuser that finds himself in the wrong.*"

A Virtual Photocopy

As regards the Traditional Hebrew and Greek Scripture underlying the KJV being a "virtual photocopy" of the original, G I Williamson did write to this effect in his commentary on the *Westminster Confession* concerning preservation, "This brings us to the matter of God's 'singular care and providence' by which He has 'kept pure in all ages' this original text, so that we now actually possess it in 'authentic' form. And let us begin by giving an illustration from modern life to show that an original document may be destroyed, without the text of that document being lost. Suppose you were to write a will. Then suppose you were to have a photographic copy of that will made. If the original were then destroyed, the photographic copy would still preserve the text of that will *exactly the same as the original itself*. The text of the copy would differ in no way whatever from the original, and so it would possess exactly the same 'truth' and meaning as the original. Now of course photography was not invented until long after the original copy ... had been worn out or lost. How then could the original text of the Word of God be preserved? The answer is that God preserved it by His own remarkable care and providence."

Concerning what the Westminster theologians meant when they declared that the Hebrew OT and the Greek NT "being immediately inspired of God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic," we have another commentary from Prof William F Orr of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary who wrote, "this affirms that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New which was known to the Westminster divines was

immediately inspired by God because it was *identical with the first text that God had kept pure in all the ages. The idea that there are mistakes in the Hebrew Masoretic texts or in the Textus Receptus of the New Testament was unknown to the authors of the Confession of Faith.*"

Biblical Basis

So does the Church have a perfect Hebrew and Greek Bible today? Yes, indeed she does. Based on what? Based on God's promise that He would preserve every one of His words to the jot and tittle (Exod 32:15-19, 34:1-4; Pss 12:6-7, 78:1-8, 105:8; 119:89,111,152,160; Prov 22:20-21; Eccl 3:14; Jer 36:30-32; Matt 4:4, 5:18, 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33; John 10:35; 1 Pet 1:23-25; Rev 22:18-19).

Some may say that this belief on biblical preservation is a result of "circular reasoning." Indeed it is. On what basis does the Church believe in VPI? Is it not on the testimony of the Bible itself (2 Tim 3:16, Matt 5:18)? "God says it, that settles it, I believe it." Circular reasoning or a *priori* reasoning is not illegitimate. It is fallacious only when the premise to begin with is false. If I reason, "I am perfect because I say I am," it is fallacious because the presupposition is utterly untrue (Rom 3:4-23). If God says of Himself, "I am perfect because I say I am," that is absolutely true. Why do we believe God has preserved His Word and words perfectly? It is simply because God has promised to do just that in the Scriptures cited above. We simply take God at His Word because God cannot lie (Num 23:19).

Do we know everything that went on in the transmission of the text? No, we do not. But God knows; He knows everything and we believe He knows what He is doing. For instance, we were not there when God created the world. We did not see His work with our own eyes. When Science contradicts what the Bible says concerning origins, who are

we going to believe? Science or the Bible? We believe the Bible. Hebrews 11:3 says, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Faithfulness to God and His Word demands that a Christian believe in a perfect God who has given His Church a perfect Bible. Biblical epistemology is not “seeing is believing,” but “believing is seeing.”

Canonisation and Preservation

Is there a historical precedent that tells us that God’s providential work can involve a closure, a terminus? The answer is yes. All the inspired NT books were completed by AD 100 when the Apostle John wrote the last book of Revelation, and God warned against adding to or subtracting from His Word in Revelation 22:18-19. However, we know that in the first few centuries, there were uninspired men who penned spurious gospels and epistles, and passed them off as Scripture. Some of these were the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Nicodemus, the Epistle of Barnabas, etc. Nevertheless, none of the inspired books of Scripture have been lost or obscured in the canonical process. By the providential guidance of the Holy Spirit, God’s people were led to identify the 27 books to become our NT Canon, no more, no less. There was a terminus to the canonisation of Scripture at the Council of Carthage in 397. In like manner, the Lord allowed copyist errors and corruptions to enter into the transmission process through the pen of fallible scribes. Nevertheless, His providential hand kept His inspired words of Scripture from being lost. In light of God’s special providence, that nothing happens by chance, and that history is under His sovereign control, I believe that in the fulness of time—in the most opportune time of the Reformation when the true church separated from the false, when the study of the original languages was emphasised, and the printing press invented (which meant that no

longer would there be any need to handcopy the Scriptures thereby ensuring a uniform text)—God restored from out of a pure stream of preserved Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, the purest Hebrew and Greek Text of all—the Text that underlies our KJV—that accurately reflects the original Scriptures. That the providential preservation of Scripture sees its historical parallel in the providential canonisation of Scripture was Dean Burgon’s thinking as well. Dr Hills wrote of Burgon: “Burgon ... never lost sight of the special providence of God which has presided over the transmission of the New Testament down through the ages, expressly set out to maintain against all opponents that the Church was divinely guided to reject the false readings of the early centuries, and to gradually accept the true text. He denied that he was claiming a perpetual miracle that would keep manuscripts from being depraved at various times, and in various places. But ‘The Church in her collective capacity, has nevertheless—as a matter of fact—been perpetually purging herself of those shamefully depraved copies which once everywhere abounded within her pale’ (*The Revision Revised*, 334-5). He believed that just as God gradually settled the *Canon* of the New Testament by weaning His churches from non-canonical books, so He did with the *Text* also.”

A Perfect Bible Today!

What kind of Bible do fundamentalists have? Do they have a perfect Bible? The VPP fundamentalist would say yes, but the anti-VPP would say no. Make no mistake about it, both claim to believe in VPI, but despite this, anti-VPP fundamentalists say they do not have a perfect Bible. Is this biblical? Is this logical? Is this safe? Anti-VPP fundamentalists say that God’s preservation of His Bible is *imperfect*. They say God did not preserve His words, only His doctrines; it is conceptual, not verbal preservation. What? Psalm 12:6-7, Matthew 5:18, and Matt 24:35 tell us explicitly that God will preserve His “pure words,” and every “jot and tittle” of His “words.” Did not

the Lord convey His doctrines through words? Without the words, where the doctrines? Dr Hills sounded a pertinent warning, “Conservative scholars ... say that they believe in the special, providential preservation of the New Testament text. Most of them really don’t though, because, as soon as they say this, they immediately reduce this special providential preservation to the vanishing point in order to make room for the naturalistic theories of Westcott and Hort. As we have seen, some say that the providential preservation of the New Testament means merely that *the same “substance of doctrine”* is found in all the New Testament documents. Others say that it means that the true reading is always present in *at least one of the thousands of extant New Testament manuscripts*. And still other scholars say that to them the special, providential preservation of the Scriptures means that the true New Testament text was providentially *discovered in the mid-19th century by Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort* after having been lost for 1,500 years.

“If you adopt one of these false views of the providential preservation of Scriptures, then you are logically on your way toward *the denial of the infallible inspiration of the Scriptures*. For if God has preserved the Scriptures so carelessly, why would he have infallibly inspired them in the first place? It is not sufficient therefore merely to say that you believe in the doctrine of the special, providential preservation of holy Scriptures. You must really believe this doctrine and allow it to guide your thinking. You must begin with *Christ and the Gospel* and proceed according to the logic of faith. *This will lead you to the Traditional text, the Textus Receptus, and the King James Version*, in other words, to the common faith.”

God forbid that we should ever make this anti-biblical statement: “The Bible contains mistakes and errors but they are so small and so minor they should not cause us any worry.” If the Bible contains error, no matter how small

or minor, I worry! “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (Jas 2:10). If a person says he believes in a perfect Bible, and yet denies just one verse, yea even a jot or tittle, he is guilty of denying all of the Bible. Jesus warned, “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt 18:6).

I believe in a perfect God who has given us a perfect Bible. *“Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar”* (Rom 3:4)! Since God said it, that settles it, and my duty is simply to *believe it!* This kind of faith ought to be instilled in every Christian. We need to cleave on to the very words of God and never doubt the veracity of His words! No one has all the answers. God has all the answers, and sometimes He allows false prophets (like Westcott and Hort with their Accursed Text), and false doctrines (like limited inerrancy and imperfect preservation) to come into the scene in order to test whether we love Him or not (Deut 13:3, Ps 139:21-22). Would we doubt or question Him, or would we trust and obey His every word no matter what man may say? “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4).

Instead of the rationalistic approach that begins with the opinions of man and then work backwards to the truth of God, which confuses it, we ought to take the faith approach. That is why Hills warned that if we do not really apply the logic of faith consistently and allow it to reach its logical conclusion, we would end up ultimately denying the very Word of God itself. It is thus no surprise that anti-VPP fundamentalists are prepared to call what are apparent contradictions in the Bible “errors.” In denying VPP they effectively deny VPI as well. They are not able to say they have a perfect Bible.

Can we afford to believe in a Bible that is less than perfect? If God is incapable of giving us a perfect Bible, what makes us so sure that He is capable of preserving our salvation to the very end? We are thrown into all kinds of doubts. If we doubt our Bible, we might as well doubt our salvation (cf. 1 Cor 15:14-19). If we as biblical fundamentalists are unwilling to affirm that we have a perfectly flawless Bible today, something is seriously wrong somewhere! *Absolute and unquestioning faith in God's infallible and inerrant Word is the only solution!* "The law of the LORD is *perfect*, converting the soul" (Ps 19:7).

Affirmation of VPI and VPP

It is absolutely vital for those who love God and His Word to affirm the twin doctrines of VPI and VPP. Here is a summary statement of my faith in a perfectly inspired and preserved Bible today:

1. I do affirm the biblical doctrine of providential preservation that the inspired words of the Hebrew OT Scriptures and the Greek NT Scriptures are "kept pure in all ages" as taught in the Westminster Confession.
2. I do believe that "the Texts which are closest (i.e., purest) to the original autographs of the Bible are the Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text of the Old Testament, and the Traditional Greek Text for the New Testament underlying the King James Version."
3. I believe that the purity of God's words has been faithfully maintained in the Traditional/Byzantine/Majority/Received Text, and fully represented in the Textus Receptus that underlies the KJV. Providential preservation is not static but dynamic.
4. I do believe that God's providential preservation of the Scriptures concerns not just the doctrines but also the very words of Scripture to the last jot and tittle (Ps

12:6-7, Matt 5:18, 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33, Rev 22:18-19).

5. I do not deny that other faithful Bible translations, including foreign language ones, that are based on other editions of the Textus Receptus can be deemed the Word of God.
6. I do believe in the verbal plenary inspiration and total inerrancy of Scripture. I do not believe there are any scribal errors in our present Bible, and any alleged errors are only apparent and not errors at all.
7. I do not believe we need to improve on the TR underlying the KJV. I do not want to play textual critic, and be a judge of God's Word. I accept God's special hand in His providential work of perfect Bible preservation during the Reformation.

THE PERFECTION OF THE BIBLE: THREE VIEWS

	NOT PERFECT <i>Not Perfect Then & Now</i>	NOT SO PERFECT <i>Perfect Then, Not Now</i>	ALL PERFECT <i>Perfect Then & Now</i>
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL	Liberalism/ Modernism, Neo-orthodoxy	Neo-evangelism, Neo-fundamentalism	Biblical & Reformed Fundamentalism
DESCRIPTION OF THE BIBLE	Bible is <i>not</i> or <i>becomes</i> the Word of God	Bible <i>contains</i> the Word of God	Bible <i>is</i> the Word of God
VIEW ON BIBLICAL INSPIRATION	Human or Non-miraculous inspiration	Divine inspiration only in Autographs	Divine inspiration (VPI) in Autographs & faithful Apographs
VIEW ON BIBLICAL PRESERVATION	Denies preservation of words & doctrines	Denies preservation of words / Affirms preservation of doctrines	Affirms preservation of both words & doctrines to the jot & tittle (VPP; WCF 1:8, Matt 5:18)
AUTHORITY	Science Alone	Science plus Bible	Bible Alone (<i>Sola Scriptura</i>)
EPISTEMOLOGY	Intellect not Faith is supreme (See to believe)	Faith subjected more to the Intellect than to the Bible (See to believe)	Faith and Intellect totally subjected to the Bible (Believe to see)
VIEW OF BIBLICAL INFALLIBILITY & INERRANCY	Denies both infallibility & inerrancy	Denies inerrancy / Affirms infallibility (i.e. limited inerrancy)	Affirms both infallibility & inerrancy to the jot and tittle (VPI & VPP)
ARE THERE MISTAKES/ ERRORS IN THE BIBLE?	Full of mistakes, with all kinds of factual discrepancies & actual contradictions	No mistakes only in spiritual matters but not in science, history, geography where discrepancies are actual or factual errors	No mistakes or errors at all, and any discrepancy is only apparent
CHOICE OF ORIGINAL GREEK TEXT	Westcott-Hort Minority & Critical Text Only	Westcott-Hort Minority & Critical Text is Superior	Textus Receptus (Received Text) Only
POSITION ON BIBLE VERSIONS	Only Liberal, Ecumenical, Roman Catholic, Feminist versions acceptable	All versions acceptable whether corrupt or not	Only KJV acceptable since it is the best (most accurate, faithful & reliable)
CHOICE OF BIBLE VERSIONS	RSV, NRSV, TEV/ GNB, TNIV	NIV, NASB, NKJV, ESV	KJV
TRANSLATION METHOD	Dynamic Equivalence (Contextualisation)	Dynamic Equivalence (Thought for Thought)	Formal Equivalence (Word for Word)

ESV - English Standard Version
 GNB - Good News Bible
 NASB - New American Standard Bible
 NIV - New International Version
 NKJV - New King James Version
 NRSV - New Revised Standard Version

RSV - Revised Standard Version
 TEV - Today's English Version
 TNIV - Today's New International Version
 VPI - Verbal, Plenary Inspiration
 VPP - Verbal, Plenary Preservation
 WCF - Westminster Confession of Faith

Appendix K
**UNDERMINING GOD’S WORD BY TWISTING
 THE TEXT: ON WESTCOTT AND HORT
 AND THEIR CORRUPTED TEXT**

Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo

God has safeguarded His Word for His people in every age. The Church was never without a body of trustworthy Greek texts that is absolutely inspired and inerrant. The chief representative of the traditional, providentially preserved Greek text is the Textus Receptus (TR) which underlies the NT of the Authorised Version (AV)/KJV. With this, Satan is not pleased.

In 1881, Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort replaced the Textus Receptus with a modernistic Critical text. They referred to the Textus Receptus as “vile,” and “villainous.” Their new text became the basis for all the modern editions of the Greek New Testament published by the United Bible Societies. Most of our modern English versions of the Bible are translated from these corrupted editions of the Greek text.

The Westcott and Hort Text is a corrupted text. It is based on corrupt manuscripts, viz. the Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. Both are dated to the 4th century. Westcott and Hort theorised that the earlier the manuscript the better it is. They assumed that earlier copies are less corrupted than later ones. So the readings of Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, according to them, should be accepted as true readings and cannot be safely rejected.¹ This assumption is fallacious. The corruption of those two codices could

¹ B F Westcott, and F J A Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1882), 225.

have occurred very early. The date is thus no proof of their reliability.

In Westcott and Hort's new edition of the Greek Testament, many passages and verses were deleted from the traditional text. Among the texts scissored out were such precious passages as the *pericope de adultera* (John 7:53–8:11), the last twelve verses of Mark (Mark 16:9–20), and the Johannine *Comma* (1 John 5:7f). Not only those, but also the following verses: Matthew 17:21; 18:11; 23:14; Mark 7:16; 9:44, 46; 11:26; 15:28; Luke 17:36; 23:17; John 5:4; Acts 8:37; 15:34; 24:7; 28:29; Romans 16:24; and many other portions of Scripture.² In fact, the number of verses taken out of the Bible amounted to that of 1–2 Peter. Should you accidentally tear away one leaf of your Bible, how sorry you will be. To have eight chapters of God's Word cut out by Westcott and Hort, i.e. the equivalent of the contents of 1 and 2 Peter, the Bible is all but destroyed!

It is no wonder that Dean Burgon took Westcott and Hort to task in his *magnum opus*—*The Revision Revised*. Burgon has convincingly proven that the Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus Westcott and Hort hailed to be almost like the autographs are really among the most corrupt copies of the New Testament in existence.³ Burgon said the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are “*most scandalously corrupt copies extant:—exhibit the most shamefully mutilated texts which are anywhere to be met with:—have become ... the depositories of the largest amount of fabricated readings, ancient*

2 See G W Anderson and D E Anderson, *A Textual Key to the New Testament: A List of Omissions and Changes* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1993).

3 See John William Burgon, *The Revision Revised: A Refutation of Westcott and Hort's False Greek Text and Theory* (Collingswood: Dean Burgon Society Press, nd), 1–110.

*blunders, and intentional perversions of Truth,—which are discoverable in any known copies of the Word of God.*⁴

These two codices run against the readings of the majority (99%) of Greek New Testament manuscripts we have today.

With the entrance of the Westcott and Hort Text in 1881, the foundation of the systematic corruption of the Bible has been laid. Since that time, Bible scholars including evangelicals and even fundamentalists, echo Westcott and Hort. They say that the TR/AV is unreliable and outdated. New translations of the Bible are needed. Most of ⁵the twentieth century modern translations of the English Bible have followed the Westcott and Hort philosophy of textual criticism and Bible translation. Harold Greenlee for example commented, “All things considered, the influence of W-H upon all subsequent work in the history of the text has never been equalled. ... With the work of Westcott and Hort the T.R. was at last vanquished ... [and] the textual theory of W-H underlies virtually all subsequent work in N.T. textual criticism.”⁶ D A Carson agrees, “the vast majority of evangelical scholars ... hold that in the basic textual theory Westcott and Hort were right, and that the church stands greatly in their debt.”⁷

Nowadays, many evangelical Bible translators in trying to distance themselves from Westcott and Hort are claiming that their modern English versions are based not on Westcott and Hort but on an eclectic text. For example, the NIV translators say they used the best current printed Greek New Testament texts which are “eclectic.” The question

4 Ibid., 16.

5 D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, 2nd ed (Collingswood: The Bible For Today Press, 1996), 56.

6 J Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1964), 77–8.

7 D A Carson, *The King James Version Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 75.

arises: Which are the “best” current printed texts of the Greek New Testament? According to the NIV translators, the “best” Greek testaments are those published by the United Bible Societies and Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. These are the so-called “eclectic” or “scholarly” editions of the Greek New Testament.

Let us now examine the so-called eclectic texts, namely, the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (UBSGNT), and the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (NA). The UBSGNT is founded on the Westcott and Hort Text. The preface to its first edition states, “The Committee carried out its work ... on the basis of Westcott and Hort’s edition of the Greek New Testament.” The first two editions of the UBSGNT relegated the *pericope de adultera* (John 7:53–8:11) from its original and traditional place to the end of the Gospel; this to show that the passage is considered non-authentic. This clearly reveals a Westcott and Hort attitude. Like Westcott and Hort, they accepted without question the omission of those verses in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus over against the Traditional Text. It is interesting to note that the third edition transposed John 7:53–8:11 back to its original location. Are the editors now admitting their error in rejecting the *pericope*? Although the *pericope* is now put back in its traditional place, the double brackets enclosing the *pericope* are retained. What do these double brackets mean? “Double brackets in the text indicate that the enclosed passages which are usually rather extensive are known not to be a part of the original text.”⁸ In other words, they are not to be considered as part of Holy Scriptures. What double dealing!

8 Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Matthew Black, Carlo M Martini, Bruce M Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, eds, *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev ed (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994), 2*.

The NA is exactly the same as the UBSGNT except for its fuller critical apparatus. It is said that the UBSGNT is meant for the translator, while the NA is for the exegete. The NA like the UBSGNT has its roots in the Westcott and Hort Text. Nestle admits that his text is heavily influenced by Westcott and Hort. He said the “origin of the text itself was clearly traceable ... particularly in passages where the special theories of Westcott-Hort had dominant influence in its formation.”⁹ As in the UBSGNT, John 7:53–8:11 and Mark 16:9–20 are also assigned double brackets to indicate their non-genuineness.

The New International Version (NIV) reflects the Westcott and Hort Text. Gordon Fee himself, a TR/AV opponent, said, “all subsequent critical texts (i.e. UBSGNT, NA) look far more *like WH* than like the TR.”¹⁰ In another place, Fee said, “[In] Modern textual criticism, the ‘eclecticism’ of the UBS, RSV, NIV, NASB etc., ... recognizes that Westcott-Hort’s view of things was essentially correct.”¹¹ Radmacher and Hodges correctly pointed out that the “NIV as well as the NASB, NEB, JB, RSV, TEV, etc., simply adopt what is today’s ‘textus receptus,’ ... found in the two most widely popular printed editions of the Greek New Testament: the 26th edition of the Nestle/Aland text and the 3rd edition of the United Bible Societies text.”¹²

9 Eberhad Nestle, Erwin Nestle, and Kurt Aland et al, eds, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 26th ed (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), 39.

10 Gordon D Fee, “The Textual Criticism of the New Testament,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed Frank E Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1979), I:428.

11 Gordon D Fee, “The Majority Text and the Original Text of the New Testament,” *The Bible Translator* 31 (1980):107–118.

12 Earl Radmacher, and Zane C Hodges, *The NIV Reconsidered* (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1990), 139.

This new “textus receptus” of the United Bible Societies according to Radmacher and Hodges “do not differ a whole lot from the text produced by Westcott-Hort in 1881.”¹³ It is evident that Westcott and Hort continue to have a hypnotic hold on modern-day textual critics and Bible translators in terms of their attitude and approach to the New Testament. Following the lead of Westcott and Hort, the NIV translators took a low view of the Traditional Text and allowed many verses of the New Testament to remain missing. Those they have chosen to retain, they cast doubt by such comments, “the passage is absent from earlier and better manuscripts,” and “the earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have ...”. Parroting Westcott and Hort, they continue to insist that the two most corrupted manuscripts—Sinaiticus and Vaticanus—are better and more reliable. In Chinese terminology, they have “changed the soup but not the medicine.”

Now, what kind of men were Westcott and Hort? Be warned that Westcott and Hort were modernists. They did not believe that the Scriptures are totally inspired of God. Westcott and Hort were part of the team which translated the New Testament of the English Revised Version (RV). They questioned the doctrine of biblical inspiration by translating 2 Timothy 3:16 thus, “Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable ...”. By placing the copula “is” after “inspired of God,” the clause is made to mean that certain parts of Scripture are not inspired of God. Only those portions which are inspired are profitable. The KJV places the linking verb “is” right after “All Scripture”: “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable ...*”. This leaves no ambiguity whatsoever that all of Scripture is inspired of God. Westcott and Hort’s alteration of the KJV’s rendering

13 Ibid., 142–3.

of 2 Timothy 3:16 in the RV evinces their limited inerrancy view of Scripture.

The nineteenth century saw the rise of rationalism and liberalism which sought to destroy God's Word by rejecting the supernatural and miraculous. Westcott and Hort, in their denial of God's providential preservation of His Word, joined the company of Bible attackers. Westcott and Hort threw out the Majority Text which has been used by God's people down through the centuries in favour of a couple of perverted manuscripts found during their time. Dr Alfred Martin, former Vice-President of Moody Bible Institute, noted, "At precisely the time when liberalism was carrying the field in the English churches the theory of Westcott and Hort received wide acclaim. These are not isolated facts. Recent contributions on the subject—that is, in the present century—following mainly the Westcott-Hort principles and method, have been made largely by men who deny the inspiration of the Bible."¹⁴ Their very low view of biblical inspiration and authority is evident in their rejection of biblical creationism. Hort supported Darwin's theory of evolution. He said, "But the book which has most engaged me is Darwin. Whatever may be thought of it, it is a book that one is proud to be contemporary with ... my feeling is strong that the theory is unanswerable."¹⁵ Westcott took the biblical creation account to be mythical. He said, "No one now, I suppose, holds that the first three chapters of Genesis, for example, give a literal history. I could never understand how any one reading them with open eyes could think that

14 Alfred Martin, "A Critical Examination of the Westcott-Hort Textual Theory" (ThD diss, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1951), 70, cited in David W Cloud, *Modern Versions Founded upon Apostasy* (Oak Harbor: Way of Life Literature, 1995), 22.

15 David Otis Fuller, ed, *Which Bible?* 5th ed (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1975), 278.

they did.”¹⁶ Plainly, Hort’s Siamese twin Westcott also is a disciple of Darwin.

Westcott and Hort not only denied the Word, but also the Work of Christ. They did not believe that Christ is Sole Mediator and the only One worthy of worship. Hort was a Mary worshipper. He confessed, “I have been persuaded for many years that Mary-worship and ‘Jesus’-worship have very much in common in their causes and their results.”¹⁷ Westcott took delight in Mary-worship and idolatry. He testified, “After leaving the monastery, we shaped our course to a little oratory which we discovered on the summit of a neighbouring hill. ... Fortunately we found the door opened. It is very small, with one kneeling place; and behind a screen was a “Pieta” (i.e. a statue of Mary holding a dead Christ) the size of life. ... Had I been there alone I could have knelt there for hours.”¹⁸

As modernists and Mariolators, Westcott and Hort were not fit to handle the Scriptures. “*Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully*” (Ps 24:3–4). Void of the Spirit, they have made erroneous and destructive textual-critical decisions against God’s providentially preserved text as found in the Textus Receptus. The Westcott and Hort text and theory embraced today by the eclectic method ought to be rejected. The Textus Receptus, on the other hand, is free of revisionist poison. Alfred Martin has rightly advised, “It will not do to modify Westcott and Hort and to proceed from there. The only road to progress in New Testament textual criticism is repudiation of their theory and all its fruits. Most contemporary criticism is bankrupt and confused, the

16 Ibid., 280.

17 Ibid., 279.

18 Ibid., 278.

result of its liaison with liberal theology. A Bible-believing Christian can never be content to follow the leadership of those who do not recognize the Bible as the verbally inspired Word of God. The Textus Receptus is the starting-point for future research, because it embodies substantially and in a convenient form the traditional text.”¹⁹ The Trinitarian Bible Society refers to the Textus Receptus as “The Divine Original.”²⁰ The Authorised Version or King James Version which is based on the Textus Receptus, according to D A Waite, is “God’s Word Kept Intact In English.”²¹

The NIV and its Westcott-Hort based Critical texts cast doubt on the authenticity of these three important passages of Scripture: (1) the *pericope de adultera* (John 7:53–8:11), (2) the last 12 verses of Mark (Mark 16:9–20), and (3) the Johannine *Comma* (1 John 5:7–8). A critique of the NIV/Westcott-Hort attack on these verses is necessary at this juncture.

THE PERICOPE DE ADULTERA (JOHN 7:53–8:11)

The story of the woman taken in adultery in John 7:53–8:11 is called the *pericope de adultera*. Modernistic scholars have attempted to remove this whole passage from the Bible. According to Westcott, “This account of a most characteristic incident in the Lord’s life *is certainly not a part* of John’s narrative.”²² Not only has it been said that the *pericope de adultera* was not a part of John’s Gospel, both

19 Alfred Martin, “A Critical Examination of the Westcott-Hort Textual Theory,” in *Which Bible?*, ed Fuller, 172.

20 *The Divine Original* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, nd).

21 D A Waite, *Defending the King James Bible: A Fourfold Superiority* (Collingswood: The Bible For Today, 1992), xi.

22 B F Westcott, *The Gospel According to St John* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1981), 125, 141–3.

Westcott and Hort insisted that the story “has *no right to a place* in the text of the four Gospels.”²³

The Westcott-Hort based NIV has this misleading statement concerning the authenticity of John 7:53–8:11: “[The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53–8:11].” What are these so-called “earliest” and “most reliable” manuscripts which do not have the *pericope de adultera*? They are Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, both 4th century manuscripts. Those who reject the *pericope de adultera* do so on a presuppositional bias that these two codices which omit it are superior manuscripts.

Are the above codices really reliable? One will do well to remember that these are the same two codices which attacked the doctrine of the Trinity by removing the Johannine *Comma* (1 John 5:7f). According to Dean Burgon, a godly and renowned Bible defender of the nineteenth century, the codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are among “the *most corrupt* copies in existence.” Burgon wrote, “I am able to demonstrate that every one of them singly is in a high degree corrupt, and is condemned upon evidence older than itself.”²⁴ Although the above two codices may be “earliest” they are by no means “most reliable.”

There is abundant evidence in support of the authenticity of the *pericope de adultera*. John 7:53–8:11 is found (1) in the majority of Greek uncials and minuscules, (2) in the ancient versions or translations: Old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, and Ethiopic, and (3) in the writings of the Church Fathers: Didascalia, Ambrosiaster, Apostolic Constitutions,

23 Quoted by John W Burgon, “The Woman Taken in Adultery: A Defense of the Authenticity of St John 7:53–8:11,” in *Unholy Hands on the Bible*, ed Jay P Green (Lafayette: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 1990), F-6.

24 For a full discussion, refer to Burgon, *The Revision Revised*.

Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. Jerome (AD 340–420), the translator of the Latin Bible called the Vulgate, said this about the *pericope de adultera*: “... in the Gospel according to John in many manuscripts, both Greek and Latin, is found the story of the adulterous woman who was accused before the Lord.”²⁵ Jerome considered the *pericope* genuine, and included it in his Vulgate. Self-styled textual critics who arrogantly say: “This text has no place in Scripture; I will never preach from it!,” should rather heed these wise words of Calvin: “It has always been received by the Latin Churches, and is found in many old Greek manuscripts, and contains nothing unworthy of an Apostolic Spirit, *there is no reason why we should refuse to apply it to our advantage.*”²⁶

It must be noted that if John 7:53–8:11 is removed from the Gospel, it leaves a vacuum between the words “*out of Galilee ariseth no prophet*” (7:52), and “*Then spake Jesus again unto them*” (8:12). In 7:40–52, we find the private dialogue and debate among the Jewish populace, and between the temple servants and Pharisees over Jesus’ identity; whether He was the Moses-like Prophet (Deut 18:15) or not. Jesus was out of the picture at that time. It is thus quite awkward to introduce Jesus so abruptly in 8:12 where it is recorded that He spoke to them “*again.*” Jesus in verses 12–16 was teaching what is righteous judgment. The *pericope de adultera* provides the link between the two episodes. Jesus taught them “*again*” because He had already begun teaching the people before he was interrupted by the scribes and Pharisees (8:2–3). Jesus’ “*light of the world*” discourse clearly fits the context of the *pericope de adultera*. The Jewish religious leaders had failed to exercise righteous judgment because in condemning the adulteress, they failed to judge themselves for they

25 Quoted by Edward F Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 4th ed (Des Moines: The Christian Research Press, 1984), 151.

26 John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, trans William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, nd), 1:319.

were equally sinful (8:7–9). Jesus’ judicial and yet merciful treatment of the adulteress clearly demonstrates that He alone as the Light of the world is the true and perfect Judge (8:12).

The divinely inspired account of the woman taken in adultery rightfully belongs to the Gospel of John. Let us not hesitate to use it for our encouragement and comfort.

THE LAST 12 VERSES OF MARK (MARK 16:9–20)

Are the last twelve verses of Mark really Mark’s? According to the NIV, “The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9–20.” Its Study Bible goes on to say, “serious doubt exists as to whether these verses belong to the Gospel of Mark. They are absent from important early manuscripts and display certain peculiarities of vocabulary, style and theological content that are unlike the rest of Mark. His Gospel probably ended at 16:8, ...”. Here is another NIV attempt at scission. Practically every modern English version would insert this doubt over the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20. It is only the KJV which accepts it without question.

We affirm the authenticity of the last 12 verses of Mark together with Dean J W Burgon who wrote a scholarly 350-page defence of those celebrated verses. Burgon argued that the codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus which are said by many to be “most reliable” are actually “most corrupt.” Burgon wrote, “Recent Editors of the New Testament insist that these ‘last Twelve Verses’ are not genuine. ... I am as convinced as I am of my life, that the reverse is the truth. ... I insist, on the contrary, that the Evidence relied on is untrustworthy,—untrustworthy in every particular. ... I am able to prove that

this portion of the Gospel has been declared to be spurious on wholly mistaken grounds.²⁷

Furthermore, there is abundant manuscript evidence supporting the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20. E F Hills wrote, “They [*Mark 16:9–20*] are found in all the Greek manuscripts except *Aleph* [i.e., *Sinaiticus*], and *B* [i.e., *Vaticanus*] ... And, even more important, they were quoted as Scripture by early Church Fathers who lived one hundred and fifty years before *B* and *Aleph* were written, namely, Justin Martyr (c. 150), Tatian (c. 175), Irenaeus (c. 180), Hyppolytus (c. 200). Thus the earliest extant testimony is on the side of these last twelve verses.”²⁸

How about the allegation that the last twelve verses are non-Markan because of the difference in literary style? Metzger, for instance, argues against the last twelve verses because there are therein 17 words new to the Gospel of Mark.²⁹ Such an argument is often fallacious because it wrongly assumes that an author has only one uniform style of writing. In any case, Burgon, after a careful comparison of Mark’s first twelve verses with his last twelve verses, concluded, “It has been proved ... on the contrary, the style of S. Mark xvi. 9–20 is exceedingly like the style of S. Mark i. 9–20; and therefore, that *it is rendered probable by the Style* that the Author of the beginning of this Gospel was also the Author of the end of it. ... *these verses must needs be the work of S. Mark.*”³⁰

27 John William Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark* (Oxford: James Parker and Co, 1871), v–vi.

28 Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 161–2.

29 Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 227.

30 Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark*, 190.

THE JOHANNINE COMMA (1 JOHN 5:7–8)

Is there a clear, biblical proof text for the doctrine of the Trinity? 1 John 5:7–8 in the KJV reads, “For there are three that bear record **in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth**, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one” (*bold-face added*). The words in bold constitute the Johannine *Comma* (Greek: *koptein*, “to cut off”). The *Comma* proves the doctrine of the Holy Trinity—that “There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power, and glory” (WSC Question 6).

Why is this verse so seldom used to teach the doctrine of the Holy Trinity? The oft-quoted NT texts for the Trinity are Matthew 3:16–17; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Revelation 4:8; but why not 1 John 5:7f? One will reply, “How can I when my Bible does not have it?” Therein lies the problem; with 1 John 5:7f missing in so many of the modern Bible versions like the NIV, RSV, and NASB, it is no wonder that many Christians are ignorant of this verse. And even if they do know that this verse exists, they hesitate to use it because they have been deceived into thinking that it is not part of God’s Word. *The NIV Study Bible*, for instance, says that 1 John 5:7f “is not found in any Greek manuscript or NT translation prior to the 16th century.” On account of this they argue that 1 John 5:7f is spurious.

It is **not true** that 1 John 5:7f is absent in all pre-sixteenth century Greek manuscripts and NT translations. The text is found in eight extant Greek manuscripts, and five of them are

dated before the sixteenth century.³¹ Furthermore, there is abundant support for 1 John 5:7f from the Latin translations. There are at least 8,000 extant Latin manuscripts, and many of them contain 1 John 5:7f; the really important ones being the Old Latin which Church Fathers like Tertullian (AD 155–220), and Cyprian (AD 200–258) used. Now, out of the very few Old Latin manuscripts with the fifth chapter of 1 John, at least four of them contain the *Comma*.³² Since these Latin versions were derived from the Greek NT, there is reason to believe that 1 John 5:7f has very early Greek attestation. There is also reason to believe that Jerome’s Latin Vulgate (AD 340–420), which has the Johannine *Comma*, was translated from an untampered Greek text he had in his possession, and that he regarded the *Comma* to be a genuine part of 1 John. Jerome in his *Prologue to the Canonical Epistles* wrote, “irresponsible translators left out this testimony [i.e., 1 John 5:7f] in the Greek codices.”³³ Edward F Hills concluded, “... it was not trickery which was responsible for the inclusion of the Johannine *Comma* in the Textus Receptus but the usage of the Latin-speaking Church.”³⁴

This leads us to the so-called “promise” of Erasmus. Westcott and Hort advocate—Bruce Metzger—made this claim which became the popular argument against the Johannine *Comma*. He wrote, “Erasmus promised that he would insert the *Comma Johanneum*, as it is called, in future editions if a single Greek manuscript could be found that contained the passage. At length such a copy was found—or made to

31 Greek minuscules: 61 (XVI), 88 (XII), 221 (X), 429 (XIV–XV), 629 (XIV), 636 (XV), 918 (XVI), 2318 (XVIII). See also Michael Maynard, *A History of the Debate Over 1 John 5:7–8* (Tempe: Comma Publications, 1995). This study is full of important data in defence of the Johannine *Comma*; an indispensable volume by a librarian.

32 *Ibid.*, 19.

33 Cited in *ibid.*, 41.

34 Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 209.

order.”³⁵ This view against the authenticity of 1 John 5:7f is parroted by anti-KJVists Stewart Custer, D A Carson and James R White.

Is this truly what happened? H J de Jonge of the faculty of theology, Leiden University, an authority on Erasmus, says that Metzger’s view on Erasmus’ promise “has no foundation in Erasmus’ work. Consequently it is highly improbable that he included the difficult passage because he considered himself bound by any such promise.”³⁶ Yale professor—Roland Bainton—another Erasmusian expert agrees with de Jonge furnishing proof from Erasmus’ own writing that Erasmus’ inclusion of 1 John 5:7f was not due to a so-called “promise” but the fact that he believed “the verse was in the Vulgate and must therefore have been in the Greek text used by Jerome.”³⁷ The Erasmusian “promise” is thus a myth!

This was no small embarrassment to Metzger and all his followers. Metzger, however, did not remove his misleading story about Erasmus in subsequent editions of his book, but placed a corrigendum in a footnote on a distant page (page 291) in his third, enlarged edition confessing that what he had written on page 101 about Erasmus and 1 John 5:7 “needs to be corrected.”³⁸ But the unsuspecting reader and those not in the habit of reading footnotes, or those referencing his book for information on 1 John 5:7 from page 101 would hardly come to know that his story about Erasmus and 1 John 5:7 was in fact spurious (There’s no footnote on page 101 that would direct the reader to the correction made known on page 291; neither is page 291 indexed with 1 John 5:7 in the 3rd enlarged edition.) We can only opine that Metzger was

35 Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 101.

36 Cited in Maynard, *A History of the Debate Over 1 John 5:7–8*, 265.

37 Ibid., 252.

38 Bruce M Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 3rd enlarged ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 291.

trying to save face for he apparently took no special effort nor great care to make known the falsity of his allegation against the authenticity of the Johannine Comma, which was really a myth invented to undermine the providentially preserved Textus Receptus underlying the KJV.

It has also been argued that the Johannine *Comma* did not come from the Apostle John himself but from an unknown person who invented and inserted it into 1 John 5 so that Christianity would have a clear Trinitarian proof text. Up till this point in time, no one is able to identify this mysterious person who tried to “help” the Church. In any case, it is highly unlikely that 1 John 5:7f is the work of a well-meaning interpolator. When we look at the text itself, the phrase, “*the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit*” (emphasis added), naturally reflects Johannine authorship (cf John 1:1, 14). An interpolator would rather have used the more familiar and perhaps stronger Trinitarian formula—“the Father, *the Son*, and the Holy Spirit.” “The Word” or “The *Logos*” of 1 John 5:7f surely points to the Apostle John as its source for it is distinctively John who uses the term “the Word” to mean Jesus Christ in all his writings.

There is nothing in the Johannine *Comma* that goes against the fundamentals of the Christian faith. It is thoroughly biblical, and theologically accurate in its Trinitarian statement. There is really no good reason why we should not regard it as authentic, and employ it as the clearest proof-text in the Scripture for the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Epilogue: Deuteronomy 13:1–5 says, “If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or

that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.”

Appendix L
**UNDERMINING GOD’S WORD BY TWISTING
 THE TRANSLATION: ON THE DYNAMIC
 EQUIVALENCE METHOD AND THE NIV**

Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo

God originally gave the Old Testament in Hebrew/Aramaic, and the New Testament in Greek. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar [i.e., “common,” or “vernacular”] language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner; and through patience and comfort of Scriptures, may have hope” (WCF 1:8b).

The Bible can be found in many languages of the world today. This is surely in partial fulfilment of Christ’s Great Commission to His Church in Matthew 28:18–20. However, the Church should not only be concerned with the quantity but also the *quality* of translations. The latter has to do with the method employed in translating the Scriptures. It is important that the Scriptures be translated accurately. William Tyndale’s testimony is noteworthy, “I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God’s Word against my conscience, nor would this day, if all that is in the earth, whether it be pleasure, honour, or riches, might be given me.” This same attitude ought to be adopted by every translator of Scripture.

There are two methods of Bible translation: (1) the formal equivalence, and (2) the dynamic equivalence method. Formal equivalency is the literalistic approach which translates the

words of the original language into *the equivalent words* of the receptor language. It is word-for-word translation (e.g., Matt 1:23 cf. Isa 7:14; Matt 27:46 cf. Ps 22:1). Since every word of the Bible is inspired of God, it goes without saying that a translation of His Word must be done as literally as possible, reproducing accurately in the receptor language what is written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The verbally inspired nature of Scripture demands formal equivalence to be the only acceptable method in Bible translation. The operating principle of this method of translation is “as literal as possible, as free as necessary.” In other words, it is not an interlinear or woodenly literal approach. This philosophy of translation has been the standard for most Bible translators throughout the centuries. Dynamic equivalency is the popular method of Bible translation used today. This new method is a result of unbelief or compromise. The people who are especially comfortable with this method are those who believe the concepts contained in the Scriptures are inspired, not the words. The Trinitarian Bible Society has correctly observed, “In recent years, however, there has arisen a group of scholars who no longer believe in the importance, and often the inerrancy and inspiration, of the individual words of Scripture. These men believe instead that it is the thoughts or the truth behind the words that is important. ... This view is called the dynamic view of Scripture; transferred into the realm of translation, this is referred to as dynamic equivalence. The aim of dynamic equivalence translation is not word-for-word accuracy, but thought-for-thought equivalence.”¹

The dynamic approach is thus not really Bible translation, but Bible *interpretation*. In dynamic equivalency, the job of the translator is “to CREATE a lively Bible by his

1 G W Anderson, and D E Anderson, *New International Version: What Today's Christian Needs to Know about the NIV* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, nd), 3.

clever rephrasing of Scripture into colloquial language. “Equivalency” no longer means that the translator strives as perfectly as possible for an equal transfer of the words and structure of the original. Rather, the emphasis is on a general equivalency, with the translator having great freedom to restate, change, add to, and take away from the original writings.”² The meaning of the text is thus no longer solely dependent on the original text itself; it is now made dependent on the thoughts or views of the translator. The dynamic equivalence method may be well and good on ordinary, human literature, but it is certainly not suitable for supernatural, divine literature—the Holy Scriptures—where every word to its jot and tittle is God-breathed. God warns against any attempt to add to, subtract from, and change His Word (Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18–19).

The very loose dynamic equivalence approach to translating the Scriptures has resulted in a number of unreliable Bible versions. These have subtly undermined certain fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. The most popular dynamic equivalence version at this time is the New International Version (NIV). This inaccurate version has attacked the Written Word and the Living Word.

Attack on the Doctrine of the Divine Preservation of Holy Scriptures

Psalm 12:6–7 says, “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep *them*, O LORD, thou shalt preserve *them* from this generation for ever” (emphasis added). This is a very explicit proof-text on God’s promise to preserve His words. How did the NIV render this verse? The NIV reads, “And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined

2 David W Cloud, *Dynamic Equivalency: Death Knell of Pure Scripture* (Oak Harbor: Way of Life Literature, nd), 4.

in a furnace of clay, purified seven times. O LORD, you will keep us safe and protect us from such people forever.” Note the change from “keep them” to “keep us,” and “preserve them” to “protect us.” They changed the pronouns from third plural (i.e. “them”) to first plural (i.e. “us”). Is this a correct or accurate translation? In the Hebrew, the first word is *tishmerem*. The *-em* suffix means “them” not “us.” He will keep “them” (so KJV) is correct. The second word is *titzrennu*. The *-ennu* suffix (with an energetic *nun*) is third singular (i.e. “him”), not first plural (i.e. “us”). The energetic *nun* is emphatic (i.e. “every one of them”). So it should be translated preserve “them” (i.e. “every single one of His words”) not “us” (i.e. people). By incorrectly and inaccurately translating Psalm 12:7, the NIV has effectively removed the doctrine of Bible preservation from this text.

Attack on the Eternal Generation of God the Son

The eternal generation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity (i.e. Jesus is the eternally begotten Son of God) is an important doctrine of the Christian Faith. The 4th century Athanasian and Nicene Creeds state that Jesus is both Son and God “*only-begotten*, ... of the Father before all the ages.” The Westminster Confession of Faith (1648) likewise followed the ancient creeds in describing the relationship that exists within the Godhead: “In the unity of the Godhead, there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is *eternally begotten* of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son” (II:3; emphasis added). All three ancient creeds describe Christ as only begotten, or eternally begotten. Now you know that every doctrine must be based on the Bible. Where in the Bible do we find Jesus being described as the only begotten Son of God? If you have the KJV you will find it in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; and 1 John 4:9. But if you are using the NIV, you will

have a hard time finding it. The term “only begotten” with reference to Christ has been conveniently removed by the NIV. It mistranslates the Greek *monogenês* as “one and only.” Problem is *monogenês* does not just mean “one and only.” The Greek *monogenês* comes from 2 words: *monos* meaning “only” and *gennaô* meaning “to beget” or “to generate.”³ The KJV translates it literally and accurately as “only begotten.” The NKJV’s criticism of the NIV’s “dynamic” rendering of *monogenês* is worth noting, “Dynamic equivalence, a recent procedure in Bible translation, commonly results in paraphrasing where a more literal rendering is needed to reflect a specific and vital sense. For example, references to Christ in some versions of John 3:16 as ‘only Son’ or ‘one and only Son’ are doubtless dynamic equivalents of sorts. However, they are not actual equivalents of the precisely literal ‘only begotten Son,’ especially in consideration of the historic Nicene statement concerning the person of Christ, ‘begotten, not made,’ which is a crucial Christian doctrine.”⁴

3 There is an argument which says that *-genês* does not come from *gennaô* (“to beget”), but *ginomai* (“to become”). It goes on to argue that since *ginomai* refers to a “category” or a “kind,” *monogenês* has to mean “only one of its kind” or “unique.” But this is unlikely. The root *gen* seems closer to *gennaô* than to *ginomai*. Even if *-genês* is *ginomai* and not *gennaô*, there is no real problem. *Ginomai* and *gennaô* are related words. They can be taken synonymously. *Ginomai* is a well attested quasi-passive of *gennaô*, and does contain the idea of begetting (see F F Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1982], 195). Büchsel agrees, “In the NT *monogenes* ... means ‘only begotten.’ ... In Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn. 4:9 *monogenes* denotes more than the uniqueness or incomparability of Jesus. In all these verses He is expressly called the Son, and He is regarded as such in 1:14. In Jn. *monogenes* denotes the origin of Jesus. He is *monogenes* as the only-begotten” (TDNT, s.v. “*monogenes*,” by F Büchsel, 4:739, 741). The origin of Jesus is His preexistence as God Himself. As the only begotten Son of God, Jesus shares the same essence with God the Father. See also John V Dahms, “The Johannine Use of *Monogenes* Reconsidered,” *New Testament Studies* 29 (1983):222–232.

4 *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), iv.

The NIV goes counter to Reformed theology. The Westminster Confession of Faith teaches according to the Scriptures that Jesus “the Son is eternally begotten of the Father.” Now, in which verse of the Bible is Jesus described as the only begotten Son of God? The subscriber of the Westminster Confession who has for his Bible the NIV would not be able to answer this question. A Reformed or Presbyterian believer would be contradicting his faith if he were to uphold the NIV as his Bible. The NIV has removed this important teaching on the person of Christ from the Scriptures. It has subtracted from God’s Word; a very dangerous thing to do (Rev 22:19). That is why the NIV cannot be trusted. The NIV is not telling us what God says, but what man thinks God is saying. The NIV is an interpretation, and not a translation of the Bible.

Attack on the Virgin Birth of Christ

In Luke 2:33 we read, “And *Joseph and his mother* marvelled at those things which were spoken of him” (KJV). In the NIV, it reads like this, “The child’s father and mother marvelled at what was said about him.” Do you see the problem here with the NIV? The NIV makes Joseph the father of Jesus! The NIV’s rendering of this verse is totally out of line for the following reasons: (1) the word “child” is not in the traditional Greek text, (2) the word “father” is also not there, (3) the possessive pronoun “his” is connected to Mary alone (*he meter autou*), and does not include Joseph. Those who do not know better would probably come to the conclusion that Joseph was the direct, natural father of Jesus. The NIV has caused Luke to contradict the virgin birth. Jesus has only one Father, and He is none other than the First Person of the Holy Trinity. Joseph was neither physically nor spiritually the father of Jesus.

However, NIV advocates will point out verse 41 which called Joseph and Mary “his parents” (so KJV as in NIV). The fact

that Joseph and Mary were indeed parents of Jesus—Joseph being legally a “parent” and not naturally the “father” of Jesus—would prove the point that the biblical writers were careful not to attribute the title “father” to Joseph, for Jesus has only one Father, and that is His Father in Heaven—the First Person of the Holy Trinity. In verse 43, we again see the biblical writers carefully distinguishing Joseph’s actual relationship with Jesus by the words “Joseph and his mother,” again purposely avoiding calling Joseph His “father.” Jesus Himself refused to call Joseph His “father,” and gently corrected His mother when she said, “thy father and I have sought thee” (v 48), which drew this response, “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my *Father’s* business?” (v 49). Why did not Jesus use “God,” or “the Lord,” but “Father” at this juncture? It is to correct any misconception that Joseph was in any way His “father”; God alone was His Father.

Attack on Christ who is Both God and Man

1 Timothy 3:16 has to be one of the clearest texts of Scripture proving the full deity and full humanity of Christ, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: *God was manifest in the flesh, ...*”. But from the NIV, you would have a difficult time proving this. Instead of the reading, “God was manifest in the flesh,” you have “He appeared in a body.” The NIV obscures (1) the deity of Christ by removing “God” and replacing it with just “He,” and (2) the humanity of Christ by replacing “the flesh,” with “a body” (a body may not necessarily be of “flesh and blood”). The word in the original is *sarx*, “flesh,” not *sôma*, “body.” It is also significant to note that the KJV translators never rendered *sarx* as “body” and *sôma* as “flesh.”⁵ The KJV recognised the distinction

5 See Yeong Shoon Lau, “A Textus Receptus-King James Version Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament,” (MDiv thesis, Far Eastern Bible College, 1997), 214, 228.

between the two; something the NIV translators obviously failed to do, having exalted method over theology.

Since we are at 1 Timothy 3:16, a comment on why the NIV reads “He” and not “God” is appropriate. The NIV chose to adopt a Westcott-Hort reading of the text. According to Westcott and Hort, since the Sinai and Vatican codices read “he who,” instead of “God,” it must be the correct reading. And mind you, this is over against *the majority* of the Greek manuscripts which read *Theos*, “God,” instead of *hos*, “he who.” Many modern versions like the NIV happily follow Westcott and Hort in corrupting the Word of God. Lovers of God’s Word should refrain from using a version which not only wrongly translates the Bible, but also supports the unbelieving views of Westcott and Hort.

Twisted translations exist. Dynamic Equivalence Bible versions are unfaithful to the original, and untrustworthy for personal use. Such versions are the NIV, the Living Bible (including the New Living Bible), Today’s English Version (TEV or Good News for Modern Man), and Contemporary English Version (CEV).

Attack on God’s Grace to China and the Chinese

Isaiah 49:12 speaks of God’s grace to the Chinese people, “Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.” The KJV translation, “from the land of Sinim,” comes from the Hebrew text, *me’erets sinim*. The NIV, on the other hand, turns the “Land of Sinim” into “Region of Aswan” by a twist of the ball-pen.

How does the NIV differ to translate *me’erets sinim* into “from the region of Aswan”? “Sinim” as in the KJV is a transliteration of the Hebrew *sinim*. In Ezekiel 29:10 and 30:6, the word for “Aswan,” according to the NIV, is “Sevneh”.

Now “Sinim” is made “Seveneh” and translated “Aswan.” But why is “Sinim” in Isaiah 49:12 by a twist of the NIV’s ball-pen also become “Aswan”? Even the non-Hebrew reader can see that Sinim and Aswan are two different words. Perhaps the NIV translators think they can palm off their ware to the unwary non-Hebrew English reader.

Another difference between the KJV and NIV translations is the NIV rendering of *’erets* into “region” whereas *’erets* has always been translated “land,” “earth,” or “ground.” Now if the NIV translates “the *land* of Zebulun” and “the *land* of Naphtali” from the word *’erets* (Isa 9:1) and Zebulun and Naphtali are small tribes, why does the NIV use the word “region” here? The right word for “region” in Hebrew is *chebel* according to the Hebrew lexicon.⁶ There is no valid reason to translate *’erets* as “region” except for the sinister purpose of demoting the Land of Sinim into some Egyptian outback.

The land of Sinim, according to Hastings’ *Dictionary of the Bible*, from the context, must have been the extreme south or east of the known world.⁷ The LXX (Septuagint) favours the view that a country in the east is intended, and some modern commentators have identified Sinim with China, the land of the Sinae. The ancients’ view that Sinim refers to China is attested overwhelmingly by continuing modern Hebrew usage. The English-Hebrew, Hebrew-English lexicon by Prof M Segal and Prof M B Dagut, says China is “Sin.”⁸ The root of “Sinim” is “Sin,” so “Sinim” points most assuredly to China and not to Aswan, which is translated from a different word “Seveneh” as stated above. Thus, one who is well-versed in Chinese is called a sinologue and sinology is the study of Chinese language, history, customs,

6 BDB, s.v. “*chebel*,” 286.

7 James Hastings, ed, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Sinim.”

8 *English-Hebrew, Hebrew-English Dictionary*, s.v. “China,” “Chinese.”

etc.; and the war between China and Japan was called the Sino-Japanese war.

Dr Allan A MacRae, in his *Studies in Isaiah*, says as a matter of fact on the subject under discussion: “In verse 12 the remarkable extent of the work of the servant is clearly indicated with people coming to his light from the north and from the west and even from the land of Sinim (China). What a marvelous prediction of the extension of the gospel of deliverance from sin through the servant of the Lord to the very ends of the world! How wonderfully it has been fulfilled in these days when groups of believers have come to the Savior from so many sections of the earth, even including this very land of China, which must have seemed in the days of Isaiah to be the utmost fringe of civilization. Truly He has become ‘a light to the Gentiles.’”⁹

Furthermore, let us see how the translators of the Chinese Bible (CUV) treat the Hebrew text. They translate the land of Sinim as “*Chin Kuo*,” the Kingdom or Country of Chin, and “Chin” is a root word for China, verily, as it was *Chin Shih Hwang Ti*, the first emperor who united the many ancient states into one China. This is a good translation in line with the time-honoured Hebrew usage to this day.

9 Allan A MacRae, *Studies in Isaiah* (Hatfield: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1995), 237. See also MacRae’s *The Gospel of Isaiah* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 109–12. Edward J Young wrote likewise, “In any attempt to identify the land of Sinim we must look for a place far from Palestine. An ancient interpretation would identify it with China, ...” (Edward J Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1972], 3:282, 294).

Appendix M
THE BLASPHEMY AND DECEPTION
OF THE DA VINCI CODE

Jeffrey Khoo and Suan-Yew Quek

Caveat

Satan is a liar and a deceiver (John 8:44, Rev 12:9). Dan Brown's bestselling novel—*The Da Vinci Code* (Bantam Press, 2003; 593 pages)—is the latest Satanic attack against our Lord Jesus Christ and His inerrant Word. Brown seductively weaves a highly imaginative story in a vain attempt to prove that the Jesus believed by Christians today is not the same Jesus who lived in the first century. According to *The Da Vinci Code*, the true historical Jesus was only an ordinary man and not God at all.

The book is a most seductive and deceptive novel replete with hidden codes, murder, sex and intrigue. It seeks to debunk the common notion that the Holy Grail is the Cup of the Last Supper of Christ. The author asserts that the painting by Leonardo Da Vinci of the Last Supper reveals that the Holy Grail refers actually to Mary Magdalene who he says is the wife of Jesus Christ. Mary Magdalene is said to be pregnant when she was with Christ at His resurrection. Not only that, this lineage of Christ and Mary Magdalene continues to this very day. This is blasphemy in the highest degree.

Brown's attacks on Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures are not new. His blasphemous and deceptive views have been propounded for decades within the four walls of modernistic universities and liberal seminaries. Brown distills the academic jargon and weaves the views of liberalism into a mystery novel for the general audience, and for the money no less.

The Blasphemy of *The Da Vinci Code*

In his book, Brown attacks the inspiration, preservation, and canonicity of the Scriptures. The Bible he says, “is a product of *man*, ... Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book. ... [T]housands of documents already existed chronicling His life as a mortal man. To rewrite the history books, ... Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s *human* traits and embellished those gospels that made him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.”

As far as Brown is concerned, the historical and factual gospels have been destroyed in the 4th century. What remains today are the spurious and fictitious Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John that promote a mythical, godlike Jesus. So, all this while, Christians have been reading the wrong Gospels and believing in a false Jesus!

Truth of God’s Perfection

Does Brown’s unbelief make the faith of God without effect? “God forbid; yea, let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom 3:4).

How do we know that the Bible today is truly the Word of God, perfect and without mistakes? Simply because God says so! The declaration, “Thus saith the LORD,” or “Hear the Word of the LORD,” or “The LORD spake ... saying,” appears over 3,000 times in the Bible. Be not deceived, the Bible is altogether God’s Word, not man’s word. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (*theopneustos*, literally, “God-breathed”) and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man

of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Bible was written over a span of 1,500 years by more than 40 different writers, and despite all its diversity, its miraculous unity is obvious. It goes without saying that though the Bible has many writers, it has but one Author—God Himself. That every one of the OT prophecies concerning Christ’s first coming has been fulfilled precisely proves the Bible’s authenticity (eg, Isa 7:14 cf Matt 1:22-23).

How do we know that the Scriptures that we have today are the true ones, and not those that have been lost for over a thousand years? We know this because God promised to preserve His words perfectly and perpetually. Psalm 12:6-7 says, “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.” Jesus Himself promised, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt 5:18). “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33). “The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

The true Bible can be easily identified. It is the one that has an unbroken lineage, fully and continuously preserved by God down through the ages, and always in the possession of His people. Thus, the perfect and true Scriptures are not in the lately found Alexandrian manuscripts underlying the modern corrupt versions (which incidentally present a less than divine Jesus preferred by Brown), nor are they in the newly discovered Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi codices (Gnostic manuscripts from Egypt) as mentioned by Brown, but in the long-existing, time-tested and Christ-honouring Hebrew and Greek Scriptures underlying the good old Authorised Version.

Certainty of Christian Conviction

How can we be absolutely sure that the Scriptures we hold in our hands today are truly the infallible and inerrant Word of God? Faith is the answer! “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). The logic of faith is the key to certainty. God says it, that settles it, we believe it! We do not see to believe; we believe in order to see.

The Apostle Peter told the Church to trust in “a more sure word of prophecy”—the Holy Scriptures—as written by eyewitnesses: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man (and certainly not by the will of Constantine); but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet 1:20-21).

If we are truly born again and the Spirit of God dwells within us, we cannot but know and believe the Truth of God’s Word. The Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17). “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ... He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:13-14). “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1 John 2:27).

Historical and scientific evidences that prove the Scriptures may be helpful, but ultimately, the only basis of our faith and practice must be the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone.

The Perfect Bible (and we have it today and know where it is) is our supreme final authority. *Sola Scriptura!*

In *The Da Vinci Code*, it is Satan's voice one hears. True Christians will not follow. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they shall follow me: and I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:27-28).

We have experienced the good news and resurrection power of Christ in our life, and we cannot deny that our Lord and Saviour is indeed 100% God and 100% Man, and that His Word is 100% inspired and 100% preserved.

It goes without saying that *The Da Vinci Code* is truly Fiction. The Bible, on the other hand, is purely Fact. We have a Perfect Canon and a Perfect Text. May we never add to it, nor subtract from it (Rev 22:18-19), but love it and obey it (1 John 2:3-6)! "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps 11:3).

The Deception of *The Da Vinci Code*

The Da Vinci Code is a Satanic masterpiece. It is utterly deceptive, and particularly so in Chapter 55. In this chapter, one finds the two talking snakes, Teabing and Langdon, seducing Sophie with their sophistry. Alas, the helpless lass is mesmerised, and the serpentine duo go for the jugular with their venom of lies.

Deception #1: Da Vinci's Fresco Tells the Truth, Not the Bible

The Da Vinci Code assumes that Leonardo was telling the truth concerning who Jesus was and what happened in His life. Teabing pontificates, "In fact, Da Vinci painted the true Grail." At the end of the chapter, Teabing again presses the point that Da Vinci's fresco is truthful and not the Bible, "You will be shocked to learn what anomalies Da Vinci

included here that most scholars either do not see or simply choose to ignore. This fresco [of the Last Supper], in fact, is the entire key to the Holy Grail mystery.”

Refutation #1

It must be said that Da Vinci, born in 1452 and died in 1519, was not an eyewitness to the Last Supper. How can his painting then be regarded as an authoritative depiction of that event? We should rather trust in eyewitness accounts. Matthew and John who were there recorded what happened during the Last Supper in their respective Gospels. The truth is not in the painting of Da Vinci, but in the testimonies of Matthew and John, and of Peter and Paul as found in Mark and Luke, who wrote under divine inspiration (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Pet 1:20-21).

One proof that Da Vinci’s fresco is historically unreliable is that he painted Jesus and His disciples dining at a long and high table with some sitting down and others standing up. The people in those days did not have their meals in such a way. In those days, they had their meals in a reclining posture. This fact is accurately reported in the Four Gospels where we find Jesus and His disciples reclining on mattresses around a low table during the Last Supper (cf. John 13:23, 25).

Deception #2: If You Believe in the Bible, You Must be Stupid

In order to cause Sophie to doubt, Teabing made her read a couple of Da Vinci’s sayings that demean believers of the supernatural and miraculous. Quotation of Da Vinci #1 reads, “Many have made a trade of delusions and false miracles, deceiving the stupid multitude.” In other words, Sophie is made to think that anyone who believes that the Bible is a supernatural God-given Book, and that the

miracles recorded therein are true, must be simple-minded and stupid.

Refutation #2

People ought to realise that Da Vinci is but a creature, and not the Creator. Da Vinci is dead, but Jesus is alive (1 Cor 15:1-20). As such, it is not what Da Vinci says in his paintings that we should worry about, but what Jesus the risen Lord says in His Word.

Who are the fools in God's eyes? They are those who deny His existence and His miracles. Twice in the Psalms, God says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Pss 14:1, 53:1). The judgement of such fools as spoken of in Romans 1:18-22 applies to Teabing, Langdon, and not forgetting the author Brown himself, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." The truly blind are they who deny the miracle of creation, even the Creator God—the Lord Jesus Christ—Himself (John 1:3, Col 1:16).

Deception #3: If You Believe in the Bible, You Must be Blind

Quotation of Da Vinci #2 states, "Blinding ignorance does mislead us. O! Wretched mortals, open your eyes!" Teabing could be quoting Da Vinci out of context. Whatever the case may be, Teabing is trying to tell Sophie, "Don't be blind!

Don't be misled! Stop believing in the Bible! Stop following Christ!"

Refutation #3

Da Vinci says "Blinding ignorance does mislead us," and so it does. Jesus speaks against "blinding ignorance" as well, and calls on all to seek and know the truth. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:6-9).

From where do we seek the Lord? "Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail" (Isa 34:16). Why the book of the Lord? Because "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps 19:7-8).

How should we seek the Lord? We should seek Him by faith, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6). We do not see in order to believe, we believe in order to see. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). We should seek Him with great reverence, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov 1:7). "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Prov 9:10).

Deception #4: The Bible is a Product of Man, Not of God

Teabing tells Sophie, “The Bible is a product of man, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book. ... More than *eighty* gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John among them.” Teabing lies to Sophie, “The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great. ... Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s *human* traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.”

Refutation #4

It is not true that the Four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—were 4th century inventions of Constantine and the Nicaean Council. The Four Gospels were written in AD 40-50 shortly after Christ rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. The Early Church Fathers—Papias (in AD 110) and Irenaeus (in AD 180)—mentioned them by name and affirmed their Apostolic origins. It is thus not the over 80 gospels that Teabing mentioned that were the early and authentic Gospels but the Four that we have in the Canonical Scriptures today, totally inspired and entirely preserved to this day.

It must be pointed out that the over 80 gospels that Teabing regards as authentic do not paint Jesus as a mere mortal at all, but super-divine in a fairy-tale manner that can only come from the corrupt imaginations of unregenerate men. As a matter of fact, these false gospels deify Mary more than they do Jesus which eventually led to the Mary-worship that

we see in the Roman Catholic Church today. It is no wonder that God's people have always rejected those 80 gospels as spurious. A born-again, Spirit-indwelt Christian (John 14:16-17, 1 John 2:27) when reading about the boyhood of Jesus in these false gospels can easily tell that they are myths and not truth (read *The Lost Books of the Bible*, especially 1 Infancy 14-15, about Jesus being bitten by a mad and demonised Judas, and Jesus being a proud and boastful show-off).

Teabing's claims that Constantine (1) was "a lifelong pagan who was baptized on his deathbed," and that he (2) financed a new Bible in AD 325 to consolidate his power as emperor, are lies. The truth is: (1) Constantine lived from AD 285-337, and became a Christian in AD 312—i.e. 25 years before his death! (2) The NT Canon as we know it today existed since the first century. By God's special providence, it was the Council of Carthage of AD 397 and not the Council of Nicaea AD 325 that settled the NT Canon; this happened 60 years after Constantine's death!

Brown says that the New Testament Canon is a human fabrication and thus should be dismissed or replaced. This attack must be refuted. It is vital that Biblical Christianity holds fast to the ancient Biblical Canon without change. The word "canon" refers to a measuring rod by which things are kept straight. It is used metaphorically in 2 Corinthians 10:12-18 to designate God's rule over our lives. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:12-18 wrote, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule (**canon**) which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as

to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line (**canon**) of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." The canonicity of the Bible is thus "the quality or character of the Scriptures by which they are our rule of faith and life, as the infallible Word of God." As such, the Biblical Canon constitutes the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures.

The Church did not make the words of man to become the words of God as Brown asserts. The Word of God stands on its own, and declares itself to be the Word of God. The Bible is its own infallible authority. There is no higher authority than the Word of God itself. This is an acceptable tautological argument. In defense of this truth, J O Buswell correctly observed that "all factual existential statements may be regarded as circular. Why is a fact a fact, and why is it regarded as a fact? The only answer is, because it is a fact." The Westminster Confession of Faith likewise states, "The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God."

The Word of God was canonised the moment it was written. The canonicity of Scripture finds its basis in the inspiration of Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all

good works.” The Church at that time received the canonical words of the Apostles as the very words of God and not the words of man. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 states, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” When heresies like Marcionism and Montanism arose, the pastors of the early church realised the need to identify the Canon so that their parishioners may know for sure the names and the number of the divinely inspired books. The Council of Laodicea (AD 363) listed the present number of 27 New Testament books. Athanasius also mentioned 27 in his Easter letter of AD 367 and these were recognised as the Canon at the Council of Hippo (AD 393) and the Third Synod of Carthage (AD 397). Since then, the New Testament Canon of 27 books was confirmed and fixed. The New Testament pseudepigrapha were all rejected as spurious and not as Holy Scripture. The identification of the Canon is the result of the special providential work of God through His Spirit-guided Church (John 16:13-14).

But Teabing says that the Scriptures “evolved,” and there is no such thing as a definitive version of the book. This is nonsense. The biblical doctrine of the Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of the Scriptures tells us that we have an absolutely perfect and definitive Bible today as found in the infallible and inerrant Hebrew and Greek Scriptures underlying the Authorised King James Version. E F Hills rightly said that the logic of faith is the key to such a certainty, “You must begin with Christ and the Gospel and proceed according to the logic of faith. This will lead you to the Traditional text, the *Textus Receptus* and the King James Version.”

Deception #5: Jesus was Only a Man, and Not God at All

Teabing says, “Jesus Christ was a historical figure ... a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal. ... Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea. ... A relatively close vote at that. ... Many scholars claim that the early Church literally stole Jesus from His original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power.”

Refutation #5

The Council of Nicaea was convened to hear the case of Arius, a priest from Alexandria, who taught that Jesus was only half God and not fully God. Arius said that Jesus (1) was a creature and thus not the Creator, (2) had a beginning and thus not eternal, (3) was different from and not the same as God Himself. But God raised up a defender of the faith in Athanasius. In the Council of Nicaea, Athanasius argued from the Scriptures that the Lord Jesus Christ was fully God and fully Man (John 1:1, 14; Col 2:9; 1 Tim 3:16), eternally begotten of the Father, not created (John 1:3, 3:16, 18, 10:30; 1 John 4:9). Arius was declared a heretic. The vote was hardly close—315 for Athanasius and only 3 for Arius. Arius was defrocked and excommunicated.

Furthermore, Teabing’s claim that the deity of Christ was a New Testament invention is not true at all! It was not the New Testament that first spoke of the deity of Christ but the Old Testament. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet 1:19). The Old Testament prophetic Scripture had already made mention of a coming Messiah who would be none other than God Himself. Isaiah 7:14 was one such prophecy, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Jesus Himself fulfilled this prophecy in 5 BC as announced by the angel Gabriel. Jesus

was Immanuel, “*God with us*” (Matt 1:22-23). It is significant to note that Isaiah’s prophecy of the virgin-born Son of God was given 750 years before Jesus came. It goes without saying that the lie that Jesus was never God but made God by the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 was not Constantine’s invention, but Teabing’s.

Today, Arius’ teaching is found in a cult called the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and in the corrupt modern versions of the Bible (like the NIV) that are based on the Alexandrian text. It would be no surprise if Arius and his followers had altered the inspired text to create their own text to undermine the deity of Christ. It is indeed troubling to note that in the NIV, 1 Timothy 3:16 should read falsely, “He appeared in a body,” which undermines His deity and humanity. The true reading is, “God was manifest in the flesh” (as accurately and faithfully translated from the original by the KJV) which tells us that Christ is *Theanthropos*—100% God and 100% Man. Deception abounds today not only in the cults that claim to be “Christian,” but also in the modern versions that claim to be “Holy Bible.”

Warning

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Tim 4:1-2). In the face of such dangers, what must Christians do? The Apostle Paul exhorts, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim 4:16).

May the Lord protect His Church from falling into Satan’s trap of deception.

Appendix N

THE JUDAS GOSPEL: BAD NEWS OF BETRAYAL

Jeffrey Khoo

Introduction

According to *The New York Times* of April 6, 2006, The Judas Gospel together with the other Gnostic Gospels “have produced a new generation of Christians who now regard the Bible not as the literal word of God, but as a product of historical and political forces that determined which texts should be included in the canon, and which edited out. For that reason, the discoveries have proved deeply troubling for many believers.”

Is this true? Have the Gnostic Gospels produced a generation of Christians who no longer believe that the Bible they have in their hands today is the literal Word of God? Those who are truly born again, born of the Spirit, born from above should not be troubled by the Judas Gospel for the Holy Spirit that indwells us is the Spirit of truth and guides us into all truth (John 16:13). What is truth? God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice ... and they follow me” (John 10:27). The Lord says His sheep will be able to discern His good voice of truth from the strange voice of falsehood.

The Gospel of Judas is not good news at all but another bad news of betrayal—Jesus is betrayed once again by Judas in this recently found “Gospel” named after him. Actually, the title—“The Gospel of Judas”—misleads. The title gives the impression that it was Judas himself who had written this Gospel. No, Judas wrote no Gospel. This so-called “Gospel” was not written by Judas but by some unknown person who for some twisted reason wanted to revise Biblical history by turning the villain Judas Iscariot into a hero—the best and most loyal disciple of Jesus.

Now, let me critique the Gospel of Judas (according to the text released by the National Geographic Society), and offer three reasons why this Gospel is a fictitious and spurious one.

The Judas Gospel is a Heretical Gospel

The Gospel of Judas begins like this: “The secret account of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot.” The fact that the Gospel of Judas is introduced as a “secret account” lets out the “secret” that it is an unorthodox gospel created by the Gnostics who were known for their “secrets.” Prof Tan Kim Huat of Trinity Theological College writing for *The Straits Times* on April 14, 2006 asked: “Is Gnosticism a variety of Christianity or is it a mutation so dangerous that it should be treated as a heresy?” Our answer to his two-part question is, “No, Gnosticism is not a ‘variety of Christianity’ but a totally different religion that is occultic, and yes, it is definitely a heresy by the infallible and authoritative standards of the divinely inspired and preserved Scriptures.”

What is Gnosticism and who were the Gnostics? The word “gnostic” comes from the Greek *ginosko* which means “to know.” Gnosticism was a 2nd century cult which used the name of Christ to spin a heretical brand of Christianity teaching that (1) salvation requires secret knowledge outside of the Bible that is accessible only to the privileged elite; (2) matter is evil; and (3) Jesus did not really come in the flesh.

The gospel of Christianity is no secret but clearly revealed in the Written Word of God—the 66 books of the Canonical Scriptures. The Apostle John wrote referring to the Canonical Gospels: “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31). The Written Word reveals to us the Living Word, and it is

sufficient for us to know how to find salvation in Christ, the only Saviour of the world.

What is the gospel? The word “gospel” (*euangelion*) literally means “good news.” The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 explains what is the gospel: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that *Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*” Christ crucified and resurrected is the good news of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life for those who will put their trust in Him.

This knowledge of the gospel is not secret but open. The knowledge of salvation is not far from us, but very near us. The Apostle Paul tells us in Roman 10:8-9, “But what saith it? *The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*” But the Gnostics add to the gospel. They say that it is not enough to know Christ and His resurrection, one must attain to some hidden and mysterious knowledge before one can truly know God and live forever. The Gnostic formula for salvation works like this: “Gospel + Secret Knowledge = Salvation.” It is “another gospel.” Anything that adds to the perfect redemptive work of Christ and the pure content of the Gospel of Christ is *heteron euangelion*, “another gospel” (Gal 1:6).

The Gospel of Judas can shake the faith of the believer. May we not be so easily shaken in our faith like some of the

Christians in the Galatian Church. Paul wrote to chide and warn them, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:6-9).

The Judas Gospel has a Different Jesus

What kind of Jesus does the Judas Gospel present? The Judas Gospel presents a Jesus who has a habit of laughing at people. He laughs at his disciples for saying grace, he laughs at their questions, he laughs before he speaks, he laughs after he speaks. The word “laugh” appears eight times in the Judas Gospel. This compares with only twice in the whole New Testament and that only in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus said in Luke 6:21, “Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.” In Luke 6:25, Jesus warned that those who laugh now will weep later, “Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.” In John 11:35, we find Jesus weeping. Jesus was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3). He did not come into this world to have a jolly good time, but to suffer, to bleed, and to die for us so that we might be saved.

The Judas Gospel also presents Jesus not as the Creator but a creature. The disciples referred to Jesus not as “the Son of God” (ie, God Himself) but “the son of our god.” Jesus also says that his god is different from the god of his disciples. In the world of the Gnostics there are many gods and many levels of divinity. The highest level is pure spirit. This is typical of the Gnostic thinking that all flesh is evil. Since Jesus is in the flesh, Jesus must be evil and could not have come from the supreme God who is pure Spirit. Then where

did Jesus come from? Judas is the one who has the answer. In the Gospel of Judas, Judas tells Jesus, “I know who you are and where you come from. You are from the immortal realm of Barbelo.” Barbelo is one of the inferior gnostic gods from the lower levels of the immortal realm. Jesus himself confesses to Judas that he is not God but one of the twelve angels created by God. Jesus is the first of the twelve angels who is “Seth” and called “Christ.” This is pure nonsense.

The truth is Jesus is God and the Creator of the world. In the very first verse of the Gospel of John, we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This Word is none other than the Living Word—the Lord Jesus Christ—who created the universe: verse 3 says, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” This invisible God and Creator became a human being and took on human flesh to be our Saviour. John 1:14 says, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” The flesh of Jesus was not at all sinful, evil or bad, but utterly sinless, pure and perfect, “full of grace and truth.”

The mystery of Jesus Christ is a mystery revealed, not for a secretive and elite few but for all to know and believe so that they might be saved from their sins. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:16, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only (uniquely) begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The Judas Gospel is a False Text

The Judas Gospel is one of the many false gospels written by the Gnostics. How many Gnostic Gospels were there? Some say 15, some say 30, some say 80. The experts are not even sure. Christians have always recognised only the Four Canonical Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—to be the inspired Word of God. *The Da Vinci Code* and the National Geographic Society are saying the very opposite—the Gnostic Gospels are true and the Four Gospels false.

Now, how do we know that the Four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John we have today are true and not the recently discovered Gnostic Gospels like the Gospel of Judas? Christians have long had answers to such attacks on the Word of God and they are in the twin doctrines of the Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of the Holy Scriptures as taught in Psalm 12:6-7, Matthew 5:18, 2 Timothy 3:16, and 2 Peter 1:21.

The divinely inspired or God-breathed (*theopneustos*) New Testament Scriptures were those written by God's special servants, namely, the Apostles of Jesus Christ. Now it is argued that the Gnostic Gospels were also written by Apostles like Thomas and Judas. Why were the Gospels of Thomas and Judas not included in the Bible? The answer is simple. They were not gospels written by the Apostles in the first place, nor written by eyewitnesses, nor written in the first century but appeared only two to three hundred years after the death of Christ, after the Apostles of Christ had passed away, and after the Four Canonical Gospels had long been written, read and received as Holy Scripture by the Church.

Ireneus, the Bishop of Lyons, testified in the 2nd century: "Matthew published a written gospel for the Hebrews ... Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, transmitted to us

in writing the things preached by Peter. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by him. Lastly, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had leant back on His breast, once more set forth the gospel, while residing at Ephesus in Asia." Ireneus' testimony can be trusted for he was a disciple of Polycarp who died a famous death as a martyr of Christ, and was also a disciple of the Apostle John.

What is more is that the Four Canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John fulfilled all the prophecies of the Old Testament Scripture concerning the Jewish Messiah and His redemptive mission on earth. There are about 300 prophecies concerning Christ's first coming. These prophecies were given centuries before Christ came and they have all been fulfilled precisely and completely (eg, Isa 7:14 and Matt 1:21-22, Jer 23:5 and Luke 3:23, Mic 5:2 and Matt 2:1, Ps 22:16 and Luke 23:33). The Four Gospels on the basis of the Old Testament give us "a more sure word of prophecy" (2 Pet 1:19). The Judas Gospel on the other hand can make no such claim for it contradicts the Old Testament Scripture concerning who Christ was and what He came to do.

The Gospel of Judas was written in the 2nd century long after Judas had died. And if it were true that Judas was Jesus' best disciple and a hero, then Judas should be basking in glory or martyred, but he committed suicide! Why? The truth is Judas was a crook and betrayed his Master out of his own wicked heart. The fact is that the Gnostics were the ones who plagiarised the names and terms of the Four Gospels to invent their own strange gospel of secret knowledge and man-made gods.

The stories found in the Gnostic Gospels are spurious. For instance, the Gospel of Thomas teaches that only men can enter into heaven, women cannot. If a woman wants to get into heaven, she must first become a man. And this was what

Jesus did—He turned Mary Magdalene into a man so that she could go to heaven. Now, how does one square this with *The Da Vinci Code* which claims that Jesus married Mary Magdalene? They contradict!

The Judas Gospel cannot qualify as an authentic text because it does not fulfil Jesus' criterion of verbal authenticity to the jot and tittle (Matt 5:18). The Judas Gospel has many gaps and many missing words and sentences. Brackets and ellipses indicating lost words or sentences are seen throughout the text. The translators often had to fill in the blanks by guessing what the words were, and writing them into the text. Such remarks as [----one line lost----], [-----one line missing-----], [----about five lines missing----] are found throughout. The fact that the Gospel of Judas has not been preserved intact by God's singular care and providence is one evidence that it is not divinely inspired Scripture, not at all.

The Gnostic Gospel of Judas is disqualified as an authentic text because (1) it was not continuously used, (2) it is just one compared to the thousands of copies we have of the Canonical Gospels today, (3) it disagrees drastically with the words and doctrines of the original, preserved and received Gospels, and (4) it was rejected by the Spirit-guided Church since the beginning for its heresies. Bishop Ireneus for instance knew about the Gospel of Judas in about AD 180 and wrote against its claims, "They [i.e., the Gnostics] declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal: by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the Gospel of Judas."

The Biblical doctrine of the VPP of Scripture identifies for us where the true Biblical texts are today. **VPP tells us that the true Scripture resides in the continuously used and always existing majority manuscripts which have been traditionally received by God's people and kept pure throughout the ages by the special providential hand of God Himself. These texts as identified by the Trinitarian Bible Society are the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus of the great 16th Century Protestant Reformation, the Authorised or King James Bible being the best English translation of these divinely preserved and authentic texts.**

Conclusion

The divinely inspired Gospels have always been preserved by God and received throughout the ages by His faithful Church. They were never lost only to be found thousands of years later. If what the modernists and textual critics claim is true, that the original and true Gospels are the Gnostic Gospels and not the Four Gospels we have in our Biblical Canon today, then all the Christians who died for their faith under the Roman regime, in the days of the Protestant Reformation, and in anti-Christian countries today have all died in vain believing in a wrong book and a false message. Can this be so? God forbid! For it is written, "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever" (Ps 12:6-7).

But what do we have today? We are living in a postmodern age of relativity and uncertainty that anyone who dares to believe and defend the present perfection of the Holy Scriptures should be castigated as "foolish," "extreme," "schismatic," "heretical," "cultic," and "unregenerate." On the other hand, those who say that the Bible today contains

missing verses and passages, insignificant mistakes and redundant words, are considered “godly” and “scholarly.” Is it no wonder that Psalm 12 should end with these words, “The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted” (Ps 12:8)? We are nevertheless comforted by the words of the Psalmist in the Bible we have in our hands today that the Lord will not only preserve His words but also His people who are oppressed and persecuted by the rich, the powerful, and the unbelieving, “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him” (Ps 12:5). God help us!

Judas is alive today in all who deny God’s only begotten Son, and reject His forever infallible and inerrant Word. The Judas Gospel is the bad news of betrayal all over again. We are living in days of Deformation, not Reformation! May the Lord keep us faithful until He comes again.

Appendix O
**STATEMENT OF FAITH OF
THE FAR EASTERN BIBLE COLLEGE**

- 4.1 The Statement of Faith of the College shall be in accordance with that system commonly called “the Reformed Faith” as expressed in the Confession of Faith as set forth by the historic Westminster Assembly together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.
- 4.2 In abbreviated form, the chief tenets of the doctrine of the College, apart from the Doctrinal Position Statement of the College, shall be as follows:
- 4.2.1 We believe in the divine, Verbal Plenary Inspiration (Autographs) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (Apographs) of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and as the perfect Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Pet 1:20-21, Ps 12:6-7, Matt 5:18, 24:35).
- 4.2.1.1 We believe the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament underlying the Authorised (King James) Version to be the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant.
- 4.2.1.2 We uphold the Authorised (King James) Version to be the Word of God—the best, most faithful, most accurate, most beautiful translation of the Bible in the English language, and do employ it alone as our primary scriptural text in the public reading, preaching, and teaching of the English Bible.

- 4.2.1.3 The Board of Directors and Faculty shall affirm their allegiance to the Word of God by taking the Dean Burgon Oath at every annual convocation: “I swear in the Name of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit that I believe “the Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God, not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the throne, faultless, unerring, supreme.”
- 4.2.2 We believe in one God existing in three co-equal and co-eternal Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut 6:4, 1 John 5:7).
- 4.2.3 We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and is true God and true man in complete and direct fulfilment of Isaiah 7:14 (Matt 1:20-23, John 1:1, 14, Col 2:9).
- 4.2.4 We believe God created the whole universe *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) by the Word of His mouth, and all very good, in the space of six literal or natural days (Gen 1:1, Exod 20:11, Ps 148:5, John 1:3, Col 1:16, Heb 11:3).
- 4.2.5 We believe that man was created in the image of God, but sinned through the fall of Adam, thereby incurring not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature and

become sinners in thought, word and deed (Gen 1:26-27, Rom 3:19-20, 5:12, 6:23).

- 4.2.6 We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died a propitiatory and expiatory death as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who repent of their sins and believe in Him are justified before God on the grounds of His shed blood (Rom 5:8-11, 1 John 2:2, 1 Pet 1:18-19).
- 4.2.7 We believe in the bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His ascension into Heaven, and in His exaltation at the right hand of God, where He intercedes for us as our High Priest and Advocate (1 Cor 15:1-4, 15-19, Phil 2:9-11, Heb 3:1, 4:14-16).
- 4.2.8 We believe in the personal, visible and premillennial return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to judge this world, restore His chosen nation Israel to greatness, and bring peace to the nations as King of kings and Lord of lords (Jer 3:17, Zech 14:9, Acts 1:6, Rom 11:26, Rev 20:1-7).
- 4.2.9 We believe that salvation is by grace through faith alone, not by works, and that all who repent and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour are born again by the Holy Spirit and thereby become the children of God (Rom 5:1, 8:14-16, Eph 2:8-10, 1 Tim 2:5, Tit 3:5).
- 4.2.10 We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and to convict and regenerate the sinner, and indwell, guide, instruct and empower the believer for godly living and service (John 16:7-14, Rom 8:1-2).

- 4.2.11 We believe that Christ instituted the Sacrament of Baptism for believers and their children and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which sacraments shall be observed by His Church till He comes (Matt 28:19, 1 Cor 11:23-26).
- 4.2.12 We believe in the eternal security, bodily resurrection and eternal blessedness of the saved, and in the bodily resurrection and eternal conscious punishment of the lost (John 10:27-29, 1 Cor 15:51-53, 1 Thess 4:13-18, Rev 20:11-15).
- 4.2.13 We believe in the real, spiritual unity in Christ of all redeemed by His precious blood and the necessity of faithfully maintaining the purity of the Church in doctrine and life according to the Word of God, and the principle and practice of biblical separation from the apostasy of the day being spearheaded by the ecumenical movement, charismatic movement and other false movements that contradict the Holy Scriptures and the Historic Christian Faith (2 Cor 6:14-7:1, Jude 3, Rev 18:4).

Appendix P
**CHILDREN'S CATECHISM: QUESTIONS AND
 ANSWERS ON EVERLASTING LIFE FOR CHILDREN**

(1)

1. Who made you?

God.

2. What else did God make?

God made all things.

3. Why did God make you and all things?

For His own glory.

(2)

4. How can you glorify God?

By loving Him and doing what He commands.

5. Why ought you to glorify God?

Because He made me and takes care of me.

(3)

6. Are there more gods than one?

There is only one God.

7. In how many persons does this one God exist?

In three persons.

8. What are they?

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

(4)

9. What is God?

God is a Spirit, and has not a body like men.

10. Where is God?

God is everywhere.

11. Can you see God?

No; I cannot see God, but He always sees me.

(5)

12. Does God know all things?

Yes; nothing can be hid from God.

13. Can God do all things?

Yes; God can do all His holy will.

(6)

14. Where do you learn how to love and obey God?

In the Bible alone.

15. Who wrote the Bible?

Holy men who were taught by the Holy Spirit.

(7)

16. Who were our first parents?

Adam and Eve.

17. Of what were our first parents made?

God made the body of Adam out of the ground, and formed Eve from the body of Adam.

18. What did God give Adam and Eve besides bodies?

He gave them souls that could never die.

(8)

19. Have you a soul as well as a body?

Yes; I have a soul that can never die.

20. How do you know that you have a soul?

Because I can think about God and the world to come.

21. In what condition did God make Adam and Eve?

He made them holy and happy.

(9)

22. What is a covenant?

An agreement between two or more persons.

23. What covenant did God make with Adam?

The covenant of works.

24. What was Adam bound to do by the covenant of works?

To obey God perfectly.

(10)

25. What did God promise in the covenant of works?

To reward Adam with life if he obeyed Him.

26. What did God threaten in the covenant of works?

To punish Adam with death if he disobeyed.

27. Did Adam keep the covenant of works?

No; he sinned against God.

(11)

28. What is sin?

Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.

29. What is meant by ‘want of conformity’?

Not being or doing what God requires.

30. What is meant by ‘transgression’?

Doing what God forbids.

31. What was the sin of our first parents?

Eating the forbidden fruit.

32. Who tempted them to this sin?

The devil tempted Eve, and she gave the fruit to Adam.

33. What befell our first parents when they had sinned?

Instead of being holy and happy, they became sinful and miserable.

(12)

34. Did Adam act for himself alone in the covenant of works?

No; he represented all his posterity.

35. What effect had the sin of Adam on all mankind?

All mankind are born in a state of sin and misery.

36. What is that sinful nature which we inherit from Adam called?

Original sin.

37. What does every sin deserve?

The wrath and curse of God.

38. Can any one go to heaven with this sinful nature?

No; our hearts must be changed before we can be fit for heaven.

(13)

39. What is a change of heart called?

Regeneration.

40. Who can change a sinner's heart?

The Holy Spirit alone.

(14)

41. Can any one be saved through the covenant of works?

None can be saved through the covenant of works.

42. Why can none be saved through the covenant of works?

Because all have broken it, and are condemned by it.

(15)

43. With whom did God the Father make the covenant of grace?

With Christ, His eternal Son.

44. Whom did Christ represent in the covenant of grace?

His elect people.

45. What did Christ undertake in the covenant of grace?

To keep the whole law for His people, and to suffer the punishment due to their sins.

(16)

46. Did our Lord Jesus Christ ever commit the least sin?

No; He was holy, harmless, and undefiled.

47. How could the Son of God suffer?

Christ, the Son of God, became man that He might obey and suffer in our nature.

48. What is meant by the Atonement?

Christ's satisfying divine justice, by His sufferings and death, in the place of sinners.

(17)

49. What did God the Father undertake in the covenant of grace?

To justify and sanctify those for whom Christ should die.

(18)

50. What is justification?

It is God's forgiving sinners, and treating them as if they had never sinned.

51. What is sanctification?

It is God's making sinners holy in heart and conduct.

(19)

52. For whom did Christ obey and suffer?

For those whom the Father had given Him.

53. What kind of life did Christ live on earth?

A life of poverty and suffering.

54. What kind of death did Christ die?

The painful and shameful death of the cross.

(20)

55. Who will be saved?

Only those who repent of sin, believe in Christ, and lead holy lives.

56. What is it to repent?

To be sorry for sin, and to hate and forsake it because it is displeasing to God.

57. What is it to believe or have faith in Christ?

To trust in Christ alone for salvation.

58. Can you repent and believe in Christ by your own power?

No; I can do nothing good without the help of God's Holy Spirit.

59. How can you get the help of the Holy Spirit?

God has told us that we must pray to Him for the Holy Spirit.

(21)

60. How long ago is it since Christ died?

About two thousand years.

61. How were pious persons saved before the coming of Christ?

By believing in a Saviour to come.

62. How did they show their faith?

By offering sacrifices on God's altar.

63. What did these sacrifices represent?

Christ, the Lamb of God, who was to die for sinners.

(22)

64. What offices has Christ?

Christ has three offices.

65. What are they?

The offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king.

(23)

66. How is Christ a prophet?

Because He teaches us the will of God.

67. How is Christ a priest?

Because He died for our sins and pleads with God for us.

68. How is Christ a king?

Because He rules over us and defends us.

(24)

69. Why do you need Christ as a prophet?

Because I am ignorant.

70. Why do you need Christ as a priest?

Because I am guilty.

71. Why do you need Christ as a king?

Because I am weak and helpless.

(25)

72. How many commandments did God give on Mount Sinai?

Ten commandments.

73. What are the ten commandments sometimes called?

The Decalogue.

(26)

74. What do the first four commandments teach?

Our duty to God.

75. What do the last six commandments teach?

Our duty to our fellow men.

76. What is the sum of the ten commandments?

To love God with all my heart, and my neighbour as myself.

77. Who is your neighbour?

All my fellow men are my neighbours.

78. Is God pleased with those who love and obey Him?

Yes; He says, "I love them that love Me."

79. Is God displeased with those who do not love and obey Him?

Yes; “God is angry with the wicked every day.”

(27)

80. What is the first commandment?

The first commandment is, Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

81. What does the first commandment teach us?

To worship God alone.

(28)

82. What is the second commandment?

The second commandment is, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

83. What does the second commandment teach us?

To worship God in a proper manner, and to avoid idolatry.

(29)

84. What is the third commandment?

The third commandment is, Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

85. What does the third commandment teach us?

To reverence God’s name, word, and works.

(30)

86. What is the fourth commandment?

The fourth commandment is, Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

87. What does the fourth commandment teach us?

To keep the Sabbath holy.

(31)

88. What day of the week is the Christian Sabbath?

The first day of the week, called the Lord's day.

89. Why is it called the Lord's day?

Because on that day Christ rose from the dead.

90. How should the Sabbath be spent?

In prayer and praise, in hearing and reading God's Word, and in doing good to our fellow men.

(32)

91. What is the fifth commandment?

The fifth commandment is, Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

92. What does the fifth commandment teach us?

To love and obey our parents and teachers.

(33)

93. What is the sixth commandment?

The sixth commandment is, Thou shalt not kill.

94. What does the sixth commandment teach us?

To avoid angry passions.

(34)

95. What is the seventh commandment?

The seventh commandment is, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

96. What does the seventh commandment teach us?

To be pure in heart, language, and conduct.

(35)

97. What is the eighth commandment?

The eighth commandment is, Thou shalt not steal.

98. What does the eighth commandment teach us?

To be honest and industrious.

(36)

99. What is the ninth commandment?

The ninth commandment is, Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

100. What does the ninth commandment teach us?

To tell the truth.

(37)

101. What is the tenth commandment?

The tenth commandment is, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

102. What does the tenth commandment teach us?

To be content with our lot.

(38)

103. Can any man keep these ten commandments perfectly?
No mere man, since the fall of Adam, ever did or can keep the ten commandments perfectly.

104. Of what use are the ten commandments?
They teach us our duty, and show our need of a Saviour.

(39)

105. What is prayer?
Prayer is asking God for things which He has promised to give.

106. In whose name should we pray?
Only in the name of Christ.

107. What has Christ given us to teach us how to pray?
The Lord's Prayer.

108. Repeat The Lord's Prayer.
Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

(40)

109. How many petitions are there in The Lord's Prayer?
Six.

110. What is the first petition?
"Hallowed be thy name."

111. What do we pray for in the first petition?
That God's name may be honoured by us and all men.

(41)

112. What is the second petition?

“Thy kingdom come.”

113. What do we pray for in the second petition?

That the gospel may be preached in all the world, and believed and obeyed by us and all men.

(42)

114. What is the third petition?

“Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

115. What do we pray for in the third petition?

That men on earth may serve God as the angels do in heaven.

(43)

116. What is the fourth petition?

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

117. What do we pray for in the fourth petition?

That God would give us all things needful for our bodies and souls.

(44)

118. What is the fifth petition?

“And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

119. What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

That God would pardon our sins for Christ’s sake, and enable us to forgive those who have injured us.

(45)

120. What is the sixth petition?

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

121. What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

That God would keep us from sin.

(46)

122. How many sacraments are there?

Two.

123. What are they?

Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

124. Who appointed these sacraments?

The Lord Jesus Christ.

125. Why did Christ appoint these sacraments?

To distinguish His disciples from the world, and to comfort and strengthen them.

(47)

126. What sign is being used in baptism?

The washing with water.

127. What does this signify?

That we are cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ.

128. In whose name are we baptised?

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

129. Who are to be baptised?

Believers and their children.

(48)

130. Why should infants be baptised?

Because they have a sinful nature and need a Saviour.

131. Does Christ care for little children?

Yes; for He says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

132. To what does your baptism bind you?

To be a true follower of Christ.

(49)

133. What is the Lord's Supper?

The eating of bread and drinking of wine in remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ.

134. What does the bread represent?

The body of Christ, broken for our sins.

135. What does the wine represent?

The blood of Christ, shed for our salvation.

(50)

136. Who should partake of the Lord's Supper?

Only those who repent of their sins, believe in Christ for salvation, and love their fellow men.

137. Did Christ remain in the tomb after His crucifixion?

No; He rose from the tomb on the third day after His death.

138. Where is Christ now?

In heaven, interceding for sinners.

(51)

139. Will He come again?

Yes; at the last day Christ will come to judge the world.

140. What becomes of men at death?

The body returns to dust, and the soul goes into the world of spirits.

141. Will the bodies of the dead be raised to life again?

Yes; "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised."

142. What will become of the wicked in the day of judgment?

They shall be cast into hell.

(52)

143. What is hell?

A place of dreadful and endless torment.

144. What will become of the righteous?

They shall be taken to heaven.

145. What is heaven?

A glorious and happy place, where the righteous shall be for ever with the Lord.**HOW TO BE SAVED****Everyone has sinned.**

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”
(Romans 3:23)

There is punishment for sin.

“For the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23)

Salvation is a gift from God. You cannot save yourself.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8, 9)

God has provided salvation for all people who believe in Jesus.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son [Jesus Christ], that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

Salvation is simple.

- **Repent.** “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3)

- **Confess.** “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1: 9)

♦ **Believe.** “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” (Acts 16:31)

Decide NOW!

“Behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2)

O Lord, save me!

Having learnt from God’s Word that I am a lost sinner bound for hell, I now confess my sins to Jesus Christ who died for me. I receive Him into my heart as my personal Saviour. O Lord, save me!

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PROFILES



J Oliver Buswell

Dr J Oliver Buswell (1895–1977) was Dean of the Graduate Faculty at Covenant College and Seminary, St Louis, Missouri. He taught philosophy and theology for many years. Well known for his stand as a Christian educator, Dr Buswell had a long and distinguished career in the field of Christian education. He graduated from the University of Minnesota (BA), the McCormick Theological Seminary (BD), the University of Chicago (MA), and New York University (PhD). The honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him in 1927 by the Evangelical Theological College of Dallas, Texas; and the honorary degree of LLD was presented to him by Houghton College, Houghton, New York, in 1936.

In 1926, he was chosen the third President of Wheaton College, a position which he held until 1940, when he joined the 20th Century Reformation movement led by Dr Carl McIntire, and became Professor of Systematic Theology at Faith Theological Seminary. In 1941, he became President of the National Bible Institute, later Shelton College, in New York City. He left Shelton in 1956 to take up his duties at Covenant College and Seminary.

Dr Buswell was a published author of several books, and the editor of *The Bible Today*—the journal of the National Bible Institute of New York. He was a member of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC), the American Philosophical Society (APS), and the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS).

Timothy Tow

The Rev Dr Timothy Tow (1920–) is the founder of the Bible-Presbyterian Church and movement in Southeast Asia. In 1935, he was saved during the Singapore Pentecost under the great Chinese revivalist—Dr John Sung. In 1946, in submission to the Lord’s call to turn away from fame and fortune, and in obedience to his mother’s vow that he enter the full-time ministry, the young Timothy Tow went to Nanking, China to study at Spiritual Training Theological Seminary under China’s first theologian—Dr Chia Yu Ming. The Lord later opened the door for him to study in the United States at Faith Theological Seminary where he studied Systematic Theology under Dr Buswell. There he earned his Bachelor of Divinity (now Master of Divinity) and Master of Sacred Theology degrees.

In 1950, Timothy Tow returned to Singapore after his studies to found and pastor Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, which had parted ways with the ecumenical Presbyterian synod. Seeing the need for trained leadership in the Bible-Presbyterian Church, he founded the Far Eastern Bible College in 1962. In 1964, Shelton College honoured him with a Doctor of Divinity degree for his outstanding contribution to Biblical missions and theological education in Singapore and Malaysia. The Rev Dr Timothy Tow is the author of more than 40 books on Biblical Studies, Theology, Church History, and Pastoral Ministry.

At Faith Seminary, the Rev Dr Timothy Tow caught the spirit of the 20th Century Reformation movement started by Dr Carl McIntire. He was actively involved in the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) for many years, and had served as President of the Far Eastern Council of Christian Churches (FECCC). In 2003, he founded True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church.

Jeffrey Khoo

The Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo (1964–) is the Academic Dean of the Far Eastern Bible College. Heeding God's call to full-time ministry in 1985, he was admitted to the Far Eastern Bible College where he studied theology under the Rev Dr Timothy Tow. He graduated with the Bachelor of Theology degree in 1989, and then pursued further studies in the United States at Grace Theological Seminary where he earned the Master of Divinity degree with high honours (*magna cum laude*), and won the New Testament Award for having done the best work in the department of New Testament language and literature. After his graduation from Grace Seminary, he went on to earn the Master of Sacred Theology from Biblical Theological Seminary, and the PhD in Theology from Trinity Theological Seminary.

Dr Khoo is a published author, and the editor of *The Burning Bush*—the theological journal of the Far Eastern Bible College. He is a member of the Dean Burgon Society and sits on its Advisory Council. An ordained Minister of the Gospel, he serves as an Elder of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church.

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Ordination of Dennis Kwok (Truth BPC) & Nguyen Gia Hien (Brisbane BPC) at FEBC's 32nd Graduation Service, May 6, 2007



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True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church
 Worship Service at
 RELC, Auditorium, 10.30am

30 Orange Grove Road,
 down Shangri-La Hotel,
 Singapore 258352

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FEEDBACK

FOUNDING ETHOS OF THE FAR EASTERN BIBLE COLLEGE

Theological training is vital for church growth. In his book *Forty Years on the Road to Church Growth*, FEBC's founding principal Dr Timothy Tow wrote: 'Without proper Bible training, the church that relies on self-taught evangelists or missionaries will be stifled in growth, inasmuch as the tether of their theological knowledge is short and the ability of their preaching skills is limited'.

Many a self-made pastor has lost his way due to a lack of intensive, systematic training in the Word. Even the theologically trained can succumb to error. So, in obedience to the Pauline mandate, 'And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also' (2 Timothy 2:2), FEBC was instituted in Singapore.

On 28 April 1962 the late Dr Paul Contento laid the foundation stone of FEBC and prayed to the Lord that he would raise up great Christian leaders and preachers from the college's ranks.

In those days, theology in the seminaries was taught exclusively by modernist professors. There was a crying need for a Bible-believing institute in the Far East for the propagation of the true gospel and the defence of the biblical faith. The stranglehold of modernism and ecumenism needed to be broken.

These needs remain today, made more acute by the emergence of new and virulent 'isms', like postmodernism, neo-evangelicalism, charismaticism, hyper-Calvinism and neo-Pharisaism.

Moreover, counseling methods, which syncretise Christian truth with heresy, and unscriptural church-growth methods, have added to the deluge of unbelief and apostasy that is drowning many a seminary today. The need for theologically sound Bible colleges has never been so great.

FEBC was constituted to propagate the Reformed faith and is affiliated to the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC). It has a pre-millennial view of the end-times. It endeavours to carry the Reformation torch into this new century by setting high biblical standards and training both men and women to become effective servant-leaders for the church militant.

As published by the *Evangelical Times*, March 2001.



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