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INTRODUCTION TO DOGMATICS

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A. DEFINITION

The term theology is derived from two Greek words, *theos* (God) and *logos* (word or doctrine). Strictly speaking it means the doctrine of God, but here we use it in the wider meaning of knowledge of God and His relations to the universe.

Theology does not merely begin with belief in the existence of God but also says that He has graciously revealed Himself. Philosophy denies both of these ideas as presuppositions. Philosophy is to the unbeliever what the Christian faith is to the believer.

B. THE ADVANTAGE OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

It is advantageous to systematize teachings of the Bible not only for our own edification, but also so as to be able to counter philosophies which are also systematized forms of scattered ideas. If we do not have a system, i.e. facts laid out in order and grouped together, we are at a disadvantage. As far as we are concerned, theology does not need to be dry. If it is believed and acted upon, then it will produce changed lives for it is merely teaching from the word of God arranged in a systematic order. A Christian who knows and acts upon doctrine is a strong Christian, and will not be hoodwinked by ideas that are foreign to the Christian revelation.

C. THE SUB-DIVISIONS OF DOGMATICS

1. Theology proper, which is the doctrine of God. Under this heading is sometimes included the doctrine of supernatural persons or angelology.
2. Anthropology or the doctrine of man.
3. Harmartology or the doctrine of sin, which is connected with the doctrine of man.
4. Soteriology or the doctrine of salvation. This deals with grace and the doctrine of salvation (principally the work of Christ).
5. Christology or the Person of Christ.
6. Pneumatology or the doctrine of the Holy spirit
7. Ecclesiology or the doctrine of the Church.
8. Eschatology or the doctrine of the last things.
9. Angelology or the doctrine of angels.
10. Bibliology or the doctrine of Scripture.

D. THE A-PRIORI OF DOGMATICS

Any study of dogmatics presumes three things:

- 1) God exists
- 2) God reveals himself
- 3) Man is capable of receiving this revelation.

1. The Existence of God: The Biblical authors of course presume this. For them, the man who has said in his heart "there is no God" is a practical rather than a theoretical atheist.

In dealing with objections to the existence of God, there are two ways open to the Christian apologist. The first way is to present a number of proofs for God's existence. The second way is to seek to destroy the philosophy of the other person, so that as a result it is as reasonable (if not more so) to accept the existence of God than to deny it. Proponents of the second method are, amongst others, Pascal.

The Classic arguments for the existence of God. In the nature of the case, you can only argue up to the highest degree of probability. From then on, it is a moral decision.

a) **The Cosmological Argument:** This comes from the Greek word *kosmos* meaning universe or an ordered or rational system. This argument declares that nothing can cause itself and so it is possible to go back in a series of causes to a First Cause and this is God. But, as the process of cause and effect only operates within time, God, who is outside time, cannot be evoked as a supreme cause. In one version of the Big-Bang theory, it is postulated (thanks to Quantum theory) that the initial development of the universe took place outside time. Similarly, to ask the question "who made God?" assumes a temporal framework beyond the universe, which is in itself invalid.

The cosmos is a process, which according to the theory of thermodynamics is running down. Some power must have set the process in motion. The process is a meaningless one unless it derives its meaning from a reality beyond the limits of space and time. Thus, the theory is a pointer, rather than an absolute proof.

b) **The Teleological Argument:** This comes from the Greek word '*telos*' or end – reasoning on the basis of the end or purpose, for which something appears to be designed. This argument declares that design is the work of mind, and that design in the universe can only be the work of a divine mind.

The Darwinian theory of natural selection claims to provide an alternative explanation of some of the phenomena on which this argument is built, but as we shall see later, this is unconvincing. If you are sufficiently credulous you may ascribe the orderliness of nature to chance, but it requires considerably less strain upon the mind to ascribe it to the creative mind of God.

Paley's argument from design has now been discredited because no one any longer believes in a mechanistic universe. However, this argument has been recently revived in what is called the anthropic principle which stresses how very unlikely it is that there is no intelligence behind the complexity that is found in the universe. Einstein himself found it very difficult to conceive that there is no intellectual principle that governs the way the universe is.

c) **The Ontological Argument:** This comes from the Greek present participle 'on' (genitive '*ontos*'), meaning 'being' and when used as a noun 'that which is' = true being or reality. Ontological means "concerning ultimate reality." This argument says that we could not have an idea of God in our minds unless there existed somewhere a corresponding reality. The correspondence of the ideas in our minds to the objects in our environment requires some explanation, and the best explanation is that the same God made both the intelligent mind and the intelligible world.

d) **The Moral Argument** says that man's sense of absolute worth and absolute obligation must be derived from an external source.

The real objection to these arguments is that God is treated as a scientific hypothesis to be used for the explanation of an otherwise inexplicable universe. We can argue as far as the God of the philosophers but not as far as the God of the Bible

who enters into personal relations with his worshippers. It has been said that: to those who have had no such experience of God, the arguments for God's existence are unconvincing, and for those who have had a real experience of God, they are unnecessary. These arguments, then, are no more than pointers; they are not absolute proofs.

e) **Science** itself involves the interaction of theory and experiment, the role of human judgement and the never-ending search for more refined models. Science, which cannot investigate the reason why, raises the religious questions. Where do the laws of physics come from? Why are they intelligible to us. Why is there a universe for such laws to describe, and what is its purpose? Science raises questions which it is unable to answer, because that is beyond its competence.

2. **God Reveals Himself**

If God exists and has created man as the summit of his creation, it is reasonable that He should have revealed Himself to him.

a) **God Reveals Himself in Nature:** If we can disprove the theory of evolution, there is no reason left why nature should not reveal some of the attributes of God since He is its creator. Deists maintain that nature is the all-sufficient revelation of God. This is of course an exaggeration but we can admit that it does reveal the power, intelligence and goodness of God. This revelation is however intended to incite man to search for a fuller revelation of God (Romans 1:20, Psalm 19, Acts 17:27).

b) **God Reveals Himself in History:** In history in general we can see God's providence being worked out. Despotism rises and falls. In the case of the nation of Israel it is very difficult to explain their history as anything else but God's hand upon it.

c) **God Reveals Himself in Conscience:** Most men know whether any particular course of action is right or wrong. People that consistently abuse their consciences end up with severe psychological problems (Romans 2:12-16).

d) **God Reveals Himself in Special Revelation:** He has revealed Himself to special people at special times. This was a treasure that Israel was supposed to share with the whole world. It was a revelation in miracles, supremely in the resurrection of Jesus, in prophecy that was fulfilled, and supremely in Jesus Christ Himself. To individuals God revealed Himself in the Scriptures and through personal experience of Him (Rom 3, Hebrews 1:1-3).

3) **Man is Capable of Receiving this Revelation:** If God exists and He has created man in His image, then He must have a way of communicating with him, as God is at the top of a chain of command, and man is at the summit of creation.

a) **Man has a rational capability** to come to conclusions when presented with certain evidence like nature or conscience.

b) **Man has a spiritual capacity** (which animals lack) and which is called his 'spirit'. This enables him to know God, to come into a personal relationship with Him.

E. ALTERNATIVE VIEWS TO MONOTHEISM ARE:

1) **Atheism:** which basically means a denial of the existence of God. Today in its most extreme form it is represented by "scientific materialism" which is supposedly proved by the theory of evolution.

2) **Agnosticism** declares that God is unknowable. This is represented by positivism in science (the mere study of phenomena) and pragmatism in philosophy. It can be countered by reference to both God's general revelation and His particular revelation in Christ.

3) **Deism** admits that there is a powerful Deity, but separates him from his universe and removes him from active control over it. He is merely the first cause and may even be thought of as impersonal. It more or less makes God an absentee landlord or a person who winds up the clock and then leaves it to run down.

4) **Pantheism** where God is reduced to a mere impersonal force who is identified with his own creation. The universe is merely a phase of God's existence. A certain version of it is seen in Eastern religions. **Panentheism** which is a compromise between theism and pantheism, is the belief that God is greater than the universe and includes and interpenetrates it.

5) **Polytheism** maintains that there is a plurality of gods. These are invented in order to account for natural phenomena. However, it would seem that monotheism was the original belief of mankind. The same forces are given different names by different tribes but have been proved by science to be the same.

Today, however, the main challenges to the judaeo-christian revelation come from:

- 1) Scientific materialism
- 2) Eastern Religions
 - 3) Islam
 - 4)

THEOLOGY

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

A. GOD AS PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL

1. The Biblical Approach to the Doctrine of God

It is most important that our approach be biblical, for it affects all other doctrines. The Bible begins with the fact of God as a Person. God is not proved by the necessity of there being absolute abstractions such as absolute goodness, absolute beauty etc, which is the Greek approach.

a) **The Bible accepts the fact of God:** It does not begin with a treatise on God which argues for His existence. On the contrary, assuming the existence of God, it describes His actions. Arguing for the existence of God would in any case only lead us to an idea which explains phenomena which are otherwise inexplicable. The biblical writers assume that their readers believe in the existence of God. Indeed, they believe that there is no particular virtue in believing that God exists (James 2:19). Heb 11:6 shows that it is more than a basic belief in the existence of God that constitutes true faith. According to the biblical view, unbelief is not related to intellect alone but to a basic unwillingness to subordinate one's life to God's authority. In the Wisdom writings of the Bible, the "fool" is essentially the godless man, the practical atheist. In Acts where the apostles preached to the heathen, they did not attempt to prove the existence of God. The Bible limits itself to saying what God is like and what He has done.

b) **The Bible discloses the personal nature of God.** This means that God is by no means less personal than human

personality. God is not simply a collection of attributes, an abstraction, but a personal Being. The Bible does not tell us so much what God is as who He is. In Genesis 1 we have the vivid impression of seeing a personal Being at work. In the Psalms and the prophets, there is often a contrast between the personal God of the Bible and the pathetic lifeless imitations of pagan deities. (Ps 135, I Ki 18:27, Is 41:21, 24, 46:1).

c) **The Bible indicates what is to be the true approach in our thought about God.** He is never to be regarded as a mere object of study. Knowing God not only means comprehending Him with our minds, but knowing Him as a personal Being. It is possible to know all about God but not to know Him personally. Hosea complains that there is no knowledge of God in the land (of Israel), by which he does not mean intellectual knowledge, as there was plenty of that! What Hosea really means is obedience to God, because obedience is the proof of an ongoing relationship to God. It is most irreverent to think that we can study theology in a detached way. The only true study is based on a personal recognition of Him. The truth is that not only are we studying God, but He is studying us.

d) **The Bible emphasizes God's acts in history:** The Bible has something to say about God's relation to the universe as a whole, but also about His relation to angelic beings. But the emphasis is on God's acts in human history. God meets man in the realm of human history. Persons reveal themselves chiefly in personal relationships, so God reveals Himself chiefly in His personal activity in history, of which the chief manifestations are (a) in judgement, and (b) in salvation.

2. **The Names and Titles of God Reveal His Personality:**

We normally give a name only to persons, animals or objects which we treat in a quasi-personal way. A name represents a person's character – it is a revelation of himself. The names

given to God in the OT were often related to a particular incident in which He revealed further details regarding His character. Also, when God changes a person's name in the Bible, it marks a change of character and destiny.

a) **General Names**

El (singular) occurs 250 times. The underlying thought is that of strength or might. It means God or god in the widest sense, i.e. to refer to God or pagan gods. When used of God it is usually used in connection with one of His attributes: a merciful God (El-Rahum) – Deut 4:31, a jealous God (El-Qanna) – Ex 20:5.

It is also used in conjunction with other strengthening words like: El Elyôn meaning "God Most High" (Genesis 14:18-22), El Olam meaning "The Everlasting God" (Genesis 21:33), El Shaddai meaning "God Almighty" (Genesis 17:1).

Eloah is a singular form of Elohim and has the same meaning as El. It is chiefly found in poetry (Deut 32:15-17). The corresponding Aramaic form is Elah.

Elohim (plural) occurs over 2,000 times. It implies the God of creation and providence, the supreme Deity. Though a plural form, it is probably a plural of majesty. It is of course also used to translate pagan "gods". It is a fitting name for the Creator in the Genesis account.

b) **The Covenant Name**

Is YHWH (no one is quite sure what the vowels are). It is God's special covenant name used in the context of His relationship with Israel. It is His real name in contrast to His generic name (*Elohim*). The word is a noun derived from an earlier form of the verb "to be" (*hava* from *haya*) and has the meaning of "the

existing, ever-living, absolute, unchangeable One". (cf Exodus 3:11-15, John 8:58 etc). The name often occurs in its shortened form JAH or JAHU in names.

Regarding the text in Exodus 6, the passage has been the subject of much debate. The name of someone means in Hebrew his revealed nature. In the events of the Exodus he reveals something more than he revealed in his dealings with the patriarchs in Genesis: the deliverance of a whole people (and the judgement of their enemies) by a series of mighty acts. It is not as if God did not begin to reveal himself as JAHWEH in Genesis. Hebrew has a way of expressing itself in absolute contrasts. This is probably an example of a hyperbole. Basically what God is saying is that he is going to reveal some more of his character.

c) **Particular Names containing the words El or YHWH**

These occurred when God revealed Himself in a new way to various individuals. Thus we find: JHWH-Jirah (the Lord will provide, lit: see (to) – Genesis 22:13,14, JHWH-Rapha (the Lord who heals) – Exodus 15:26, JHWH-Nissi (the Lord my banner) – Exodus 17:15-16, JHWH-Shalom (the Lord is (our) peace) – Judges 6:24, JHWH-Tsidkenu (the Lord our righteousness) – Jeremiah 23:6, JHWH-Shammah (the Lord is there) – Ezekiel 48:35, JHWH-Tsevaôt (the Lord of (heaven's) armies) – I Sam 1:3, 17:45, Ps 24:10.

The word Adon (singular) meaning "Lord" and Adonai (plural) meaning "my Lord" are also used of God, 30 and 280 times respectively (cf Ex 23:17, Gen 15:2,8). Other titles used for God are: Qēdosh Yisrael (the Holy One of Israel) used 29 times in Jeremiah, Avir Yisrael (the Mighty One of Israel), used in Isaiah 1:24, Netsah Yisrael (the Glory (victory) of Israel) used in I Sam 15:29, and Attiq-Yomim (The Ancient of Days), used

in Daniel 7, 9, 13, 22 in conjunction with the Most High (illaya, elyonim). Finally, the word Shem (name) means God.

In the Greek of the NT we find the following equivalents:

El and Elohim become "theos" (God)

YHWH becomes "Kurios" (Lord)

El-Shaddai becomes Pantokrator (ruler over everything)

Above all, God is called the Living God, a title which contrasts Him with idols that are made with hands, but which are devoid of life. Unlike them, God acts and intervenes in the lives of His people (Num 14:21, 28, Jer 10:10). The phrase "As I live", says the Lord is frequent in the OT. As the living God, He is strong to save His people from their enemies: He comes to rescue and deliver (Isaiah 37:4, 17, 19, Daniel 6:20, 26). As the Living God, He also comes into fellowship with His people (Ps 42:2, Ps 84:2).

d) **God also links Himself with the names of persons to** show that He stands in a (saving) relationship to them, even though, in some cases, they have already died. This means that the persons in question, though dead, are still alive and will rise again. To enter into such a relationship with these persons, God must be a Person Himself. Hence, God is called the God of Israel. Israel was first of all an individual (it was another name for Jacob) and then the nation that sprang from him. It indicates that the same God that revealed Himself to Jacob, transformed his character and gave him a new destiny, is now bound up in the destiny of a nation of the same name which He has chosen. It also links God with previous revelations of Himself (Ex 30:3, I Sam 10:18, Amos 2:10).

3. The Personality of God as Revealed in the Incarnation:

The answer to all philosophic speculation regarding the personality or non-personality of God is the incarnation. Christ was and is God manifested in the flesh (ie manifested as a

human Being). In Christ there are two natures, one human, one divine but united in one person. It is difficult to conceive of the incarnation without recognising God as being personal. Jn 14 : 9, II Cor 4:6).

4. The Personal Qualities of Divine Being

a) Intellectual Qualities

The Bible shows God as thinking and reasoning (Is 1:18, 55:9, Mt 6:8, I Cor 3:20).

b) Emotional Qualities

The Bible speaks much about the feelings of God. It speaks about the anger, indignation and wrath of God (Ex 4:14, Jn 3:36, Heb 10:27). It speaks of the jealousy of God (Ex 20:5), His compassion (Ps 78:38), His grief (Gen 6:6), His love (many passages). We find passages in the Bible which are cries from the heart of God (Gen 3:9, Deut 5:29, Ps 81:13-16, Is 48:17-19, Hos 11:8-9).

c) Volitional Qualities

The Bible speaks of the will of God, those things to which God is committed (Ps 40:8, Mt 12:50, Jas 4:15). Thus God has the basic qualities of human personality; intellect, emotion, will.

5. God as a Perfect Personality: If there are similarities between God's personality and ours, there are also differences: God is immutable, we are not; God is holy, we are sinful; God

is Creator, we are creatures; God is perfect purity and not subject to the limitations we attach to human personality.

a) **God is Unlimited by Lack of Power**

Man's actions are limited by his creaturely limits: he makes plans but he is not always able to carry them through. All beings, other than God, are limited in power (this includes angels and Satan). But does this mean that God can do anything? We must remember that God's actions are determined by His will, and that His will is determined by His character. Therefore there are certain things that God cannot do (ie lie, for instance).

b) **He is Unlimited by Sin**

Human personality is affected by the fact of sin, because sin has affected every part of man's being. Total depravity means that the totality of man's being is affected by sin. God is completely free from this in every realm. For instance, man's anger is often tainted, but God's anger is always righteous. God's love, unlike that of man's is not fickle. There are therefore certain moral impossibilities with God: He cannot lie (Num 23:19, Titus 1:2, Heb 6:18, II Tim 2:13) and He cannot deny Himself.

c) **He is Unlimited by Change**

It is stated in Scripture that God is immutable (Ps 102:27, Hos 11:9, Mal 3:6, Jas 1:17). This does not refer to his activity but to His Being. He is not presented as an immobile or impassive God, but one whose being and character is stable. God is even said to "repent" but this really means to change His line of action because of a change on man's part. When men change (eg repent) they begin to feel a different side of God's character

(instead of His wrath, His favour and love). God is only supra-personal in the sense that He is all that human personality is and more; it does not mean that He is beyond personality and therefore impersonal.

6. The Spirituality of God

The Scriptural revelation of God is that He is Spirit – He is in essence non-physical. The definition of spirit as being a pale copy of the material equivalent is grossly inadequate. If God, who is Spirit, brought matter into being, this establishes the superiority of spirit over matter, for the inferior cannot create the superior (cf Jn 4:24, Ex 20:4, Deut 4:12, 15 ff, Jn 1:18, Rom 1:20, Col 1:15, I Tim 1:17, 6:16)

a) **The problem of anthropomorphisms:** the Bible is full of them: eyes (II Chr 16:9, Zech 4:10) ears (Ps 34:15, Jas 5:4), mouth (Is 40:5, Mt 4:4), nose (Gen 8:21), hands (Ps 95:5, 111:7, Heb 10:31). Some have gone too far as to maintain that God has a body (cf Tertullian who had been a stoic before his conversion).

b) **Anthromorphisms are due to several factors:**

I) **An intensely personal conception of God.** The expressions in question were only used by people who were entirely convinced of the personality of God. They serve to stop us thinking of God as merely abstract or impersonal.

II) **They are due to the necessities of language.** During the inter-testamental period there was a reaction against anthropomorphisms as seen in such translations as the Targums (paraphrases) and the Septuagint, but the translators could not possibly remove them altogether. In fact they cannot be removed without running the risk of de-personalising God.

III) They are due to the activities of an infinite God in a universe of space and time. But God is in fact not confined to either, because He is eternal and infinite. However, anthropomorphisms are to be distinguished from theophanies and from the incarnation. An anthropomorphism is a linguistic device whereas a theophany is a manifestation of God to man, sometimes in human form. The incarnation is a unique event involving God becoming man.

B. GOD'S BEING; ATTRIBUTES AND ACTS

There is always the danger of abstraction by passing into philosophical realms. Systematic theology is concerned with the reality and significance of God.

1. The Distinction between God and His Attributes

It is important to proceed from the acts of God, through His attributes, to the being of God. Certain acts of God reveal to us an attribute. For example, the fulfillment of God's promises points to His faithfulness. We can say that God is faithful and that God is just, but these are descriptive and not definitions. In fact, all attributes are descriptive of God. The problem comes when we go beyond this and try to define God personally and say what sort of a being He is. But God is unique and so it is difficult to compare Him with other things or experiences which we know. This does not mean that it is impossible to give a definition of God, but that it is difficult to give one which is really adequate. An analytical descriptive definition is possible but not a genetic-synthetic definition. God is alone in being uncreated. He is the one, almighty, uncreated spirit which differentiates Him from other spirit beings by (1) being uncreated, and (2) sovereign.

2. God is Truly Known Through His Acts and Attributes

God has willed to reveal Himself to us but the acts by which He does so must be interpreted to us by Himself (Ps 18:1-2, 19:14, 23:1, 27:1, 36:5-6). Throughout history, human beings have come to know more and more about God through revelation until the final revelation came in Christ. His attributes are therefore not additions to His character but the expression of His being.

3. Terms Used in Connection with the Attributes of God

These are sometimes divided into absolute and relative attributes. Absolute attributes are those which pertain to God Himself, whereas relative attributes pertain to God in relation to the universe. There must be a universe if the latter terms are to have any meaning (eg omnipotence and omnipresence). The classification is also given of transitive and intransitive attributes. Transitive means immanent, which refers to what God is in Himself. Another classification of God's attributes distinguishes between communicable and incommunicable attributes. God has caused the universe to share some of His attributes, though not all. For instance, the universe shares existence with God though it is not self-existent, for it is dependant upon Him. Man shares some of the moral attributes of God. In both cases, they are communicable attributes. But God has not, for instance, communicated infinity and unchangeableness. In more detail, God's incommunicable attributes are:

a) **Self-sufficiency**: God does not need the universe which he created, nor does he depend on it in any way. The essence of humanity on the other hand is dependency. God is not man multiplied by infinity: he is by nature and by definition different! This is summed up in the following verse: "The God who created the world and everything in it, and who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands . It is not because he lacks anything that he accepts

service at our hands, for he is himself the universal giver of life and breath – indeed of everything." (Acts 17,24-25).

God certainly did not create mankind because he needed fellowship, for he had that in the Trinity before the world was ever created. However, in spite of this, he purposed before the foundation of the world to enter into fellowship with certain of the people whom he was to create (i.e the elect).

b) **Immutability**: this really means his unchangeableness. This does not mean that he is impassive and that he does not react to situations, but that he is consistent (not fickle) and therefore predictable in his character. This is in stark contrast to the gods of the heathen. This is summed up in Mal 3,6: "I, the Lord, do not change, and you have not ceased to be children of Jacob."

It follows from this that God is unchangeable in his purposes and in his promises.

"But the Lord's own purpose stands for ever, and the plans he has in mind endure for all generations" (Psalm 33,11).

But, it will be objected, does not God sometimes change his mind? No. What actually happens is that when man changes his course of action (i.e. repents), or if someone intercedes on behalf of the guilty party, then God relents and does not bring the threatened judgement. The change on man's part, causes him to experience a different aspect of God's character.

"When God saw what they did and how they gave up their wicked ways, he relented and did not inflict on them the punishment he had threatened." (Jonah 3,10)

But what about passages where it says God was sorry for having done such an such a thing? This refers to his displeasure at sin, but it does not mean that if he had to start again he would not have done what he did (create the world or appoint Saul as king). His long-term plans remain unchanged. For further discussion see the section on Process Theology under "Heresies".

c). **Impassibility**

The problem with this expression is that it belongs essentially to platonic philosophy. Its adoption by Christian theologians has not been without problems.

It is true that God cannot suffer physically, since he has no body. In addition, he cannot suffer any emotional disturbance due to unresolved mental conflict: he cannot lose his composure or show symptoms of stress or agitation.

But the idea that God is a passionless, emotionally immobile being is totally unscriptural. The Bible reveals him as a God of wrath and jealousy. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek 33,11). He is grieved when human beings destroy themselves. The Holy Spirit (who is God) cannot be grieved (Eph 4,30). He is also passionate in his love for the elect.

Secondly it is false to say that God is unaffected by occurrences outside himself. The crucifixion did not leave him unmoved, for instance.. he was vitally involved in the whole process – he (the Father) was not crucified, but he gave his Son and he had to refuse to listen to his cries for help when he was on the cross.. Indeed, if he is so immobile and so passionless that the cross cost him nothing, then all talk of him must cease because our language about him becomes meaningless.

c) **Eternity**: God is outside time and so not subject to it. He therefore knows everything from the beginning to the end. But this does not mean that he is a passive spectator, because he is in control of history and actually directs it. In fact, the Hebrew word for history is *dēvarim* (words): God impels history on its course by a series of commands or words. What he predicts, he is able to bring to pass.

Time is a dimension that is tied to a material creation. God, as Creator, is outside this. Who was this God or Supreme Intelligence, which could survey Superspace and observe all its past and future events in a single glance? Professor Wheeler replied with the famous saying of the Marquis de Laplace, 'An intelligence which knew at a given instant all of the forces by which nature is animated, and the relative position of all the objects, if it were sufficiently powerful to analyse all this information, would include in a single formula the movements of the most massive objects in the universe and those of the lightest atom. Nothing would be uncertain to it; the future and the past would be present to its eyes'.

Isaiah 46,9-10: ...for I am God and there is none other; I am God and there is no one like me. From the beginning I reveal the end, from ancient times what is yet to be, I say: 'My purpose stands, I shall accomplish all that I please'.

d) **Omnipresence**: Although God is outside the universe, he is also parallel to it (if we regard it as a curve, as in Einsteinian physics) and has access to it at every point. There are certain points where he has chosen to concentrate his presence, that is, to impinge upon it. One example would be the Temple in the Old Testament. In the NT it is the mind of the believer. In this sense he is said to "indwell" the believer by his Spirit.

Jer 23,23-24 "Am I a God near at hand only, not a God when far away? Can anyone hide in some secret place and I not see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth?"

e) **Unity**: God is a unity and everything he does is an act of the whole person of God. One attribute of God cannot be said to be more important than the other or more characteristic of Him than the other. He is not partly this and partly that, but fully this and fully that: at any one time, all of his attributes act together – he acts as a fully integrated being. It is true that at certain times in history he shows one attribute more than the other (because of man's conduct), but it would be quite false to say

for instance that God is a God of justice in the OT and a God of love in the NT. In fact the heretic Marcion concluded that there were two gods at work.

Ex 34,6-7: He passed in front of Moses and proclaimed: "The Lord, the Lord, a God compassionate and gracious, long-suffering, ever faithful and true, remaining faithful to thousands, forgiving iniquity, rebellion and sin but without acquitting the guilty, one who punishes children to the third and fourth generation for the iniquity of their fathers."

The attributes that follow can be characterised as God's communicable attributes.

C. GOD'S CHARACTER

Character and personality are intimately related. The names of God reveal God's attributes as well as his personality. The revelation of God had to be made in history, for it is only in deeds and actions that character is truly known. Some aspects of His character take time to be revealed, eg His faithfulness.

1) **The Historical Revelation of His Character**

God has revealed his character more and more through the pages of Scripture. The doctrine of progressive revelation does not mean that what had been learnt about God needed to be unlearned, but rather that God builds upon that which has already been revealed, never revoking what has gone before. However, in God's revelation, there are two aspects that arise right at the beginning:

- (a) His love of righteousness and His hatred of sin – His holiness,
- (b) His love and mercy towards man. In the creation story, man sins and fellowship is broken but God immediately gives a promise of future redemption (Gen 3:15).

The prophets taught both the holiness and the love of God but in balance. Christ's hatred of sin is expressed in His woes to the Pharisees whereas His love for the sinner is expressed in His mission to save.

God's revealed character is often referred to as his **GLORY** (*kavod*): This word contains the idea of weight. The weight of a person determines his importance, the respect which he inspires, his glory, reputation, worthiness. Thus in Hebrew, the word glory does not so much denote his fame as his innate worth. The term God's glory denotes God himself, in as far as he reveals himself in his greatness, power, outshining of his person and dynamism. Thus, glory really means God's character revealed, his presence revealed, sometimes through natural phenomena. In the OT this glory is revealed in two ways:

1) His mighty works of judgement or salvation (Num 14,22: Ex 14,18 and 16,7) cf. also Jn 2,11.

2) The outshining of his person (Ex 16,10). This is what Moses is expecting when he asks God to reveal his glory (Ex 33,18). After Sinai, God's glory or presence fills the Tabernacle, resting on the ark of the covenant.

Later it fills the temple but is withdrawn when his people go into exile (as recorded in Ezekiel).

2) God as Self-Affirming

a) **Holiness**: (heb. *qodesh*). The root meaning of the word is perhaps "that which is cut off". It indicates as such a definite sense of distinctness and is used of things and people. It means things and people set apart for God. It is used not only in the sense of set apart from, but also of set apart for (a specific use, a specific person). God is Himself holy – He is distinct, separate from all else.

In the NT the verb "*hagiazō*" (to make holy or to set apart) is chiefly used, but it is not used so much for God as it is in the

OT. The NT builds on the primary revelation of the OT and the NT writers automatically took the OT teaching for granted (cf Jn 17:17, I Jn 2:20).

In what sense is God separate and distinct?

i) By the holiness of His sheer majesty (Ex 15:1, I Sam 2:2, Is 40:25, Hos 11:9, Hab 3:3).

ii) By His moral holiness (Ezek 36:21-36, 38:23). "Holy" means essentially "like God" and so "different". He is utterly pure over against those who are impure (Is 5:16, Hab 1:12-13, I Jn 1:5). We are acquainted in human life with majesty without holiness, but with God both go together.

b) **Righteousness** (*tsedakah*) originally meant perhaps "straightness or uprightness" in a purely physical sense. The word which often goes together with righteousness in the parallel of Hebrew poetry is judgement (*mishpat*) in the sense of the verdict or ruling given by a judge. But in the NT both are represented by one word – *dikaionuné* = righteousness and justice. These terms imply standards and principles and laws to which a person's conduct conforms or does not conform. God is righteousness in the sense that the standard is internal to Him, a part of His own nature. It is a law of God's own being, a law in the very nature of God by which all other laws are judged. The character and will of God are in complete accord with one another. The adjective "righteous" (*tsedek*) refers to God's activities within a moral universe. His righteousness is a transitive attribute seen, for example, in His execution of judgement upon sin. His anger is therefore roused by what is opposed to His very nature (Ps 9:8, 97:2-3, Dan 9:14, Acts 17:31, II The 1:5, Rev 15:3).

c) **Wrath** (*harôn*): Righteousness is often connected with it but his is not an inevitable connection. It is in essence the product

of God's reaction when confronted by sin (Num 32:14, Jos 22:18, II Ki 13.3, Ps 78:21 ff, Is 66:15-17, Ez 8:18). While God's love is spontaneous to His own being, His wrath is called forth by the wickedness of His creatures. It is not an impersonal principle, but a principle of retribution directly attributed to God. There is no idea of any caprice in the expression.

Summary: God's holiness denotes not only His moral uniqueness but also His very nature. When He acts in the universe His holiness is expressed in His righteousness for He acts in line with the standard of His own holy nature. But because of the sins of men, this activity is especially manifested in wrath.

3) God as Self-impacting

a) **His Goodness** (*tîv*): This is not a synonym for God's holiness, but refers to his beneficence. "He is good" means that He is good to us, or, He does good to all his creatures. This is shown in particular in the provision of their temporal needs (Ps 23:6, 104:27-8, Neh 9:25, Acts 14:17). The goodness of God is an attribute which lies behind every gift He has ever given or even will give. Thus it can be used of God's special gifts: His forgiveness (Ps 86:5) and His mercy in redemption (Ps 107).

b) **His Love** (*ahava*): This essentially means a commitment to be loyal to the other and to please the other, a self-giving for the benefit of the other. It is a disposition resulting in an action. It is the characteristic of the relationship within the Trinity (Jn 17,24: 14,31). Because he has loved us, we are to love Him and the essence of love is loyalty and obedience. Because he has loved us, we are to love one another. When we look in the OT, we see that these words are used in the context of the covenant. This explains why it occurs most frequently in Deuteronomy (appeal to renew the covenant) and the Prophets (a call to repent and return to the covenant). There

are two words used, "*ahavah*" and "*hesed*". "*Ahavah*" is the cause of the covenant, "*hesed*" is the means of its continuance. "*Hesed*" is the wedding-together of the love of God and the faithfulness of God (Is 16:5, Ps 36:5, 88:11). The word is sometimes translated as "loving-kindness" or "mercy". The message of "*hesed*" in Hosea is that although Israel has let God down, He will not let them down.

The use of the word in the NT (where just one word is used for both of the above: "*agape*"), has to be read in the light OT usage. We are looking at a continuation and development of the OT concept. This is made possible by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

c) **His Grace And Mercy** (heb. *hén*) refers to God's unmerited favour for the sinner. It is the attitude of a superior to an inferior. It emphasizes the unmerited favour of God. Its NT equivalent is "*haris*" which is used of the attitude of God in salvation – it lies behind the whole plan of salvation (Jn 1:14-17, Titus 2:11). The Gospel is especially the gospel of grace (Acts 20:24). This grace is a sovereign grace (Rom 11:5 ff). But not only does it denote an attitude but also an inward power dealing with sin inwardly (Acts 4:33, Rom 5:21, 12:9). It is not a commodity but a divine attribute. When we say that grace is at work, we mean that God is at work graciously (in salvation).

d) **His Saving Righteousness**: In the OT, righteousness is often linked with salvation, and not only with justice and judgement. It is especially used in this sense in regard to the bribery and corruption that caused the collapse of the Jewish legal system. God through His prophets rebukes this and declares that He will intervene and see to it that wrongs will be righted; the guilty will be punished and the innocent vindicated. Hence God's righteousness was manifested in the salvation of the poor, needy and oppressed (by judging oppressors). In this context, God is said to save "in His righteousness". To judge

and to save are thus treated as synonyms in many passages (Ps 72:4, 143:11, 51:6, Jer 23:6, Zech 9:9). This particular meaning is carried over into the NT. But whereas in the OT salvation was normally used of particular cases of deliverance from enemies, in the NT it is mostly used of salvation from a far deadlier enemy within, sin. The background to this is the Cross of Christ where God dealt with the problem by sending His Son to be judged in our stead so that He could save us, without his righteous standards being compromised (His judgement against sin had to fall on somebody).

4. The Unity of Divine Character

It is very important to keep in equal balance both the love of God and His holiness, yet both are united in God's character. Whereas the love of God reacts against sin by grief, His righteousness (which springs from his holiness) reacts against sin by anger (wrath). Neither love nor holiness can be adequately defined without reference to the other. They are not mutually exclusive. Love which is not holy is either sentimentality or sensuality, for love is the urge to impart holiness. Real love is not only the desire for person's happiness but also for his holiness. Therefore God's purposes of love are to make us holy like Himself, and this is where chastening comes in.

The supreme declaration of this unity is seen in the Cross where God reconciled the two aspects of His character, in order to save us. The Cross shows God's judgement on sin (which fell on His Son) and His love for sinners (in that He provided a substitute for us, at infinite cost to Himself).

D. GOD AND HUMANITY

God sustains three important relationships to man: (1) Creator, (2) Ruler, (3) Father.

1. God as Creator

This is the most basic relationship of all between God and man, and lies behind all other relationships. Every statement about man's relationship to God presupposes creation. Biblical teaching is completely opposed to (a) pantheism, (b) deism. Creation involves complete dependance of the creature upon the Creator. The Creator can do with His creation as He wills. We are dependent on God for life itself (I Sam 2:6, Ps 114:29, Acts 17:25), for our food (Gen 9:3, Ps 114:14 ff, Mt 6:26), for our spiritual life, for God is our redeemer also (Eph 2:8-10), Titus 3:4-5). Moreover God created man for His glory (i.e. to reflect his character), and this is true of all creation.

God is still at work in the universe, in providence (Ps 104, Is 44:24, Job 38, 39, Jn 5:17). God is working towards a new creation, the old one having been previously affected and spoilt by sin. However, this new creation will not be utterly new, but will mark a completely new beginning whereby the new will emerge from the old (Is 65:17, 66:22, Rev 21:1). But this new creation has commenced already with the work of the Spirit in the hearts of regenerate men (II Cor 5:17). God shows His grace in enabling such men to live in the old world. One day He will make a renewed world for new men to live in.

2. God as King

A strong grasp of this doctrine (the sovereignty of God) makes for strength and stability in the christian life.

a). The Spheres of God's Sovereignty

His sovereignty over men is one aspect of His sovereign control over the whole universe (I Chr 29:11-12, Ps 103: 19-22). His sovereignty extends over all the nations; this is seen in the account of the world-wide flood, in the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel, the Exodus and entry into Canaan. In Daniel we discover that God rules in the kingdoms of men and sets up and deposes whom He chooses. His sovereignty extends over Israel. The kings of Israel were delegates of God and God intervenes on behalf of His people even today, in spite of their unbelief. His sovereignty is also over the Church of which Christ is the head. (Only group under God's direct rule).

b) Manifestations of God's Sovereignty

(i) in history, (ii) in judgement. In Biblical times kings were also judges and so is God. He is always able to carry his judgement into effect (Gen 8:25, Ps 96:13). He executes judgements from His kingly throne, but as sovereign He is not arbitrary. He is also sovereign in bringing salvation to His people, by saving them on a national scale from their enemies. His sovereignty is also seen in providence – in loving care and foresight for His creatures. People tend to de-personalise providence, but it becomes a mere abstraction unless it is the providence of a person, i.e. of God. There is however a distinction to be made between general and special providence: general providence refers to His keeping of his creation, whereas special providence refers to interventions on behalf of his elect and their constant care and protection. God sees that things work out to the futherance of the gospel and the conforming of His children to the image of His Son, Jesus.

c) The Sovereignty of God and Human Freedom

It is important in this respect to distinguish three types of freedom:

I) **Determinism**: whatever we do is determined by forces over which we have no personal control, external or internal. "We are a cog in the wheel of the universe and our movement is determined by the movements of the other cogs".

II) **Indeterminism**: man's will is subject to no constraint whatever – it is not even determined by his past habits. "I have total liberty of action at all times and in all situations".

III) **Self-determinism**: man's actions are determined at least in part by what he is. What I do is the expression of what I am, which reflects what I have done in the past. Man is free to express what he is in the context of circumstances brought into his life by God. But he is under spiritual bondage until he is set free by the grace of God.

However the Bible does qualify the concept of absolute human freedom. It recognises that man's freedom is morally and spiritually limited (Jn 8:34, Rom 6:17). Redemption does imply previous human bondage. The Bible does qualify human freedom but it does not regard men as automata. Freedom really means responsibility and as such God addresses men's will, but the biblical writers do not see any tension between the determinate counsel of God and human responsibility. God is not thwarted by man's sin in his governing of the universe. The sovereignty of God is maintained over the evil of men in spite of appearances of the triumph of evil (Acts 1:16, 25, 2:23, Rom 9, 10).

3. God as Father

He is Father of all men in the sense that He is the Creator of all men and that all men are created in the image of God. In order

to understand this concept, it is necessary to examine the idea of the family in the Bible. The Hebrews recognised the importance of moral and physical resemblance within the family. A certain type of family produces a certain type of character. In the OT, God is also called the Father of His people Israel because He has adopted them into a covenant relationship by virtue of His election of Abraham (Is 63:16, 64:8). God is also the Father of His people because He is also their king who sums up the power of the nation in Himself. The king who represented Israel, the covenant nation, became God's son on the day of his enthronement. he was known as the Messiah = anointed one (I Sam 7:14, Ps 2:7).

The angels are also called sons of God, possibly because of their resemblance to God as spirit beings (Job 1:6, 38:7). However, the Epistle to the Hebrews 1:5 expresses a denial of the fact that the angels are sons of God in the same way that Jesus is the son of God (ie He shares the same nature as the Father).

God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3). The expression refers to the essential filial relationship of Jesus to the Father within the Trinity. This unique relationship is stressed in John 20:17 where Jesus says: "My Father and your Father" because he could never say "Our Father". Jesus is the unique son of God the Father, but believers become sons of God by adoption only (Gal 4:5-6) which makes the relationship different.

4. God's Decrees

Within the context of God's relationship to humanity, God can be said to have formulated certain decrees, certain things to which he is committed.

a) He has decreed to create the universe and man. In other words, He is committed to a material universe. This means that it is good and not evil, apart from the taint of sin, which is an intruder from outside. Jesus became a material man.

b) He has decided to save man (and ultimately the whole material universe) from sin. To say that He has decreed to permit sin or to overrule sin for good is a statement that needs to be qualified. This is really in the nature of a concession rather than an absolute decree (Gen 3:15, Rev 21:15)..

c) God has decreed to reward His servants and to punish the disobedient (Ps 1, Rev 11:18).

d) God is committed to the human family and to righteous government which reflects His standards (Prov, Mt:5:27-28, Pr 14:34, Amos, Ps 98).

e) God is committed to Israel as a nation and has decreed that during the millenium it will be the nation that leads the other nations in the worship of Himself and the Messiah, and through which He will teach the other nations (Is 60).

f) God is committed to the Church in this age and to its ruling with Christ during the millenium (II Tim 2:12, Eph 1:22-23).

g) God has decreed that in the end He will triumph and that all evil shall be banished from the universe to the cosmic rubbish dump called the lake of fire. In the mean time, God has consented to tolerate the presence of evil as a means of sifting men's ultimate loyalties and of developing the character of His children, in view of the life in the world to come (Rev 20:11-15).

E: GOD AND THE WHOLE UNIVERSE

1. The Transcendence and Immanence of God

All that exists can be put into two categories: (1) the created universe, (2) the uncreated God. God is exalted above the universe as its Creator and Ruler. He transcends it utterly. He is other than it. This is His transcendence. His immanence means that God indwells his universe – a fact which is made possible by the fact that he is outside time and space. There is very clear scriptural teaching about God's transcendence (Ps 57:11, Is 33:5, 40:12 ff, I Ki 8:27). The key to this idea is that God created the world and is therefore outside it. Yet Scripture also gives clear teaching about God's immanence – the fact that He is present in the world in the sense that He is parallel to space and time and can intervene in it anytime He likes (Ps 139, Jer 23:24, Acts 17:27-28). God is the upholder of the universe (Neh 6, Col 1:17, Heb 1:3).

The Bible presents a balance of both: the balance between the immanence and the transcendence of God. One can lose a personal God if one removes God from the world or if one identifies Him with the world. The Bible is theistic by maintaining that God is both immanent and transcendent at the same time (I Ki 8:27-30, Acts 17:24-28). Stoic philosophy which was pantheistic and Epicurean philosophy which was deist (absentee God) both had unfortunate effects on the thinking of many Early Church Fathers.

2. The Infinity of God

As God is transcendent, God is not limited by the universe which He has brought into being – ie by space, time or lack of knowledge. However, ideas implying God's confinement in space and time are used in Scripture, because our minds cannot comprehend what is beyond space and time. One aspect of God's infinity is His eternity which refers to His infinity with relation to time (Ps 90:2, Eph 3:21, I Tim 1:17). God is JHWH

= I AM, a title which embraces time past, present, and future – the Eternal One.

- a) God's omnipresence is His infinity with relation to space. This presence makes natural revelation a possibility and also personal fellowship.
- b) God's omnipotence is his infinity with relation to power. This does not mean that God actually does all that it is possible for Him to do, or what it would be improper for Him to do. The performance of His will is determined by his own nature.
- c) God's omniscience is His infinity with relation to knowledge. God does not acquire knowledge. His wisdom means his knowledge as directed towards attainment of practical ends.

F. GOD AS THREE IN ONE

This truth refers to the unity of God and yet also to His threefoldness. The doctrine of the Trinity states that while man is unipersonal (ie one person equals one man), God is by definition a tripersonal being (three persons equal one God).

1. The Unity of God

There is much evidence for this in Scripture. It is very strongly asserted in the OT that God is a unity because of the surrounding predominance of polytheism amongst the pagans. Unlike the pagan gods, there is total unity among the members of the Trinity. Much of God's activity in the OT is spent in establishing His sole deity over the various polytheistic systems (Deut 4:33-35, Is 43:10-12, 44:6, 45:14-21). It is regarded as a great day of triumph when God (YHWH) will be acknowledged everywhere as the only God, the other gods being in reality demonic powers (I Ki 8:60, II Ki 19:15-19, Ps 86:8-10).

However, these truths are stated just as emphatically in the NT (Mk 12:29, Jn 5:44, I Cor 8:4-6, Eph 4:5-6, I Tim 1:17, 2:5, Jas 2:19).

It must be made clear however that God is a unity and not a unit.

2. The Trinity of God

The word Trinity does not actually occur in the Bible. In its Greek form, Trias, it seems to have been first used by Theophilus of Antioch and in its Latin form, Trinitas, by Tertullian. The word means that there are three eternal distinctions in one divine essence, known respectively as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These distinctions are three Persons. The two main heresies regarding the Trinity have been Sabellianism (the Trinity is merely three aspects of one person) and Tritheism (there are three Gods).

a) Allusions to the Trinity in the OT

Many OT passages suggest a plurality in the Godhead. In the first chapters of Genesis, a plural word is used for God (Elohim) followed by a singular verb. In Gen 1:26 we read that God says: "Let us make man in our own image.." (cf also Gen 3:22, 11:6, 7, 20:13 48:15, Is 6:8). In Isaiah 6 the angels cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy" (three times – a mere coincidence?): There are also intriguing references in Gen 19:24, Hosea 1:7 where the construction is odd and could be construed as a reference to the Trinity. In Deuteronomy 6:4 we are told that there is one God: Shēma Yisrael YHWH Elohenu YHWH ehad. But this word is often used in a collective sense. Mishpahah ahat = one family = united family – they are not the only one in the world! The Aaronic blessing in Num 6:24 points to Mt 28. The OT doctrine of the Messiah (Is 7:14 and 9:6) points to a divine Person who is not the Father. The Wisdom of God, as

contained in Proverbs 11, also indicates a divine Person other than the Father, who can be no less than God.

The Angel of the Lord is obviously not the same Person as the Father and yet a member of the Godhead, because he is referred to one moment as the angel of the Lord and at another moment as God (Genesis 18:13, 17, 20, 22-23).

The Son of Man in Daniel is also treated as a divine Person. (Dan 7:13-14). All of these figures point of course to Jesus Christ, Second Person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is also referred to in the OT as a separate entity who is divine and yet not the Father (cf Gen 1:1-2, 6:3).

b) Allusions to the Trinity in the NT

There are about 70 passages where Three Holy Persons are associated together. First of all, at the baptism of Jesus, we find the Father speaking from heaven, the Spirit descending and Christ Himself being called God's Son. At the end of the Gospel of Matthew the apostles are bidden to baptise in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Other texts are: I Cor 12:4, 6, II Cor 13:1, I Pet 1:2, II Cor 1:21-22, Jude 20, 21, Heb 2:3-4.

Then there is the additional proof that all three Persons of the Trinity are referred to as being divine at one time or another in the NT. The divinity of the Three Persons of the Trinity is dealt with at length in the sections on Christology and Pneumatology respectively.

c) Subordination within the Trinity.

It is clear that there is a subordination within the Trinity which is permanent. The personal names of the Trinity are identifiers to help us understand how they relate to one another and to us, not statements of where they originally came from. It is important to realise that the terms Father and Son do not refer to the incarnation as such, but rather indicate a permanent status. They are only illustrative terms which describe the relationship between two persons of the Trinity in terms of; a)

likeness, b) endearment, c) status (the subordination of the Son to the Father who is the initiator). The Holy Spirit is subordinate to both the Father and the Son. However, this subordination is quite consistent with an equality of nature of all three members of the Trinity at all times.

References in Scripture to the Son having been 'begotten' refer to his taking up a position (to which he was appointed from eternity). The term was used in the OT at the coronation of kings when the king became God's 'son' and He became their 'father' (cf I Sam 7:14).. Jesus, at his baptism, entered into his functions as Servant of the Lord. After his ascension he began his reign as Messiah. He who had always been Son of God by nature, became a 'son' in the sense of the Messiah (Son of God was also a synonym for Messiah).

When the work of redemption is finished and death has been abolished, Jesus will then hand back the kingdom to the Father: that is, he will cease to reign as mediator (on behalf of the Father) and from then on the Father will rule directly. (1 Cor 15).

Furthermore it is important to realise that the term "only-begotten" means "unique" or "only" and does not refer to birth (the incarnation) or to having been "put forth" at some time prior to creation like an emanation. It is significant that the Hebrew word for "only-begotten" is "yahid" which means "only, unique". It comes from a stem "yahad" meaning "oneness, union, communion". In other words the expression really means "consubstantial" (of the same nature) and therefore "dearest". In Gen 22,16 Isaac is called Abraham is called Abraham's only son and this must mean his dearest son (he had other children). The idea that John is communicating is that Jesus has the same (divine) nature as the Father who sent him. It is also significant that the nonsensical idea of the "eternal generation" of the Son was first concocted in Alexandria where church leaders were heavily influenced by platonism. Those that hold to this view (e.g. Berkhof) start

uncritically from Origen's platonic vocabulary which eventually even crept into the Nicene creed. We must go back to the biblical and Hebrew meaning of the word and not take Greek philosophy as our starting point. Even the Nicene creed is not infallible. It is not part of Scripture.

When the Early Church came adrift from its Jewish moorings, many hebraisms were misunderstood and this appears to have been one of them.

It is important to emphasize that both the Son and the Holy spirit are co-equally and co-eternally God as much as the Father is. There are three Persons within one Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

G. HISTORICAL DISCUSSIONS

1. Monarchianism This heresy denies the concept of the Trinity. It marks the outworking of an earlier heresy: gnosticism and in particular docetism.

Justin Martyr had said in one of his controversies that "there is God and His Logos (Jesus)" – a phrase which seemed to suggest that there were two gods. But his opponents went too far in the other direction by saying that there is only one "*monarchia*" (i.e. one indivisible God).

Since this heresy denied that there is such a thing as the Trinity, this raises questions regarding the identity of Jesus. Some concluded that he cannot be God (therefore he must be a man who was granted divine status as a reward) others that he was the Father in a different form (a sort of avatar – not a real incarnation).

a) **Dynamic monarchianism**: (also called adoptianism).

I) The word **dynamic** refers to the idea that Jesus was dynamised by the Spirit to a unique extent. Theodotius of Byzantium resurrected the docetic heresy by saying that Jesus

was a unique man who was divinely energised by the Holy Spirit (which came upon him at his baptism and left him before the cross).

II) The word **adoptionism** comes from the idea that he had such a close walk with God that he was "adopted" into the divine substance. This was the view propounded by Paul of Samosata. Adoptionism is thus a precursor of the 19th cent liberal idea that Jesus was a person whose religion (example) we must seek to imitate.

b) **Modalism**, so called because of the idea that the expressions Father/ Son/Holy Spirit designate different modes of activity of the same person (not the activities of 3 persons). The title patripassianism comes from the inevitable conclusion of this point of view – that the Father suffered on the cross. The expressions, Father, Son and Holy Spirit really refer to successive roles played by the same being. The heresy is also called sabellianism because it was held by Sabellius. It was also held by Praxeas and Noetus.

This heresy sought to avoid any taint of subordinationism or emanation but did not give an adequate account of the incarnation.

It was the Council of Constantinople in 381 that finally condemned this heresy in both its forms. The heresy lasted for a long time and became the seed-bed for subsequent heresies.

2) **Process Theology**: reacts against the idea that God is immutable and that therefore man has no significance. Unfortunately they go too far in the other direction and claim that God is changed by what we do and thereby becomes something that he was not before.

In reply, it has to be stressed that our significance in God's eyes does not come from our alleged ability to change his being, but by the fact that we are made in His image and that he has

chosen to give us significance. God, unlike the universe he has created, is not changeable in his attributes (Hebr. 1,10-12)

3) **The Openness of God theology:**

For the so-called 'Post-conservative evangelicals, God is not all-powerful, all-knowing or eternal. Rather, his power has limits; he does not know the future; and he exists in time. God does not condemn anyone eternally. Nor can he stop human suffering. In fact, he has to work in partnership with us, and he changes as we change. This is the "openness of God" theology, in which God, the church, and Christianity are 'opened up' so that they become less narrow, more inclusive, more open to new ideas, and more compatible to the postmodern mind.

This school of theology takes as its point of departure arminianism and seeks to develop it at the inevitable expense of the classic doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Its main proponent has been Clark Pinnock. Needless to say, his theology has been warmly welcomed by the charismatic camp. In an effort to recover the doctrine of a God who is dynamic, Pinnock goes so far as to say that God does not know the future, because he operates inside time and reacts or adapts to us. Some would object that he ends up with God made in the image of man.

The weakness of the doctrine is that it fails to take account of different levels of knowledge in the mind of God. If God is the ruler of the universe, then it follows that he knows the beginning from the end, but there is no reason why this should interfere with the dynamic character of his dealings with us. The doctrine is a failure to appreciate a super-mind that goes beyond our puny conceptions.

Pinnock also reacts to a misunderstanding of the doctrine of the immutability of God. This does not mean that he is impassive (like a stone statue), but that he cannot be affected (or corrupted) by our sinful way of thinking: he maintains his integrity intact.

Moreover, the character of God does not change. Pinnock seems to misunderstand the word repent when applied to God.

God is even said to "repent" but this really means to change His line of action because of a change on man's part. When men change (eg repent) they begin to feel a different side of God's character (instead of His wrath, His favour and love).

It is the contention that God is essentially "love". Whereas God loves the world, his love for those whom he chooses is of a different order and cannot be extrapolated to include any relationship that he has with the world. In other words, as typical arminians, they stumble over the doctrine of election: for them it is anathema.

F. GOD AND CREATION

1. The biblical perspective: The account found in the book of Genesis is unique in the ancient world. Most ancient philosophies and pagan religions believed in some kind of metamorphosis of species and spontaneous generation. The biblical account, on the other hand, speaks of the creation of the worlds with all its flora and fauna at once by God.

However, it is not written in modern scientific jargon, but in a timeless style understandable by any culture. It is clear that God wants man to see the universe from his perspective. It is not a cold, impersonal place without meaning: it did not evolve all by itself. The account is couched in warm, personal terms. It has been created by a loving, but all-powerful God for man to live in. The creation account contains the following important concepts:

a. Creation. The word creation is used in two ways:

I) **absolute creation** (from no previous material) – hebr. *bara*, a word that is only used three times in the account to indicate three jumps: from nothing to initial matter; from inanimate to animate life; from animal life to human life.

II) **indirect creation** from existent material (hebr. *asa*). But in both cases, God gave the order and it happened instantaneously. God who has absolute wisdom (complete power to make

anything he wants, so that it corresponds exactly to the plan in his mind – this is the meaning of the word 'good' in Genesis.

All this has important implications:

- 1) God does not need to experiment. This rules out evolution.
- 2) Neither matter nor energy are eternal.
- 3) It precludes any kind of dualism in the universe in which any other power existed eternally or outside his control.
- 4) God is distinct from his creation, as against pantheism.
- 5) God decided to create the universe – he did not need to do it, because he is by definition self-existent and self-sufficient.
- 6) He created the universe, for his glory, that is: to display or express his character. That is the ultimate reason for our existence. Sin has spoilt all this and tried to make man an end in himself.

b. Conflict between Genesis 1 + 2? Genesis 2 is not at all a second account of creation but an account of Adam's relationship to God, his wife and the rest of creation. He is responsible to God who has given him work to do (to develop his character), his wife is his vis-à-vis and helper, and the animals are placed under him. In order to set the scene, the author has to tell us how there came to be a garden with a man in it. The author, who considers the scene from a postdiluvian standpoint, points out that in the beginning things were not like they are now. In the garden there were three elements lacking: 1) rain, 2) a gardner, 3) the sort of plants that grow in a garden. Verse 11 refers to animals that had been previously created (Hebrew has no pluperfect tense) but which are now led before Adam for him to name them. This account also sets the scene for the fall in chapter 3.

c. Creation of order (hierarchy): Genesis 2 tells us that God created an authority structure, with himself at the top, man as his viceroy, woman and animals. Sin has disturbed this structure.

d. Creation account: is presented in Genesis 1 in the form of a six-day pattern. Various interpretations of this have been proposed:

I) An attempt to reconcile the biblical account with the theory of evolution: The six days are thought to represent long geological ages. This is unlikely to have been in the mind of the original author who emphasizes the role of the word of God: God spoke and it happened instantaneously. Intelligence and power render geological ages unnecessary.

A variation of this is the gap theory, whereby the six days are supposed to be six days of re-creation after the first creation was destroyed by the rebellion of Satan. According to this theory, popularised by the Scofield Bible, the gap (into which we are supposed to fit the geological ages) occurred between verses 1 and 2 of Genesis chapter 1. Verse two is therefore interpreted to read: and the world *became* without form and void. Unfortunately, this interpretation does not stand up, as there is no *vav*-consecutive construction (the *vav* – hebrew word for 'and' has to be attached to the verb, for the construction to work: it does not in verse 2) in verse 2 which would enable the verb to be translated as an aorist (following on from verse 1). The means: Now, the world was...(cf. same construction in Jonah 3,3 and Zechariah 3,1-3). According to this interpretation Ezekiel 28 is seen as a reference to the expulsion of Satan from an earthly paradise. Much more likely it refers to his expulsion from heaven. The theory is unnecessary, as the catastrophe in question can be much better explained by the Flood.

II) The six days represent 6 periods of 24 hours and happened in chronological order. The creation of the sun on the fourth day represents a problem, which adherents of this interpretation seek to overcome by suggesting that the light described on the first day does not refer to the sun, but a specially created light source. This seems unlikely, as the whole solar system is

designed to function as a unit: on the third day we read about plants growing. It is also unlikely that all the stars (i.e. the rest of the universe) was created on the fourth day! A more reasonable interpretation is that the presence of the sun is implicit in verse 4, but made explicit in verse 14 (in this verse it is identified as the object that divides the light from the darkness). The reason why the author delays the mention of the sun until the fourth day (verse 14) is that he wishes to make a theological point.

III) The six days represent the six phases in which the material was **communicated** to Adam in a dream or represent the six tablets on which the account was written. Everything is written from the point of view of an observer on earth. Thus the sun and the stars only emerged from cloud cover on the fourth day. They were there from the beginning, having been previously created by God.

IV) The aim of the account is **liturgical**. According to this theory, Moses imposed a 6-day framework on the original material in order to make it suitable for liturgical use at a new year ceremony (after the Babylonian pattern) or at feasts, many of which lasted 6 days culminating in a seventh, the sabbath (Dt 16,3.13). In this case, the "days" would be the days of commemoration: a different aspect of creation would be commemorated on each day of the feast. The style of the material might possibly confirm this: rhythmical formulas, repetitions and a solemn setting. The fact that there are 10 commands and 8 divine acts of creation all compressed into a six-day pattern is significant in this respect. It is also interesting to note that we hear nothing about sabbath-keeping (for instance, in the life of Abraham) prior to the giving of the law on Sinai, which suggests that the sabbath was not originally a creation ordinance.

Moses would then have arranged his material as follows: the first three days are preparatory. First, three spheres of

habitation are prepared: sky, sea and land. Secondly they are filled by: birds, fish and animals + man. The seventh day lies outside the scheme of creation and is established as a pattern of rest for his creation: one day in seven. The material emphasises that it is the divine creative word that brings order out of chaos, light out of darkness and life out of death. Creation is thus the product of God's personal will.

However, it has to be admitted that there is absolutely no evidence for such a festival.

V) The creation account is also **polemical** and **didactic** in nature. It is couched in the form of a catechism (or a creed). This would demand that it be short, geared to refute what the opposition (Canaanites) believed, and easy to memorise. It bears all the signs of having been written (by Moses) shortly before the entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land, in order to prepare them for their encounter with the Canaanite religion which was based on the fertility cult. In this religion, the world was conceived of as having been the result of a sexual union between the gods. This would explain why the account is so polemical in tone: it is specifically designed to attack a rival system of thought. It would also explain the structure and emphasis of the account.

One of the tenets of the Canaanite religion was that creation was the result of struggle between the creator and the forces of chaos (cf. goddess Tiamat, a word related to the hebr. *tehom* = the deep). The biblical account emphasises that it was not the result of a struggle but that God was in perfect control of the creative process at every stage. When we read after each creative act that 'God saw that it was good', this means that the result of that creative act corresponded completely to what God had in mind: it was exactly what he wanted.

It is significant that the heavenly bodies only appear on the fourth day. This relates to their importance: they are not gods, but lights in the sky that correspond to the liturgy of Israel: they give light to the earth and serve to mark out the feasts of the

liturgical year: they contribute to the worship of God. Their names are not even mentioned (neither are those of fish: *Dag* comp. Dagon, or bird: *Sippor*) because they were the names of pagan gods: (Sun – Shemesh, cf. sun-God Shamash; comp. Shemshon> Shimshon>Samson; and the Moon; cf. moon-goddess Jareah, comp. Jericho). They are merely called light bearers, for that is all they are in God's scheme of things. They are entirely subordinate to God and under him: their place is in the firmament (2nd heaven), not the 3rd heaven (where God dwells).

VI). Concluding remarks: It seems safest to accept the traditional interpretation but with the following provisos:

1. The account probably does not refer to the creation of the universe as such, (though this is mentioned in passing), but the creation of life on planet earth. It assumes that the universe and planet earth have been previously created. Even the initial phrase "heavens and the earth" may mean no more than planet earth with its multiple atmospheric layers.
2. There is undoubtedly a polemical and didactic element in the presentation of the material. It is a polemic against paganism – it aims to correct a distorted perspective. This accounts for the mention of the heavenly bodies only on day four.
3. God created life on planet earth in six days so that this would provide a meaningful pattern for human activity (6 days work and 1 day rest). Any attempt to get round this has to be rejected. It is extremely unlikely that the 6-day account represents a mere literary or liturgical device, since a pattern of 6 days work and one day's rest could hardly be established on anything less than a fact (cf. the Exodus and the celebration of the Passover). It can hardly have been read back into the account at a later date.

e. Comparison with other accounts: Throughout the ancient Near East there was a conception of a primary watery emptiness (rather than chaos) and darkness. Creation was seen

as a divine act *ex nihilo* (from nothing) and man was made by direct divine intervention for the service of the gods. The Hebrew account with its clarity and monotheism, stands out as unique, there are no struggles between deities or attempts to exalt any special city or race.

Greek religion sees things from a slightly different perspective. For the Greeks, the gods they worshipped were not responsible for the creation of the world, but rather, were beings created or begotten by vaguely conceived deities or forces. Procreation seems to be the underlying process involved. cf. Canaan world-view.

Greek philosophers tended to rationalise this in various ways. The Epicureans attributed everything to chance combinations of atoms, whereas the pantheistic Stoics conceived of a *logos*, or impersonal world-principle.

f. The role of the Trinity in creation. The work of creation is variously attributed to all three persons of the Trinity:

- i. to the Father (Gen 1,1; Is 44,24; 45,12; Ps 33,6).
- ii. to the Son (Jn 1,3.10; Col 1,16).
- iii. to the Holy Spirit (Gen 1,2; Jb 26,13)

ANTHROPOLOGY

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

There have always been a multitude of rival anthropologies to choose from, each expanding its own understanding according to the dogmas of its proponents' philosophical or religious stance. As in every other instance, what we believe about human nature is determined by what we believe about more fundamental issues.

1. **Biblical perspective:**

a. Man is seen as part of the created universe. He is not an emanation emerging from the being of God himself. There will always be that gap between the Creator and the created. The human race did not evolve from the lower primates as a result of an independent process of natural selection and development. Rather, humanity is portrayed as a special and direct creation of God. Man is the summit of God's creation but still dependent on Him for his very existence. He was the last being to be created and his creation is seen as being 'very good' – of all God's creatures, he corresponded most closely to the person of God himself.

b. Man is made in the image of God: he is made as a creature with responsibility towards God and as one with whom God can interact. He is an intelligent, moral being with an independent will. He has also been appointed to rule – to exercise delegated authority. Some would see the image of God as being this faculty, which he lost at the Fall and so lost control of creation, of relationships and of himself. It seems, rather, to be everything that makes man different from an animal.

Although the image of God in man has been deformed by the effects of sin, it has not been abolished. This is seen in the Tora where the murder of man by man must be punished by death, because it is an attack against God's image. An ox must die if it

kills a man because the image of God is at stake. It seems therefore that the body is involved, as the body serves to express this image.

Man made in the image of God is so important that when he fell, the whole creation fell with him. The Son of God himself became a man in order to redeem man. Man is so important that God respects his choice, for or against him, for heaven or for hell.

There was considerable discussion by the Early Fathers regarding the distinction between the 'image' (*tselem*) and 'likeness' (*dēmut*) of God. Catholics still hold that likeness was a supernatural gift (original perfection) given by God to man at his creation, but which he lost at his fall. However, an examination of the biblical evidence would seem to suggest that there is no real distinction meant between 'image' and 'likeness' – it is probably just a couplet like 'body and soul', 'heart and mind'. Man was created innocent (he had had no previous experience of evil), but not perfect (for this suggests someone who has passed a test or been through a maturing process). He had to prove himself in order to be able to eat the fruit of the tree of life and become immortal (i.e. having eternal life and acquiring a glorified status). But man rebelled and so failed the test. God could not allow a rebel to acquire this status, so he cut off his access to the tree of life. Man has still not attained a glorified status: this will only happen at the resurrection for those who have put their faith in Christ.

c. Man is a social being, sustaining important relationships.

This is seen in Genesis chapter 2 which is primarily about relationships.

I) Man is responsible to God who has delegated his authority over the earth to him .

II) Man has a kinship with the animal kingdom: he is also made from the 'dust' (chemical elements) of the ground

III) He was given dominion over the whole of the animal kingdom which is a direct result of his possession of God's image. His naming of the animals shows his superiority over

them. He is also superior over the plant world, as he is given plants to eat.

IV) Man was also created as a social being. In fact, the full image of God is seen supremely in the couple: the man and his wife together. They together reflect God's glory, that is, his character.

V) In the book of Genesis, we see the basic pattern for human society. The next step from Adam and Eve is the family. Later, nations are seen as an extension of the family principle.

Because all men are descended from Adam, mankind is seen as one huge family – the sons of Adam. As all men are related to him by flesh and blood, all men have a legal and genetic solidarity with him. This has important repercussions as far as the doctrine of original sin is concerned: because of Adam's sin, both Adam and his offspring (family) are condemned and suffer the consequences.

2. Constitution of man:

The basic Hebrew concept is that man is a unity consisting of the outward man (body) which you see, and the inward man, which you do not see.

a. Man is a living being (hebr. *nefesh*, sometimes erroneously translated as 'soul'): a person in relationship to God and to other people. However, it must also be pointed out that animals are also called *nefeshim*. – beings in whom is the principle of biological life. They have a *psyche* as well as a body, but they do not have the capacity of fellowship with God (spirit).

b. It is the spirit (*ruah*) that makes man qualitatively different from the animals. It gives a different quality to his body + soul complex which means that he is immortal in that he will exist for ever. Immortality in the biblical sense has a different meaning (eternal life) which is a reference to quality rather than duration. It also means that man has the unique capacity to have fellowship and to interact with God. It is this that is essentially the meaning of man being made in God's image. As

one writer has put it, *nefesh* refers to person whereas *ruah* refers to personality

c. The word flesh (hebr. *basar*) refers to man's solidarity with the animal kingdom. It indicates a created and dependent sort of life which men and animals share, a sort of life which is derived from God, and which, unlike God's own life, requires a physical organism to sustain it in its characteristic activity. The phrase 'all flesh' refers to the whole animal kingdom including man. The physical life of such creatures lasts only for a comparatively short period, during which God supplies the breath of life (i.e. life principle) in their nostrils. As such, man is not only limited but also (extension of the meaning pioneered by Paul) sinful and living in opposition to God.

d. Other words (primarily meaning parts of the body) are used to indicate emotional impulses and feelings: liver, kidneys, bowels. We should note in particular that the word 'heart' refers to the centre of the personality (or the control-room) where decisions are made and not primarily to sentiment. A pure heart does not primarily denote a person whose heart has been cleansed from sin, but one who is single-minded in his devotion to God and undivided in his loyalty to Him.

3. The development of man: The Bible maintains that all races derive from Adam and so all men inherited Adam's sinful disposition and have a solidarity with him. But is this genetically and scientifically feasible? The Bible gives an account of the development of individuals to families and families to peoples, and peoples to nations. This is found in the first chapters of Genesis and in particular in the so-called Table of the Nations in chapter 10. The account of the population explosion in the early chapters of Genesis is rigidly selective: the author is only really interested in the godly line amidst a sea of growing corruption. We read for instance that there were other people around at the time of Cain and Abel, who might take revenge on Cain. It has been calculated that by the time of Adam's death (he lived for 930 years) there may well have been

a population of some 20 million people, if their rate of reproduction was anything like ours. There are indications that the genealogies in Genesis 1-12 were selective (10 names from Adam to Noah, 10 names from Noah to Abraham). But as the flood destroyed them all except the family of Noah, what really concerns us is the development from the Flood onwards.

- a) **From families to nations**: The material is so arranged as to suggest that the Babel division by tongues corresponded to families and that each such division presupposed that there would be a country (or land) where the family could live and work, and that such family groups would indeed become nations. Acts 17:26 corresponds to this idea.
- b) **Shem is probably the author of the list**, as he lists his own descendants to the fifth generation in some cases, whereas Ham's genealogy extends to only the third generation and Japhet's to only the second. This indicates that Shem must have lost touch with many of his relatives after the confusion of languages and the great dispersion.
- c) **Shem knew from Noah's prophecy** that he was the one chosen to transmit the knowledge of the True God and His promises to later generations.
- d) **The division of the inhabited earth** referred to as having occurred during the days of Peleg must refer to a linguistic and geographic division to be identified with events following the Tower of Babel. If Peleg was born soon after the Dispersion, then it is not surprising that Eber would commemorate such a momentous event in the name of his son (which means 'division'). Continental drift is unlikely to be meant.
- e) **Migrations** undoubtedly took place across the former land bridges at the Bering Strait and the Malaysian Strait, when the sea level was much lower than it is now, during the centuries

following the Flood when much of the earth's water was frozen in the great continental ice sheets of the Ice Age. The use of sea-going vessels cannot also be ruled out. In the south, regions that are now deserts (Sahara, Arabia etc) were enjoying a pluvial period with abundant water resources able to support developing civilisations throughout the world.

f) **This process of migration** and cultural development did not require long ages, as evolutionists imagine. Rather, the entire world was inhabited within a few generations. This probably lasted for almost two centuries, or longer, if there are gaps in the genealogies. Archeology has increasingly confirmed in recent years that civilisation appeared more or less contemporaneously in all parts of the world, only a few thousand years ago. Remains of original occupation sites when a group first arrived in an area during their migration, naturally suggest to evolutionist a 'stone age culture' but actually they probably reflect a very temporary situation. As soon as materials for ceramics and metals could be found, the 'stone age' at the site was succeeded by a 'bronze age' or 'iron age'. The 'village economy' was quickly succeeded by 'urbanisation' as the population increased and suitable building materials were developed. This pattern of cultural development seems to have occurred over and over again.

As a tribe migrated to an unexplored region, it would find a suitable location (normally on a high elevation for protection, but near a spring or river, with fertile alluvial plains for water and food supply) and then try to establish a village. Although members of the tribe certainly knew many useful arts such as agriculture, animal husbandry, ceramics, metallurgy and so on, they could not use them right away. Veins of metal had to be discovered, mined and smelted: suitable clay had to be found for making bricks and pottery, animals had to be bred and crops had to be planted. All of this might take several years. In the mean time, the tribe had to survive by hunting, fishing and

gathering fruit and nuts. Temporary homes had to be built of stone, if available, or timber or even in caves.

No doubt a great many of the evidences of the so-called Paleolithic and Neolithic cultures of early man, when rightly interpreted, are merely commentaries on the difficult struggle to survive by small tribes of post-flood men in the early centuries following the Great Flood.

If a site settled by a tribe was especially desirable, it must have often been the case that a subsequent invasion by a stronger tribe would drive out or destroy the occupants and a distinctively different culture would succeed the original one on the same site. Some the tribes grew rapidly and developed strong nations. Others grew slowly, then stagnated, deteriorated and then finally died out.

g) Development of physical characteristics: As each family and tribal unit migrated away from Babel, not only did each develop a distinctive culture but each also developed distinctive physical and biological characteristics. Since they could communicate only with members of their own family unit, there was no further possibility of marrying outside the family. Hence, it was necessary to establish new families composed of very close relatives, for several generations at least. It is well established genetically that variations take place very quickly in a small inbreeding population, but only very slowly in a large interbreeding population. In the latter, only the dominant genes will find common expression in the outward physical characteristics of the population, reflecting more or less average characteristics, even though the genetic factors for specifically distinctive characteristics are latent in the gene pool of the population. In a small population, however, the particular suite of genes that may be present in its members, though recessive in the larger population, will have opportunity to become openly expressed and even dominant under these

circumstances. Thus in a few generations of such inbreeding, distinctive characteristics of skin colour, height, hair texture, facial features, temperament, environmental adjustment and others, could become associated with particular tribes and nations.

Since the population of the earth was still relatively young and since, before the Flood, there had been a minimum of environmental radiation (thanks to the water canopy surrounding the earth's atmosphere which filtered out such radiation) to produce genetic mutations, there was as yet no genetic danger from inbreeding. After many further centuries had elapsed, however, the accumulation of mutations and the associated danger of congenital defects had become sufficiently serious to cause God to declare incestuous marriages illegal (Leviticus 18:6-14).

Of course, as time went on and people learnt each other's languages, intermarriage did take place, and the process was reversed, as we see today. But it is interesting to see that in both cases, inbreeding or intermarriage, the decisive factor was the language barrier. But, by and large, the institution of distinct nations has become permanent.

h) Development of religion: All nations as they dispersed must have retained some awareness of the true God of heaven even though he receded more and more from their consciousness as time went on. They retained their corrupted traditions of the Flood and, to a lesser extent of the Dispersion from Babel. Their vague recollections of God's promised Redeemer were distorted into various systems of animal and even human sacrifices, in order to gain favour with the spirit beings which seemed to govern their daily lives. Eventually, these spirits were more and more identified with the forces of nature in a closed-system universe. To this we must add the deification of

heroes and the development of the Babylonian counterfeit system of organised paganism which was actively spread. earthly existence.

4. Origin of the human soul: There are three views on this:

a) The pre-existence of souls: This was a widely held view outside of Christianity. For instance it was held by the essenes and also by certain Jewish sects, cf. Book of Wisdom). The Talmud states that: 'Souls are kept in a kind of treasury from where they are taken, given a view of heaven and hell and then put into a body'. Origen maintained that all souls were created at once at a time before the material creation. In his pre-temporal fall, all the souls fall except the one which becomes united with the Word in the incarnation. Ps 139,13-16 is sometimes taken to support this view, but it must be said that it obviously refers to the body and not to the soul (it is a poetic description of the growth of the body in the womb).

b) Creationism: the soul is created by God and placed in the body at conception or birth. Among texts appealed to are: Num 16,22; 27,16; 12,7.

c) Traducianism: the soul is derived from the body just as the body is. It is just as indirectly created as the body. Texts appealed to are: Gen 2,1- 3,21; 5,3.

Relative merits of the two views: Luther and Augustine tended to oscillate between the two views, but Luther came down in favour of traducianism before his death. Creationism does justice to man as a unique being, whereas traducianism does justice to the unity of the race of Adam. Creationism raises difficulties relating to the doctrine of original sin. Pelagius, significantly enough held this doctrine. The passages that creationists quote are really neutral: all they claim is that God is the creator of the soul of man. This is also what traducianists believe, but by means of an indirect creation. Creationists say that the opposite view is materialistic, but we are told that Adam begat a man in his own image, which refers to the personality of the inner life (i.e. the soul).

B. THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN

1. The Biblical terms used.

a) In the biblical perspective, **he is Adam (a member of mankind)**, formed from the soil, or chemical elements (hebr. *adama*). This expression refers to the creatureliness of man and his kinship with the elements. The Hebrew word *adam* corresponds to the Greek word *anthropos*. Mankind is divided into male (hebr. *ish*, gr. *aner*) and female (hebr. *isha*, gr. *gyne*).

b) **Man is referred to as BASAR** (flesh). This is the first of all the constituents of the body of man (Gen 40,1) or of an animal (Lev 6,27): then it comes to mean the whole body (Prov 14,30), and finally the whole of earthly existence. All flesh (*kol ha-basar*) means 'all living things' as well as animals. It indicates man in his physical frailty. The equivalent word in Greek is '*sarx*' which is usually a translation of the Hebrew concept.....This is not an unnatural development of the meaning because even in the OT it did already have the connotation of the human being in its frailty, and sin does employ the body for its expression. The flesh in this sense means 'the whole personality as organised in the wrong direction, as directed to earthly pursuits rather than the service of God'.

c) **Man is also NEFESH** (lit: soul, a living being, a being possessing life). *Nefesh* is thought of as something essential to physical existence. It often means a living person. It is also used of animals which are also called 'living beings' in which is the 'breath of life'.....In the earlier parts of the Bible, the terms '*nefesh*' and '*ruah*' tended to overlap, but later '*nefesh*' became more and more associated with the lower aspects of man's consciousness, the personal but merely human life in man, the seat of his appetites, emotions and passions. Thus the way was prepared for the sharper Pauline distinction between the

physical and the spiritual. In Greek it is translated by '*psyche*' which can mean in the NT 'life' and at other times 'inner life'. In modern Hebrew the word relates to psychology (*Ezra Rishona Nafshit* = Psychiatric First Aid)

d) **Man is also made up of RUAH** (spirit, breath). It meant a 'mysterious, awesome power, an invisible power'. The word can refer to the Spirit of God or the breath of a beast (thus overlapping with '*nefesh*'). As it was unseen, it came to be used of the unseen part of man, but it remained God's 'ruah' which he could withdraw anytime he wanted to. In later usage, the meanings 'human spirit, angelic or demonic spirit, and divine Spirit' predominate and are more distinct. Thus in the NT, the word '*pneuma*' (greek equivalent of 'ruah') is used more than 40 times to denote that dimension of human personality whereby relationship with God is possible. But we must remember that for the Hebrews, the visible and invisible parts of man were a unity and the NT still preserves this idea. It is probably accurate to say that the soul (gr. *psyche*) is the manifestation of the immaterial part of man towards the world, whereas spirit (gr. *pneuma*) is its manifestation towards God. In 1 Cor 2,14 we have a distinction drawn between natural and spiritual men. The unregenerate or soulish man (*psychikos*), is unable to appreciate God's revelation, but the regenerate or spiritual man (*pneumatikos*) is alive towards God. The two terms also designate types of behaviour: behaviour characteristic of an unregenerate man (and so inconsistent with a Christian profession) and that of a regenerate man.

e) **Man has a heart** (*lev* or *levav*), which refers to personality, inner life or character in general (Ex 9,14), to the emotions (2 Sam 14,1), to intellectual activities (1 Ki 3,9) and to purpose and will (Ex 7,23). This list does not correspond to our English usage. In the NT it can mean the whole inner life (i.e. mind, intellect and will: Rom 6,17, Mt 5,28), or the emotions (Rom 9,2; Jn 16,6). But other physical terms were also applied to the

inner life: liver (*kaved*: Lam 2,11) kidneys (*kēyalot*) or bowels (*meim*. Jer 4,19).

Man cannot regard his thoughts as detachable from himself and the Hebrews had a very clear conception of the unity of the inner and outer man.

f) **Man also has a mind** (gr. *nous*), a word which has a distinctive reference to the intellect. Sometimes however it has a moral connotation. The mind is an integrated part of man that cannot be neglected or separated from him (Rom 1,28, Ef 4,17; Tit 1,15). Hence, Paul can talk about a fleshly mind (Col 2,18).

g) **Man has a conscience** (gr. *syneidis*). Although the word does not occur in the OT, the idea is there (2 Sam 24,10; Psalm 51,4). It means essentially to pass judgement on a past action or thought. It is a kind of self-knowledge (*sun-oida*).

2. Varying interpretations of man's constitution

a) **The Greek view of human nature**: the Greek interest in man was psychological whereas the biblical interest was *religious*. The Greeks wanted to integrate man into their system of thinking (their total world view of things) whereas the Bible is concerned with *man's relationship to God*.

i. The Greek interest tended to be analytical while the biblical interest was *synthetic*. The Greeks tended to divide up human nature (for example, the soul was divided up into 3 parts). According to Plato, the soul had a rational, spiritual and appetitive part (corresponding to reason, volition and emotion), reason being the most important, for it linked man with the eternal world. Plato always regarded the body as inferior to the soul (the body was seen as the tomb of the soul). In Scripture however there is very much less precision in the definition of terms.

ii. The Greeks emphasised the intellect, whereas the Bible is concerned with the *will* of man. For Socrates, virtue was

knowledge: if a man knows what is good, he will do it. But the main problem in Scripture is man's rebellion against God. For the Greeks, the possession of light was the most important thing, whereas for the Bible, *obedience* to the light is the most important thing.

iii. The Greeks thought of personality as self-contained, but the Bible teaches that it is *open to the spiritual world*. The Greek laid much store on the freedom of the individual. Scripture recognises that the Spirit of God has access to the personality.

b) **The Hebrew view of human nature** The basic Hebrew concept is that man is a unity consisting of the outward man (body) which is visible, and the inward man (soul/spirit), which is invisible. The Hebrews did not possess a vocabulary of precise psychological terms. The terms used are popular, not technical. Moreover, we find that certain biblical terms overlap in meaning (eg. heart and soul).

c) **Dichotomy and trichotomy in Church History**: Even in the Early Church, there were differences on this question. The eastern Christians with their Greek platonic background favoured a trichotomist view, whereas the Latins with their stoic background were mostly dichotomists. Among the Latins (of which Tertullian is a good example) the tendency was to think of man as consisting of just body and soul. According to them, the soul even has a shape of its own! In Alexandria a trichotomist doctrine was taught by Clement who was heavily influenced by platonism. He regarded the spirit as higher than the soul, for he said: 'the spirit relates us to God, whereas the soul relates us to the world'.

d) **The trichotomist viewpoint**: The trichotomist viewpoint comes in two forms. The classic form and the spiritualist form. The classic form takes soul to mean: instincts, feelings, and spirit to mean reason. The spiritualist takes soul to mean

reason, will and feelings, and spirit to mean divine faculty, close to intuition (cf. T. Austin Sparks and Watchman Nee).

It would seem that the trichotomists impose on the Hebrew thought-forms a Greek interpretation which is foreign to the Bible. The tripartite conception of man originated in Greek philosophy, which held that the immaterial could only enter a relationship with the material through an intermediate substance, which they called the 'soul'.

Texts used by trichotomists to prove their case are:

i. 1 Cor 2 and Jude 19 those who are spiritual are those who have the Spirit of God, and not the spirit of the world. It must be God's Spirit that is being referred to.

ii. Hb 4.12: the style in this paragraph shows that the writer is using synonymous pairs of words: alive/ active; piercing/dividing; joints/marrow which refer to man's inner being. The author is not referring to division of any sort (of soul from spirit): a butcher does not divide between joint and marrow (both refer to the very deepest recesses of a physical body). Therefore soul and spirit are synonyms of this inner being.

iii. 1 Th 5.23: the use of three terms does not mean three parts of man (cf. Mk 12. 30). He means: every aspect of man, man in his totality. Paul is probably referring to the three dimensions of human life: communication, ongoing life, relation to the material universe.

Consequences of a trichotomist point of view: Trichotomists tend to regard the spirit as purer than the soul, and, when renewed, as free from sin and responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. This contradicted by the following passages: 2 Cor 7,1 or 1 Cor 7,34 where it is clearly implied that the spirit can be influenced by sin. Moreover, the soul worships God just as much as the spirit (Ps 25,1; Ps 103,1; Ps 146,1; Lk 1,46).

This is very close to the gnostic idea which maintained that the soul could not be influenced by the soul or the body. The trichotomist view can also result in a depreciation of the body

or of intellectual pursuits. The inference is that as everything is spiritually discerned, there is no need to go to Bible college etc.

e) **The dichotomist viewpoint**: It is difficult to hold that Scripture teaches an absolute distinction between soul and spirit. In fact the two expressions seem to be used interchangeably. In John 12,27 Jesus says: "Now is my soul troubled", whereas in a similar context in the next chapter John says that Jesus was "troubled in spirit" (Jn 13,21). In Luke 1,46-47 Mary says: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour" (an example of Hebrew parallelism in poetry). Those who have died are sometimes referred to as "spirits" (Hebr 12,23; 1 Peter 3,19) and sometimes as "souls" (Rev 6,9; 20,4). The expressions "body and soul" and "body and spirit" are clearly synonymous in the following passages: Mt 10,28; 1 Cor 7,34.

f) **Monism**: This is a more recent view which says that man cannot exist at all apart from a physical body and that when he dies, he ceases to exist, though he can be resurrected at a later date as whole person. According to this view the words soul and spirit are just another expression for the person himself or for the person's life. This is really the Hebrew view taken to an extreme.

g) **The biblical perspective** is essentially Hebrew. So why does Scripture use two words? The distinction between the two words would seem to be as follows: soul emphasises the distinctness of a person's conscious selfhood as such; spirit carries the nuance of the self's derivation from God, dependence on Him, and distinctness from the body as such. Where Scripture does distinguish between them, they are related to different functions, not parts, of the entity. In 1 Thess 5,23 it is doubtful whether Paul is really concerned to draw specific distinctions. Hebr 4,12 and Mk 12,30 indicate that what is really implied is totality, not an analytical statement.

The Bible therefore seems to teach a constitutional dichotomy but a functional trichotomy.

h) Concluding remarks: Human personality has many diverse manifestations, but the will is treated as the centre of the personality. Indeed, psychologists assure us that no act of will is possible without intellect and emotion. All are connected. Conscience is a special kind of knowledge, not a separate faculty. The mind can be just as well occupied with the things of earth as with the things of heaven. A human being constitutes a unity, and a man in the full biblical sense is incomplete without a body. Indeed we are essentially corporeal beings, unlike the angels. Thus man in the biblical perspective is a unity of body, mind and spirit, all of which are made in the image of God (not just the soul) and are therefore eternal.

C. MAN AND WOMAN

In the beginning God made mankind as man and woman. They were made to reflect God image, that is his character. Moreover we are told by the apostle Paul that Adam was created in the image of God, but that Eve was created in the image of Adam (1 Cor 11,7). She therefore shares the image of God, but at one remove, through him. It is significant that the second person of the Trinity became a man, not a woman, in order to reveal God to us. This means that man reflects God's character more adequately than woman does. This hierarchy consisting of God, man and woman, in that order, was established before sin entered this world, and has its outworkings today within marriage and within the church: men and woman are assigned different roles. The curse brought a distortion of these roles, not the introduction of new ones. In Christ we regain what we lost in Adam, but the hierarchical structure established by God as well as distinction between the sexes continues until the resurrection. After the resurrection the differences disappear.

The practical implications of this today is that wives must be subject to their husbands (recognise that the husband is the leader and defer to him) and husbands must love their wives (put themselves out for them).

Within the context of the church, women are not to assume a leadership role. Moreover a distinction in dress is to be maintained in church gatherings – this is the point of Paul's excursus on the subject of headgear (which was the chief distinguishing mark in those days).

Wives, be subject to your husbands; that is your Christian duty. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. (Col 3,18-19)

I do not permit women to teach or dictate to the men; they should keep quiet. For Adam was created first, and Eve afterwards; moreover it was not Adam who was deceived; it was the woman who, yielding to deception, fell into sin. (1 Tim 2,12-14)

HAMARTIOLOGY

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

1. The Fall of Man:

a. The origin of evil: Evil is essentially the perversion of what is good, that is, of God's creation. In our search for its origin, we can go no further back than the free choice of man, and, before that, the free choice of Satan. God took a risk in creating beings with a free will.

b. The nature of the Fall: The fruit of the tree which Adam was forbidden to eat was to give him the knowledge of good and evil. In the context of the passage, this appears to mean total knowledge and therefore total power, and therefore to become morally independent and so their own gods. The temptation was therefore to displace God and join Satan in his rebellion: it was high treason.

Eve (hebr. *Hava*) fell when she ignored the word of God (his command) and listened to Satan's lies. She then concentrated on what her sight told her. She ate the fruit and fell. The woman then encouraged her husband to eat. He is held responsible, because he listened to the voice of his wife: he should have decided for himself and his wife. Satan, by addressing himself to Eve, seeks to undermine the structure that God established.

The effects of sin are seen almost immediately in the strained attitude towards God: man hides himself. He has been running away from God ever since. The effects of sin are also seen during the interrogation which follows the crime: the man blames the woman (and God, for giving her to him) and the woman blames the snake. They all refuse to admit that they are wrong.

c. The results of the Fall:

- i. The relationship between God and man is no longer spontaneous and frank. Sentence of death is passed on man and man is cut off from God. Physical death and disease begin.
- ii. Man is caught up in power that is greater than he and which keeps in bondage. Man passes on a sinful nature to his descendants.
- iii. Man, having joined Satan in his rebellion, is guilty of treason and on the road that leads eventually to hell (total and irreparable banishment from God's presence).
- iv. Man and woman are punished in their basic activity: man's job now becomes a chore – it is no longer a joy. Woman is affected in the area of child-bearing. The verse which says that "the desire of woman shall be to her husband but that he will rule over her" (a state subsequent to the fall) really means: woman shall seek to rebel against her husband (contest his leadership), but that her husband shall tyrannise her (i.e. be a tyrant in the home). It is significant that the emphasis in NT teaching is on wives submitting to their husbands and husbands loving their wives (Col 3,18-19; Eph 5,22-23; Titus 2,5 and 1 Pet 3,1-7).
- v. Trust is a casualty. Relationships suffer. Man no longer believes God's word. He cannot be sure that his fellow man is telling the truth. There is distrust and rivalry between the sexes. Man loses control over his personal and family life.
- v. Sin becomes a disordering principle in society. It causes strife in families, tribes and nations. It leads to war.
- vi. Nature is affected: the result is infertile soil, bad weather, the law of the jungle among animals.
- vii. The snake (really a talking lizard) comes in for particular condemnation as a ally of Satan: henceforth it must crawl (eat dust).
- viii. Satan and his fallen angels become the rulers of the world, having usurped man's position by ruse. Henceforth man is subjected to their rule. Man has got the government he deserves. He elected Satan to power and now he cannot get him

out. Only the Messiah (Redeemer kinsman) can get him out and this involves a struggle (cf. Book of Revelation).

ix. Man is subject to the rule of law which, though a result of God's mercy in checking the progression of sin, is nevertheless also the result of sin: law, limited life-span, physical death.

With this comes accusation of conscience, sense of shame and fear of punishment.

x. Man is punished by becoming a slave of human religion (self-effort which involves and also idolatry). Idolatry is seen as a punishment inflicted on the nations for their disobedience. Israel has been redeemed from this to monotheism (cf. Dt 4,19).

2. The Biblical terminology

The Bible uses an extremely rich terminology to describe sin. It is a wandering or a turning aside from a path. It is an illness, a sore for which one searches in vain for balm (even in Gilead!). It is weakness, blindness, hardness. It is a stain which excludes a man from God's presence. It is a debt by which man places himself 'in the red' with God.

The most following Greek and Hebrew words are used to describe sin:-

a. *Hamartia* implies failure to attain a target. It is 'missing the mark' (Judges 20,16, Romans 3,23), 'a falling short of the target'. The Hebrew word is *het* which means sin, error or failure. When used with the Hebrew preposition 'L' (meaning 'towards') it means 'failure to come up to the expectations of a superior' and thus 'to offend a superior' (*hata* + *L*). In the New Testament it is used in a very general way to refer to the state of sin, habits of sin, acts of sin. In Romans 6-8 it is portrayed as a great king, lording it over the human race.

b. *Parabasis* means 'transgression, overstepping, tripping and falling (cf. skandalon), violation of the law'. It is the crossing of a forbidden line (James 2,10). It is a going aside or a deviation. In Hebrew, the word is '*avon*', which means a 'twisting or

bending of what is right'. The OT pictures man bent under the weight of his own sin (Psalm 32:5, 38:5).

c. *paraptoma* means 'trespass or offence' and also 'a line crossed by an offender'. The expression presupposes the existence of a law. In Hebrew the word is '*ashma*' (guilt).

d. *anomia* means iniquity or lawlessness, that is; a lack of conformity to the law (God's will and character). It is a violation of the law (I John 3,4). In Hebrew this word is translated by '*pesha*' and '*avon*' meaning a crime, an insult to God, and therefore revolt and rebellion. The expression '*psh + b*' is used of the throwing off of vassalage (2 Kings 1,1)

e. *adikia* means unrighteousness. It is that which is not straight or upright, that which does not conform to God's standard. (I John 5,17). In Hebrew the word is '*avel*' meaning perversity or unrighteousness.

f. *asebeia* means ungodliness and has a definite reference to God. It is that which is impious or irreverent, an insult (hybris) to the deity (Romans 1,18). In Hebrew it is translated by the word '*hattat*'.

3. The Biblical Conception of Sin

a). Sin is not simply a moral, but a religious term. It is automatically related to God.

Sin is a personal reaction against a personal God. Sin implies the existence of two parties. It is a word concerning relationships. It therefore implies rebellion, godlessness and enmity (Isaiah 1,2; Amos 1,2 – 3,6, Luke 19,4; Romans 1,18). It entails pride and self-centredness. Sin is not just a negative (the absence of good) ; it is an attitude of enmity against God. Sin expresses itself in the transgression of God's revealed will. The Gospel is therefore not only an entreaty to be reconciled with God, but also a command to do so.

b). The will of God was represented by His law, or by any command of God. Sin is therefore essentially lawlessness. The second table of the law (commandments 6-10) is just as much God's law as the first table (commandments 1-5). The law

shows us not how good we are but how far we have gone wrong or deviated from the right path. But the transgression of God's law is not always deliberate. The Old Testament sacrificial system made provision for sins committed by mistake.

c). Sin is centred in the will, but affects every part of the personality. But the will cannot be isolated; it is the person considered from one point of view. It is the person acting. Therefore sin affects the whole personality; the mind and emotions become warped (Romans 1,18-22). Sin affects even the sinning will, which develops a certain fixity of direction and so brings it into bondage (John 8,34, Romans 6,16; 7,14-25, 2 Peter 2,15). Therefore the assertion of free will without qualification is contrary to Scripture.

d). Sin is universal (I Kings 8,48; Psalm 14; Ps 53; Luke 11,13, Romans 1,8-10). This is also confirmed by experience. This universality of sin is explained by the doctrine of original sin.

e). Sin is an intruder and not proper to man as such. The incarnate Christ was human but not involved in personal sin.

f). According to Roman Catholic doctrine, there are degrees of sin (mortal and venial): mortal sin kills the life of the soul whereas venial sin does not. But Scripture makes no such distinction regarding the ultimate effects of sin. The soul that commits any kind of sin shall die, and there is only one remedy for sin: the atoning work of Christ, achieved once and for all. What the Roman Catholics confuse is the effect of sin in this life (in which God or the local church disciplines us according to the gravity of the fault) and its effect in the life to come (not purgatory, but hell). There are degrees of sinfulness related to degrees of light (Luke 12,42-48; John 19,11). More light means greater sin if this light is rejected. I John 5,16-18 is sometimes adduced to prove the distinction between mortal and venial sins, but there it probably refers to the sin against the Holy Spirit (committed by the Gnostics who never were real Christians in the first place). The reference in James 5,20

probably refers to physical death, which is the ultimate sanction which God uses against a Christian.

Thus we can conclude that sin is any lack of conformity to the law of God or any transgression of it. Or, it is failure, conscious or unconscious to conform to the will of God in deed, word or thought, a failure rooted in a rebellious attitude towards God, and inherited in man from Adam.

4) **Consequences of sin:** We have already seen in a previous section what the immediate consequences were for Adam and those involved in the historical fall. But what consequences have we inherited today? These come under three main headings: depravity, guilt and condemnation.

a) **Depravity:** This means a fallen nature with a bias towards evil. Not only is this our experience, if we are honest, but the Bible, in saying that we must all be born again, also testifies to this. Moreover, this depravity is total. By this is meant, not that all men are as bad as they could possibly be, but that the principle of corruption has infected every sphere of man's existence (Mk 10,21; Mt 23,23; Rom 2,14; Gen 15,16; 2 Tim 3,13). Man is caught in a downward vortex from which only God can rescue him. This sinful nature, which we inherit, is called the 'flesh'. It is a compulsive inner force inherited by man's fall, which expresses itself in general and specific forms of rebellion against God, His nature and purposes. It is a deadly enemy which is capable of completely defeating a believer and keeping him from pleasing God with a holy life. One of the reasons why the flesh (fallen human nature) is such a difficult enemy to handle is because of its close inner relationship to the believer's personality. The flesh is intimately intertwined with our mind, our will and our emotions, and, prior to conversion, it pretty much controls a man's inner life (Deut 6,4-5; Mt 22,35-38; 2 Tim 3,4; Rom 8,7; 7,18).

b) **Guilt:** to be guilty means to be in the wrong before the Law. God, who is the supreme judge, is in the right and we are in the

wrong. Therefore we can expect to experience the consequences of his negative reaction (wrath = to be in a state of enmity or war with God). Inner guilt manifests itself in damage to the personality (psychological problems) and also in decreasing sensitiveness of moral discernment and feeling.

c) **Condemnation** (penalty): The penalty (punishment) for sin is death: physical, spiritual and eternal separation. Physical death is regarded as a penalty for sin: Gen 2,17; 3,19; Num 16,29; 27,3; Ps 90,7-11, Is 38,17-18; Jn 8,44; Rom 5,12-17, 1 Pet 4,6, Rom 4,24-25). However, for the Christian, physical death is no longer considered a penalty (it has lost its sting), since Christ has endured this penalty. It is now a means by which he enters into fuller communion with Christ. The body, though not the spirit, sleeps until the resurrection day (2 Cor 5,8; Phil 1,21-23, 1 Thess 4,13-14).

Physical death is essentially the separation of the body/soul from the spirit, which is abnormal and only destined to be temporary.

Spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God, and thus something that the unregenerate experience here and now (Gen 2,7; Rom 5,21; Eph 2,1; Lk 15,32; Jn 5,24; 8,51).

Eternal death (what is called hell or the lake of fire) is the irrevocable and eternal separation of the person from God (Mt 25,41; 10,28; 2 Thess 1,9; Hebr 10,31; Rev 14,11). Strictly speaking, this does not occur until the last judgement.

5. Differing views on sin

Discussion of this question leads us on to a consideration of the wider issue of evil in the universe

a) **The Optimists** see evil as playing a positive role in the universe. They say essentially that there have to be contrasts in the universe. Unless there was evil in the universe, we could not have its opposite (good). It is a natural part of the world's composition. Behind the scenes, good and evil are really the

best of friends. Hinduism holds to this view. Most optimists are dualists. Hegel reconciled good and evil by his dialectic according to which evil is necessary in order to impell progress forward and upward. Marx interpreted evil as being the class conflict which produces revolutions that impell history forward.

b) **The Dualists** are content to record the permanent place of evil in the universe, without passing a value judgement on this. There is a perpetual battle going on between two eternal principles (good and evil forces).

c) **The Pessimists**. According to them, the world is intrinsically evil and absurd anyway. One example of this is Buddhism in which emptiness is the ideal and in which attachment to anything created is considered to be a pain. This is really a variation of gnosticism.

To this, the Scriptures oppose three contrasting theses:

I). Sin is totally evil and out of place in God's world. It should not be there and it is a scandal and affront to God. Eventually it will be totally eliminated. This can be seen by the extent of God's judgement on it.

II). Dualism is ruled out by a God who is totally sovereign, though He has chosen to stand back for a while to let man reap the fruits of his rebellion.

iii. God cannot be held accountable for evil. He is completely good and there is no dualism in Him, or as the Bible puts it: 'in him there is no darkness' (I John 1:5). cf. also James 1;13, Hebrews 1;12, Deut 3;24)

d) **Solutions proposed by Christian thinkers**

I) Origen and Augustine were neo-platonists and so optimists. They argued that because God's creatures are finite, this means that there is always the risk of evil. Indeed they cannot mature without an encounter with evil. Augustine argued that natural evil preserved the balance of nature. Moral evil is permitted by

God because he can use it to bring blessing. Teilhard de Chardin says evil was necessary for the evolutionary process to be able to function. Hegel and those influenced by him (Barth, Tillich and Moltmann) see evil as necessary in order for God to be able to achieve His mysterious aims.

II) According to others like C.S.Lewis, evil is a necessary concomitant of the liberty of man. A moral being has to be able to choose.

III) According to Luther and the Jansenists, evil is God's strange work. We cannot understand it; it is just there.

In conclusion we must stress that any satisfactory discussion of the problem of evil and sin must hold two seemingly contradictory truths in tension:

i). The awfulness of sin which is a scandal and an affront to God.

ii). The sovereignty of God.

Evil was not inevitable but once it came in God decreed to use it, for a limited time, to achieve some of His purposes. The Bible just presents us with the facts and takes us on from there. There are aspects of this question which our finite minds cannot understand.

Thus we can conclude that sin is any lack of conformity to the law of God or any transgression of it. It is anything that is inconsistent with the character of God. Or, it is failure, conscious or unconscious to conform to the will of God in deed, word or thought, a failure rooted in a rebellious attitude towards God, and inherited in man from Adam.

C. ORIGINAL SIN

1) **Definition**

a). It is called original because it is derived from the original root of the human race.

b). Because it is present in the life of every individual from the time of his birth and therefore cannot be regarded as the result of imitation.

c). Because it is the inward root of all actual sins that defile the life of man.

We should, however, guard against the mistake of thinking that the term in any way implies that the sin designated by it belongs to the original constitution of human nature before the Fall.

2) **The Biblical evidence** Genesis contains no actual doctrine of original sin but it is obvious from the narrative that man's nature changed after the Fall, for after it we witness the rapid degeneration of mankind. Genesis 5:3 tells us that Adam 'begat a son after his own image' which seems to imply 'his own depraved image'.

From Job 14:1-4, 15:14 and Psalm 51:5 we learn that man is 'sinful from his youth'. In Psalm 51 David is conscious not only of having committed a sin, but also of his sinful nature in general. Ephesians 2:3 says that: 'we were by nature children of wrath.'

In the OT we meet the concept of the punishment of children for the sin of one ancestor (Gen 20:7, Deut 28:45-59, 2 Sam 12:10). In 1 Chr 21:11 the recognised representative of the people is punished.

In Leviticus 4:3, the sin of a priest could bring guilt on the people as a whole. We also find the idea of the children inheriting sinful tendencies – children of murderers, of pride, sons of valour. All this links up with the idea of original sin.

In Romans 5:12-21 we read that certain results come on all men from Adam's sin: death and condemnation is brought upon all. Romans 5:19 says that by the offence of one were many made sinners. This phrase cannot be merely understood as implying a mere example (as Pelagius thought). It implies that the whole human race was involved (Rom 5:13-14). The fact that death has spread to the whole human race is proof of them being involved in Adam's sin, though before the Law was given, it was technically not classed as sin. Death is the lot of all mankind, not because each man has directly transgressed the

Law but because of original sin inherited from Adam, and because of our solidarity with Adam. Paul therefore states the fact of original sin but not the theory behind it: we inherit sin, we are punished and we are involved in death.

C. HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE DOCTRINE

1. The early Greek Church Fathers did admit that sin was transmitted in some way to Adam's descendants but did not elaborate. As none of them held to traducianism, they found it very difficult to work out what the connection was. However, as most of them were trichotomists, they held that sin was transmitted by the body.: the higher and rational side of human nature was left intact. The will is therefore not in bondage to sin. Origen, however, because of his theory of the pretemporal fall of all souls, came closest to the theory of original sin. The major Greek theologians seem to have considered that children were innocent. As they were mostly engaged in combatting gnostic determinism and pagan fatalism, they tended to swing in the opposite direction (i.e. emphasis on free will). Free will takes the initiative in regeneration. Though it begins the work of sanctification, it cannot complete it without divine aid.

2. The Latin Fathers on the other hand arrived at the doctrine much earlier. Irenaeus seems to have held it but it was Tertullian who first coined the phrase 'original sin'. It was essentially his traducianism that convinced him of this. For him, the propagation of the soul involved the propagation of sin. Cyprian carried on the same line of thinking, as did Ambrose and Hilary of Poitiers. But none of them believed in total depravity.

3. Augustine's View (also known as the realistic view). Augustine developed the doctrine, especially to combat Pelagius. According to him, sin is passed on by propagation, and this propagation of Adam's sin is at the same time a

punishment for his sin. As a punishment, Adam's posterity are born corrupt. They are also born guilty by imputation because the same nature that inhabited Adam also inhabits us. In Adam we sinned. We are all a chip of the old block. Augustine saw this corruption as manifested especially in sexual desire, which is in essence the desire to reproduce a sinful nature.

Romans 5:12 was therefore taken to mean that sin passed on to all men, because all sinned in Adam, their natural head. The concomitant of this view is that we are not capable of perfection in this life. The Augustinian view was held by Luther, Calvin and the Reformers (except Zwingli).

4. Pelagius was an Irish monk whose real name was Morgan who denied any connection between the sin of Adam and those of his posterity. He started with three presuppositions:

- a). That sinless perfectionism is possible.
- b). That traducianism is a heresy.
- c). He also thought it was unfair for God to punish people for sins they did not commit.

According to Pelagius, Adam's sin affected only himself, though he set a bad example which each generation tends to imitate sooner or later. It also brought death on the whole human race. He also believed that because every human soul is immediately created by God, it is innocent and as free as Adam originally was to choose good or evil. God only holds man accountable for sins that they actually commit. Some men have lived entirely sinless lives (Abel, John the Baptist, Socrates etc) but he did not go so far as to say that this could be achieved in complete independence from God.

5. The Medieval church rejected Pelagius and followed the direction taken by Augustine. Hugo St. Victor and Peter Lombard held that sexual desire stains the semen in the act of procreation, and that this stain in some way defiles the soul in its union with the body!

Medieval theologians believed that the guilt of Adam's sin was imputed to all his descendants. They believed that because of the sin of Adam, God's image in man became distorted and this incurs God's wrath. They believed that the pollution of Adam's sin is in some way passed on to his posterity but because they were not traducianists, they found it hard to explain how it happened.

6. The Reformers: According to Luther we are accounted guilty by God because of the indwelling sin inherited from Adam. Calvin held that since Adam was not only the progenitor but the root of the human race, all his descendants are born with a corrupt nature; and that both the guilt of Adam's sin and their own inborn corruption are imputed to them as sin.

7. The Federal or Covenant view It is also known as the immediate imputation view. This view was really developed by Theodore Beza who was Calvin's successor. It stressed the fact that there is an immediate imputation of Adam's guilt to those whom he represented as head of the covenant. Immediate imputation means that each individual at conception receives a corrupt nature directly from God as a punishment because of his association with Adam! This has become the classic calvinist view as opposed to the Lutheran one.

According to this view, God made Adam the representative of the race and entered into a covenant with him. God promised eternal life to him if he would obey, but death and a corrupt nature if he disobeyed. Adam disobeyed, and so God henceforth directly (hence the expression immediate imputation theory) creates each soul corrupt before putting it in a body! Romans 5:12 is thus taken to mean that we all sinned in the person of our representative.

This view is founded on creationism. It means that we are only linked to Adam judically but not physically. It has the advantage however of explaining how Jesus could be born

perfect and without the taint of sin. It also has the disadvantage of making God the direct creator of evil!

Socinians and Arminians went to the other extreme and both rejected the idea of imputation of Adam's sin to his descendants.

7. The Arminian view (also known as semi-pelagian view)

The Arminian view was born when disciples of Arminius reacted against disciples of Calvin (both of whom had gone well beyond what their respective masters had said). According to this view, all inherit a sinful tendency from Adam but they are not condemned for this. God gives by his Spirit, to each person sufficient grace at birth for them to choose good, so that, for all practical purposes, they are in the same position as Adam was before the Fall. Corruption of itself is not culpable: it only becomes so when it leads to conscious acts. Sin is not considered to be a principle but an act.

8. The mediate imputation view Placeus (Josué de la Place) of the school of Saumur in France, faced with the Arminian attack against Calvinism, retreated to what he thought was a more reasonable viewpoint. He agreed with the Arminians that it was absurd to impute Adam's sin to us, but he wanted to have his (Reformed) cake and eat it. He held to the idea of mediate or indirect imputation: because we inherit a sinful nature from Adam, we deserve to be treated as if we had committed the original offense. His view was condemned at the Reformed synod of Charenton in 1644.

The soul, created separately by God, becomes corrupt as soon as it is united with the body. This natural depravity is the only thing that God imputes to men but as a consequence, not as a penalty for Adam's sin. Thus Romans 5:12 is taken to mean that all sinned because they have a sinful nature.

To this view it can be objected that depravity becomes our misfortune and not the punishment for our sin. This ignores the federal view of our racial solidarity with Adam.

9. John Wesley was a moderate arminian. He made a distinction between sins of ignorance and wilful sins. In his doctrine of total sanctification, he conveniently plays down sins of ignorance. He went on to say that, through the second blessing experience, sin could be extracted like a bad tooth, resulting in a state of sinless perfectionism. The Salvation Army and Oswald Chambers also hold the classic Arminian view.

A variation of this view is held by the Congregationalists and Finney. They held that the will at birth has no moral character, so it does not have to be influenced by the Holy Spirit to choose good.

According to this view, Romans 5:12 means that all suffer the consequences of Adam's sin and all personally consent to their inborn sinfulness.

10. In modern liberal theology the doctrine of the transmission of sin to Adam's posterity is entirely discredited. It is seen just as man's animal inheritance and so not in itself sinful. We can detect here the heavy influence of evolutionist teaching.

What then are we to believe? What does Romans 5,12 mean anyway? It is not easy for us to follow Paul's rabbinical way of arguing. It appears to mean: It is because of the sin of Adam that we are punished for our sins. Expositors had put themselves on the horns of the following dilemma: either we are federally related to Adam or we are physically related. Which side they took tended to depend on whether they were creationists or traducianists. The Bible implies that it is not a question of either/or, but both/and. Paul's statement then contains two ideas: we are linked both federally and physically to Adam – the one follows from the other.

God implies in Genesis that that because of what Adam has done He (God) is going to punish both Adam and his descendants. This means that because we are related to Adam,

we are punished for his sin. We are both physically and legally linked to Adam. Legally here means: according to the law of family inheritance. This is not so far-fetched as it seems. A family ancestor could affect the rest of his descendants both physically and legally. He could have a child by a close relative whom he had not married. In this case, the descendants would be affected legally (by the stigma of illegitimacy and so could not inherit the family fortune) and physically by inheriting a mental problem. The punishment for Adam's sin is that we inherit a sinful nature and we are born cut off from God. It is not just a question of being born deprived: cut off from God and from the Holy Spirit. We have inherited a corrupt nature. Normally speaking, God confirms a man in his own sin, but here God confirms Adam's ancestors in Adam's sin. What we inherit is a fixity of the will, biased against God. The universality of death proves that we are all sons of Adam and as such all subject to condemnation.

CHRISTOLOGY

THE DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

A. CHRISTOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

In the OT we see Christ presented in His pre-incarnate life. Sometimes we see Him portrayed in terms of typology and sometimes set forth in predictive prophecy. Typologically He appears as the perfect Prophet, Priest and King to which all these (as yet imperfect) offices of the OT looked forward. We also find two sorts of predictions of Christ in the OT:

(a) those which start from a human being of whom it is predicted that He will come. These are the messianic prophecies prophesying the coming of a great Priest, a great King, a great Prophet.

(b) passages, which speak of a great future manifestation of God in person, as for instance in Ezekiel 34. God says that He is not going to simply send someone but that He will come Himself to do the job.

Christ is also predicted in phraseology: man was made in the image of God and yet no man ever showed the image of God as Christ did. Christ is also the wisdom of God incarnate and also the Word of God incarnate.

1. Christ Appears as the Angel of the Lord

This is obviously no ordinary angel, for he is identified with and distinguished from all other angels. He distinguishes Himself from God and yet also identifies himself with Him. The following evidence forces us to think of the angel of the Lord as a divine and not a created being.

Gen 16:7-14 He is a being called the angel of the Lord and yet Hagar calls Him the Lord (v.13 "Have I really seen God?...")

Gen 22:11-18 "I know you fear God" indicates distinction, and yet "you have not withheld your son from me" indicates identification with God Himself of the angel.

Gen 32:24-30 Jacob before his meeting with Esau, wrestles with a "man" until daybreak, and yet afterwards he calls the place Peniel, "for I have seen God." In Gen 48:15 ff, he refers back to the incident by saying "the angel who has redeemed me." Hosea 12:3-5, referring to the same incident says that Jacob strove with the angel and God spoke to him.

In Exodus 3:1-4 the angel of the Lord appears in the middle of a burning bush and yet it is God who speaks to Moses.

In Exodus 14:19, 24 God is spoken of as being in the pillar of cloud and the column of fire but so is the angel of the Lord, which suggests that the two are connected.

In Joshua 5:13-6:2 a "man" appears before Joshua (the commander of the Lord's army), but Joshua worships him and is not rebuked. He later says that the Lord spoke to him.

In Judges 13:3-28 the name of the angel of the Lord is call Wonderful which is the pre-incarnate name of Christ in Isaiah 9:6.

In Zechariah 3:1 ff The angel of the Lord is linked with the Lord who is linked with the Branch (messianic title).

In Zechariah 12:8 it is said that the descendants of David will lead them like the angel of the Lord, like God Himself.

In Malachi 3:1, the Hebrew suggests that the messenger and the Lord are the same person.

In Micah 5:2 we are told of the future ruler of Israel "whose goings forth have been of old", a phrase which may well refer to the pre-incarnate visits of Jesus to the world in the person of the angel of the Lord.

All these references tend to show that all these instances of the appearances of the angel of the Lord refer to appearances of the pre-incarnate Christ.

2. Christ Appears as the Perfect Prophet

The prophet, unlike the priest and the king, did not owe his office to genealogy; he had to receive a direct call from God. A prophet was essentially a person through whom God spoke, or whom God used to write the OT. Moses was thus the prophet of the OT par excellence (Deut 34:10, 18:9-22). In Deut 18:15, God said that He would send a prophet like Moses, and that the people were to obey him, and yet in Deut 34 the author remarks that this prophecy lacked historical fulfillment within the OT. The Jews were certainly expecting such a prophet; as the second Moses, he was to repeat the miracle of the manna (in this light, John 6:14 is most significant: surely this (ie Jesus) is the Prophet who was to come into the world). However, Acts 3:22-26 indicates the specific fulfillment of the prophecy.

In Matthew 17:5 (the account of the transfiguration) God the Father says in the presence of Moses and Elijah, "This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased. Listen to Him." This implies, as with any prophet, that His words were important. But God the Father also spoke through the whole life and character of Christ, which leads us on to the revelation in John 1:1-18. In Christ, the word, which had inspired the prophets throughout the OT, Himself becomes incarnate. He wasn't just

to share the word of God with others, but He was the Word. Christ's life (unlike that of the prophets, who were but men) in all its detail mirrored God's revelation. His life was full of truth as well as His words.

3. Christ Appears as the Perfect Priest

Under mosaic law, the priestly functions were restricted to the descendants of Aaron, and these functions were chiefly sacrificial. But the priest also had an intercessory function; on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest went before God on behalf of the whole people. The priests also had instructional functions: the levitical priests lived scattered throughout the people, to whom they interpreted the Law (God's Revelation) and whom they instructed. But the priesthood was always a God-ward office, for the priest stood between God and man, facing man to speak God's word to him, but also facing God in order to represent man. The priest was chosen by God, even though his ministry was to represent people before Him. The priestly group was headed by the High Priest whose task it was to represent the people on the great day of atonement. All this refers to the levitical or Aaronic priesthood, but one person is mentioned in the OT who is quite outside this system: Melchizedek in Genesis 14. He suddenly appears to greet and bless Abraham after his victory over the four kings. There is no record of his genealogy and yet he is described as a priest of the Most High God. This same figure is recorded in the prediction of Psalm 110 and is thus a type of Messiah. Moreover, in this Psalm 110 there is a complete fusion of this kinship and his priesthood (cf v4). The Messiah is said to be a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 6:20-7:28). In the NT other vocabulary is employed to describe Christ which is distinctly priestly (cf Lk 22:32, Jn 17, Rm 8:34). In I John 2:1 Christ is described as our "advocate" with the Father, which is a priestly term referring to his intercession for us. Thus Christ stands for us before the Father, represents us and intercedes for us.

4. Christ Appears as the Perfect King

In Deut 17:14 ff the kingly ideal is set out for us. It is to be a constitutional monarch, but the constitution is given from above (from God) and not imposed from beneath. The king had to be chosen by God. Every king had to be a Jew – no foreigners were allowed to occupy the post. In Israel, the king had 3 chief functions:

(a) capitan or war leader, but always under the ultimate leadership of God

(b) he was the shepherd of the people, which indicates a pastoral concern for their welfare

(c) he was supreme judge before God: the ultimate human authority in legal system.

David was presented in the OT as the best of the kings. In the book of Kings, David is treated as a kind of standard by which all the other kings were judged; it is said of each king that he either did or didn't walk in all the ways of David. Yet, David himself was imperfect, so even he was only an approximate standard of kingship. The perfect embodiment of kingship was looked forward to – a perfect version of David.

The OT points forward to the King who is to come and fulfill that expectation. Genesis 49:10, refers to a king of the line of Judah: "until he comes to whom it (the sceptre) belongs." This is a messianic prophecy which implies that the Davidic line of kings were really only the trustees of a kingship which rightly belongs to Jesus. Furthermore, "to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (plural), which implies that he is also to be the world rule. A similar reference is found in Ezekiel 21:24-27

"until He comes whose right it is, and to him I will give it" (ie the high priest's turban and the king's crown).

There are many OT passages which predict the coming of the perfect King:

II Samuel 7 is very important in this respect and constitutes the foundation of the OT hope of the coming king. God says that He will build a house (a royal line) for David. This He does in the Messiah. The house of David then is to be eternally secure because of the Messiah (who is eternal – God) in his line. (cf Ps 2, 45, 72, 89, 110, Is 7:13 ff, 9:6 ff, 11:1-10, 32:1-8). Isaiah prophesied in the reign of 4 or 5 kings, many of whom left much to be desired, and to him God reveals, appropriately enough, the perfect king of the future. Other references to the coming perfect king are as follows:

Jeremiah 23:5-8, 30:9, 33:14-26

Ezekiel 34:23-31, 37:15-28

Micah 5:2-5, Zechariah 3:8 ff 9:9ff

Some of these passages have a double reference, first to the king of the time when the prophecy was made but second, by extension, to the Messiah himself.

5. Christ is seen as the Perfect Servant

Prophets, priests and kings were all regarded as servants, to serve the people of God. However, in the OT one particular servant transcends all of them. He appears in the Servant Songs of Isaiah (chapters 42, 49, 50, 52:13-53:12, 61). At first examination it is not clear to whom these prophecies refer. It could be the people of Israel, for they are sometimes referred to as a servant. Some of the Jews interpreted it in this way (especially after the time of Christ!), but as one looks at the series, one can see how impossible this interpretation is. In

Isaiah 43 the servant is called Israel and yet distinguished from Israel. When we read all the passages, we are driven to the conclusion that they are referring to an individual.

He is the one who sums up in Himself God's desires and plans for Israel. He is the embodiment of God's purposes for that nation. He also sums up within Himself the three major offices within Israel, prophet (Is 49:2) in that he speaks for God, priest (Is 53 and 52:15) in that he suffers as representative Israel, and King (Isaiah 52:13, 53:12). The theme of anointing unites these three: the priest and the king were anointed, and there are occasional references to the anointing of prophets. The Messiah is the only person who combines all three offices in himself.

6. Christ is portrayed as the Righteous Man

The Messiah is the only perfectly righteous man. All the godly men of the OT were but imperfect representations of Him. Hebrews 10:6-8 applies the words of Psalm 40 to the Messiah as one who perfectly fulfilled God's will. Psalm 1 gives a picture of godliness which never found perfect fulfillment until Jesus came.

7. Christ is seen as the Son of Man

This is of course a messianic title which contemplates the Messiah's relation to Israel and also to mankind. A man in the OT was sometimes called a son of man, but the Messiah is the Son of Man.

Jesus is given many titles involving the term "son of" in the NT.

Son of Mary (in relation to his family), Son of David (in relation to the royal tribe of Judah), son of Abraham (in relation

to the people of Israel), son of man (in relation to all mankind), son of God (in relation to God).

In Genesis 3:15 we see how the serpent (Satan) is to be overcome through one who is human. But Jesus used the title with specific reference to Daniel 7:13 ff which identifies Him with the coming Messiah – a superhuman and transcendent person. he is in human form yet coming from above in the glory of the clouds (Mt 26:64).

As Son of man, Jesus is also seen in the NT epistles as the head of the new humanity (Rom 5, 1 Cor 15).

8. Christ seen as Son of God

In the OT various persons are referred to by this term. Angels – probably because sonship implies likeness (Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7, Heb 1:4). In Hebrews, however, the writer draws a careful distinction between the angels and Christ. In Exodus 4:22 it refers to Israel to whom God stands in filial relationship (cf also Hosea 11:1). The Messiah is therefore the embodiment of what God always intended Israel to be. It also refers to Christ as king (II Sam 7, Psalm 2:7, 89:27) where it has messianic overtones. Kings were occasionally called sons of God, but the term was used very sparingly.

Christ is above all, the Son of God – He stands in a unique relationship to the Father.

9. Christ is the Lord

It is clear from many references in the OT that the Messiah was going to be God incarnate (cf Is 7:13-14 "Emmanuel, God with us"). In Isaiah 9:6, the names given suggest deity. cf also Jeremiah 23:5-6, Zech 13:7. Compare Isaiah 6 with John

12:37-41. Isaiah says that he saw the Lord high and lifted up. John says that Isaiah saw Christ.

B. CHRISTOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

I. THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

A. ATTRIBUTES THAT ARE ASCRIBED TO HIM AND MANIFESTED BY HIM:

1. **Eternity**: It is repeatedly asserted that he was in existence before creation of any sort began (Jn 1:1, 1:15, 8:58). Jesus uses language which implies his preexistence. He speaks of being sent into the world as though he had his origin outside it (Jn 10:36, 3:17). He also says that he came down from (lit: out of) heaven (Jn 6:33,51, 6:38). He says of himself that he is from above (8:23, 3:13). He refers to the glory which he shared with the Father before the existence of the world (Jn 17:5,24). In one sense, the ascension of Jesus was but his return to his former home. There are two significant prepositions used in Jn 16:27-8. In vs. 28 we read 'I came out of (ek) the Father and came into the world, whereas in vs. 27 we have the preposition 'para' = from alongside, from the side of. He claimed to be looking forward to a continued life after death but the form of the claim is unusual for it expresses in a unique manner a resumption of something which he had known before (Jn 17:7). It is almost a divine home sickness (Jn 7:33, 13:3, 14:12, 16:10,17, 17:11,12, 6:62).

2. **Omnipresence**: Although he chose to limit himself during his earthly existence, he said that (after his glorification), he would also be present through the Holy Spirit, on earth as well as in heaven. Being outside time, he is nevertheless parallel to the time space universe at every point (Mt 18:20, 28:20).

During his ministry he possessed supernatural knowledge about people (Jn 1:49, 4:29).

3. **Omnipotence:** During his earthly ministry he had complete power over nature, the weather, demons and diseases. Jesus had but to say the word and it happened. His miracles were cited as proof of his ministry (Jn 5:36, 10:25,38)

4. **Immutability:** In the OT God's name (JHWH) meant the Eternal One. In several passages in the NT he is associated with the Father in the eternal and abiding qualities which only the Godhead possesses. (Hebr 13:8, 1:12, Mt 28:20, Eph 1:2-3).

B. THE OFFICES OF DEITY

He is both the Creator and the Upholder of the universe (Hebr 1:10, Jn 1:3, Col 1:16-17, Hebr 1:3) In Colossians 1:15-17 Christ is referred to as the first-born of all creation. The OT gives us the clue as to what this phrase really means: the first-born had special privileges and was regarded as the head of the family when the father was absent. Paul probably uses this expression to say that Christ is supreme: he has preeminence over all things. The verse goes on to say that by him and for him all things (not all other things) were created. It is difficult to see how the universe could have been created by and for any person less than divine. In Revelation 3:14 Jesus is referred to as the beginning (arche) of God's creation, an expression which refers to him being the origin or source (comp. architect) of God's creation.

C. JESUS EXERCISED THE PREROGATIVES OF DEITY

He forgave sin; he will raise the dead and he will execute judgement (Jn 5:25-7). Jesus worked and spoke in a way that was the prerogative of God alone. This becomes clear if we compare the OT background of phrases which Jesus used, and which in the OT refer to God alone. Jesus not only raised the

dead but gave spiritual as well as physical life (Jn 5:21-28, 5:40). This spiritual life is of an eternal nature. He claimed to be able to raise himself from the dead (Jn 2:19-19-21, 10:17-18). He promised to meet the deepest needs of people (Jn 4:13-14, 6:27,35, 7:37-8, 8:35ff, 14:27, 15:11, 16:33). He promised to answer prayer (and also speaks of God the Father answering prayer). He promised to send the Divine Spirit (Jn 14:14, 15:26). He taught divine truth on his own authority (Jn 3:3,5). He claimed to have authority over all flesh (i.e. over all God's creation, all life, Jn 17:2). He linked faith in himself with faith in God (Jn 12:44, 14:1). No OT teacher, however great, ever said anything like that. He claimed to be the light of God that had come into the world – he did not claim merely to bring light like the OT prophets, but to be himself the light (Jn 8:12, 9:5).

Jesus claimed to forgive sins (Mk 2:5). The scribes were correct in saying that only God can forgive sins but they were not prepared to accept the inference of this.

Jesus claimed to be the Lord of the Sabbath: that is to be the one who has the right to decide what is allowed to go on on the Sabbath and what is not. This is a claim that no ordinary teacher would make and points to the deity of Jesus (Mk 2:27). Jesus claimed to be the only one who can introduce anyone to the Father, and bring him into God's family (Mt 11:25-30, Lk 10:21 ff).

D. JESUS IS IDENTIFIED WITH THE GOD OF THE OT

Things that in the OT are said of JHWH are said of Christ in the NT. He is creator (Ps 102:24-27, Hebr 1:10-12). His glory was seen by Isaiah (Is 6:1, Jn 12:41).

E. THE NAMES OF JESUS IMPLY DIVINITY

In Jn 8:56-8 Jesus uses the emphatic form of the verb 'to be' (I AM) and in so doing he is obviously claiming more than mere pre-existence, for the Jews regarded what he said as tantamount to a claim to deity. It is in fact the name of God in the OT,

especially in Exodus 3:14. Several times, Jesus uses the phrase I AM without a complement (Jn 8:24, 18:4 ff). When he says 'I am he' (Jn 18:5) all the greek says is 'I AM'. It is significant that these words cause the Jews to fall to the ground. Jesus also uses the phrase I AM with many complements, perhaps as a development of the meaning in Exodus 3:14, as if God is now showing something of what He is: I AM the door, I AM the Good Shepherd, I AM the way, the truth, the life.

In Revelation there are a number of titles that Jesus quite clearly shares with the Father (Rev 22:13). He is Immanuel (God is with us) in Is 7:14, Mt 1:22-23). He is called the Logos (OT: *memra*) ; the incarnation of the wisdom of God as seen in Proverbs 8. In fact the whole of the first three verses of John 1 are written with this passage in mind.

Jesus is called Lord (the OT word for God) in Mt 4:7, 11:25, Acts 17:25, Rev 4:8). Jesus is called the Son of God in a special sense (Jn 10:36, 5:18,23). Jesus is called God. John 1:1 says that the Logos (*Memra*) was God (emphatic position in the sentence)...and *God* was the word (Jn 1:18, 20:28, Titus 2:13, Heb 1:8, 1 Jn 5:20).

F. HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE FATHER PROVES HIS DEITY

Jesus and the Father are put on the same level in the baptismal formula (Mt 28:19). The disciples are to baptise in the Name (singular), not 'names', those who believe in Jesus as Messiah. The suggestion is that all three Persons are bound up in the one Name. In Acts 2:38 all three Persons are associated in salvation. The apostolic blessing associates all three names of the Godhead (1 Cor 1:3, 2 Cor 13:13, Eph 1:2). We are also told that Jesus in his exaltation has been given the Name which is above every Name, which is the Name of God. The Name as another word for God in the OT. This means that the rights of Jesus have been restored to him as God. (Phil 2,9).

We also find the use of the terms 'Father' and 'Son' in association. They are repeatedly used together as if both are

unique terms: *the Father*, *the Son*. Jesus uses these terms as if he had a special right above all others to do so (Jn 2:16, 6:27). In a post-resurrection appearance he makes a distinction between his relationship to the Father and that of others (Jn 20:17) : my Father and their Father, my God and their God, as if, in the nature of the case, the two relationships to God could never be the same.

Jesus also claimed equality of nature with the Father (Jn 8:16-19, 10:30ff). In the context they are one in power. God is almighty, so that if Jesus also has that power, he must be almighty and thus God. This also implies a oneness of nature (Jn 12:45, 14:7-11, 15:23-24, 16:3). In Jn 14:23 Jesus says of a man that *we* will come in and take *our* abode in him, which is a clear claim to equality with the Father.

Jesus is the glory of God: the outshining His Person (Hebr 1:3) and the image of God (Col 1:15) in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily (Col 2:9). In the OT the word glory was used of God himself: a man is inseparable from his intrinsic worth.

Jesus is also God's dwelling-place among men. In the Prologue of John's Gospel we are told that 'the word became flesh and dwelt among us (lit: pitched his tent among us. He is Immanuel = God with us, God dwelling among us. Jesus referred to his body as 'the temple' = the place where God dwells among men. In Revelation 21:22 we read that: 'I did not see a temple in the city, because its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.'

Jesus and the Father act together (Jn 14:23, 2 Thess 2:16-17) and we as his adopted children sustain the same relationship to both. Whatever the Father has, is Christ's (Jn 15:15, 17:10).

G. DIVINE WORSHIP IS GIVEN TO JESUS AND ACCEPTED BY HIM

(Lk 5:8, Mt 14:33, 15:25, 28:9, 1 Cor 1:2). Since the OT (Ex 34:14) and Christ himself (Mt 4:10) declare that God only is to be worshipped, and both ordinary men and angels refused the

worship offered to them (Acts 10:25-6, Rev 19:10, 22:8-9), for Christ to accept it would have been blasphemy if He were not God. Further, the Bible does not merely inform us that Christ was worshipped but they ask us to worship Him (Jn 5:23, Hebr 1:6).

H. CHRIST'S OWN CONSCIOUSNESS AND CLAIMS PROVE HIS DIVINITY

He was conscious of a unique relationship with the Father (Lk 2:49-50, Mt 3:17). Jesus claimed to be superior to Moses and to be able to give the new law (Mt 5:21-28) as well as to be the Lord of the sabbath (Mk 2:28). He thus claimed to radically reform the two pillars of judaism (the Law and the Sabbath). He requested that prayer be offered on his authority (Jn 16:23-4). He claimed that he and the Father were one = they acted in complete agreement (Jn 10:30, 17:11, 14:9) and that he himself was *the* Son of God.

He also referred to himself as 'something greater than the Temple' (the place where God dwells in the OT), something greater than Jonah (a claim to be greater than the prophets) and greater than Solomon (the most majestic of kings) Mt 12:6. In the parable of the wicked tenants, Jesus is likened to the son who is sent by the Father when all else has failed. He is the Father's last word.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Moses is seen as the servant in God's house (i.e. the covenant community) whereas Jesus is seen as the Son and architect of the covenant community.

I. JESUS CLAIMS TO BE THE DIVINE MESSIAH

Many came and asked Jesus questions as he taught in the Temple in an effort to trap him, but at the end of the day Jesus himself asked a question: he challenges the current estimate concerning the true identity of the Messiah. They say that he is the Son of David, but Jesus points out that this is an inadequate view of the Messiah, as he is said to be David's Lord as well. Nothing less than a divine Person can fulfil this role. Jesus

quotes from Psalm 110, which was to be the focal point of much future apostolic exegesis. It is clear that the OT predicted a divine Messiah.

Jesus acknowledged his messiahship in reply to the question of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:25-9), and he allowed Martha to address him as Messiah (Jn 11:27). He makes use of his messianic title, Son of Man, in the Gospel of John as he does in the synoptic Gospels. In Jn 3:14 he links it with suffering, and in 6:53,62 he links it with glory. Jn 1:51 is full of language reminiscent of the story of Jacob (the ladder between earth and heaven) implying that he is God who has come down from heaven to reveal God the Father to men.

In the OT the deity of the Messiah appears to have been taught (Isaiah 9:6), yet the Jews seem to have been blind to it. Jesus uses the title Son of God (which was applied to kings in the OT) not as an office but as descriptive of his person. The relationship of Jesus to God as God's Son is clearly shown in Jn 10:30-39. Jn 11:4 treats the glory of God and the glory of the Son of God as the same thing.

In Jn 5:17-18 the Jews interpret the teaching of Jesus about being the Son of God as being a claim to deity. Jesus does not refute this claim or conclusion at all.

During his trial, Jesus replies that he is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Son of Man. This is the only time that Jesus clearly claims to be Messiah in public, though he does so in private elsewhere.

J. JESUS CLAIMS TO BE THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

In Lk 4:14-30 we see how Jesus reads Isaiah 61 in the synagogue and then interprets it in terms of himself. There is no good reason for separating Isaiah 61 from the other Servant songs: thus Jesus is claiming identification with the Servant of the Lord as presented in the other chapters of Isaiah.

Peter in Acts 2-5 and 10 preaches 5 sermons that speak of Jesus as the Servant of the Lord. Jesus is identified not only as a

prophet, but as the Great Prophet (messianic title eventually adopted by Muhammed) foretold by Moses (Jn 3:22). He is referred to as the Holy and Righteous One, which is again a messianic title (Acts 3:14, 4:30, 7:52). He is God's Servant (Acts 8:32-35) which is an allusion to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. He is referred to as the Pioneer of Life (*archegos* – sometimes translated prince or author of life – Acts 5:31, Hebr 2:10, 12:2, a word that can either mean 'source' or 'leader'. Thus the author of life really means the source of life (Acts 3:15) and our leader (Acts 5:31) who has preceded us into heaven (which is the guarantee that we shall follow him to the same place).

K. JESUS IS IDENTIFIED WITH JHWH

Peter maintains that Jesus is Lord (Acts 2:36, 7:59, 9:17) and Lord of everything (Acts 10:36). The word used is the Greek word *Kurios* which is the word used for the Lord (JHWH) in the Septuagint. Peter implies that Jesus shares the very throne of God (Acts 5:31).

The Gospels are thus united in presenting a Jesus who is at the same time truly God and truly man: in each Gospel there is abundant evidence of the deity and humanity of Jesus. There are really four pictures given of Jesus in the Four Gospels: each writer makes his own selection of material according to the particular aim that he has in writing. The pictures represent a difference of emphasis rather than a stark contrast. The Early Church would never have accepted the Gospel of John if they had considered that John had presented a different picture. In the Gospel of John we see a greater emphasis on the sort of teaching which Jesus gave in private to his disciples, and in that context it is to be expected that he would say more about his divine sonship than elsewhere. Each of the four evangelists uses the same names, titles and descriptions of Jesus, such as Son of Man, Son of God, Messiah and Lord.

L. The WITNESS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION:

John portrays Christ at his first appearance with all the attributes of deity (1,12 ff); he is the Son of Man of Daniel's vision, but has assumed the snow-white hair of the Ancient of Days (the Eternal One), as well as the eyes, the voice and the countenance of the Lord of glory. Like the throned figure before whom the elders lay their crowns, he is the Lord of Lords and king of kings (17,14; 19,16). He can lay claim to God's own title, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (22,13; cf. 1,8; 2,8; 21,6). The heavenly choir addresses to Him the same words as they have addressed to the Creator: "You are worthy", and unites the Lamb in worship with him who sits on the throne (v. 7-9). Thereafter the name of God and of the Lamb are regularly coupled (7,10; 14,4; 21,22) until at the last the very throne of heaven is called "the throne of God and of the Lamb".

II. THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

A. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

1. Jesus had a human birth (Gal 4:4, Mt 1:18-2:12, Lk 1:30-38, 2:1-10). His descent is traced back through David to Adam (Mt 1:1, Rom 1:3, Lk 3:23-38). The genealogy in Matthew traces his royal line (probably via Joseph, his legal father) whereas the genealogy in Luke probably traces it back through Mary, Heli being her father, and Joseph being reckoned as her father's son through marriage. His birth was in direct fulfillment of the promise made to Eve (Gen 3:15) and to Ahaz (Is 7:14).
2. He had a human development (Lk 2:40) and at each stage in this development he was perfect. He obviously had training in a godly home and regularly went to the synagogue.
3. He had a human body (Hebr 10:5, 2:14). He had a soul (Jn 12:27) meaning a 'thought life'. He also had a spirit (Mk 2:8, 8:12, Lk 23:46). He had a human (though unfallen) nature
4. He had a human name: Jesus (*Jeshua*, aramaic form of Jehoshua or Joshua).

5. He had the sinless infirmities of a human nature: He was tired (John 4:6), hungry (Mt 4:2), thirsty (Jn 19:28), he slept, was tempted, taught and performed miracles.

6. He is repeatedly called a man (Jn 1:30, Acts 2:22, Jn 8:57). Even after his resurrection he had the appearance of a man (Jn 20:15, 21:4-5). Today he reigns in glory as a man (1 Tim 2:5) and he will rule over the world as a king of David's line.

B. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

1. **Consciousness of a special relationship to God:** In the account of the first Passover which Jesus attended (Lk 2,41-52), we have a glimpse of the childhood of Jesus. In this we see his early consciousness of a special relationship with God. For instance, no Jew would ever speak of God as his Father; the use of this expression by Jesus was unique (vs. 49). The same passage also provides an example of the human obedience of Jesus (vs. 51).

2. **The life of Jesus was without sin.** This is testified to by other people (Mt 27,4,24; Lk 23,47; Acts 3,14; 2 Cor 5,21; Hebr 4,15; 1 Pet 2,22-23; 1 Jn 3,5). There is also the testimony of his own conscience (Jn 8,29,46; 14,30). The testimony of his Father (Mt 3,17; 17,5).

3. **He fulfilled all biblical standards of holiness:** he kept the decalogue perfectly (Ex 20, fulfilling the spirit as well as the letter of the Law (Mt 5,21-47). Only he fulfilled the ideal of the righteous man in the OT (Psalm 1). All the fruits of the Spirit were supremely seen in Him (Mt 22,37-39; Gal 5,22). Temptation was a reality to him: if it were not, we could derive no comfort from texts like Hebr 2,18; 4,15. He overcame temptation (which was addressed to his human nature) because his Spirit (God) was always in perfect control of his human nature. To overcome these temptations, we must remember that he did not employ power that is not available to us through the Holy Spirit (Lk 4,1-13; Lk 22,28; Mt 16,23).

C. INCARNATION

1. The mystery of the incarnation: The following points should be made about the incarnation:

- a). The incarnation involved the emptying (*kenosis*) of himself, which means that he renounced his rights and privileges, but not his essential nature (God).
- b). Prior to the incarnation, Jesus possessed one nature, but as a result of the incarnation he came to possess two natures. This means that he was in no sense a man before his incarnation. His human nature only developed personality in union with his divine nature, which occurred at conception.
- c). His human nature had no personality of its own apart from its union with His divine nature; at no stage did his human nature develop privately from his divine nature.
- d). During his life on earth, he exercised his divine attributes only as the Father willed: he never exercised them independently of that will.
- e). In his exaltation (glorification) he resumed his position of equality with the Father, but he did not thereby relinquish his humanity. His humanity remains as long as he has to mediate: to represent us before God as our high priest and to reign on earth after his return.

2. The virgin birth:

- a). Strictly speaking, the birth of Jesus was like that of any other child, but it was the manner of his conception which was miraculous: he had no human father.

The virgin birth refers to the method by which the incarnation took place. Technically speaking, a woman supplies 23 chromosomes and a man supplies another 23 to make up a total of 46. Presumably the Holy Spirit fashioned the necessary genes and chromosomes that could be the vehicle of Christ's body in uniting with those in the body of the virgin.

The virgin birth has nothing to do with the immaculate conception which implies that (Mary herself having been conceived without sin) gave birth to the baby in such a way that

it left her medically still a virgin. It is significant that this doctrine first appeared in Protevangelium of James (a gnostic writing of the late second century). It is basically a gnostic idea that says that sexual relations defile a person. This is countered by two verses: Lk 2,23 and Mt 1,25.

b). Is 7,14 is the prophecy from which the idea derives. The word used there (*alma*) and translated by virgin (*parthenos*) in the Septuagint, does not specifically mean virgin (as does another hebrew word: *bētula*), but a young woman of marriagable age but not yet married, which amounts to the same thing as far as antiquity is concerned.

c). The Gospels speak of Joseph as the 'father' of Jesus, but this does not have to mean any more than that he performed the functions which accrue to a normal earthly father. Mark (Mk 6,3) refers to Jesus as being 'son of Mary' which is a very odd expression (usually the father is mentioned). Both Mt and Lk record the virgin birth. Mk and Jn do not record this period of his life, because they start with his ministry. However, one early manuscript of Jn 1,13 (the Verona Latin codex) has the reading: the Word...who was born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. But no Greek MS has this reading. John implies in 8,24 that scandalous rumours circulated about the manner of Jesus' birth. The Jews protest that: 'We (unlike you) are not illegitimate children'. The inference is that they thought Jesus illegitimate, because of the different manner of his birth.

Paul does not mention the virgin birth directly, because he is more interested in the incarnation as such, rather than the method employed to reach this end.

d). Faced with the docetic heresy which denied the incarnation, the apostle John laid special emphasis on the reality of Christ's humanity (his weariness – Jn 4,6; thirst – 4,7; 19,28; tears – 11,33, reality of his death – 19,34). He denounced a denial of the incarnation as hitting at the root of the Gospel, for Jesus had to become a man to redeem us and to continue to be an

effective mediator (1 Jn 4,2f; 5,6; 2,22-25; 4,1-6; 5,5-12; 2 Jn 7.9).

3. His suffering and death: In all four accounts of the crucifixion, we see that he experienced real suffering. Phil 2,8 shows us how far Jesus was prepared to go in his sufferings and humiliation

4. His descent into the world of the dead: he went there because:

- i) he had to experience all the stages of human experience, but unlike the rest, he did not have to stay there (Mt 12,40; Acts 2,31-2).
- ii) to release the righteous of the OT to take them with him to heaven (Eph 4,8-9 and 1 Peter 4,6, which probably refers to the righteous dead who had to respond positively to the Gospel before going to heaven).
- iii) to announce (note verb used: keruxo and not evangelizo) his victory to the powers of darkness (1 Pet 3,19-20; Jude 6).

5. His resurrection: the cross and the resurrection together constitute one composite event which results in our justification (Rom 4,25; 1 Cor 15,17).

It is a Trinitarian act.

- a) We learn that the Father raised Christ from the dead (Rom 6,4; Gal 1,1; Eph 1,20; Eph 1,20; 1 Pet 1,3; Acts 2,24)
- b) It is also portrayed as an act of Christ himself (John 2,19-21; Jn 10,17-18; Acts 17,3)
- c) By implication, the Holy Spirit is also said to have raised Christ (Rom 8,11).

It was clearly a miraculous event: only God could produce it, as he is the only one outside the vicious circle of sin and death.

It was a physical event, so it cannot be interpreted as the continuation of the influence of Christ or as the survival of the soul. The Hebrew conception of the resurrection involves the resurrection of the body. But it was not a mere coming back to

life (as was the case with Lazarus) , for it involved a new, transformed body able to appear and disappear at will, and not subject to death. After the ascension it became a glorified body, so that when people saw it, they fainted from fear, as in the OT.

6. **The significance of the resurrection** was as follows:

- a) Work of Christ on the cross was accepted by God
- b) It vindicated the claims of Christ made during his lifetime to be the Messiah, the Son of God. He had repeatedly prophesied that this would happen. It set the seal on his ministry, much as fulfilled prophecy set the seal on the ministry of the prophets of the OT.
- c) It makes possible the sending of the Spirit, for the Messiah had to be glorified and enthroned first.
- d) It is the pledge (and prototype) of our own resurrection.

7. **Evidence of the resurrection**: Jesus was buried on Friday evening in the tomb of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, who took him down from the cross after the Roman guard had certified that he was dead. Crucified bodies were normally left unburied but this shows that Jesus enjoyed support in influential circles. However, on Sunday morning, all four gospels assert that the tomb was empty. They go on to talk about about eleven separate encounters with the risen Jesus in the period immediately following that Sunday morning. The varied and quite unexpected character of these appearances and the different groups involved (from single individuals to a group of more than 500) make it impossible to dismiss them as hallucinations, and the difficulty of fitting them all together (as with accounts of finding the empty tomb) make it the more unlikely that there was any deliberate collusion in perpetuating a well-intentioned deception.

- a) On these grounds Christians have concluded that Jesus rose bodily from the tomb, with a body which, while set free from some of the limitations of time and space (he could pass

through closed doors, and appear and disappear suddenly) was solidly physical, able to break bread and eat, and to be mistaken for a gardener or fellow traveller.

b) That Jesus really did rise from the dead is best seen by considering the shortcomings of alternative possibilities. One is that Jesus only appeared to die, that he lapsed into a coma and later revived temporarily. But his death is indicated by the brutal beating that he endured, by the six hours hanging on the cross, by the thrusting through of his abdomen with a spear and the resultant gushing out of watery fluid (probably pericardial fluid) and blood, by his partial embalming and being wrapped up in grave clothes, and finally by his being sealed in a tomb. It would require almost as much credulity to believe that Jesus did not die as it requires faith to believe he rose from the dead.

c) Others suggest that the disciples stole the corpse of Jesus. But to do so they would have had to overpower the Roman guards, an unlikely event, or bribed them, equally unlikely, since the guards knew they would be subject to capital punishment for failing to protect the body of Jesus from theft. That the graveclothes lay undisturbed (not even unwrapped!) and the turban still twirled up and set to one side militates against a hasty removal of the corpse by theft. Thieves do not usually take time to tidy up! Here they would probably have taken the body with its wrappings.

d) The surprise, even disbelief, of the disciples at the resurrection of Jesus shows that they did not steal his corpse, unless their surprise and unbelief were fabricated to make the story look convincing. But fabrication would have been a little too clever on the part of the early Christians. Besides, it is unlikely that stories would have been invented in which the apostles are pictured as unbelievers in the resurrection, for the early church soon began to revere them.

e) Yet others think the disciples experienced hallucinations. But the New Testament gives evidence of Jesus' appearances in different places at different times to different parties numbering from one to over five hundred. In 1 Corinthians Paul challenges doubters to ask the eyewitnesses! The appearances were too many and too varied to have been hallucinations. Furthermore, the disciples were psychologically unprepared for hallucinations, since they did not expect Jesus to rise, and actually disbelieved the first report that he had risen from the dead. All the unbelieving Jews would have had to do when the report of Jesus' resurrection began to be circulated was to produce the body. But they never did!

f) The same objection militates against the suggestion that the disciples came to the wrong tomb. Why did the Jews fail to produce the corpse of Jesus from the right tomb? They must have known where it was, for they had induced Pilate to put a guard there.

g) Still other objectors explain that the disciples modelled the account of Jesus' resurrection after the dying and rising of gods in pagan mythology. But the differences are far greater than the similarities. The matter-of-fact style of reporting in the Gospels contrasts sharply with the fantasies that abound in the myths.

And accounts of the resurrection appear immediately in the early church, without the lengthy interim required for the evolution of detailed mythology. Paul's triumphant statement that most of the more than 500 people who saw the risen Jesus at the same time and place were still alive, and therefore could be asked, is unbelievably audacious if the whole story was the result of mythological development.

Something unique must have made the Jewish disciples change their day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday. Either they were deceived – then the unbelieving Jews could have squashed the Christian movement by producing the corpse of Jesus – or they foisted a hoax on the world – then it is

psychologically incredible that they willingly suffered torture and death for what they knew to be false. It is also inconceivable for the ancient world that the fabricators of such a story would have made women the first witnesses of the risen Messiah. One does not have to treat the New Testament as inspired by God to feel the force of the historical evidences for the resurrection of Jesus. The gospel accounts must be explained even when they are not regarded as divinely authoritative. Making up one's mind beforehand that such a thing could not have happened is the real obstacle to faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

8) His ascension and glorification: this marks the messianic enthronement of Jesus. It is the beginning of his messianic reign which will be openly manifested when he returns. It also marks the beginning of his high-priestly ministry on our behalf.

9) His return: will result in the completion of salvation for believers, in the form of the resurrection (salvation of the body). It will also mean his direct, visible, reign on earth. Events associated with his return also show him acting as executor of God's judgements (the wrath of the Lamb; he opens the seals that precipitate the end of Satan's reign), as well as judge (adjudicator) of the lives of believers and unbelievers.

D. DIVERGENT VIEWS:

1) The Ebionites: denied the divinity of Christ because of their one-sided monotheism which they inherited from Judaism. They were the successors to the Judaizers of the time of Paul. All they believed was that Christ had been given supernatural powers at his baptism. According to them, he was elected Son of God at his baptism when he was united with the eternal Christ who is higher than the archangels, but not divine. This later became known as the adoptianist heresy (a form of dynamic monarchianism).

2) The Gnostics: found it impossible to accept the idea of the incarnation, because they believed matter to be inherently evil. The docetists denied that the Logos inhabited a real body: it only looked (lat. doceo) like a body. Others said that he had a real body but denied that it was material. The Cerinthians believed that the man Jesus and the divine Messiah were two separate people. They believed that Christ was a spirit or power that descended on Jesus at his baptism but left him on the cross.

3) The Arians denied the divinity of Christ. Their point of departure was very probably gnostic: they wanted to lower the Logos to a non-divine status so that it could be combined with the (evil) body without any problem. So they lowered Jesus to the status of a perfect creature or honorary god. According to them, Jesus was at one stage created.

Arianism is essentially a reaction against the inadequacies of Alexandrine theology, which were based on platonism. However, the reaction was also inadequate because it was based on yet another philosophy alien to Christianity, aristotelianism.

Origen and other orthodox theologians before him had said that the Trinity had come into being when the Father brought forth his Word and his Spirit. This event had supposedly taken place at the beginning of creation, when God the Father set out to make the universe with the aid of his 'two hands'. Origen had also taught that Jesus the Son of God was subordinate to his Father in heaven as well as on earth.

Arius had trained at the theological school of Antioch. Antioch was at that time also one of the greatest centres of Aristotelian philosophy. From Aristotle, Arius learned that a difference of name implies a difference of substance. As the word Son is different from the word Father, the two persons cannot be of exactly the same substance, no more than an apple is of the same substance as a tree. Christ was divine, but his divinity was only partial and derivative. Moreover, when this divine creature entered the human race, he took the place of the soul

of the man Jesus. As Jesus had struggles in his soul, and as God is without change, it cannot have been God that indwelt him but a lesser creature. Arius backed up his belief by a number of texts from Scripture, including Proverbs 8,22 (Septuagint translation) and Colossians 1,15; Mt 28,18; Mk 13,32; Lk 18,19; Jn 5,19; 14,28; 1 Cor 15,28.

Arius accused his bishop, Alexander, of sabellianism, which was admittedly a weak point of Alexandrine theology.

Although Arius was later opposed by Athanasius, Athanasius also had his weak points: he defended Christ's divinity on the assumption that the essence of Christianity is the divinisation of the believer: only God can divinise anyone. Besides this, he was never quite sure whether Jesus had a human soul or not. A disciple of Athanasius, Apollinarius, said that in Jesus the divine reason (Logos) took the place of a human soul.

Arian sympathizers ruled the Christian empire for 43 of the 56 years that separated the Council of Nicaea from the Council of Constantinople in 381. This was initially made possible because of the influence arianism on the sister of Constantine I and then on his son and successor Constans I and finally on the emperor Valens.

4) The Apollinarians: They believed that the Logos only inhabited the mind of Christ: his soul and body were purely human. This is not a real incarnation.

5) The Nestorians: tended to stress the two natures of Christ as two entities that did not intermingle (he was almost a split personality). However, it must be remembered that almost all we know of Nestorius's views have come down to us through his arch-enemy, Cyril of Alexandria. Nestorius felt obliged to stress the separateness of the two natures of Christ in order to avoid saying that Mary was the mother of God (Theotokos): she was only the mother of his human nature).

6) The monophysites: went to the other extreme by saying that Jesus only had one nature (divine) of which Mary was the mother. The expression "put on flesh" meant that his human nature was almost a covering (a camouflage) of the true divine

nature. Cyril of Alexandria was inclined towards monophysitism, and this had a fatal effect on his theology. Once again, monophysitism had its roots in gnosticism which was so prevalent in Alexandria.

7) The Reformation period: While the Reformers remain orthodox in their christology, heresy is found in the ranks of the anabaptists. Melchior Hoffmann has a docetic view of the body of Christ: it was a heavenly body which passed through Mary like water passing along an aquaduct (i.e. he owed nothing to Mary)! Menno Simons was also influenced by this view. The rationalists go even further in the wrong direction: Servetus has a pantheistic theology. Socinius marks a return to adoptianism. If there is any difference between the two reformers, Luther and Calvin, it is that Luther is closer to the Alexandrine School whereas Calvin is closer to the Antiochene school. Luther virtually believes in a divine body of Christ that has the property of omnipresence. That is how he justifies his view on the real bodily presence of Christ at the eucharist. Luther also has a tendency towards sabellianism (modalism) which makes it easy to say that Mary is the mother of God or that God is dead. Luther maintained that the human nature of Jesus received the attributes of divinity such as omniscience and omnipresence. It is not by chance that Lutherans accused Calvinists of being Nestorians while Calvinists accused Lutherans of being monophysites.

8) Catholic doctrine: The cult of the Virgin Mary (and the saints) is in effect an implicit denial of the humanity of Christ, for it effectively denies him his role as high priest who is both God and man. Catholic doctrine views Mary as the architypal mother-figure. This suggests that just as any mother has great influence with her son, so Mary is in an ideal position to bring our prayers to Jesus. The NT contains no scrap of evidence for such claims. It reveals Mary's honoured role as bearer of the Saviour, but repeatedly emphasises how limited this role was. At Cana she needed a gentle rebuke: a reminder that he, the Son of God, could not be subject to her authority. Indeed, when

it was suggested that she might have special access to him, Jesus firmly set her in her place as one among his other disciples. When a woman wanted to accord Mary special honour, Jesus firmly put her on the same level as any other Christian who does God's will (Mt 12,48-49, Lk 11,27-28). There is no need of a human mediatrix, for Jesus shared our humanity and is totally accessible to us (Hebr 4,15-16). The Mary of Rome is not the Mary of the Gospels. Rome's Mary originated in the pagan goddess of the mediterranean world, who, in the fourth century, found a home in the church as it was beginning its long compromise with the world. The very titles of the Mother goddess, such as Star of the Sea (Stella Maris) or 'Our Lady' have continued. Even the familiar picture of the Madonna and Child have their pagan roots in the Egyptian representation of the goddess Isis and Horus on her knee. A process started in the last century which has since been growing momentum whereby the attributes of Christ have been transferred to Mary: the immaculate conception (1854), the ascension (assumption) of Mary 1950, Mother of the Church (Christ is the Lord of the Church), co-mediatrix with Christ. The advent of feminist theology has further strengthened this trend.

9) The modern period: The modern period is dominated by the influence of non-christian philosophies upon christology. Whereas the pietist movement held in balance experience as well as orthodox belief, subsequent liberal pietist theologians (like Schleiermacher) dispensed with the orthodox belief and concentrated on the experience. This tendency was further accentuated by the emergence of existentialism and of higher criticism which doubted any verifiable basis for the life and teaching of Christ. Hegel takes up the idea that Christ had to empty himself of his divine attributes in order to become an authentic human being. This later developed into the kenosis theory. This is the opposite of monophysitism and thus an extreme form of Antiochene theology. Ritschl accused kenotists of being socinians.

It is no coincidence that most German and Swiss theology reflects the weaknesses of Lutheran theology, especially as it developed after the death of Luther. In reacting against the monophysite tendencies of Luther, most modern theologians arrived at the concept of Jesus as a mere man. This links up with the nominalist philosophy (which was essentially humanist) of the later Middle Ages which had such an effect on Luther. The Lutheran reformation has proved to be theologically inadequate. It is rare to find a modern theologian who will admit that Jesus is fully God, the Second Person of the Trinity.

10. **The orthodox Christian view** states that: in the one Person, Jesus Christ, there are two natures, a human nature and a divine nature, each in its completeness and integrity, and these two natures are organically and indissolubly united, yet so that no third nature is formed thereby.
- 11.

SOTERIOLOGY

DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Introduction

The preparations for the coming of God's salvation is seen in the OT in the series of promises linked to covenants that God made with various people at various times. A covenant can be defined as a contract that is concluded between God and certain individuals in order to limit the effects of sin and to bring salvation in the broadest sense. Since these conditions did not prevail before the Fall, it is speculative to apply the term to anything that God may have said to Adam and Eve. Besides the Bible does not mention the word covenant in this context.

A. THE COVENANTS

After the fall of man, God is not content to leave things as they are. He makes a promise that He will provide a Saviour who will one day come and do battle with Satan. He will win, but at the cost of his life. Satan will be dealt a mortal blow and it is implied that as a result, the consequences of the fall will be reversed. Moreover it is stated that he will be of the line of Eve and therefore he will be a man. This promise is contained in what is called the Protevangelium in Gen 3:15. It seems clear that Eve was conscious of this promise because after the death of Abel, she names his replacement Seth (the anointed one). One can see from this that a future covenant is anticipated. The early chapters of Genesis place much emphasis on the continuation of the godly line (that will eventually lead to the Messiah: the promised Deliverer). The 10 mentioned before and the 10 mentioned after the Flood are all singled out because of their godly lives (Gen 3:15) and therefore of their election.

1. Noah

There is definite covenant made with Noah as a representative of the humanity that survived the Flood. In it God promises to limit the effects of the fall. There will never again be a Flood: the seasons are assured and so is relative fertility: law is established to check the effects of sin (Gen 9:1-17).

Like subsequent covenants, it is based on a promise by God to have mercy and to save. It is sealed by a sacrifice, to which God adds his seal: in this case, the rainbow. It is not a pact between equals. God takes the initiative and binds Himself by the promises that He makes.

2. Abraham

God establishes a covenant with Abraham, the ancestor of the chosen People of which God's seal is the circumcision. Israel is the chosen nation because of its ancestors (Abraham and his children according to the promise). Its election depends on God who does not go back on His choice. This choice cannot be compromised by the disobedience of the nation to the Sinai covenant. God promises three things to Abraham:

- (a) To make his descendants into a powerful nation (this is fulfilled at the time of the Exodus)
- (b) to give that nation the land of Israel for ever (this happened at the Exodus) and is still valid.
- (c) the Messiah would come from his descendants and be a blessing to the world. Once again this covenant is sealed by a sacrifice (Gen 12.1-3, 15:12-21).

3. The Nation of Israel under Moses

Typical vocabulary associated with this type of covenant was as follows: *ahav* = to love, *hesed* = covenant love or covenant solidarity, *tova* = goodness or friendship, *shalom* = covenantal peace or covenantal prosperity, and *yada* = to serve faithfully in accordance with the covenant.

The seal of this covenant was the tablets of the law. This covenant was unlike the others in that it was provisional, anticipating the time when the Messiah would come and fulfill the promise of the Messiah made to Abraham (Gal 3:19-21). On obedience to this Law depended not the election of Israel but its enjoyment of God's blessing. It is really a ratification, on a national scale, of the promise made to Abraham.

Like a king that has rescued a lesser nation from slavery, God concludes a treaty or alliance with his vassals. They will be punished if they are unfaithful. He rescued the nation because of the previous promise made to Abraham. The aim of the law was to keep the people intact, to serve as a witness to God's standards to other peoples, and to educate the people, in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. Paul says that the Law was their guardian to lead them to Christ. It showed them, among other things, their need of salvation (Ex 20, Gal 3:24). So the Sinaitic covenant was very much an open-ended affair. It was preparatory and incomplete.

The law was meant to be provisional until the coming of the Messiah, so that they could put their faith in Him and receive the promised Holy Spirit, but the Jews had made the law an end in itself, and after the exile (where there was no temple) had evolved system of salvation according to merit, without reference to sacrifice.

The system was not administered directly by God but by angels which Paul refers to as the "elemental spirits of the universe".

He also implies that although sin was forgiven under this covenant, it merely resulted in a stay of execution during the lifetime of the average Israelite and that after death "the book was thrown at him." Only in Christ is the "bond that was outstanding against us with its legal demands cancelled" (Col 2,14).

The Davidic covenant has to be seen within the context of the Sinai covenant, of which it is a further extension. It became necessary with the development of a new historical situation. The Israelite king was now the mediator between the Lord and His people. A covenant with this king thus became a necessity. According to 2 Sam 7 God will be a father for David's son and the king will be a son for God. We find a parallel in Hittite vassal treaties where we find that the sons of the faithful vassal would reign eternally on this throne. In spite of the failure of Israel and of the Davidic dynasty, this promise is finally fulfilled in the Messiah.

4. Spiritual Israel

This is the NT sealed by the blood of the Messiah. The seal or sign is the Holy spirit in the heart of the believer (the inward circumcision, not made with hands). This covenant is the fulfillment of the one made to Abraham and to his spiritual descendants. Both in Jeremiah and Ezekiel we find passages looking forward to it (Jer 31:31-34, Ez 36:26, 39:29). Only those Jews who trust in the Messiah will be saved (Zech 12:9-13:1, Mt 1:21, Rom 11:25-26).

5. The World

It also appears that during the Millenium, God will make a covenant with the world at large, on the same basis as the one concluded between God and Israel at Sinai. This would explain why there is Temple worship and sacrifices during the

millennium period (Ez 40-48, Rev 21:24-27). The aim of this covenant is presumably to make the nations aware of their sin and lead them to faith in the Messiah. As in the OT, there will be penalties for those who disobey (Zech 14:18).

6. **Ultimately there will only be the community of the redeemed:** those who benefit from the covenant made between the Messiah and His people (Rev 21:1-8). Only they will inherit the world to come. This shows that the covenant concluded by the Messiah is the most important of all, and the ultimate factor upon which our eternal destiny hinges.

B.DOCTRINE OF SALVATION: THE WORK OF CHRIST

B. THE DOCTRINE IN THE SCRIPTURES

1. The Old Testament Background

a) The Sacrificial System

I) Before Sinai

Although the sacrificial system was introduced in the context of the Sinaitic covenant, we read of sacrifices being offered through the book of Genesis: in connection with Adam and with Cain (tacit) and explicitly whenever a covenant was made. Special mention must also be made of the attempted sacrifice of Isaac, and also of the Passover sacrifice, which last predated the Sinaitic covenant.

II) At Mt Sinai

At Mt Sinai the nation of Israel received the Law, obedience to which resulted in blessing and continued fellowship with God. Details regarding how God wanted to be worshipped were

given at the same time. The system of sacrifices was laid down by God as a means of restoring broken fellowship (caused by sin or ritual impurity) as an expression of worship and to assure ceremonial purity in worship. Like the Law, they were not a means of eternal salvation. The men of faith of the OT (the Remnant) were saved on the same basis as us. The future sacrifice of the Messiah was reckoned to their account.

III) The different types of sacrifice

There were five main types of offering:

i) Burnt offering (heb. *zevach shēlamim*), the sacrifice of well-being or shared offering. There were three main types of peace offering (specific thanksgiving, general thanksgiving and the taking of a vow). Part of the victim was burnt and half eaten by the worshippers. It symbolised fellowship between man and God and man and man.

ii) Cereal offering (heb. *minha*) symbolised consecration of work to God.

iii) Guilt offering (heb. *asham*) means an offering made as a reparation for having stolen something. In addition monetary restitution had to be made. This is symbolic of atonement.

iv) Sin offering (heb. *hattat*) was made for the sins of the nation or of an individual. In Hebrew the word "hattat" can also mean "sin". Hence Christ became sin (= a sin offering) who knew no sin – 2 Cor 5:21. This is the type of sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross and which is commemorated in the Lord's Supper.

v) On the Day of Atonement, which occurred once a year, this sacrifice took a special form. The High Priest entered the most holy place in the Temple. He first had to offer a sacrifice for

himself, for he was a sinner. Then he offered a sacrifice for the whole people. For this he employed two goats. One of the goats was killed and the other one was sent away into the desert. The first goat symbolised the atonement itself (the cost) whereas the second symbolised the result of the atonement (the removal of sin).

IV) The importance of blood

In all these sacrifices, the shedding of blood was involved, either in the main sacrifice (if it was for sin) or in a preliminary ritual. It reminded the worshipper of his original sin, which had to be atoned for by the shedding of blood. The elements involved in blood sacrifice were:

(i) propitiation (of God) which the turning away of his anger (the state of enmity existing between two persons, resulting in punishment)

(ii) expiation (of sin) which meant the removal of sins. The atonement embraces both these concepts

(iii) The principle of substitution. The sinner had to lay his hand on the animal to be slaughtered, as a sign of identification with it, and at the same time had to confess his sin

(iv) It was God who provided the sacrifice for the atonement. Man had to accept God's way of reconciliation with himself (cf Lev 17:11).

V) The advantages of the sacrificial system

(i) It was a vivid experience, guaranteed to be remembered by the sinner – his sin had cost the life of an innocent animal

(ii) Sin was shown not to be restricted to conscious acts. The individual might not realise he had sinned, but others could point it out to him. This showed the depth of sin

(iii) Man had to come to God on God's terms.

(iv) It showed that God desires fellowship with himself.

VI) The limitations of the system

i) Like the law, it was a provisional system that was to be valid until the Messiah should come. In itself, the blood of animals had no value to make atonement, but only the value that God agreed to put on it for a limited time

ii) The system did not cover sins of deliberate and conscious rebellion against God, like adultery, idolatry, murder and blasphemy, all of which excluded a person from the covenant community and carried the death penalty

iii) The system enabled the sinner to escape temporal punishment (ie physical death) but only until the next sin was committed. In other words, they could not secure an eternal salvation, and therefore had to be repeated.

The Sacrifice of Jesus of course does away with all these limitations.

b) OT institutions pointing to the work of the Messiah

Redemption terminology is used in the following cases in the OT:

I). Legal substitution on the basis of family relationship. In Is 40-66 it is used to proclaim the Lord as the liberator (*goel*) of his people. It is also used in reference to the redemption of family members. The redeemer (*goel*) buys back (*gaal*) his

relative who has been sold into slavery (Lv 25,47-49), or buys back his lost property (Lv 25,25). He marries the widow without children (Ruth 3,13) or avenges a relative (in which case he is called the redeemer of blood – Nu 35). In each case he has done what the other is not in a position to do: there is a legal substitution on the basis of family relationship.

II). The price paid to deliver someone from the death penalty. The root meaning of the verb used (*pada*) is to exchange for a ransom. In the OT we see the need for the redemption of the first-born (Ex 13,12, Nu 3,40; 18,15-17) and the liberation which the Lord performs (Ps 130,7). This is because the first-born belong to God and so, legally, should be sacrificed to Him. But, because human sacrifice is abhorrent to God, He pays the price so that they can remain alive, but they are thereby His possession and so must consecrate themselves to His service.

The ransom paid to save one's life is also the meaning of the capitation tax which the Israelites had to pay if a census was carried out (Ex 30,12-16). This was because a census could only be taken if the sanctuary tax was paid, in order to cover for their lives that had become forfeit, because taking a census implied lack of faith in God. In the NT Jesus implies that this tax has been paid for the sons of the kingdom who are now exempt (Mt 17,24-27).

c) Prophecies concerning the Suffering Servant: in the light of the NT these can be seen as referring to the Messiah. The servant songs are found in chp. 42, 49, 50, 52 and 53 of the book of Isaiah. As the chapters progress, the note of suffering becomes stronger and utterly dominates the fourth servant song where we find the language of substitution being employed – the language of animal sacrifice is applied to a person.

2) Our Lord's Teaching

His death was "essential". Necessity is implied but also deliberate choice: "I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it up again" (Jn 10:17-18). All this power suggests that the Cross was in His mind throughout His ministry. As early on as Mark 2:18 we are told that the day will come when the bridegroom (Jesus) will be taken away (or; snatched away) from them, and then they shall fast (Mk 2:20). After Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, Christ begins systematically to instruct his disciples because He knows that his time is short. His coming sacrificial death was for him something particularly dreadful – a baptism, a cup that he must drink to the dregs (Mk 10:38-39), Jn 12:27, Ps 42:7, 69:1-3, 75:8, Is 51:17 (where we find the figure of baptism as a judgement)). Thus in His death, divine predestination and human responsibility are conjoined: necessity (Mk 14:25 & 41, Jn 7:30, 13:1, 17:1), and yet human responsibility Mk 14.21, Jn 19:11).

In His teaching, Christ made clear that His death was to be on behalf of others (Jn 10:11-18, 15:13, Mk 10:45, 14:24, Jn 6:51). In Mark 10:45 there is a clear reference to a substitutionary death. This is further confirmed by His use of terms like blood and covenant in connection with His death. The purpose of his sacrificial death is to effect a relationship between God and man, but for this to become valid for the individual, there must be faith (a personal commitment to Jesus upon recognition of the meaning of His death – the end of all self-merit and the acceptance of a substitute).

3. The Primitive Christian Preaching and Teaching

This must be read against the background of the OT. The Early Church adopted an approach to the significance of His death, which had been learnt from Jesus Himself. This is particularly striking of the sermons and epistles of Peter, in which we find:

(a) **a tremendous emphasis on the resurrection**; it is the Cross and the Resurrection that constitute the Gospel (Good News about Jesus)

(b) **the Cross is seen as a divine act** and yet also a crime for which humanity is held accountable. The same nature which indwelt those who demanded the crucifixion, dwells also in us. We would do the same if we were put in the same position.

A frequent theme in Peter's sermons is that of the Suffering Servant (Acts 3:13-14, 2:27). I Pet 2:21-25, which was written later on in Peter's life, is really kind of inspired meditation on the Servant songs of Isaiah in the light of later facts. The sufferings of Jesus are seen as the Messiah suffering for the sins of His people. This is remarkable because this was the one aspect of Jesus' teaching to which Peter had previously objected.

4. The Teaching of Paul

The teaching of Paul on this subject is profound and many-sided. For him, the Cross was the heart of the Gospel (I Cor 1:18, 2:2). He speaks of it as having been foreshadowed (I Cor 15:3, Eph 5:2, I Cor 5:7-8, Acts 17:2). It was propitiatory (Rom 3:25) serving to turn away the wrath of God (Rom 1:18) blazing out against sin. It was a sacrifice divinely provided (Gal 3:10-14 II Cor 5:21). The Cross is also seen as substitutionary. He speaks of it in sacrificial terms (Rom 8:3, Eph 5:2). The technical term "Christ died for sin" is used 50 times in the Septuagint to mean "for a sin offering" or "as a sin offering". In I Timothy 2:6 His death is referred to as "a substitutionary ransom instead of". The same idea comes out strongly in II Cor 5:21. The Cross is also seen as a justifying work. Paul uses the term "to justify" frequently. It means to acquit or to declare righteous (i.e. right with God) and is essentially legal terminology. It indicates a change in legal standing. II Cor 5:21

expresses a number of factors together: "He (God) made Him (Jesus) to be sin (propitiation), for our sake (substitution)". In Him we become the righteousness of God (justification). The Cross of Christ is also seen as being redemptive: it indicates the deliverance from bondage – the bondage of sin (the power of sin, rather than guilt is in view here). It is redemption from sin (Titus 2:14), from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13, 4:5, 5:1), from this present evil age (Gal 1:4), eventually (at the resurrection) from the very presence of sin (Rom 8:23 refers to the redemption of our bodies). The cost of redemption is also made very clear by Paul (I Tim 2:6) He gave Himself a ransom for all. It was effected by His blood (Acts 20:28). The price of our redemption is His blood (Eph 1:7). The Cross also reconciles us with God (Rom 5:6-11, II Cor 5:18-21, Col 1:20-22, Eph 2:11-18). It reconciles us by the ending of enmity between God and man, by the intervention of a third party, and by the consequent bringing of peace (whereas God's wrath was upon him before: Rom 5:10, 8:7, Col 1:21, Phil 3:8-9). Reconciliation is something accomplished and then presented to man for his repentance and faith. The Cross of Christ is also revelatory. It reveals the hideousness of man's sin (it put Jesus on the Cross), but also God's grace. It reveals God's love (II Cor 5:14, Gal 2:20) for man who is lost and condemned by his sin and rebellion. It reveals God's righteousness; there was no other way to pay the infinite price of sin. God cannot ignore sin or reconcile man with Himself without the blood sacrifice of His Only Son; an infinite Person (Jesus, Son of God) had to pay an infinite price (the shedding of His blood which has infinite value) for the infinite consequence of man's sin (he is made in the image of God). It reveals that Christ is the only representative that God will accept on our behalf (Rom 3.25, Acts 4:12).

5. The Epistle to the Hebrews

is completely devoted to the theme of expounding the significance of the Cross; his sacrifice is viewed against the background of the OT system of sacrifices. Christ combines in Himself so many diverse elements from the OT. He is the suffering servant (9:28) of Isaiah 53; He is the Redeemer (9:15) His sacrifice seals a new covenant (9:15-22): He is viewed as Prophet, Priest and King.

There is much emphasis on Christ's priestly office: the writer shows that His office as a priest is a valid one. He is appointed by God (Heb 5:1, 4:6). As a true priest, He is intimately related to those for whom He acts (Heb 2:17, 5:2). His incarnation and identification with man was made with a view to priesthood and to subsequent atonement. The Jew would immediately raise a problem: a priest needs sympathetic identity with man. The most fundamental thing about a priest in the OT was that he had to be of the tribe of Levi and of the clan of Aaron. But the author to the Hebrews says that this was not necessarily so: the Aaronic priesthood was not the only one to be seen in the OT – there is another, that of Melchizedek. The whole point of Melchizedek's priesthood was that it should stand outside the Aaronic priesthood. The priesthood of Melchizedek was not only different to that of Aaron but also superior to it.

The priestly work of Christ involved sacrifice – the sacrifice of Himself as the only acceptable one to God. He was a sacrifice that was God-given (Heb 10:5-7). He was a perfect sacrifice: Jesus Himself was perfect (i.e. unblemished) in the moral and spiritual sense (9:14). His sacrifice was a blood sacrifice, that is, a sacrifice related to sin (1:3, 2:17, 7:27, 9:26). He (the priest) offered the sacrifice (Himself). It was a unique sacrifice in that it was made once and for all at one point in time (7:27, 8:3, 9:12-14, 25-28, 10:10). It was a voluntary sacrifice (10:1-10, 9:11-14). It was a perfectly effective sacrifice – it was not provisional but perfect and final, so that it puts us into immediate and eternal relationship with God. Jesus entered

heaven for us (2:10, 4:14, 6:20) as the pledge that we shall also enter in. He sat down (a priest never did this after having completed a sacrifice), to signify that it was a single sacrifice for sins, made once and for all time. His sacrifice is also the basis for His present ministry of intercession (2:18, 5:7-10, 7:25, 9:24). He sat down to reign as king.

6. The Johannine Writings

In these writings, the idea of light is very prominent. By this, John is alluding not only to the light of revelation but more essentially to the dispelling of the darkness caused by sin. Light is one of the OT words for salvation.

But John is also very concerned with reconciliation. For him, Christ's death was an atoning sacrifice: hence the many references to the blood of Christ (Jn 19:34, I Jn 1:7, 5:6-8, Rev 1:5). John's favourite figure is the Lamb of God. In aramaic "talya" can mean "lamb" or "servant". This has a rich OT background: Genesis 22 (the Lamb offering instead of Isaac – there the individual is in view), Exodus 12 (the Passover Lamb – the family is in view), Exodus 29 (the Lamb of the morning and evening sacrifice – the nation is in view), Isaiah 53 (the Suffering servant is brought "as a lamb to the slaughter" – the world is in view). In Revelation, the word used is "little lamb" which underlines the tremendous paradox of the one who died and yet who is now the world ruler and executor of God the Father's plan for the culmination of the history of the earth. The Lamb is there portrayed as having died and yet having come back to life; though alive, he preserves in Himself the virtue of His death.

The theme of the Passover lamb is of great interest to John; he quotes from Exodus 12 in talking about the sacrifice of Christ (Jn 19:4, 31-37) which suggests that he believed that Christ was the fulfillment of all that the Passover lamb ever stood for.

John also speaks of Christ as the propitiation (*hilasmos*) for our sins – a word which is very close to the propitiatory (*hilasterion*) or mercy seat, the place on top of the ark onto which the sacrificial blood of the sacrifice for the sins of the whole people was sprinkled, the place where sins were expiated or done away. It is also the place where God's righteous wrath is turned away (I Jn 2:2, 4:10).

Christ's death is also seen as a liberating act. The only place in John's writings where the actual expression redemption is used is in Revelation 5:9, but the idea is in Revelation 1:5 where the correct rendering is probably, "having freed us from our sins" i.e. from the bondage of our sins. Elsewhere the language of victory over the Devil is very apparent (I Jn 3:8, Rev 12:11).

Christ's death is also seen as a revelation of the love of God (Jn 11:50-52, I Jn 2:2, 4:8-11, Rev 13:8). This last reference contains a puzzling phrase: "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world", which means that the Cross (= Christ's sacrificial death) belongs to the eternal counsels of God. Alternatively it can refer to God's election, if taken together with the Lamb's book of life.

Other references to God's love in sending Jesus to die for our sins are: Jn 3:16, Rev 1:5 where the present tense is probably correct (He loves us); the death of Christ is seen as the supreme expression of the great love which God has eternally.

B. THE BACKGROUND TO THE ATONEMENT

1. Preliminary Considerations

a) There is a need for a truly biblical doctrine of the atonement, since the whole of Christianity rests on an objective fact, which

we must explain. If the Cross of Christ is the only way to God we must be very clear in proclaiming its meaning.

b) Any account of the doctrine must be based firmly on the NT; there is no room for speculation in such a realm as this. Any theory imposed from outside of Scripture is bound to be heretical. It is important to seek to interpret the NT as a whole and not just to fasten on to certain incidental aspects of the atonement. Many views, for instance, take the effect of the Cross and try to make it the reason for the cross.

c) The NT must be understood against the background of the OT, for the OT is the seedbed for all NT doctrine. Illustrations taken from personal background can be helpful but they can be also positively misleading. We must stick to scriptural categories.

2. The Broken Relationship Between God and Man

The fact of sin testifies to a broken relationship. The NT always presents the Cross in connection with the fact of sin. (I Jn 4:10). Every reference to sacrifice reminds of the fact of sin; redemption from sin, from Satan and from the Law (Is 59:1-2).

3. The Many-sided Effects of Sin

At least three parties are involved in the problem:

a) **God, for sin violates His holiness** which is the essence of God's character and of His creation, before the Fall came. Sin is abnormal and an intruder from outside. Sin is also an affront to God's majesty as Ruler of the universe. It also grieves His love and threatens to thwart His purposes of love, and so He cannot remain indifferent to it. Sin is an attitude of persons – one of rebellion against a Holy, Loving God.

b) **Sin is related to Satan**, for it has brought man under his power. As a usurper, Satan has established his sovereignty over man (Jn 12:31, II Cor 4:4, I Jn 5:14, Heb 2:14-15).

c) **Man himself is also affected**. Sin affects the man who sins (Jn 8:34, Rom 6:16, II Pet 2:19). Amongst other things it brings man into bondage of himself. It also has social consequences for it is a disordering principle in society, and especially within the family.

4. The Many-sided Effects of Atonement

a) **Atonement concerns God**, for it is a propitiation or "turning away of" His wrath. The word "expiation" is not sufficient, as it has no connotation of wrath or personal relationship. Wrath is essentially a state of enmity existing between two persons and resulting in punishment.

b) **The Cross also has a relation to Satan**, because man needs to be released from his grip and to be restored to his rightful position in God's universe. As a sort of public prosecutor Satan has legitimate demands to punish because of man's sin, but God also has objectively solved the sin problem and the Holy Spirit solves it subjectively, any claim by Satan is rendered null and void, with reference to those who have been redeemed.

c) **The atonement affects man** in that he should be made to hate his sin; to be won away from paths of sin to God. The blood of Christ (his sacrificial death on the Cross applied) and the Holy Spirit are decisive factors here.

5. The Grace of God in the Atonement

The atonement emphasizes God's initiative in salvation. It is in direct line with all OT covenants which were divinely initiated. It is thus described also in the OT "I will make a new covenant"

(Jer 31:31-34). Never is it called our covenant (God's and man's); it is God's gift to man, and that is the essence of grace. God is also the initiator in providing a sacrifice for our sins: "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is 53). Christ is the Lamb of God (i.e. God's Lamb). The Bible describes Jesus as the Messiah whom God has set forth to be a propitiation. Jesus gave Himself "according to the will of God". Atonement therefore proceeded out of the heart and mind of God. Christ died according to the Scriptures (i.e. just as God in the OT said He would, through the prophets). We should not therefore say that the Cross made God change His mind towards us. It was provided by Him in order to bring the elect into fellowship with himself. We must never represent Christ as one thrust forward by humanity to pay its own debts – Christ is not even a third party who steps into the breach. In Christ, God reconciles us unto *Himself*. The determination of God to save man is all of grace (the reason is entirely to be found in His own nature) and is not conditioned by an outside necessity.

C. THE ATONEMENT AND THE INCARNATION

1. The Relationship Between the Person of Christ and His Work

There is an intimate relationship between the two. If Christ is not divine, then His death cannot atone for the sins of others, and certainly not for the sins of the whole world. Athanasius rightly said: "What you believe about the person of Christ affects what you believe about His work."

2. The Necessity for a Divine Saviour

Christ's redemption is unique for it deals with bondage at a very deep level. It is not by accident that Arians held a very low

doctrine of sin, and it has been rightly noticed that an Arian Christ is a fit Saviour for the Pelagian man. Pelagian theology and related theologies do tend to gravitate towards a denial of the divinity of Christ. If we admit that Christ is the Word, the Creator, then it is not a far step to admit that He could redeem. All John's arguments are founded on the premises of his Prologue and *visa versa*. In his Epistles, and possibly in his Gospel, he attacks docetism as hitting at the very heart of the Gospel: if the divine Christ never really became a man, then the atonement is worthless; unless the divine Christ suffered and died, then there is no hope for any of us, for we are still in our sins and lost. Jesus Himself said "Unless you believe that I AM, you will die in your sins" (Jn 8:24).

3. The Necessity of a Human Saviour

Jesus was not distant from us: he took on our humanity (yet without sin) and this links us for ever with Him, for the incarnation has eternal consequences, not only in the effects of His death, but also in his direct relationship to us, as the God-Man (Gal 4:4-5, Phil 2:7-8, I Tim 2:5-6, Heb 2). Not only has He saved us from the punishment of sin (on the Cross), but He saves us from the power of sin as our High Priest, but he will save us from the presence of sin, by transforming our bodies to be like His glorious resurrection body. None of these aspects is possible unless Jesus shares our humanity (cf Heb 2).

4. The Atonement as an Historical Event

As it is related to an historical event (Heb 1:3) it must always be referred to in the past tense (Heb 9:4-28). For it to have validity in our space-time universe, it must have occurred at a point in time, and this is exactly what Scripture says. What is more, unless the atonement is an act that has been completed then there is no basis for vocabulary in the Scriptures which refers to us as having been redeemed (Eph 2:5) or having been

sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13) as a guarantee of the future, or of speaking in terms of certainty regarding the future (Rom 8:28-30). Another factor is the very character of God and His determinative purposes as Sovereign Lord of the universe – He will not be thwarted in His sovereign designs, either by Satan or by man (this is exactly the argument of Paul in Romans 8). Revelation 13:8 does refer to "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" but, in the light of other scriptures, this must be interpreted in terms of (1) the prophecies of the OT, (2) the eternal purposes of God. In fact, the Good News Bible translates the verse as follows: "All people living on earth will worship it except those whose names were written before the creation of the world in the book of the living which belongs to the Lamb that was killed".

D. PENAL SUBSTITUTION

1. The Principle of Substitution in the OT

This is found essentially in the sacrificial system and in the idea of redemption (either an animal or a person standing in for another). Then there is the idea of collectivity: a king represents his people, Adam represents humanity. The suffering servant Isaiah 53 dies for the sins of his people.

a) **The sacrificial system:** The man who sins is in danger of the wrath of God falling on him and of being killed. The only way he can avert this is to bring an animal to the priest, in his place, and for the wrath of God to fall on that animal. It is the shedding of the blood of that animal that turns away the wrath of God from the sinner. The principle is; the shedding of blood of another, which must be without blemish, for "without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb 9:22). The use of the word "blood" also implied substitution; the blood (or life) of the animal was substituted for the life of the sinner, and the animal killed (its blood was shed).

b) **The idea of redemption** rests on the idea of one person substituting himself for another on the basis of family ties or of priests standing in for the firstborn.

2. The Principle of Substitution in the NT

a) **Jesus quite clearly refers to himself as a substitute:** he is the shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. He is the king of his people, the master of his friends, the head of the body, the bridegroom of the bride, the servant who stands in for the many, the second Adam (Son of Man) – Christ's preferred title denoting himself). In the pistles we are told that Jesus had to become a man in order to be an effective substitute as sacrificial victim and high priest.

b) **The language used in the NT to refer to the work of Christ quite clearly reflects substitution:** The NT merely uses the OT background which means that it is impossible to understand the NT except against the background of the OT. By the frequent use of such words as "sacrifice" and "blood" and other words related to sacrifice in the OT, the NT shows its dependence on the OT. Moreover this is a general emphasis which is found in each NT writer. Therefore we must not interpret these allusions in non-OT terms.

The NT uses certain prepositions when talking of sacrifice, which can only refer to the idea of substitution. These are:

anti (Mk 10:45, I Tim 2:6)

peri (Mk 14:24, Rom 8:3, I Jn 2:2)

hyper (Lk 22:18-20, Jn 11:51-52, Rom 5:6-8, I Pet 3:18, I Jn 3:6)

The use of the word "anti" normally implies substitution whereas the use of the other two (*peri*, *hyper*) does not necessarily imply it, but it may and often does imply it. For

instance, in reference to the Cross, there are many passages where substitution must be in view, eg Gal 3:13 "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for (*peri*) us". In Jn 2:2 Christ is said to be "the propitiation for (*peri*)" (He bears the wrath of God against us, so that we do not have to bear it). In any case, the use of the word "propitiation" (*hilasmos* and cognate words) always denotes substitution when used in conjunction with one of the above prepositions. This is based of course on the use of the same words in the Septuagint (the Greek OT). Many passages speak of Jesus delivering us from wrath and propitiating our sins (bearing the wrath of God in our place). What Jesus has done, has removed us from the necessity of doing it: what He has born (our sins, which includes punishment for them), has removed from us the necessity of bearing their consequences (Heb 10:18, Rom 5:1).

3. Attempts to Remove Substitution from the Biblical Doctrine

There are two main attempts, both of which are based on humanist subjectivism and existentialism. These ideas remove any reference to collectivity or to an objective God who is head of a legal system

a). **Some have sought to reduce it to mere "sympathy"**: "because of His sympathy, Christ bears our sins. He suffers with us, rather than in our place ..." Admittedly, the sympathy of Christ is present in Hebrews 4:14-5:3 but this is nowhere related to His death but rather to his present intercessory ministry for us as our high priest who has already, once and for all, offered a sacrifice for our sins. In the OT, the sacrifice did not sympathise with the sinner but took his place...

b). **Some seek to reduce substitution to "representation"**. Although the two words are very close in meaning, the word "representative" is broader and vaguer, and does not belong to

the sacrificial vocabulary of the OT. Substitution is a precise term implying Christ's death in our place. A substitute has a real connection with those whose place he takes. It implies an act really done for us by someone from outside who comes into the race and performs the act (substitutionary sacrifice) within it. The work of a substitute exhausts our responsibility for doing anything more (i.e. like meriting our salvation by additional acts).

4. The Substitutionary Sacrifice as the Culmination of a Sinless Life

The atonement is ethical in character – it is God's way of dealing with sin and only one perfect in character could perform this act. In the OT both priest and sacrifice had to be physically perfect (without blemish), though this was admittedly a symbolic perfection. As a sacrifice, Christ was perfect (He was without sin – I Pet 1:19) and He was perfect as the priest who offered the sacrifice (Heb 7:26). Heb 9:14 combines the two ideas – He as perfect High Priest offered up Himself as a perfect sacrifice. God's law was vindicated in His life before it was vindicated in His death (I Pet 2:21-25, I Pet 3:18, Rom 5:19). His obedience is understood in terms of his obedience to His divine vocation. Moreover, His life was laid down voluntarily and not taken from Him. Even in the description of His death, the text says that "He dismissed His spirit". Without Christ's obedience to His divine vocation, the whole work of salvation would have been compromised: in a way, everything depended on it.

5. Christ's Work in Bearing the Penalty of our Sins

The picture is one of a man with a heavy load on his shoulder. Even the sin offering in the OT "bore" the heaviness of sin (Lev 10:17). The scapegoat in Lev 16:22 "bore away" the sins of the nation. The Suffering Servant bore the sins of many (Is 53).

The "bear" is translated by one of two Hebrew words, "*sabal*" and "*nasa*". "*Sabal*" is used in Isaiah 53:12 with the meaning "to carry as a burden": *Nasa* has the additional connotation of "to lift up and carry away". When both these words are used in conjunction with the word "sin", they mean "to bear the guilt or punishment for sin" (Lev 5:1, 22:19, 24:15, Num 38:22-3, Ezek 18:19-20). Because sin has been born by Christ, this means that it has been carried away (Jn 1:29, I Jn 3:5). This in turn means that expiation has been completely effected (Heb 9:26-28, II Cor 5:21), sin has been "put away". Our sins have been charged to His account (II Cor 5:21).

Christ's work also turns away the wrath of God against the sin of man. It is the cross (the actual substitutionary sacrifice of Christ) rather than the sight of the cross which turned away the wrath of God (Rom 3:25, I Jn 2:2, 4:10, Heb 2:17).

6. The Sufferings of Christ as Penal Substitute

During His ministry, Jesus made many references to the word "suffer" in connection with His death. Words like "cup" and "baptism" also have the same connotation on His lips (Mk 9:1 ff, Mt 15:16-17). Hebrews 2:9 informs us that He tasted of death, physical death and all that it entailed, for it was part of man's punishment for sin. But He also tasted of the very agonies of hell for us: His Father turned His back on Him as He suffered for our sins on the cross "My God, my God why did you forsake me" was His cry as He died, but by then it was all over, and fellowship was restored after death. It was truly finished – the bill had been paid in full. Henceforth victory was assured.

7. Objections to Penal Substitution

Substitution can only be objected to as immoral when insufficient account is taken of the fact that Christ is God.

Christ willingly gave Himself up as a sacrifice (Then I said: "Here I am, to do your will, O God, just as it is written of me in the book of the Law"): The one who died occupies every important position vis-à-vis the Law: He is the administrator, the Judge, the offence has been committed against Him, He is the Law-giver and the Creator of those who committed the offence. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself". In the face of this unique situation, all objections fade away. It is also important to realise the humanity of Jesus; He was one with those on behalf of whom He acted.

Penal substitution does not mean that all are indiscriminately forgiven, for Christ's work is only appropriated by repentance and faith (= a changed attitude towards sin). Unless those who believe leave the camp of those who crucified Christ (a camp to which all humanity outside of Christ belongs, since their sins put Jesus on the Cross), then nothing is achieved. In addition, it is not just a matter of acquitting the sinner but also a matter of the sinner receiving the Holy Spirit to change his life and attitude. In no way could any of these aspects of the way of salvation be called immoral.

Some have objected to the concept that the shedding of blood can atone for sin. To this it must be replied that this idea is basic to the whole OT revelation, although it was neglected by the Jews after the Exile. Some say that Jesus just laid down his life for us to show that he loved us, not to atone for our sins. Blood in the OT signifies "violent death". It is 203 times linked to this idea but only seven times linked to life (i.e. life liberated from the limitations of the body and set free for other purposes. On this view the "blood of Christ" would mean little more than the "life of Christ") Gen 9:4-6, Rom 5:9, Heb 9:14. Atonement is secured by the death of victim rather than by its life. For the crime to be expiated, death is demanded when a murder has been committed (Num 35:33, II Sam 21:3). In II Sam 21:3, although blood is mentioned, it is not actually spilt because in

this case the person is hanged. Leviticus says that the shedding of the blood of the sacrificial animal is a substitute for the death of a sinner.

By this sacrifice sin is effaced, or, more exactly, expiated. The Hebrew verb KAPPER which means expiate calls to mind the original image of "rubbing out" (*maha*) in Jer 18:23, Neh 3:37 or covering (*kitsa*) in Ps 32:1, Neh 3:37.

The NT uses the Greek verb "propitiate" (*hilaskesthai*) with the object as God (KAPPER in Hebrew has this sense in Gen 32:21 and Proverbs 16:14) but elsewhere the Greek word *hilla* (Ex 32:11), where Moses seeks to placate God.

Also, the principal idea in reconciliation is that of the appeasement of the one against whom the crime has been committed (Mt 5:24, Rom 5, 2 Cor 5, Eph 2, Col 1).

8. The Central Issue of Penal Substitution

It deals with the relationship of man to God, the most important issue in Scripture. The other relationships of man to Satan and of man to man are secondary, but flow from the first.

E. THE RESULTS OF THE ATONEMENT

1. The Removal of the Barrier Between God and Men

Hebrews lays much stress on the finished aspect of the atonement. The veil of the Temple was rent in two, thus opening up a direct and permanent way into God's presence. The atonement justifies us; we have new and permanent standing before God, on the basis of Christ's finished work. Jesus, as our Forerunner has already entered heaven on our behalf, which is the pledge of our ultimate entry therein. "For by the one sacrifice of Himself, He has obtained an eternal salvation Heb 10:14). One sacrifice multiplied by infinity (Christ) gives a sacrifice of infinite value.

In Christ, the God-Man, we have been reconciled for ever for he has bridged the gap by his atonement of our sins (= the cause of past enmity) and has brought us to His Father in whose presence we shall live for ever.

2. The Breaking of Satan's Power over Men

Christ has fulfilled the prophecy made in Gen 3:16 – the Messiah, the descendant (seed) of the woman, has bruised the head of the serpent, and those under his thralldom who repent and believe in the sacrifice of the Messiah, are released. Christ effects a new Exodus for his people (Lk 9:31). While the complete fulfillment of this will only be when the nation of Israel repents (Zech 12-13), the Church consists of those who have been released from the bondage symbolised by Egypt. The strong man (Satan) has been bound by the stronger Man (Jesus) as so his slaves can be released (Heb 2:14-15, Col 2:14-15). The spell of death is broken and the prospect of eternal life is opened up (immortality) II Tim 1:10.

Satan as Public Prosecutor, has no more legal claim, as the sin question has been settled.

3. The Revelation of the Divine Character

The Cross reveals God's love (I Jn 4:10), and at the same time God's righteousness (Rom 3:21-26) which means God's way of justifying men (by providing a substitute so that His love – desire to save, and His holiness – which demands that the sinner be punished (for sin cannot be overlooked) can be reconciled). In this respect it is also a supreme revelation of the wisdom of God (I Cor 1:24).

F. THE APPLICATION OF THE ATONEMENT

1. The Scope of the Atonement

This is no small issue. Is it correct, for instance, to say that Christ died for all, or that He only died for the elect? There are four views:

- a) "Christ died for all. Therefore all will experience salvation". This is the universalist view.
- b) "Christ died for all but the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of His death only to those who believe". This is the Arminian view.
- c) "Christ died for all but the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of His death only to the elect". This represents a low Calvinist view (4 point Calvinist).
- d) "Christ died for the elect only". This is the hyper-Calvinist view (5 point Calvinist).

Assuming that Scripture teaches that Jesus died for our salvation, five groups of texts merit our attention:

- a) Those that are particular in form: i.e where the death of Christ is said to be for a group within mankind, whether it be the Church or the individual.

These are: Rev 5:9 "Men from among every tribe". Jesus gives His life "for His own" (Jn 13:1), for His friends (Jn 15:13), for His sheep (Jn 10:3 ff), in vs 36 Jesus tells His hearers that they are not His, for His Church (Eph 5:25, Acts 20:28), for us. The Father sent the Son to save the elect (Jn 6:37-40). His prayer is for those who will believe (Jn 17:1). In the OT it is clear that God chose a people but not all Israel was true Israel (Rom 9:6).

In Mt 20:28 the "many" (*rabbim*) are those of Isaiah 53:11b). The members of the Qumran community interpreted the passage as referring to an elect few (which they identified with themselves).

b) Some statements are universal in form but could perhaps be particular in fact eg Jn 12:32. But "all" in this context (I will draw all men unto myself) = "all kinds of men", meaning both Jews and Gentiles" as the remark follows the request of the Greeks to see Jesus. The reference in I Tim 2:6 could be taken as particular: "all" could mean "us all", say some.

c) Some references are universal in form and can only be universal in fact. In I Jn 2:2 what does "ours only" mean? Surely it means, "not only us Jews" or "us Christians" (probably the second as there is no indication of purely Jewish readership of the Epistle). But in any case, John goes on to say "the whole world" in I Jn 5:19. In I Tim 4:10, God is said to be the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe, but this probably means "saviour" in the broader sense of "sustainer".

d) Some references are universal by implication. II Pet 2:1 probably refers to heretics whom Peter did not regard as even Christians.

e) The best approach would seem to be as follows: What is meant by saying that Christ dies for sinners? We must say that there is no limit to the value of Christ's death, since He is infinite (being God). Therefore potentially He died for all. But for whom does His death in fact avail? When the writers of the NT refer to Christ as dying for all, they are perhaps referring to the sufficiency of His work, which is, by definition infinite. His death is made effective only to the elect in Christ. Subjective appropriation still depends on divine election. Perhaps we are not to think of the atonement quantitatively at all. However, we are not at liberty to say that all men will be saved, for this is

expressly ruled out by the clear teaching of Scripture. We can hardly say that just some of the benefits of His death accrue to all, for in each case, the *atoning* benefits are in view in Scripture.

2. The Atonement and the Resurrection

The Cross and the resurrection belong together inseparably. This is even clear in the OT (Is 53:11-12). In I Cor 15:3 when Paul says "firstly" what he means is that the doctrine of the resurrection is of prime importance. It was certainly preached by the apostles as such in their sermons in Acts. It is seen as God's seal upon the finished work of Christ. It is God's great "yes" to what Christ had achieved on the Cross. "You crucified Him, but God raised Him from the dead" affirmed Peter. The resurrection makes possible fellowship with the living Christ. Christ is alive but with the power of His death in Him (Rev 5:6).

3. The Holy Spirit and the Preaching of the Cross

The Holy Spirit brings us face to face with the Person of Jesus and opens our eyes to the Good News of a finished salvation. He convicts us of our need to be saved and to let Jesus be the Ruler of our lives, as He is rightfully so as God (II Cor 5:19-21, Acts 2:37, I Thes 1:5).

4. The Reception of the Benefits of the Atonement

This is dependent upon repentance and faith, which is a personal appropriation of the benefits of Christ's death and an appropriation of the Risen Christ by allowing the Holy Spirit to enter our lives. These two conditions are not arbitrary; they are essential in the nature of the case. If the enemy accepts an amnesty, he must lay down his arms and agree to conditions. In order to be a beneficiary of the death of Christ, God demands a

repentance from sin (which caused Christ's death in the first place) and a new attitude (made possible by the indwelling Holy Spirit). He demands a new walk of faith – of trust and obedience; this is the dynamic of a continuing walk with Christ.

5. The Cross and the Two Great Ordinances of the Church

Christ ordained baptism and the Lord's Supper, both of which speak of His death and the benefits of it (Rom 6, I Cor 11).

6. The Inspiration and Challenge of the Cross

The Cross supplies the motive for Christian living, which is gratitude. This is the theme of the praises of the redeemed in Revelation "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain", they cried (Rev 5:7).

Christ's suffering and death was in the pursuance of His divine vocation. Thus we are called to identify ourselves with Him in this attitude to the will of God.

G. DIFFERING CONCEPTIONS OF CHRIST'S WORK

The variety of terminology used in the Bible to describe its significance is immense. However, many historical views have failed to take into account one basic principle of biblical interpretation: we must understand the language of the NT against that of the OT. So often expositors have tried to explain the atonement against the background of contemporary philosophy.

1. **The Church Fathers** Greek philosophy is already taking it toll on their teaching. Although they pay lip-service to the concept of the atoning and propitiatory death of Christ, the

main emphasis of their teaching has already shifted elsewhere. In concentrating on other aspects of salvation, they lose sight of the atonement. The reason for this is their preoccupation with the dilemma of gnostic man. The one happy exception to this is the Epistle to Diognetus.

a) **Christianised gnosticism:** The apologists (Justin) and the theologians of Alexandria (Clement and Origen) see in Jesus Christ the Logos who has come to give us the true knowledge (gnosis) that can show us how we can become one with God. The cross becomes an ascetic, moral and mystical symbol. For the Christian gnostic, man's main problem is not that he is a sinner but that his soul is imprisoned in his body. The aim of salvation is therefore seen to be the liberation of the soul so that it can become divinised (one with God).

b) **Recapitulation and divinisation** This is also based on a gnostic view of man. Irenaeus is a discreet gnostic. He considers that by the incarnation, Jesus reversed everything which Adam had lost: God became man so that we could become gods. The obedience of Jesus outweighs the disobedience of Adam. This can become ours by faith in Christ. Thus the cross becomes merely one aspect of the incarnation. The Greek Fathers such as Athanasius are more interested in divinisation than they are in the atonement. This is made possible not so much by the atonement as the incarnation.

c). **The Cosmic drama idea** This was very strong in the patristic period in which there was a lively awareness of the Devil and evil spirits. So it is not surprising that they thought of Christ's work chiefly in terms of a struggle against Satan in which Satan, appearing to have won, is finally crushingly defeated.

There was also great interest in ransom terminology. Origen even reckoned that Christ's sacrifice was a ransom that was paid to the Devil! Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory the Great were greatly influenced by this idea: they speak of Christ as being the bait which God used to trick the Devil. Satan punished Christ mistaking him for a mere man.

Gregory of Nyssa reckoned that the Devil had the rights of a slave owner, but maintained that God had tricked the Devil. Augustine emphasised that the Devil had overstepped his rights because he had no rights over Christ, for Christ was sinless. Therefore the merits of Christ's death could accrue to others. Bernard of Clairvaux also espoused this theory.

The same idea reappears in the writings of Luther who emphasised the cosmic struggle between Christ and Satan. The modern Swedish writer Aulén also stresses this aspect in that he sees the victory of Christ over Satan as being the classic view of the Cross.

However, it concedes to Satan a degree of independence which he does not have. He is not the lawgiver or the judge but merely the policeman, albeit a crooked one. God really is the one who provides his own satisfaction (the atoning death of Christ) and so the solution to the dilemma. Any idea of tricking the devil are non-biblical. Augustine's idea of merit is also unbiblical.

d). **The theology of merit** This view grew up in Carthage where many of the early Latin theologians were lawyers. Tertullian had already said in relation to penitence that God is satisfied by offerings that are pleasing to him, and that merit can be acquired by obeying the Law and by going further than the Law requires (works of supererogation). These ideas greatly appealed to Cyprian who then developed them. Augustine was also later influenced by them. Both of these ideas are Jewish ideas from the inter-testamental period and contradict Scripture. Cyprian said that Jesus by living a sinless life of obedience deserved glorification. Gregory the Great took the next step by saying that he also deserved salvation. But he didn't need it (because he is perfect) therefore his 'merits' can be distributed to us, through the channel of the Church, of course. Later it was added that these merits can be added to by the merits of the saints to constitute a central treasury which is administered by the Church. The Cross is therefore seen as the gaining of merit rather than substitutionary atonement

2. **The Middle Ages** see scholars seeking to provide a synthesis of all previous teaching on the atonement.

a) **Anselm** wrote a work of major importance entitled *Cur Deus Homo?* (Why did God become man?). The background of the age was no longer gnosticism or Jewish legalism but the feudal system with its concepts of honour and chivalry. He sees sin as an insult to God. Because of the dignity of the one who has been offended, the offense is of infinite gravity. Therefore God demands either an infinite penalty: hell, or that man offers satisfaction of infinite value for the insult of sin. But man cannot do this because he is finite. Therefore God had to become a man to do make this satisfaction in his place. The cross is then seen not as substitutionary atonement but as a gigantic work of supererogation! Christ went to the Cross to gain a fund of infinite merit for us. Therefore his merits are handed on to us (by the Church of course). This is really a variation of Cyprian's idea.

b). **The moral influence theory** Pierre Abélard (1079-11-42) was the first to put this view forward. He rejected Anselm's view and also the cosmic drama idea. He sees the Cross as being an example for us to follow. According to him, our redemption is that supreme love awakened in us by the passions of Christ which permits us to merit forgiveness and salvation. (Lk 7:47). In other words, Abélard is saying: 'Love Christ and you will be saved'. But how can anyone know if he has loved Christ enough to merit salvation? It is all very subjective. According to Abélard, the purpose of the cross is not to effect something for us (to expiate our sins and reconcile us with God) but to effect something in us: the Cross woos us away from our present evil way of life. This is a subjective view that emphasises the power but not the guilt of sin. The theory lay dormant until the 19th century when Horace Bushnell revived it.

c). **The sacrifice of humanity** Thomas Aquinas was the great synthesizer of the Middle Ages. He is very close to Anselm, but

he denies the idea that Christ had to (of necessity) become man: he did it of his own free will because he loved His Father.

Moreover, Christ acted as the head of humanity and so his merits can be transferred to us. Anselm was not able to explain this transfer sufficiently. He is thus able to integrate the Cross into the circle of neo-platonic salvation: the offering (consecration to God) by the head of humanity opens up the way for our return to God, but we have to go the rest of the rest of the way by imitating Christ's consecration. Therefore, imitate Christ (especially in his sufferings) and you will be saved.

d). **Late Middle Ages** Duns Scotus as a nominalist (precursor of an existentialist) believed that the sacrifice of Christ was only of finite value but God accepted it as being infinite. This is of course a virtual denial of Christ's divinity. We cannot fully comprehend what happened at the Cross. The new mysticism of the 14th and 15th centuries makes the cross the symbol and example of mortification, of the abolition of oneself.

3. The Reformers mark a return to the Bible and a rejection of Greek thought.

The idea of penal substitution Luther speaks quite clearly of this in his commentary on Galatians. For him, the break came when he was able to see that it was not a question of either satisfaction or punishment (Anselm), but of both: the only satisfaction that God would accept was vicarious punishment. Christ took our place as our sin substitute (Gal 3,13). However, we must remember that although he broke with the Middle Ages, he was still heavily influenced by it. The break becomes much clearer with Calvin. But whatever (subjective) imperfections Luther may have had in the formulation of the doctrine, subsequent Lutheran theology corrected. In Calvin we have the classic and mature statement of the doctrine of penal substitution.

Subsequent discussions amongst the heirs of the Reformers centred around the application of the atonement. They held to

limited atonement, by which they meant that Christ's death is only made effective for the elect.

Another question that interested them was that of Christ's obedience: Was it his passive obedience (his death) that saves us, or his active obedience (perfect life). Calvin maintained that it was both.

4. Modernist Theology. By this is meant those theologians who, under the influence of humanism, strayed from the strict biblical teaching.

a). **The Socinians** attacked the views of the Reformers on the atonement. According to them, all that God demands from man in order to forgive him is repentance. The cross is essentially the revelation of God's love: there is no idea of penal substitution. Many liberals adopted the same ideas, maintaining that the God of the Reformers was immoral, blood-thirsty and barbaric.

b). **Grotius** is a man who sought a middle way between humanism and the Bible. His theory sees the Cross as a penal example or as a symbolic atonement. Grotius was a lawyer who saw God as essentially the law-giver who is interested in law and order in his universe. As law-giver he can dispense with the appointed penalty if he can secure the ends of the law in some other way. For Grotius, God has no problem in pardoning sinners that repent (on what basis, he does not say) but the danger is that they will take it all too lightly and abuse his grace. The Cross is seen as an example of what happens to people who sin (though Christ was innocent). It is a threat of what will happen to sinners if they persist in their sin. Hence Christ did not bear our punishment, but a symbol of it. Another example in the same line of thinking that wishes to avoid substitutionary atonement is seen in the theory proposed by McLeod Campbell in 1856 and which was later taken up by R.C. Moberly (1901). God requires of us a perfect confession and forsaking of our sins (he does not require punishment).

Jesus, on the basis of his solidarity with us (because of the incarnation), offered a perfect confession of sins. This is the expiation that God demands and which satisfies his justice. This idea is found in the writings of P.T. Forsythe and also of Vincent Taylor.

The conditions for salvation (repentance and faith) are confused with the grounds for salvation (the atonement). There is no word about faith. Besides, man must repent for himself: Christ cannot do this for him as He is without sin. Repentance does not mean a mere confession of sin, but a turning from sin.

c). **Neo-orthodox views** The leaders of the movement against 19th century liberalism after WWI adopted what seemed to be a biblical vocabulary, but expressed themselves essentially in terms of existential philosophy.

Emil Brunner, although he had a biblical vocabulary, was still a liberal at heart and a follower of Grotius. He did not believe in substitutionary atonement

Karl Barth went even further. No idea appears in his work of the satisfaction of God's legal demands. He retained part of McLeod Campbell's theory. As an existentialist he makes no distinction between the person and the work of Christ. In his view, the incarnation means that the whole of humanity is united to Christ and thus saved (universalism).

Amongst other liberal theologians there nothing objective in the event of the Cross. According to Tillich, 'man agrees to be accepted without anyone or anything accepting him.'

Bultmann dismisses sacrificial terminology as 'mythology'.

Both he and Tillich produce a hopelessly vague existentialist (and therefore subjective) concoction. For Tillich, justification means: a person agrees to be accepted, without there being anything or anyone to accept him.

Modern Catholic theologians are typified by Teilhard de Chardin: he completely rejects any idea of a sacrifice effecting reconciliation or of a person being punished in my place. For him the cross is a manifestation of evil that contributes to the ongoing of evolution.

For more modern theologians, the cross signifies the death of a militant revolutionary or it is an event that enables us to become God (contributes to our divinisation).

For Moltmann, Jesus, by going to the cross, identified himself with the poor and underprivileged, so what is stressed is a solidarity rather than penal substitution.

Moltmann is very much influenced by Hegel and produces a dialectic view which is a sort of new gnosticism. He concludes that "a trinitarian theology discerns God in the negative and thus the negative in God, and so is panentheistic." In other words, the cross reconciles good and evil and so opens the way for a renewed universe. The Bible on the other hand stresses that the cross makes salvation for those who repent but seals the doom of those who refuse: they are forever separated from the righteous and join Satan in the lake of fire (the black hole of the universe in which they are sealed or contained for ever). Although Moltmann is a Reformed theologian, the twin influences of Lutheran universalism and hegelianism are apparent.

III. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION: GRACE

A. THE TRINITARIAN BASIS OF THE DOCTRINE

Grace is an attribute of God, so the doctrine of grace is really an extension of the doctrine of God. The salvation of sinners stems from the grace of God – the giving of Himself to save us; an action which springs from an attitude which in turn has its origin in God's eternal nature. In fact, no sinners would be saved at all were it not for the grace of God! The Father's grace comes to us through the Son (Rom 3:21-31, I Tim 2-3-6). The Spirit effectively administers Christ's effective salvation so that He is called the Spirit of grace (Heb 20:29). Grace is really an attitude of God towards sinners, but it is also used of God's power at work in man.

B. CONVERSION

The word means to "turn around" (*epistrepho*), which is an active verb. God calls us to convert (ourselves), to turn around. It indicates the turning away from a life of sin separated from God, to God Himself (Lk 1:16, Acts 9:35, 15:3, 19, II Cor 3:16). Conversion embraces both repentance and faith. It is one act which can be viewed from two sides; turning from sin (repentance), turning to God (faith) (Acts 3:19, 26:20, 11:21, 14:15, 26:18, I Thess 1:9, I Pet 2:25).

Jesus insisted on the absolute necessity of conversion (Mt 18:3, Lk 22:32, Mt 13:14-15, Jn 12:39-41, Acts 28:26, Jas 5:19). The expression "conversion" is also found in the OT as the prophets called people to repentance, to turn back (hebr. *shuv*) to God (Deut 30:2, 8, I Sam 7:3, Is 55:7, Ezek 14:6, Jonah 3:8-10).

1. Conviction (gr. *elegcho*)

is an awakening of sinners to spiritual realities. This is necessary, for normally men are spiritually dead, dead to God; it is as if there is a whole realm of their being which is asleep, not operative (II Cor 3:14 f, 4:4, Eph 2:1, 5, 4:18, 5:14). Conviction makes man see spiritual realities from God's point of view. It is the application of divine truth to the heart of the individual (II Tim 3:16 f). The word in Greek is "*elegcho*" = to show to be in the wrong, to expose. This is what the truth of God does (Titus 1:13 f, Acts 18:28, Mt 18:15, Titus 1:9, 13, 2:15, I Tim 5:20). Not only is God revealing Himself to us, but us to ourselves, in order to lead us to Himself (Lk 3:19, I Cor 14:24, Jn 16:8-11).

Conviction is effected by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. The Bible is a Spirit-given book and so it is efficacious (II Tim 3:16). Three terms are used of the Holy Spirit in John 14-

16. He is the Holy Spirit – this expression has ethical content. He is the Spirit of Truth – which means that He uses truth to do His work. He is the Parakletos, comforter, advocate but also convictor – the divine disturber, for he convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgement. He is seen at work in this way in Acts 2 v 23 (sin), vs 22, 4, 36 (righteousness) and judgment (vs 35, 40). But conviction does not end with conversion because God's great end is our total adaptation to the mind and will of Himself. The natural man does not welcome it because he hates the light. He cannot be induced to come to the light apart from the work of the spirit (Jn 3:20, Eph 5:11-13).

2. Repentance (gr. *metanoia*)

means "change of mind", but it is not something purely intellectual. We differentiate more than the Bible between intellectual, emotional and volitional aspects of personality (eg we use heart with reference to emotions whereas the Bible uses it for the whole inner life). So "metanoia" implies a change of mind, a change of purpose, a change of action. However, repentance undoubtedly has a mental element, for it involves a new understanding which comes from a preaching of the word. The mind is thereby informed, sees what God is and what we are from His point of view. Repentance also has an emotional aspect: in Ps 51 David is stirred by a knowledge of his sin. Remorse is concern about our sin because of what it does to us, whereas repentance means concern about sin with relation to God. Repentance must include renunciation of sin if it is to be genuine; the volitional element is central (Prov 28:13).

The place of repentance in the Christian life

I Jn 1:8-10 presupposes that repentance has taken place in the Christian life, not just at the beginning in terms of conversion, but throughout the Christian life. The epistles call for further

renunciation so sin as Christians see it more clearly and fully (Eph 4:17-5:20 particularly 4.22, 25, 31, Col 2.20-3:17, particularly 3:5, 8, 9). Initial repentance ought to lead to habitual renunciation of sin.

3. **Faith** (gr. *pistis*)

means in essence personal trust, but trust in a person implies trust in his word. In OT times, the true object of faith was God Himself (Gen 15:6, Ps 11:1, Is 31:1, Jer 17:5, 7) but in the NT faith in God and faith in Christ are intimately linked (Jn 14:1, 12.44, I Pet 1:20, 21, II Cor 3:4).

Another aspect of faith is personal surrender. To trust in God is to surrender to God. The first baptismal confession in the NT was "Jesus is Lord" (which not only means that Jesus is God but also Jesus is the Master of my life) (Mt 7:21, Lk 6:46, Rom 14:9, I Cor 6:20). In Acts 2:36-40 Peter lays down God's conditions for salvation. Conversion puts us under the authority of God (Acts 26:18, Col 1:13). The Gospel is not only a promise but a command. The Bible speaks of the obedience of faith (Rom 1:5, 16:26).

Faith and disobedience are treated as opposites in Jn 3:36. To reject the Gospel is to be disobedient as well as unbelieving (Heb 5:9). But this does not mean salvation by works: we obey the law by doing it, but we obey the gospel by receiving it. It is a different kind of obedience. Faith is trust but also a submissive trust (Rm 10:2-4, Jn 6:28-29).

4. **Personal conviction**

Although assent to doctrine is not enough, yet real faith always presupposes belief in some truth; it is not just a leap in the dark (Jn 8:24, Acts 8:12-13, Jas 2:19/Jn 8:24, 6:69, 11:27, 42, Rm

10:9, I Thes 4:14, II Thes 2:11-13, Heb 11:6, I Jn 5:5). Faith is essentially faith in response to revelation.

C. UNION WITH CHRIST

1. The Standing and State of the Christian

An evil-doer and a criminal are not identifiers to a condition (moral state). God changes both our standing and our state: He justifies us (changes our standing before the Law), and changes our state by regenerating us. Justification is once and for all, whereas regeneration begins a process called sanctification. In Mt 5:44-45 the passage refers to state, for Christ is saying that if we do this we shall show that we are his children. but we must not neglect either standing or state, for the two are inseparable. If we forget standing and become obsessed with our spiritual temperature (state or condition), this lead to subjectivism and an up and down Christian life based on feelings and a constant examination of self. We need to remember that our standing before God is sure (justification sealed by regeneration), otherwise we become unstable. But it is also possible to put excessive emphasis on standing to the neglect of state which leads to excessive objectivism. This can lead to stagnation.

Arminians are prone to give excessive emphasis to state by emphasizing Christian responsibility, whereas Calvinists tend to put excessive emphasis on standing, to the neglect of state. But we need to consider both carefully; we gain stability from taking stock of standing, but we need to make progress as we look at state. We "have an anchor within the veil" (standing) but we need to continually "draw nearer to the harbour" (state).

But union with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life, as far as both state and standing are concerned. Moreover, union with Christ has been made possible by what Jesus

accomplished on the Cross (our justification, thus opening the door to a new relationship to Him) and by the Resurrection (which makes this relationship with Him real through the Holy Spirit Who puts Christ's life into us).

The idea of union with Christ, both federally, and practically, is frequent in the Epistles (Rom 8:9-10, Gal 2:20, II Cor 13:5, Col 1:27, I Pet 3:16, I Jn 3:24). It all goes back to the teaching of Our Lord (eg Jn 15-17) cf also Acts 9:4.

2. OT anticipation of this union:

(a) **The representative character of certain OT figures.**

Certain OT figures are treated as representative persons who sum up a group with whom they are clearly identified. Moses represented his people for they were all "baptised" into him (I Cor 10:1-2) which entailed identification, a throwing in of the people's lot with Moses. Likewise, Christians are one with Christ but at a much deeper level. Many OT figures identified themselves with their own people in prayer (eg Moses, Daniel 9). The High Priest of Israel was a representative figure – he entered the Holy of Holies on behalf of the whole people (Ex 39:6-14, Zech 3:1 ff).

(b) **The Messiah was supremely the representative of His people.**

This is made especially clear in passages like Dan 7:13, 14 where the son of Man is representative of the saints of the Most High (i.e. the Messiah is representative of the nation of Israel, especially of Godly Israel who are the Remnant), the Servant Songs (Is 42, 49, 50, 52-53) where the Servant (Messiah) suffers for the people.

(c) **The relation of God to Israel** is compared to that between a husband and a wife (cf Is 54:5, Jer 31:31-34).

3. The Nature of Union with Christ

It has both objective and subjective aspects: I am "in Christ" (objective status) and yet Christ is in me (through the indwelling Holy spirit). He is "our righteousness" (the basis of our right standing with God) (I Cor 1:30). He is our life (our life-line to God, the source of our spiritual life (Col 3:3-4). The source of our right-standing with God (Christ) is in heaven (I Jn 2:1-2) but Christ is also the source of our life down here (through the indwelling Holy Spirit).

a) **It is a vital union**, for a common life binds believers in Christ. God's life flows out of Christ into us (cf the allegory of the vine in Jn 15) Gal 2:20.

b) **It is a spiritual union**: it is much deeper than any earthly relationship, including that of marriage. It is internal, inward, a spiritual union of the deepest kind, mediated to us through the Holy Spirit (Rm 8:9-10, I Cor 6:17).

c) **It is a personal union**: it is not a pantheistic union which dissolves all distinctions, for the personal distinction between Christ and the believer still exists. We are joined to Him and united to Him at the deepest possible level, yet we are distinct. Rom 8:15-16 makes a distinction between the Spirit of God and our spirit, yet we are witnessing together, which indicates unity. This union does not obliterate personal distinctions.

d) **It is a federal union**: it is a union by virtue of the covenant which God has made with us through Christ. It is a counterpart in grace of our union by nature with Adam. Just as our union with Adam has consequences (sin and death), so our union with Christ has consequences (salvation and eternal life). Eph 2:10-11 speaks of the contrast between what we are by grace and what we are by nature. By nature we are children of Adam and

so involved in his fate and so in the fate of all mankind, but in Christ we become a new humanity by grace.

e) **It is a union which has consequences of immense significance:** (Eph 1:3). It is only through the nature of our union with Christ that we can enjoy all that God wants to give us. Union with Christ is the seed-bed from which the practical Christian life grows.

D. RIGHTEOUSNESS

The word (hebr. *tsedeq* and gr. *dikaioisune*) denotes a right standing (before the law) and consequent right behaviour within a community. The latter is the proof of the former: i.e. that the person is a member of the true covenant community. The lawcourt setting gives righteousness the idea of the standing of a person in relation to the court's decision. Righteousness results when the court rules in favour of someone. Since the standard of judgement is the covenant law of God, righteousness can acquire the sense of behaviour in conformity with the covenant requirements. The judge himself must judge "in righteousness" in the sense that he must be true to the covenant stipulations.

God is said to be righteous in that he is true to the covenant. He punishes disobedience but he also intervenes to deliver his people.

The Gospel is God's way of putting people right with himself and making the Tora an inward reality. The Gospel, Paul declares, proves that God is in the right, despite appearances, : he has kept covenant with Abraham, had dealt properly with sin, has acted and will act without partiality, and upholds all those who cast themselves, helpless, on his mercy (Rom 1,16-17; 2,1-16; 3,21- 4,25)..

The church is to be not only an example of God's intended new humanity, but the means by which the eventual plan, including

the establishment of worldwide justice. is to be put into effect in an eschatological setting.

E. JUSTIFICATION

1. The Nature of Justification

The verb "to justify" means essentially to set right what was wrong, to put someone into a right relationship with another person. As far as God is concerned, the sinner is in the wrong before the Law: he is also in a wrong-relationship with the law-giver who is also the judge. The word "righteous" often means "in a right relationship to". Since in the Bible it is connected with Christ's sacrifice (which was of infinite value and which was made once and for all), the new right relationship with God which is achieved by the sacrifice (who appropriates it by faith) must of necessity be a permanent relationship. In legal language to justify is to acquit and thereafter to permanently treat as acquitted.

Paul's frequent use of the term justification is based on the concept as found in the original Hebrew word. The verb *tsadaq* can mean "to be righteous", "to be shown to be righteous" and "to declare righteous", according to which aspect is used. In the third of these senses, "to declare righteous", it is translated nine times in the Septuagint by *dikaioo*, as in the following examples:

Isaiah 5,23: Woe to those who justify (*tsadaq*, *dikaioo*) the wicked for a bribe, and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right (the righteous). It quite clearly means here to pronounce a legal verdict: the corrupt declares the wrongdoer to be innocent, not guilty, and acquits him. cf. also Ex 23,7; Deut 25,1; Proverbs 17,15, Mtt 12,37

In Romans, the words condemn (= declaring guilty) is often used in apposition to justify (= declaring innocent). cf. Rom 8,33-34, 2 Cor 3,9.

Finally, God himself is said to be justified when he judges (Ps 51,4; Rom 3,4), meaning "declared and pronounced righteous in the eyes of all as a judge, acquitted of all charges of injustice.

In OT sacrificial terminology the equivalent expression would be "covered". The wrath of God (i.e. the state of enmity existing between God and the sinner, and subject to a suspended death sentence = hell) has been set aside because the cause of it has been dealt with. The punishment for sins has been born (the sins have been expiated). As this expiation was performed once and for all on the Cross, we can, by accepting God's amnesty, obtain an eternal salvation (i.e. be acquitted for ever). We have been saved eternally by the shedding of Christ's blood, in accordance with the demands of the OT legal and sacrificial system. This is what the Epistle to the Hebrews means by perfection (Heb 7: 11, 18, 9:9 etc): a perfect covenantal relationship to God.

Our salvation has nothing to do with good works on our side, because we are dealing with a death penalty. The only way to escape from a death penalty is via an amnesty. But this amnesty has to be based on something. As God is absolutely just, the death penalty has to be carried out. It has been carried out on a substitute of infinite value (God's Son), so that through faith in Him, we can become beneficiaries of the amnesty.

The term "Christ is our righteousness" means that He is the means by which we have been set right with God. He is therefore the basis of our right standing with God. It is not that we exchange our sinfulness for His righteousness. Righteousness in this context and in many others, really means a right relationship with God, which is the result of justification. Paul talks about rejecting a righteousness according to the law. By this he means that he has abandoned

trying to obtain a right standing before God on the basis of having kept the Law.

God is a righteous God in that He is eager to put us right with Himself (i.e. to save us).

2. The Need of Justification

God's reaction to the sin of man (which is universal) is wrath (death and hell) – Rom 1:18, 24, 26, 28, 32, 2:2, 5, 8, 12, 16, 3:5-8, 19, 20 all speak of judgement and wrath.

3. The Source of Justification

The source is God. "It is God that justifies" (Rom 8). God takes the initiative and makes the pronouncement (Rom 3:20-24). It is God's unmerited favour, dealing with man quite apart from his works (which do not and cannot enter into the question, in view of the serious nature of man's sin – it demands that death penalty; Titus 3:1-7, Rom 11:6, Rom 3:21, 10:3, Phil 3:9):

4. The Grounds of Justification

These are the atoning work of Christ – it is one act which brings about justification (Rm 5:18, 19, 5:9, 3:21-26). Faith justifies if it is faith in the atoning work of Christ and an entire submission to his Lordship. Faith is therefore not the ground, but the condition for justification.

5. The Condition of Justification

Faith is the great condition of justification in the NT as it is indeed in the OT also. Faith proceeds from a believing of God's word regarding our lost condition and of the significance of the sacrifice of Christ which is closely related to the significance of His Person (2nd Person of the Trinity, fully God, the God-

Man). For there to be a genuine faith, these elements cannot be isolated. Just the same as the sinner in the OT had to identify himself with the animal sacrificed in his stead (by placing his hand upon it), so we have to identify ourselves with Christ and His sacrifice, believing that his sacrifice has taken away all my sins, and that He offers me a full and lasting pardon, a complete salvation (a completed salvation, for His is a completed work).

In the Epistle of James, the word "faith" is used in a particular way, to mean more or less "profession of faith" (note recurrence of the word "say" in 2:14, 17, 18). It is evident that he wants to get his readers to understand what faith really is. James has no time for a faith that is just a mere opinion about doctrine. A genuine faith and a faith by which a man has been justified shows itself in a changed life (works). These are not meritorious works (which would be the ground of justification) but works which are the fruit of justification (which cannot be separated from regeneration by the Holy spirit – they are the fruit of the Spirit). Abraham was proved to be righteous (= having been justified) by his works. Paul really deals with the same question (supposed objection to his teaching on justification) in Romans 6:1 ff, by pointing out that justification is inseparable from regeneration.

Eph 2:8-10 states that although we are not saved by works, we are created "unto good works". Justification does not come from works, but works comes from justification (Rom 8:1, 3 , II Cor 5:21). Faith and works belong together but faith is prior to works.

For James, to justify means "to vindicate as righteous". He gives the same illustration as Paul – Abraham, from which we can infer that when God says "Now I know that you fear God" He means "now I know that your faith is a real one" (Gen 22:12).

6. The Relationship of Justification to Certain Other Doctrines

a) **Relation to Forgiveness**: It includes and transcends forgiveness, for it is both forgiveness and acceptance. The past is not only cancelled but the future is assured.

b) **Relation to Regeneration**: It is not identical and but intimately connected. Both are acts of God. One concerns our position (justification) and the other our condition (regeneration). Both are co-ordinated in Titus 3:4-7.

c) **Relationship to Sanctification**: Sanctification is a process whereas justification is an act. However, in Hebrews the term sanctification (set apart once and for all for God's use) in a special sense, which is virtually the same as justification. Roman Catholicism confuses sanctification with justification. Nevertheless, justification leads to sanctification : Romans 3-5 concerns justification and Romans 6-8 concerns sanctification.

7. Erroneous Conceptions of Justification

a) **Justification by faith and works**: The Jews in Christ's day said that a man was justified on the grounds of his works. This view, which developed with the Pharisaical movement, is also found in some apocryphal books, and is, needless to say, in flat contradiction to the teaching of the books of the inspired canon (the Palestinian canon). In fact, due to the influence of the Pharisees, the doctrine dominated Judaism from the inter-testamental period, and still dominates Judaism. Moreover, it is clear that Roman Catholicism must have become infected with the same doctrine at an early stage through the influence of Judaisers within the church, and through the influence of pagan philosophy. Justification by faith alone was one of the first doctrines to become diluted in

the Early Church because of the growth of moralisation, spiritualisation and sacramentalism.

The Greek Fathers insisted on the value of works (without having evolved a sophisticated theory of merit) and on the power of baptism to wash away previous sins.

Augustine who represents the Latin West, went even further away from biblical teaching by confusing sanctification and justification. Unfortunately he had little or no knowledge of Greek and relied on Latin translations of the New Testament which translates *dikaioo* as *iustificare*. Justification means, according to him, not being accounted just but being made just (i.e. regenerate) by God so that we can start to co-operate in our own salvation and in order to achieve eventually deification.

Baptism takes care of original sin but not of subsequent sins.

The big stumbling block for him was post-baptismal sin which if mortal led to hell and if venial led to purgatory. In either case the future was not assured by justification. The work of grace, started with justification, could be neutralised or destroyed by mortal sin, but the guilt contracted after baptism can be removed by the eucharist in the case of venial sins, and by the sacrament of penance in the case of mortal sins.

Today the Roman Church still officially repudiates the doctrine of justification through faith alone: Council of Trent (Canon 12) "If anyone shall say the justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone by which we are justified, let him be anathema".

In stating their case thus, the Catholics were trying to safeguard the linkage between justification and sanctification, but in so doing they have obscured the original forensic meaning of the term and destroyed the doctrine of assurance which is based on original meaning.

Canon 24 says "If anyone shall say that the justice received is not preserved and increased in the sight of God through good

works, but that the said works are merely the fruits of justification received, but not a cause of the increase thereof, let him be anathema".

b) Double imputation/passive and active obedience

Evangelicals themselves sometimes put forward an account of justification as being a transaction whereby the righteousness of Christ (i.e his sinless life and perfect obedience of the Law) is credited to our account, but what is credited (or imputed) is in fact his sacrifice. We believe that it is the passive obedience (the cross) that is imputed to us, not his active obedience (his perfect life). It is also on these grounds that Abraham was justified: the future sacrifice of the Messiah was credited to his account and he was assured of a permanent right legal status with God. It was not because someone else's perfect performance was credited to his account. Marmorstein in his book entitled *The Doctrine of merits in old rabbinical literature* claims that "the doctrine of imputed righteousness was never thought of before rabbinical judaism proclaimed it", but by righteousness the rabbis meant "someone else's righteous performance", not the idea of a person's sin being transferred to an animal.

One could say that righteousness is imputed to us because we are "in Christ" and no longer "in Adam". While this is true, this is not the primary meaning of justification. Leon Morris makes this point in his book on the *Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*. While it is true that the reformers held this doctrine very strongly, one wonders whether they were not still influenced by the RC idea of the transference of merit. This was made necessary because the medieval church believed that the cross covered only their original sin. What is being imputed is not someone else's performance but a right standing based on a sacrifice. This was always the central OT idea. There was never any idea of the transference of merit from the lamb to the sinner: the lamb died in the place of the sinner, so that the sinner did not have to die.

Thus the verse 2 Cor 5,21: means "Christ was innocent of sin, and yet for our sake God made him a sin offering, so that we in him we might be put right with God" 1 Cor 1,30 ³⁰By God's act you are in Christ Jesus; God has made him our wisdom, and in him we have our right-standing with God, our holiness, our liberation. This means that his sacrifice appropriated is the basis of our rightstanding, consecration and future glorification. One can say, because he died, we have died (to sin), because he rose, we shall rise but not: because he lived a perfect life, we are counted as if we lived a perfect life. Rather, because he died on the cross, we are forgiven, put right with God.

Rom 5,19; For as through the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one man, many will be made righteous. The obedience here can hardly mean a sinless life, but rather one act of obedience, i.e. going to the cross for us.

We are not saying that the idea is unbiblical but what we are saying is that it properly belongs in the section "In Christ" and not in the section entitled "Justification".

c) **John Piper and justification:** Piper's 'justifying faith is conditioned upon good works'. Piper himself says emphatically at p.237 of his book '*Future Grace*' that 'The promise of future grace is *conditional*, but not earned'. Indeed, the whole premise of Piper's book '*Future Grace*' is that God justifies the believer because of his faith, but conditionally because of the works which will he will perform following that justification.

'Justification, according to Piper, includes both the initial act and its accompanying fruit, the evidential working of faith'. If then God justifies us, as Piper teaches, because he 'knows of our future works', then Piper's belief cannot be accommodated within Reformed theology. Instead, it reflects a distinctly Roman Catholic perspective – a faith and works salvation.

Justification, though it is always ultimately evidenced by sanctifying good deeds, is not conditional upon them.

d) **The Pietists** played down justification and concentrated on regeneration and sanctification. This led to an arminian theology.

e) **The Liberal theologians** have no place for judicial expressions in their thinking: for them they are merely symbols. Karl Barth, who was a neo-conservative, was only interested in positional sanctification which is, as we have seen, the OT equivalent of justification.

Existentialism tends to disregard anything objective. Because the historicity of the Cross is not taken seriously, nor is the once and for all aspect of it which results in objective acquittal of the believer (i.e. justification).

f) **Catholicism** repeats the Cross in the mass. Liberals see the Cross as exemplary only; Bultmann speaks of the "repetition of the kerygmatic event". Barth says: "because the event took place once and for all, therefore it is an event which is accomplished numerous times"!?

E. SANCTIFICATION

1. The Biblical Terminology

Sanctification means "being set apart" both in OT and NT (hebr "*qadosh*" = holy, gk "*hagios*" = holy). This terminology is used of God, He is the Holy One in that He is absolutely distinct and set apart from others. The word is used also of those whom He brings into association with Himself. A holy people are those whom He has set apart for Himself. Therefore we must reflect the character of the One to whom we belong.

2. Positional and Practical Sanctification

Positional sanctification (set apart for God at conversion, by the Holy Spirit) as used by the writer to the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 2:11, 12 etc) is virtually an OT word for justification with the stress on the fact of it being done once and for all. In this sense, Christians are called saints (I Cor 1:1, 2). Practical sanctification is a gradual process by which we are transformed by the Holy Spirit in us into the image of the Lord Jesus Himself (I Thes 4:13).

3. Sanctification in Christ and by the Spirit

The work of Christ is the basis of our sanctification just as it is of our justification. Christ has provided for our sanctification once and for all in the Cross. When we are justified, we are brought to a position where we can receive "grace upon grace", all through the work of Christ (Eph 5:25-7). In Heb 13:12 the word "sanctify" is in the aorist tense which refers to something that has been done once and for all. Heb 10:10, 14 refers to our having been sanctified (perfect tense) referring to a past action which has abiding consequences (Acts 26:18)

This work is applied to us by the Holy Spirit (I Cor 6:11, I Pet 1:2, II Thes 2:13) for He is the Spirit who brings us to Christ and effects our salvation. He is also the spirit who sanctifies us in a practical sense – he sets us apart for Christ and to Christ. Thus both positionally and spiritually, the Holy Spirit applies sanctification to us.

4. The Standard of Holiness

The standard is Christ Himself – nothing less (I Pet 1:15, 16). The position of the Law of God: in the broadest sense of the word, it reveals God's character and His will for us. There is a sense in which the Law is still valid for the Christian (Rom 6:12). But we are free from the Law as a way of salvation (Gal

3:13). We are free from the ceremonial aspects of the Law because they are all fulfilled in Christ (Gal 2:16-18). But we are not free from the moral law as an objective standard of holiness (Gal 5:13, Rom 12:8). It is in this sense that Paul says that love is the fulfillment of the Law; we are called to fulfill the Law, by love (i.e. by letting the Holy Spirit effectually work in us) – Gal 5:12 ff, Rom 12:8-10. The NT writers make it clear in this respect that Christ's life is a model for ours (Eph 4:15, Rom 8:28, 29, II Cor 3:18, I Pet 2:21 ff).

5. Differing Conceptions of Sanctification

Does practical sanctification eradicate sin or counteract the principle of sin within us? One or two passages do suggest eradication (Rom 6:6, Heb 2:14) but the verb used really means "to render inoperative" "to paralyse". I John 3:9, which speaks of the Christian not sinning, must be seen against the background of John combatting antinomianism which was characteristic of one branch of gnosticism. John is concerned to point out that salvation does affect character. His phrase refers to a continuous disposition (to sin as completely and fully as possible, so that "grace might abound"). Christ's nature, which is in a Christian by the Holy Spirit and which as such is incapable of sin, must have a transforming effect on the life of the Christian, otherwise one is entitled to doubt his profession. In the light of I Jn 2:1, John cannot be saying that a Christian cannot sin, for there he shows that if we sin, provision is made for us. However, the passage could also be referring to conversion, a once and for all experience. In I Thes 5.23 Paul views the sanctifying process as a whole – a totality affecting every part of our lives, and every level of our personality.

Gal 5:12-25 speaks of the Spirit warring against the flesh; the old nature is a reality but the Spirit has been given to us so that as we walk in the Spirit (in obedience to His promptings) our old nature should be paralysed.

Rom 12:1, 2 refers to a process flowing from a crisis (conversion mentioned in Romans 1-11). Paul exhorts his readers to "be constantly being transformed".

The word perfection is seen in the Bible in terms of maturity, and is used of Christians who have reached full growth in contrast to those who are immature or underdeveloped (Eph 4:13, Col 1:28, 4:12). Paul in Phil 3:15, makes a distinction between absolute and relative maturity; it is a question of adjustment both to our own spiritual environment and to the character of God (II Cor 13:9-11, Eph 4:12, I Thes 3:10, Heb 13:21, I Pet 5:10, II Tim 3:17, I Thes 5:23).

6. Doctrine and Experience

These are both intimately related. A doctrine is helpful in the measure that it leads to right living (Titus 2:11, I Tim 1:9-10, 6:4). There must be indicatives (doctrine) but also imperatives (orders). Sanctification has both negative and a positive aspect "put on ... put off". It is both passive and active – we receive and yet we are exhorted to walk (Eph 4:22-23).

7. Progress in the Christian Life

There must be first of all a reckoning by which we recognise that we are in Christ, not only federally but also in practice and effectually (by the Holy Spirit who indwells us). Then there must be identification: we must treat as facts that judgement was passed on our sins on the Cross and that their power and consequence were neutralized because their penalty was born. The secret of holy living is therefore in the mind; as we meditate on such truths and put them into practice. There must also be co-operation; we are set free by the Spirit so that we might co-operate with God. We are set free to be servants but in the sense of co-operators (Rom 6:14-23).

8. Differing Views on Sanctification:

a) **Sinless Perfectionism.**

Pelagius believed in the attainment of this through asceticism. But he also had a limited view of sin and an optimistic view of free will. The Roman Catholic Church envisages a "state of exterior perfectionism" (for monks) and a "state of interior perfection in which nothing hinders love in Action". The Anabaptists also held to sinless perfectionism in the 16th century (thus inheriting the spiritual and mystical tendencies of the Middle Ages). The Anabaptist leaders Hübmaier, Hof and Hut all held that the believer could attain a state of perfection while yet on earth. But the father of modern perfectionism is John Wesley. According to him, this state could be reached by a second experience of grace which liberated the believer from original sin and made perfect the holy obedience of love. This line of thought was carried on by Asa Mahan and Charles Finney and Oberlin College. According to them, only acts are good or evil; disposition of the heart cannot be so qualified. However, neither the Keswick movement nor the charismatic movement (both of which major on "second blessing") accept sinless perfectionism. The only passage that merits discussion is I Jn 3:6-10 where the verb "to sin" must be seen within the context of the gnostic controversy. For them it meant "to sin as completely as possible" so that "grace might abound" and "the soul be proved beyond the reach of the evil body". The apostle John is concerned to point out that no one who is a true child of God can possibly have such an attitude. A Christian cannot "remain in sin" indefinitely: the Holy Spirit will see that. There are also numerous exhortations for Christians to confess their sins, especially in the Lord's prayer. Proponents of sinless perfectionism very conveniently give their own definition of sin (freedom from all sin>freedom from all conscious sin>total consecration to God – all of which falls

short of the biblical definition) , and then on this basis claim that sinless perfectionism is possible.

b) **Antinomianism**. This comes in a number of forms:

1) Dualistic antinomianism, which was characteristic of Gnostic teaching. This maintains that salvation is for the soul only, and bodily behaviour is seen as irrelevant both to God's interests and to the soul's health, so a person may behave riotously and it will not matter. Much of John's first epistle was written against this.

II) Spirit-centred antinomianism, which puts such trust in the Holy Spirit's inward promptings as to deny any need to be taught by the Law how to live. Paul counters this by saying if a person is truly spiritual, he will acknowledge God's word as taught by Christ's apostles (1 Cor 14,37).

III) Christ-centred antinomianism maintains that God sees no sin in believers, therefore what they do makes no difference, provided they keep on believing. John's first epistle counters this by saying that it is not possible to be in Christ and to embrace a sinful way of life.

IV) Dispensational antinomianism maintains that keeping the moral law is not necessary for a Christian since he is living under grace. But Paul points out in Romans 3,31 and 1 Cor 6,9-11 that we are under the law of Christ, which means God's moral law as interpreted to us by the Spirit (as an inward thing).

V) Dialectical antinomianism (held by Barth and Brunner) maintains that the Spirit who guides us is a free agent and not subject to Scripture.

VI) Situationist antinomianism maintains that all God requires from us is the right motive and intention. The law is nothing more than a guide. Paul counters this in Romans 13,8-10 by saying that without love as a motive, specific demands cannot be fulfilled.

c) **Theosis.** The Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* wrongly confuses glorification with divinisation. Peter does talk about our being partakers of the glory of God, but that surely refers to the indwelling Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our future glorification.

F. SONSHIP

1. Regeneration

It is the supernatural, sanctifying work of the Spirit of God in our hearts by which a new and holy life is given.

a) **Its meaning:** Regeneration is an act of God within the heart, something internal which happens within the nature of man. Whereas justification is a new position, regeneration is a new condition. God changes both at the same time. By being born again into God's family by receiving the family spirit (the Holy Spirit) we receive a new nature, and at the same time, by adoption, we receive a new position.

b) **The Variety of Imagery:** used in the NT to describe regeneration:
new birth (Jn 1:12 ff, 3:1 ff, Gal 4:23, 29, Jas 1:18, I Pet 1:3, 23, I Jn 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4). This terminology appears in the work of the various NT writers and not exclusively in that of John.

I. **Eternal Life:** John emphasizes that it is something which is received now, though technically it belongs to the age to come into which Christians have already entered through the new birth. They have been born again into the new age, they have become partakers of the new creation, and to prove this they have received the life of the age to come, eternal life Jn 3:36, 5:24, 6:47).

II. Spiritual Resurrection: we are dead to life with God and to the possibilities which it brings, until He breathes new life into us. From a state of being spiritually dead (i.e. cut off from God) we have been resurrected to a new life of communion with God (Jn 5:24, Rom 6.13, Eph 2:1-5, 4:5, 5:14, I Jn 3:14).

III. Becoming a New Man: We have become the first-fruits of God's new creation. We have become new men by regeneration, which in contrast to the old man of the creation which is to be judged and which is doomed, that is, we have put on God's nature. As God plans to make "all things new", only new men have a part in God's future and so the future belongs to them alone. The old has no place in God's new creation (Eph 2:15, 4:24, Rom 12:2, II Cor 4:16, Col 3:10, Titus 3:5).

IV. A New Creation. Creation was one of the great acts of God. This image therefore brings out the greatness of regeneration. It is a re-creation and more, for it takes us beyond what Adam ever was (II Cor 5:17, 4:6, Gal 6.15, Eph 2:10, 4.24, Col 3:10). Circumcision of the heart: true religion is inward, not just outward (Rom 2:28, 29, Col 2: 11 ff, Deut 30:6).

c). **The Necessity for Regeneration.** Only one religious system in the world has ever been divinely ordained – the Jewish one. Yet Jesus said to a devout Jew that he must be born again (Jn 3:3, 5, 7, 3.14) which proves that the Jewish religion was a temporary ordinance which always had in mind a better way. There is the absolute necessity of a work outside us – the death of Christ to settle our legal problem before a Holy God, and inner regeneration to make what is legal, actual and real, so that God's purpose is put into effect Gal 6:15. It is because of our fallen nature that we need to be re-generated (life needs to be put into us again). Without regeneration we are dead

spiritually (cut off from God who is the source of all goodness)
Eph 2:1, I Tim 5:6:

d) **The divine origin of regeneration**: It is a supernatural act of God (Jn 1:13, I Jn 2:29). It is an act which is related to all three Persons of the Trinity: Father (Jas 1:17) Son (I Cor 15:45, Jn 1:3, I Pet 1:3) and Spirit (Jn 3).

e) **Its operation**. This raises the question of the precise relation of regeneration to conversion. Arminians would say that conversion precedes regeneration but it would be more accurate to say that both are aspects of the one divine and supernatural work in the heart of man. Conversion is that work seen from the manward side whereas regeneration is the same work seen from the Godward side. What is clear is that both the Word of God and the Holy Spirit co-operate in the same work. Baptism is an outward sign and proclamation of an inward reality – regeneration, by which the believer has been baptised by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ.

2) Adoption

a) **Its meaning**: Like justification it refers to a standing (position, relationship). The word in Greek (*huiiothesia*) means literally "placing as a son" or "to give the position of a son". It reflects the terminology of the family rather than that of the law court.

Many interpreters understand the term against its Roman background but the OT Jewish background is more important. The references, even in the NT, refer originally to Israel (Rom 9:4, 8:15, 23, Gal 4:5, Eph 1:5). However, in Roman society legal adoption was very important and implied the transfer of a child or adult from one family to another. It had to take place before witnesses. The determining factor was the choice of the adopting father. Although formal adoption seems to have been

unknown in the OT, informal adoption is reflected in the following passages: (Esther 2:7, Ex 2.10, I Ki 11:20, Gen 48:5). When Jacob adopts Ephraim and Manasseh they come into the same position as real sons of the family; they become equal heirs with the other children.

According to Greek custom, adoption was irrevocable: a natural son could be disinherited but not an adopted one.

b) **Sonship in the OT legal system:** The term must be seen against the background of the laws of inheritance. Sonship in the Bible essentially involves inheritance (Rom 8:11, Deut 21:15). The normal practice was as follows: the first-born son, on the father's death, became the new head of the family, received all the father's land and a double portion of the father's moveable goods. The remainder of the father's possessions were divided into a number of equal parts. The daughters did not inherit anything except when a man had no sons (Num 27:5-10). Esau sold this birthright to Jacob, but this was under exceptional circumstances. In addition, under some circumstances, the arrangement could be changed by the father (Gen 49:3-4, I Cor 5:1), but disinheriting was not very common. In II Ki 2:9 ff Elisha asks for a double portion which probably quite simply means that he wished to be Elijah's successor rather than that of any other prophet associated with him.

c) **The Sonship of Israel:** The promise made by God to Abraham is couched in the language of inheritance. These promises made to Abraham later formed the basis of God's word to Moses where the language of divine sonship begins to be used (Ex 3, 6:8, Ps 105:6-13, 42:5). The promised Land was even divided up amongst families rather than tribes (Lev 25:23, Josh 14:2, 15:13, 19:49-50) as the inheritance of Israel. This explains Naboth's objection to the suggestion that he should sell his plot of land (it had been given to him by God).

The OT also anticipates spiritual inheritance. One tribe, the Levites, had no inheritance in the land. God says that He Himself is their inheritance. God is Himself the true inheritance of His people and men are to seek a home in God Himself (Deut 18:1-2, Ezek 44.15, 28, Ps 15, 5-6, 73:26, 142:5).

d) **The Sonship of Christ:** There is a sense in which Christ's sonship is unique – as the only-begotten (meaning "only") he alone has absolute right to share all that the Father has (Jn 1:18, Rom 8:3, 32, Mk 1:11, Col 1:13, I Jn 4:9).

In apparent contradiction to this, Jesus is also called the Firstborn (Col 1:18, Rev 1:5) but the term has firstly reference to priority or supremacy. Jesus is supreme even in the human realm. We need to remember in this connection the two facts of His deity and of His humanity. In terms of deity, Jesus is unique: no one has, or ever can, have a relationship with God the Father, which is identical with that of Christ's. But as far as his humanity is concerned, He is not only superior to all but, through His resurrection, the first element in the Father's new creation and also the guarantee of this new creation. This position enables him to be superior to all created beings and the first of a long line of sons whom God will adopt into his family, with the difference that He is son by right whereas we are sons by adoption.

As the Only-begotten Son He is designated the heir of all things. Here illustrative language falls down; it does not mean that He will enjoy the inheritance when God the Father dies! Rather, the expression means that He shares all that the Father has (Heb 1.2, Mk 12:7, Jn 16.15).

e) **The Sonship of Christians:** a Christian becomes adopted into God's family by grace alone. Adoption in the Roman world was by the grace (unmerited kindness) of the adopting father.

How much more true is this in the spiritual realm (Rom 8:15, Gal 4:5, Eph 1:5)!

Sonship involves limitless inheritance. Although Christ is the Son of God in a unique sense and so the sole heir (Mk 12:7, Heb 1:2), Paul uses language that indicates that we are joint-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17, Heb 11:9). The Church is called the church of the first-born ones (Heb 12:23). There is a sense in which the full realisation of our inheritance is future (the resurrection will open the door to this) but we are also blessed now and may enjoy these blessings now, while we look forward to even greater ones. Sonship means that all racial and social barriers are broken down: (Gal 3:28, 19). Under the old covenant, inheritance was restricted to the Jew. The slave could not inherit property. The daughters of a family did not normally inherit. But in Christ all these barriers which were characteristic of a temporary and imperfect covenant, are done away with.

Sonship becomes ours in experience through the Holy Spirit: Christ made this possible for us through His death on the Cross but the Holy Spirit makes our inheritance real to us and applies it (Rom 8:15). Thus we have the same access to God the Father as Christ (Gal 4:6, II Cor 1:22, 5:5, Eph 1:14). The Holy Spirit is the guarantee and the seal of our inheritance. The universe is longing for the day when the sons of God will be delivered from the bondage of corruption and decay, i.e. when they shall be glorified. We wait for the adoption, not because we are not already sons, but because we wait for the full realisation of that sonship.

The Holy Spirit has already joined us to Christ and from then onwards sonship becomes a reality, and the process of sanctification begins by which the Holy Spirit moulds us into the image of that perfect Son, the Lord Jesus (we are being changed into His likeness). The Holy Spirit within us bears

witness that we are already the children of God. The Holy Spirit is the "earnest" (gr. *arhabon*) of our inheritance (in modern Greek the word means an engagement ring). This is a loan word from the Phoenician (and so a word connected with trade). When the Phoenicians came ashore to trade in carpets, an agreement was established between the merchant and buyer whereby the merchant left with the buyer a token carpet which was the guarantee of the rest of the consignment which had been paid for already and which would follow when the merchant returned. The pledge or foretaste (*arhabon*) had to be identical in quality with the rest of the consignment. The Holy Spirit is spoken of in terms of the first-fruits (the allusion here is to the OT incident when the spies or scouts brought back the grapes of Eschol as a token of the inheritance in Canaan). In the same way, the Holy Spirit is the guarantee and seal of our full inheritance.

G. ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

The two terms are often used as if they are synonymous but they are not. They are distinct but related terms. Election concerns the choice of **person** whereas predestination concerns the **purpose** for which they are chosen. Election asks "whom has He chosen?" whereas predestination asks "for what purpose has He chosen them?"

1) The Sovereignty of God in Salvation

a) **The concept of sovereignty** is by definition inseparable from the very idea of God, for a fundamental teaching in the Bible is that of the sovereignty of God over everything in the universe. When we think of God, we automatically think of One who is in control.

b) **God's sovereignty over everything in the universe** is basic to all that the Bible teaches. This is the presupposition of the prophets: that God is the Lord of history and uses nations to accomplish His purposes. God's sovereignty is implied by His very word and by prophecy.

c) **Divine Sovereignty in salvation** is but one aspect of this general sovereignty. Most, if not all, Christians believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation in a general way, even if they are not as specific as Calvin was. When man fell, God could have left him in sin and in a state of perdition, but God in His sovereignty chose to give us salvation. God has the prerogative of showing or of not showing mercy, but He has chosen to show mercy. Calvinists go further and say that God is sovereign in salvation, specifically in the salvation of the individual, for unless it is narrowed down to this, the whole expression loses its force. For the Calvinist it means God's choice of specific individuals to salvation.

d) **The sovereignty of God and human sin**: the Bible teaches that even the deeds of the wicked are not outside the scope of divine sovereignty, by which it means that God uses or can use the deeds of the wicked in order to accomplish His purposes in history (Ps 78:10, Is 10:5-19, Acts 2:23). It does not imply determinism. The Cross is the supreme example of this. The Cross is at the centre of the divine purpose of God and yet the accomplishment of it was due to the wickedness of men. At the same time it must be stressed that God is completely and utterly opposed to sin. Sin originates in the mysterious free-will of man. God ran a risk in creating man with a free will. God does indeed permit calamity as a means of judging men, but He is not the author of sin (Eph 1:11, Gen 45:8, 50:20). God can use an already existing situation (a sinful world) in order to accomplish his purposes, for this is the milieu in which fallen man lives, but it is man that is responsible for evil and sin in the world. As man of his own volition gave in to Satan (when

he didn't have to), it is he who is responsible for introducing evil into what was a perfect world (Rom 5:12).

2) Election in Biblical History

a) **The election of Israel:** as a first step towards the election of a Israel as a nation, God elects a series of individuals (the patriarchs) who receive exclusive promises from Him (Neh 9,7; Acts 13,17; Rm 9). This often means that God thereby reverses the natural order of things (often it is not the first-born who is chosen). Isaac is chosen and not Jishmael, Jacob and not Esau, Joseph and not the other brothers, Ephraim instead of Manasse. This leads ultimately to the choice of Israel as the nation to be his exclusive possession and to fulfil an historic purpose. This does not mean that every Israelite was saved because, at another level, God chose for salvation in the NT sense a remnant within Israel (see Romans 11,3).

The essence of the character of election emerges in this relationship with Israel: it was precisely because Israel was the undeserving object of God's electing love that He chose the patriarchs (Deut 4:37, 7:7-8, 9:4-6, 10:15). God chose Israel as a nation because He determined to set His love upon them and for no other reason. It was an electing love entirely undeserved by the recipients. However, it is important to note that the emphasis in these passages is on the election of Israel and not on the non-election of other nations (Mal 1:1-2). This is true of the doctrine of election in general.

b) **The election of individuals:** when we come to the NT, we note a change of emphasis. Whereas in the OT it has been a question of the election of a nation, in the NT it is a question of the election of individuals to salvation who are predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. Although this is often associated with sanctification, it has just as much to do with glorification. The doctrine of the OT remnant is enlarged to include the church. This emerges particularly in the Gospel of

John where Christ refers to "those whom you have given me" (Jn 6,37.39; 10,29; 17,2; 17,2.6-9.12.17). In John 10 Jesus refers to his sheep whom he calls out of Israel (represented by a sheep enclosure) and to which he adds those (Gentiles) who will believe through the testimony of the apostles. These are spoken of as if they already belong to him. Jesus tells the pharisees that they do not believe because they are not his sheep (10,26), not: you are not my sheep because you do not believe. Elsewhere Jesus insists that only those whom the Father draws can come to him (Jn 6,44.65).

In the book of Acts it is emphasised that repentance and faith are gifts of God (Acts 11,18; 18,27). In Acts 13,48 we are told that all those predestined to eternal life believed. It does not say: all those who believed obtained eternal life or: took the road that leads to eternal life). In Acts 18,10 Paul is told to persevere because he (Jesus) has many in this city who are his people. Once again, they are spoken of as if they were already his.

In Paul's epistles, the idea of divine election also emerges very clearly. In 1 Cor 1 we are told that God has chosen those who are of little importance in the world's eyes, as a deliberate policy. In 1 Thess 1,4 we are told that the manner of the Thessalonians' conversion points to their election. In Philippians 2,12-13 we are told that God provides the will to persevere. In Romans 8,28-30 it is important to realise that the same group is being referred to in each stage of the realisation of God's elective plan: those whom he foreknew...he also glorified. In Romans 9, in his discussion of the election of Israel, he sees this coming to ultimate fruition in the election of the remnant (that is: a group of individuals), of which the church is an enlargement.

The idea of election also occurs in the epistles of Peter (1 Peter 1,2). In 2 Peter 1,10 he calls on the elect to make their election sure, which really means that they are prove (show) by their conduct that they really are elect.

The book of Revelation speaks of those whose names have been written in the book of life since the foundation of the world (13,8; 17,8). See also 17,14.

c) **Christ as the Elect One:** Christ is the Great Elect One, on whom the favour of the Father rests and in Him alone is election related to descent (Mt 12:18, Lk 9:35, 23:35, Jn 1:34, I Pet 2:4-6).

d) **The election of Christians in Christ:** Eph 1:4 emphasizes the fact that Christians are chosen in Christ. Election, in this dispensation, relates to the Church and not to mankind as a whole (Lk 18:7k Jn 13:18, 15, 16, 19, Rom 8:33, Col 3:12, I Thes 1:4, II Tim 2:10, Titus 1:1, I Pet 2:9, 5:13, Rev 17:14). In fact the essential idea in election is the discriminating aspect of God's choice (between several alternatives). This needs to be stressed in view of the erroneous interpretation of this passage by Karl Barth (see below).

3) Election and Reprobation

a) **Single and double predestination:** Many people object to Calvinism on the grounds that it seems to teach predestination to damnation as well as predestination to salvation. Calvin himself taught this as do many Calvinists, and some would say that logic demands it, but we must be careful not to go further than Scripture does. The essence of predestination to salvation is that God made this decision prior to those individuals being born. There is absolutely no evidence of a parallel pre-temporal plan to damn other individuals. If predestination to salvation has its origin in God, the damnation of individuals has its origin in sinners and their sinful lives. The fact of pre-temporal predestination to salvation, shows that it has nothing to do with merit, because the individuals concerned had not yet even been born (i.e. done good or bad). When God hardened the heart of pharaoh, he locked him into a course of action which he had

already chosen himself. In no way did he predestine pharoah to behave the way he behaved: he used an already existing situation or mind-set (evil) to achieve his temporal purposes.

b) **Reprobation in the NT.** It must be said from the outset that whereas election is unrelated to merit, reprobation most certainly is related to merit. The word actually used in the NT (*adokimazo*) means to "reject after testing"! (Rom 1:28, II Cor 9:27, I Cor 13:5-7, II Tim 3:8, Titus 1:16). In all these passages what is in view is the sin of man. Moreover the contexts of the passages do not refer to the opposite of "election to salvation". The eternal damnation of those mentioned is not primarily in view but rather God's judgment on them by giving them up to their own desires, sometimes in order to accomplish His purposes. There is no indication that if God had not given them up, they would have been saved through being ipso facto the objects of God's election. A contrary interpretation of these passages stems from an entirely arbitrary arminian presupposition that if a man is not given up, he will automatically be saved, because God owes salvation to everyone.

Sometimes I Pet 2:8 and Jude 4 are quoted to substantiate double predestination, but this need not refer to anything more than that the conduct of such men was prophesied – they were bound to behave in this way, because of their basic antipathy to God and because of their heretical opinions about Him: the one is a natural consequence of the other. God had in the OT predicted the downfall of people of this type.

In conclusion it must be said that Scripture seems to teach predestination to salvation but not predestination to damnation.

e) **Predestination to holiness.** The elect are predestined to holiness of life; election must never be separated from sanctification. God's purpose is to lead us to holiness, i.e. to

transform us into the likeness of Jesus (Rom 8:29, 30, I Cor 2:7, Eph 1:5, 11). Election is never an invitation to lethargy.

f) **Election and foreknowledge.** I Pet 1:2 says that we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God". Arminians would say that the key to predestination is that God has chosen not persons, but a certain method of salvation. Unfortunately this statement is hardly born out by a serious examination of the word "foreknowledge". Whereas the knowledge of facts is purely intellectual, the knowledge of persons is personal. Knowledge in Scripture usually has a personal connotation; to know a person means essentially to have some sort of relationship with him. This is certainly true of God's knowledge of men (Amos 3:2, Hos 4:1, 6:6, 13:4, Ps 1:6, Mt 7:23, I Cor 8:3, Gal 4:9). In Romans 8:29 and 11:2 the expression cannot just mean that God knew about the persons concerned. To say that God foreknew certain persons has little sense if it merely means that He knew which way they would decide, for He (being omniscient) knows how everyone will decide anyway. Foreknowledge when used of persons in Scripture denotes the foreordained fellowship between God and the objects of his saving counsels. It indicates God's self-determination to enter into such fellowship, preceding the realisation of it. Foreknowledge means essentially God's prior determination to enter into fellowship with his people, and, more specifically, with certain people (Gen 18:19, Jer 1:5, Ex 33:12). It is virtually a synonym for election.

g) **Objections to election.** Does not God desire the salvation of all? (II Pet 3:9). To save man is certainly God's antecedent will and pleasure, and springs from Himself, but to punish man for his rebellion is part of God's consequent will and permission, and has its origin in us. Because man has abused his freedom, God is compelled to make a response which is different from His eternal purpose of grace. What happens by God's consequent will and permission, the punishment of the sinner,

is actually the frustration of God's antecedent will and purpose that all should be saved. Satan, who is the guardian of God's consequent will and permission, becomes the enemy of God's true purposes of grace, because he treats that which is secondary and relative to man's sin, as if it were the absolute will of God. In spite of this apparent dilemma, God has determined that the Public Prosecutor, Satan, shall not have the last word, and so He has determined to save those whom He will save: He has elected some to salvation. Jesus will build His Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (i.e. hold it back) = the power of death (hades) will not be able to prevent it being resurrected to a glorious new existence (eternal life in the ultimate sense of the term).

But what about I Tim 2:4 and II Pet 3:9? The first quotation (God wants all to be saved) appears to refer to God's antecedent will and purpose: He loves the world and wants to save people. It does not mean that He has determined that every single man will be saved. His general desire for mankind is that all alike shall enjoy salvation. II Peter 3:9 (He is patient with you because He does not want anyone to be destroyed) seems to be much the same sort of statement.

Some would say that election represents God as unjust and impersonal, but this argument is invalid, for justice demands the condemnation of all. In any case we cannot dictate to God what He should or should not do.

Some say that it cuts the nerve of evangelism. This is certainly true of the hyper-Calvinist, but for others who hold this doctrine this should not be the case, for on the one hand we know something of God's plan, and on the other we have our orders to preach the Gospel among all nations. Unless we have an assurance that God will do the rest, our evangelism will be done "in the flesh" and in reliance on techniques.

Some say that it inspires fatalism and anti-nomianism. This is not necessarily the case for God operates in sanctification through justification – the two are linked (where there is no regeneration, there has been no justification). God calls the man whose will has been set free to co-operate with the Holy Spirit. A balanced Calvinism accepts human responsibility as a very important factor.

The Gospel is proclaimed to men and calls for their repentance and faith in Christ and His finished work of atonement. The necessity for repentance and faith is real, but they cannot be accomplished by the unaided will because of its involvement in sin. It is accomplished only in those whom God has unconditionally chosen and affected by the Holy Spirit who sets the will free to perform them.

h) **Supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism**: this debate (which is only pertinent to calvinists) centres around the moment when God drew up the number of those whom he intended to save. The supralapsarians say that he did it before creation and then used the fall as a means of implementing this decision. The infralapsarians say he did it after the fall: i.e. he reacted to a situation. Neither point of view seems to be entirely satisfactory. The problem is that we are limited by our grasp of God and of eternity. It is clear that God must at one level of his consciousness know the end from the beginning but to say that God deliberately allowed the fall so that he could carry out his purpose is perverse. On the other hand, God is never taken aback by events. It is clear that God built enough elasticity into creation to allow for a fall, which he must have known at one level of his conscience would happen. Infralapsarians would say (against the other point of view) that it is impossible for God to choose people who have not yet been created. While this may be true logically, we are looking at things with our puny minds and God is greater than our minds.

i) **The Gospel Call**

I) **The External Call:** This comes through hearing the call to repentance and faith, which is in the Gospel itself. The Gospel of itself has an element of invitation (Mt 22:1-14, Lk 14:16-24, Acts 17:30, Rev 22:17). It is clearly God's will that the Gospel should be widely preached. It is also clear from Scripture that failure to accept the Gospel as it is preached is due to human sin and therefore culpable, for which man is held accountable to God (Rom 9:30-10:21, Acts 7:51). What binds man is internal – his own sin.

II) **The Internal Call:** This general call is accompanied by a particular effectual call to the elect (Mt 22:14). The word "called" is used of Christians (I Cor 1:24, II Tim 1:9) and therefore must refer to those who have responded to the call, which in turn means that the call has been effectual. In this special sense of the word, "to call" virtually means "to bring to faith", and "the called" really means "those whom God has brought to faith in Christ" or "the converted" (Rom 1,6; 8,28-30; 9,24; 1 Cor 1,24-26; 7,18-21; Gal 1,15; Eph 4,1-4; 2 Thess 2,14). The calling is linked with election (Rom 8:28, 9:11, II Pet 1:10). In this special call, all whom God the Father has given to Christ are effectively drawn to Him by the Holy Spirit. In this particular sense, Christ speaks to those whom the Father has given Him (Jn 6:37, 17:6, 9, 20, 24). These are drawn (Jn 6:44, 65, 12:32) from all kinds of men. The call is not irresistible but rather, invincible, because the grace of God always triumphs in the end.

j) **Grace:** this term really means God's desire to save sinners and, more particularly, his determination to save some. In the NT the term (gr. *charis*) virtually refers to the cross – the supreme example of God's gracious dealing with man in providing a sacrifice for their sins and so a way of salvation.

(Gen 6:8, Ex 33:13, Titus 2:11, Eph 2:5). By grace are you saved through faith (Eph 2,4)

Grace stands in opposition to all ideas of human merit. A person cannot partly merit the grace of God for it excludes all merit. Eph 2:4-9 "not of yourselves .. not of works" Rom 6:23. It has been rightly said that the ultimate logic of the arminian position is salvation by merit.

Grace is sovereign: it is associated with divine election. In Rom 11:5-6 Paul speaks of a "remnant chosen by grace" cf also Eph 1:4-6. It is also effective in that it achieves God's purposes in applying the work of Christ to the believer, both in justification and sanctification. Heb 10:29, Gal 2:21, and II Cor 6:1 seem to indicate that God's grace can be resisted, but this does not refer specifically to efficient grace.

F. VARIOUS VIEWS

Josephus gives us an overview of the various views held at the time of Christ:

- I. The saducees like the epicureans (who held to absolute free will) emphasised the importance of chance and said that man was entirely free to choose.
- II. The essenes were like the stoics who maintained that everything is predetermined by God. This view is found in the writings of Qumran.
- III. The pharisees held an intermediate position (not unlike platonism): history is to be explained partly by divine predestination and partly by human will.

As the Christian church grew, various points of view developed:

- 1). **The Greek Fathers** tended to emphasise the importance of free will as they spent most of their time fighting against fatalism (not only of stoicism but also of astrology). As most of them were influenced by platonism they tended to hold an optimistic view of human nature (and capacity to chose). The church in the West although much more pessimistic as regards

free will, was obliged to give prominence to it because of its obsession with the doctrine of merit.

2). **In the 5th century the advent of Pelagius** caused the subject to be debated in earnest. This Irish monk came to Rome preaching a theology of merit and asceticism in which free will played a key role. This caused Augustine to react violently and state his case for election as being the cause of salvation, not free will. However it is necessary to point out that the key to Augustine's position is an amalgum of platonistic monism and biblical monotheism. As God is being itself, we are entirely dependent on Him. Monotheism excludes other factors like man's efforts to earn his salvation.

3). **In the Middle Ages** most Catholics were semi-pelagian, though some of the big names were Augustinian.

Thomas Aquinas started off as a semi-pelagian but later embraced Augustinianism, even though this goes against the logic of his theology of merit. In the 9th century the monk Gottschalk had been condemned for teaching double predestination. The precursors of the Reformation (Hus, Wycliffe etc) were Augustinians.

4). **When the Reformation came**, Luther was strongly Augustinian. His background of late medieval pietism which placed much emphasis on passivity made him very open to Augustine's ideas. However, his successor Melancthon was semi-pelagian though held to the idea of original sin and it is he who set the tone for future Lutheran belief. Luther had a peculiar view (which inherited from Augustin) for a reprobate (one who will not be ultimately saved) person to be saved and regenerate for a while, but then to lose his salvation. This view presumably has its origin in sacramentalism (the effectiveness of the sacraments as a means of grace). A Calvinist would say that such a person was never saved in the first place. Calvin taught double predestination. Zwingli also mostly taught determinism. Calvin's point of departure is the majesty of God which he felt had been compromised by the medieval pantheism of the Catholic church (Mary and the saints were

treated as quasi-divine), but in subsequent editions of his *Institutes* he was obliged to expand what he said on predestination, as the controversy got hotter and hotter.

5). **Within the Catholic fold**, the Jesuit Pierre Molina (d. 1600) advanced a theory that sought to avoid the extremes of arminianism. He says that predestination works as follows: God knows which way people will react to a given situation, so he engineers the right conjunction in order to achieve his purposes. The importance of this theory has to be seen within the context of a dispute between Jesuits and Dominicans and later, Jansenists and Jesuits. The franciscans on the other hand remained firmly nominalist and so pelagians, emphasizing free will in their preaching.

6). **Arminius** reacted against the hypercalvinism of second generation calvinists, but he did not base himself on Pelagius but on a new idea that was becoming popular with the rise of humanism: man's unlimited free-will. Hugo Grotius, the founder of international law, eventually became its most redoubtable proponent. It can be said that arminianism eventually paved the way for liberalism.

7). **Baptists** (general, not particular) and pietists were in the main semi-pelagian.

8). **Wesley** was a firm arminian and this tendency was continued by holiness churches and pentecostalism. The Enlightenment also favoured arminianism.

9). **19th century liberalism** sees the growth of an idea which is neither calvinistic nor arminian (but hegelian), and can be discerned in the views of Karl Barth. He argues that as Christ is the elect one and we are in Christ (Eph 1,4: before the foundation of the world he chose us in Christ), this makes us elect also. However, by the word "we" he understands the whole of humanity. In proof of this Barth would cite the text of Romans 11,32: "For in shutting all mankind in the prison of their disobedience, God's purpose was to show mercy to all mankind (that is: on both Jews and Gentiles)." He claims that Jesus became reprobate for us so that we might become elect in

Him. Where this all leads is shown by the reply that Pierre Maury (disciple of Barth) gave to a questioner after one of his lectures. Question: "Will Gandhi be saved?" Answer: "I don't know but I know that Jesus Christ is Gandhi's saviour and I have confidence in Jesus Christ." For Maury it is inconceivable that he would not be saved! Does it not say that "God is the saviour of all men and in particular of believers "? (1 Tim 4,10).

10). **Calvinism was revived** after WWII and met with some success (see James Packer), but there were also strong reactions (Marston, Forster, Pinnock) usually based on a pentecostal agenda which includes arminianism..

11). **Today**, because of the prevailing climate of general biblical illiteracy, calvinism is a dead letter and arminianism has virtually wiped the board.

12) **Definition of terms:**

a) **Pelagianism**: regards man as having been given grace in his original constitution . He does not need any new inner dynamic to enable him to do the will of God. Divine grace is seen as a mere aid given to man to help him in his life of godliness.

b) **Semi-Pelagianism**: divine grace is supernatural, eternal and indispensable but the initiative comes nevertheless from man. Man therefore takes the first step in salvation.

c) **Arminianism**: salvation must in justice be offered to all. Grace is given to men sufficient to enable them to make a free decision.

d) **Wesley's modification** of Arminianism: salvation is offered to all because of divine grace, not must be offered, but is offered.

e) **Augustinianism and Calvinism**: salvation is available only to the elect in whom the will is set free to receive salvation by efficient grace.

13) **The Points at Issue**

a) **The Nature of Divine Grace**: – sufficient grace (Arminian standpoint) or efficient grace (the Calvinist standpoint). Sufficient grace means that God's grace (his giving of Christ on the Cross) is sufficient to save anyone who responds to it, by choice. It makes salvation a live option. However, efficient grace means that grace effects and secures the response. It has a persuasive effect on the will. Thus it is grace that secures salvation and produces it.

b) **The Character of Election and Predestination**: the Arminian thinks that it is conditional upon faith; it is conditional upon the individual's repentance as foreseen by God. The Calvinist says that grace is unconditional; it is not conditional on anything in man – it is all of God.

c) **The Nature of the Gospel Call**: it is important to distinguish between the external and the internal call. The external call designates the call delivered when the Gospel is preached; all men are called to repent and believe. The internal call indicates the call of the Holy Spirit within the soul. Calvinists hold that all who hear the Gospel receive the external call but that only the elect receive the effectual, internal call. Arminians, however, regard both as merely two aspects of the same call: God gives opportunity for salvation but everything ultimately depends on the will of the person.

d) **The Nature of Assurance**: the Arminian maintains that assurance of present salvation, but not of ultimate salvation. The Calvinist believes in the assurance of ultimate salvation as

well as present. The Hyper-Calvinist tends to undermine the doctrine of assurance altogether.

e) **The Condition of the Human Will:** for the Pelagian the will is free. For the Arminian, although it is in bondage, it has sufficient freedom at the point of decision to enable it to decide. For the Calvinist, the will is in complete bondage until set free by God's intervention from outside, in order to receive salvation.

14) **Human Responsibility and Freedom**

a) **Man as a Responsible Being:** God always treats man as a responsible being – He does not treat him as an automaton, but speaks to his will. The Bible addresses many commands to man's will, and commands assume that we are responsible beings. Man is held to be responsible to God in his response to the truth and revelation of God.

b) **The Effect of Sin on Man's Freedom:** A personal being expresses what is in his character by his actions. This is even true of God. Man's character is formed by his habits.

I) We must therefore define human freedom not as indeterminism (a person may do whatever he wants at any time) nor as mechanical determinism (entirely determined by circumstances, inward heredity etc). Human freedom lies rather in self-determinism – i.e. what I do, will be determined by my character. Man's moral freedom is therefore limited, in fact by sin which as a principle pervades his being (Jn 8:34, Rom 8:34, 6:16, II Pet 2:19).

II) By himself, man is sure to reject the Gospel. If man rejects the commands of God in His law and does not respond to God's revelation in the past, he is no more likely to respond to God's command in the present to repent and believe the Gospel.

Repentance and faith seem to be utterly beyond the power of man (Jer 13:23). In fact, repentance and faith are viewed in Scripture as divine gifts (Acts 5:31, II Tim 2:25, Eph 2:6-8, II Thes 2:13-14, Acts 18:27, Lk 17:5).

III) Failure to accept the Gospel as preached is culpable (Rom 9:30-10:21). Paul speaks of man's responsibility and makes it clear that man is culpable for failing to accept the Gospel (Acts 7:51 ff). Man is thus not externally but internally bound; he is enslaved by the sin of his own character. He is impotent but responsible.

IV) The liberty of the Christian man is essentially as follows: he is only really free when nothing that could injure him has any power over him. The NT teaches that Christ makes men free in this sense (Jn 8:36, Rom 8:2-4).

15) **The Balance of Truth**

a) Scripture contains paradoxical lines of teaching concerning divine and human factors in salvation and justification. This phenomenon is found widely in both the OT and NT. It often happens that two seemingly contradictory facts are laid side by side (Rom 9, 10).

b) Neither extreme Calvinism nor extreme Arminianism does full justice to the facts. Complete logical coherence always comes at the expense of some biblical truth.

c) We should not force evidence into a logical mould in such a way as to do violence to Scripture. We must note the place and the limits of logic in theology. The function of logic is to analyse and to systematise the data of revelation, and we should beware of trying to fill in the rest with speculation.

d) Both sides of a paradox contain important truths. The spiritual life and the ministry of the word both suffer if we neglect either side. We are commissioned to preach the whole counsel of God and dare not therefore select our preferences or be selective for the sake of logical consistency.

e) These truths meet even in this life in the experience of the Christian. He is both aware of divine grace and of a moral struggle.

f) Our attempts at logical syntheses are frustrated by the twin problems of the inscrutable counsels of God and the unfathomable mystery of the human personality. We cannot fully comprehend the counsels of God (if we could, he would cease to be God). Scripture teaches that God has a plan of election, yet does not desire that any should perish. Nor do we fully understand how man works – even ourselves. somewhere divine and human will are reconciled.

g) The true cause of human salvation is the grace of God. It is clear that man does not deserve salvation . In fact every man deserves condemnation. Yet God always takes the initiative in salvation. The Bible also speaks of election; the ground of our salvation is in God, not in us. There are also passages which speak of repentance and faith as gifts of God. There are also passages where God is said to draw men to Christ (Jn 6:37, Phil 2:12, 13).

h) The true cause of the judgement of man is his sin. If repentance and faith have God as their author, we always find that justice (in the sense of judgement, condemnation) is related to sin. All righteousness in the universe is attributable to God and so all sin stems from man. Man is judged for his sin; this is the doctrine of human responsibility. Salvation is to be attributed in totality to God, just as judgement must be attributed to man's sin.

i) Scripture teaches that God is implacably opposed to sin. God is not the author of sin.

j) Scripture teaches that God governs a universe in which sin exists at the present time. God is sovereign over righteous beings and is the author of their righteousness. Although he is also sovereign over all evil beings, this does not mean that He is the author of sin. We cannot perhaps understand the existence of sin in a God-dominated world, but we must remember that sin is by definition irrational.

k) The heart of the Christian may rest, even in an apparent antinomy, because he trusts the God of infinite wisdom and perfect love. Here we must walk by faith, trusting God even though we do not fully understand. If we understood everything, there would be little room for a walk of faith.

G. CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

Assurance is the conviction of our right-standing with God. The idea even occurs in OT contexts: Heb 11:14, Ps 23, Ps 40:1-4.

1) **Christ gave to many the assurance of sins forgiven.** A word of assurance came to them in just the same way as it comes to us through the Scriptures (Mt 9:2, Lk 7:47-48). In the writings of Paul we find the same note: Rom 8:35, II Tim 1:12. The Roman Catholic Church condemned the doctrine of assurance as an ontologism in 1867. They say that assurance is only given by God to certain select people, of whom Paul was one. This doctrine is also repudiated in rationalistic circles as presuming to know what goes on in the metaphysical world. But we find in experience that the Holy Sence witnesses through the Scriptures (II Cor 13:5, Rom 8:15-17, Acts 5:32). Abraham gained assurance in the OT through an objective

word from God. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells of the full assurance of faith but it also warns us of the danger of self-deception. Moreover, assurance is related to character in Scripture - I John has this as its great theme (I Jn 2:3-11, 4:7-8, 20-21). II Peter 1:5-12 tells us to make our calling and election sure (that is, to ourselves). Assurance is the privilege of the child of God and a by-product of faith.

2) But Scripture is not merely content to assure us of present salvation; it assures us of ultimate salvation essentially. This brings up the question of eternal security.

a) The decisive character of regeneration and justification. These both refer to acts which take place in a point in time – neither is a process. As acts wrought by God, they are decisive. It is never suggested in the NT that either may take place a second time. Moreover, the perfect tense is used in many expressions involving justification and regeneration (Jn 5.24, I Jn 3:14, I Jn 5:18). This tense implies that something has happened, the consequences of which are abiding and permanent.

b) The eternal character of election (II Thes 2:13 ff, II Tim 1:9, 10, Rom 8:28-30) is stressed in Scripture. God does not temporarily elect people to salvation – it is a contradiction in terms.

c) The significance of the indwelling Spirit. We are told that we must not grieve the Holy Spirit by Whom we have been sealed (Eph 4:30).

d) The persistence of divine purpose (Phil 1:6-7, Rom:31-39, Jude 1, Jn 17:11-2, Jude 24, II Thes 3:3, II Tim 1:12, I Pet 1:5) is also a determining element in this discussion.

e) **Christ intercedes for us and it is His task to see that we get to heaven.** He is the Perfect High Priest and we are in His charge (Jn 17:15, Lk 22:32, Rom 8:32,39). It is significant that Paul speaks of Christ's intercessory ministry before he speaks of no one being able to separate us from the love of God.

H. WARNINGS AGAINST APOSTASY

The strongest of them are found in the following passages: Jn 15:26, I Cor 9:2-6 ff, Gal 5:2-5, Heb 6:4-8, Jas 5:19-20. While warnings in Scripture are to be taken at their face value and are extremely serious, the above references could conceivably be taken as referring to:

1) In the Gospels, the nation of Israel taken as a whole in its response to Jesus the Messiah rather than the Church as such (the company of the elect). This may also explain certain reference in Hebrews. The recipients of this letter would, by going back into Judaism where there is no sacrifice for sin, automatically cut themselves off from the Messiah and damn themselves. But their defection would prove their true allegiance anyway. The author says he is persuaded of better things for his readers (because he has reason to believe that they really are regenerate).

2) Other passages could be understood as referring to service and reward. A Christian, through persistent disobedience, may disqualify himself from the race, and from further service, and thus lose his reward (but not his salvation).

3) It may refer to those who are not regenerate, though they come along to the meetings. Just as not all Israel were regenerate, so not all outward members of the Church are necessary regenerate. Some people's true colours are not revealed until the elapsing of a fairly long period of time.

Eventual apostasy proves non-election (I Jn 2:19, Mt 13, II Pet 2:17-22).

4) In some cases the passages may refer to punishment of Christians by physical death (I Cor 10, Jas 5:19).

I. PERSEVERENCE AND PRESERVATION

In Scripture we have on the one hand strong statements about the eternal nature of salvation, but on the other hand very strong warnings against apostasy (complete, willful turning away). Calvinists take the first group as the norm and attempt to reconcile the second group to this. The Arminians on the other hand, do exactly the reverse.

Calvinists like to quote certain passages regarding eternal security. The reaction of the Arminians is to say "if a man remains in the faith" (a factor which is not certain, as it depends on man). When Arminians quote texts (i.e. the warnings) which appear to contradict the Calvinist positions, the Calvinist replies "But God will grant perseverance to the true believer". These seem to be two symmetrical statements or ideas but in fact they are not. It is not a contradiction for God to impose a condition ("if you persevere") and then Himself cause the condition to be fulfilled. On the other hand it is contradictory to attribute perseverance to grace and yet to consider the decisive factor to be independent of God (that is; free will). How has God the power to keep the believer if that power stops at free will? We have no reason to exclude ourselves or our stupidity from the list of factors that might separate us from God as stated in Rom 8:39 (cf also Jn 10:28).

The Bible teaches that we are preserved but that God preserves us through our perseverance i.e. preservation does not follow regeneration automatically. In this, as in every other realm, God uses the means of grace. The Bible is a means of grace in

salvation through its promises. The means of grace in sanctification comes through commands but in preservation they come through warnings. If we ignore warnings we are less likely to take the necessity for perseverance seriously. The evidence that we belong to Christ must be a continuing reality. We are called not just to the act of faith but to a walk of faith, an attitude of faith. There are times when we need especially to remember promises; when we are depressed or low. At other times we need especially to remember warnings; when we are careless or presumptuous. Promises and warnings are therefore means of grace for different occasions. The Bible views truth at two levels, each of which is important:

I) the level of human responsibility – Scripture exhorts us to repent and to keep walking.

II) God has contracted to keep me but I need the dependence on His keeping power. We often desire intellectual answers to this problem but it is a spiritual issue.

PNEUMATOLOGY

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Introduction

When we think of the word 'spirit' we automatically think of something that is less than personal. However, we must remember that God Himself is in essence a spirit being. In fact the expression 'Holy Spirit' is a synonym for God's Spirit. Initially the word 'spirit' is used to describe the action of an invisible, powerful, and mysterious power, which is nevertheless personal. He is seen at work in the creation, together with the Father and His Word. He is seen in the action of the wind (God's agent) or in the ecstatic speech of the prophets. Among the later prophets, however, it is revealed that the work of God's Spirit would belong primarily to the end times. The rabbis regarded Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi as the last of the prophets, after which the Spirit of God had been withdrawn. (Only in the Qumran community was there any sort of expectation of His return). It is therefore not surprising that John the Baptist created quite a stir when he claimed to be inspired by the Spirit of prophecy and proclaimed that the outpouring of the Spirit was imminent. Jesus created an even bigger stir by proclaiming that the new age, the kingdom of God, was already effective through his ministry: the eschatological Spirit was already working through him in a unique way. Not only did he possess the Spirit without limitation, but he promised it to those who would believe in him. This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost when the Church was born. The New Age began at Pentecost, but it was prepared for by the ministry of Jesus (his teaching, death, resurrection, glorification and subsequent gift of the Spirit). The Jew lived by the Law (Tora) which was the deposit of the Spirit's work of revelation in the past. This led to inflexibility and casuistry. But the Spirit brought a direct personal relationship with God and made worship and obedience something much more free, vital

and spontaneous. Moreover, the believer can live a life in which he not only responds to the voice of the Spirit (in conjunction with the Word of God), but is also enabled to live as God wants by the Spirit's power. Finally, the indwelling Spirit is the beginning and guarantee of final salvation, the resurrection and glorified state. It is nothing less than 'Christ in you — the hope of glory', that is the guarantee of your final salvation.

A. THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. His personality: whatever conclusions we might come to from reading the OT, the NT makes quite plain that the Spirit is a person. We see this in the following ways:

Although the Greek noun for spirit (*pneuma*) is neuter, the Spirit is always referred to as he, not it (Jn 16,13), which is grammatically wrong but theologically true.

2. His title — the *Parakletos* — is a personal one. Jesus says He is another one like me. Paul refers to grieving the Holy Spirit: a power can be resisted, but only a person can be grieved.

3. His deity: a) He is referred to as the Spirit of the Lord — God's Spirit in the OT.

b) Jesus speaks of the sin against the Holy Spirit as being more serious than the sin against the Son of man (i.e. Jesus in his incarnate state).

c) Passages referring to him within the context of the Trinity (Three divine persons) show him to be divine.

B. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

1. In the OT.

His main activities are to reveal God's word to his prophets and to enable his servants (agents) to carry out his will.

1. In the OT, the Spirit is God's power in action. God's Spirit is God himself present and at work. It is God's energy at work. He is seen at work in the following ways.

- a. He shapes creation, animates animals and mankind, and directs nature and history (Gn 1,2; 2,7; Jb 33,4; Ps 33,6; Ps 104,29-30; Is 34,16).
- b. He reveals God's messages to his spokesmen, the prophets (Nu 24,2; 2 Sam 23,2; 2 Chr 12,18; 15,1; Neh 9,30; Jb 32,8; Is 61,1-4; Ezk 2,2; 11,24; 37,1; Mi 3,8; Zc 7,12).
- c. He teaches by these revelations the way to be faithful and fruitful (Neh 9,20; Ps 143,10; Is 48,16; 63,10-14).
- d. He brings out in believers faith, repentance, obedience, righteousness, teachability, praise and prayer (Ps 51,10-12; Is 11,2; Is 44,3; Ezk 11,19; Ezk 36,25-27; 37,14; 39,29; Joel 2,28-29; Zc 12,10).
- e. He equips for strong, wise and effective leadership (Dt 34,9; Jdg 3,10; 6,34; 11,29; 13,25; 14,19; 15,14; 1 Sam 10,10; 11,6; 16,13; 2 Ki 2,9-15; Is 11,1-5; 42,1-4).
- f. He gives skill and application for creative work (Ex 31,1-11; Hg 2,5; Zc 4,6).

2. Prophecies regarding a future work of the Spirit

a. The Spirit was the personal gift of the Messiah. This implies that he could not be given until after the atoning work of the Servant had cleared the ground. First, sins had to be forgiven and only then could the Spirit be given.

Peter argues in his first sermon that the outpouring of the Spirit proves that Jesus is the Messiah (Acts 2,32-36). Jn 7,38 suggests that the streams of living water would flow out from the Messiah (cf. Zah 13,1; 14,8; Is 44,3; 55,1), which means that he is the Giver of the Spirit.

John the Baptist says quite clearly that the Messiah is going to baptise with the Spirit — i.e. people are going to be baptised by the Spirit into the messianic community.

b. There will be a proliferation of gifts to all sorts of people (not just special people as previously). Every member of the messianic community will have a spiritual gift (Joel 2,28-32). For the sake of the Church, these phenomena, which belong to

the end times (as does the kingdom), have been brought forward.

c. The OT activity of the Spirit was largely limited to spiritual gifts. However, many prophecies indicated that a new outpouring would be related to a new covenant under which a new type of relationship would be possible that was unknown in the OT. John says that until Pentecost the Holy Spirit had not been given — this is surely a hyperbole, meaning that he had not been previously given in this new way. Rather than being a juxtaposition of gift and person, the Spirit will now live in people, in whom he will reproduce the fruit of the Spirit. The verse in the Gospel of John which reflects this distinction is: He is with you, but he will be in you (John 14,17b). cf. also Jer 31,33: I will put my law in them and write it on their hearts. Since this is a prophecy, it is clear that this sort of relationship between God and the believer did not exist in the OT.

3. In the NT.

He is identified with the OT Spirit of God. Now, however, he appears as a Person, distinct from the Father and the Son, with a ministry of his own.

Over and above his previous OT functions, he is now given to the Church as a second paraclete, that is, one taking over Jesus's role as counsellor, helper, strengthener, supporter, advisor, advocate and ally.

Like the Father and the Son, he acts only as a person can do — he hears, speaks, convinces, testifies, shows, leads, guides, teaches, prompts speech, commands, forbids, desires, helps, intercedes with groans (Jn 14,26; 15,26; 16,7-15; Acts 2,4; 8,29; 13,2; 16,6-7; 21,11; Rom 8,14.26-27; Gal 4,6; 5,17-18; Heb 3,7; 10,15; 1 Pet 1,11; Rev 2,7).

Again, like the Father and the Son, he can be personally insulted, blasphemed (Mt 12,31-32), lied to (Acts 5,3), resisted, (Acts 7,51), grieved by sin (Eph 4,30).

The name (singular, meaning 'revealed reality') of the one God, now takes the form of three divine persons together, Father,

Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28,19). This is especially seen in the trinitarian accounts of God's activity (Jn 14,16-16-15; Rom 8,1; 1 Cor 12,4-6; 2 Cor 13,14; Eph 1,3-14, 2,18; 3,14-19; 4,4-6; 2 Thess 2,13-14; 1 Pet 1,2; Rev 1,4-5).

The Spirit's second task as Paraclete is to mediate knowledge of, and union and communion with, the physically withdrawn, ascended and glorified Saviour. It is therefore logical that only after Jesus' return to glory could this aspect of the Spirit's ministry start (Jn 7,37-39; Jn 20,22 is clearly acted prophecy, indicating that the Spirit is the personal gift of the Messiah). The Holy Spirit is therefore none other than that member of the eternal Godhead who applies in the life of God's people the fruits of the victory won by Christ in his life, death and resurrection. This ministry entailed the following:

a). **Revealing Jesus' reality and the truth about him** (Jn 14,26; 16,13; Eph 3,2-6; 1 Tim 4,2),

I. by reminding and further instructing the apostles

II. by so enlightening others, that they receive the apostolic witness with understanding, confess the divine Lordship of Christ and experience his life-changing power through faith (Jn 16,8-11; Acts 10,44-48; 1 Cor 2,14-16; 12,3; 2 Cor 3,4-4,6; Eph 1,17-20; 3,14-19; 1 Jn 2,20.27; 4,1-3; 5,6-12)..

b). **He unites believers to Christ in regenerative, life-giving co-resurrection**, so that they become sharers of his kingdom and members of the body (the Church) of which he is the head (Jn 3,5-8; Rom 6,3-11; 7,4-6; 8,9-11; 1 Cor 6,17-19; 12,12-13; Gal 3,14.26-29; Eph 2,1-10; 4,3-6; Tit 3,4-7).

c). **He assures believers that they are children and heirs of God** (Rom 8,12-17; 2 Cor 1,22; Gal 4,6; Eph 1,13; 1 Jn 3,24; 4,13; 5,7).

d). **He mediates fellowship with the Father and the Son** of a kind that is already heaven's life begun, and is thus, as a first installment, a guarantee of the fulness of heaven's life to come (Rom 5,5; 8,23; 2 Cor 5,5; Eph 1,14; 2,18; 4,20; 1 Jn 1,3; 3,1-10.24).

e). **He transforms believers progressively**, through prayer and conflict with sin, into Christ's moral and spiritual likeness. He reproduces the character of Christ in the believer. The touchstone of a genuine work of the Spirit is conformity to the life and character of Christ: would Christ have done that?, would Christ have said that? (2 Cor 3,18; Gal 5,16-25; Jude 20-21).

f). **He gives gifts — that is, witnessing and serving abilities** — for expressing Christ in the believing community and so building it up, (Rom 12,3-13; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4,7-16; 1 Pet 4,10-11) and for the evangelistic proclamation in the world, so extending the church (Acts 4,8.31; 9,31; Eph 6,18-20)

g). **He prays effectively in and for believers in Christ** who feel unable to pray properly for themselves (Rom 8,26-27).

h). **He prompts missionary action to make Christ known** (Acts 8,29: 13,2; 16,6-10) and pastoral decision for consolidating Christ's church (Acts 15,28). Ecstatic exuberances (tongues and prophecy) can be brought under control for the edifying of the body and 'religious' urges which misrepresent, displace or dishonour Christ, (or that downgrade his apostles and the authority that they had from Him) are thereby shown not to be from the Spirit (1 Cor 12,3; 1 Jn 4,1-6).

i). **He designates and equips particular individuals for particular stated ministries** and enables every member of the body to render service that furthers corporate growth into Christlike maturity.

Since the Spirit is Christ's agent, who does His will, what the Spirit does in Christians, Christ himself may be said to do (indwell, Col 1,27, give life Col 3,4, sanctify Eph 5,26; etc). The mark of the Spirit's ministry is to glorify Christ (that is to show forth His character and bring praise to Him).

4. Sin against the Holy Spirit: Jesus speaks of it (Mt 12,31-32) and there is a reference in Hebrews to it (Hebr 6,4-6; 10,26-

29). In order to understand the meaning of this phrase, we must examine the contexts in which it occurs.

Jesus distinguished between sin against the Spirit and sin against the Son of Man (Mt 12,32). It is important to realise that he did this to before his death and glorification. Failure to recognise Jesus during his earthly mission (as did his own family — cf. Mk 3,21) was less serious than deliberately attributing his entire mission (especially his good works) to Satan, as did the Pharisees. After Pentecost, this distinction is no longer applicable, as Jesus is clearly revealed to be the Son of God by the resurrection and the Gospel is preached in the power of the Spirit. It is rejection of this message (i.e. the Gospel) and the Person it concerns, which constitutes rejection of the Spirit who bears testimony to its truth (Hebr 10,29). If, therefore, a person continues to reject the Gospel, this places him beyond redemption.

C. TERMS USED IN RELATION TO THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

1. Baptism in/by the Spirit:

In Scripture there is a close association between water baptism and Spirit baptism. This term is used in connection with:

- a) **Beginning of the Christian life.** Baptism is a word normally used in connection with water. Thus it can be linked with OT prophecies of the future outpouring of the Holy Spirit (also linked with water). Water baptism is a rite of initiation associated with the beginning of the Christian life. What the NT calls baptism in the Spirit, the OT calls outpouring and the two expressions are joined together in Acts 2. In Titus 3,4-7, the Spirit, regeneration and justification are all linked together
- b) **Entry into the Church** (the community of the saved).

Baptism and the Church: Water baptism was also a community rite concerning the Church. Baptism in the Spirit is the spiritual side of this. When a person is converted and baptised, he is

baptised by the Spirit into the Body of Christ — water baptism is the outward sign of this.

c) **Historical considerations:** The reason why the apostles had a two-stage Christian experience was that they became believers before the Spirit's full new-covenant ministry in this world began, and since they expected others to enjoy this ministry from conversion onwards (Acts 2,38; 5,32), it is illogical to make the two-stage experience a universal norm. In Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 baptism in the Spirit is related to water-baptism: i.e. people received the Spirit at the same time as they were baptised. This certainly became part of the liturgy of the Early Church where the baptismal candidate was expected to receive the Holy Spirit at the baptismal ceremony through the laying-on of hands by the bishop. The Early Church, no matter how liturgical they subsequently became, never held it to be a second-blessing experience.

In the Book of Acts all instances of reception of the Spirit were associated with the beginning of the Christian life. Luke portrays each instance of Spirit baptism (with accompanying phenomena) as being of special historical significance which shows the breaking-down of barriers. As Samaritans (ch. 8), Gentiles (ch. 10) and the disciples of John (ch. 19) were added to the Church, a break-through was achieved on each occasion by the Spirit of God. Furthermore, such groups had not been previously associated with the church at Jerusalem. It was therefore fitting that as the Spirit broke through into each major new area (ethnic and religious), some of the phenomena connected with the first Pentecost should be repeated.

Admittedly, the rushing wind was not there, but there was the phenomena of speaking in foreign languages which in Acts 2 was associated with the proclaiming of the Gospel to the Gentiles. In the case of the Samaritans this was particularly important. God may well have withheld the manifestation of the Spirit until the apostles had arrived, so that they could be its channel, so as to stop the Jewish Samaritan schism from being carried over into the Church. Both Samaritan and Jew were

receiving the same spiritual privileges and must recognise the divinely established leadership and authority of Christ's Jewish apostles.

The charismatic manifestations above all served to authenticate the apostles witness (Hebr 2,4). Luke, in recording particular spiritual experiences in Acts, sees them as milestones in the progress of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, and not as models of how God always acts and which are therefore to be imitated by future generations of Christians. After the initial break-throughs had occurred, there was no longer any necessity for the same phenomena to be repeated and the gift of speaking in tongues presumably now took its place among those gifts which were designed to edify the Church. This meant that not every one spoke in tongues, as each person had a different gift.

d). **Conclusion:** The expression 'Baptism in the Spirit' is not appropriate for any experience subsequent to conversion. It is significant that the Bible contains no exhortation to be baptised in the Spirit. In 1 Cor 12,13 Paul treats baptism in the Spirit as something relating to the past, referring to the moment when believers were incorporated into the body of Christ. In that same chapter Paul states that not all (of those baptised) speak in tongues. This counters the charismatic claim that tongue-speaking is a sign of Spirit-baptism. We therefore have to conclude that the use of the term in charismatic circles to designate a second-blessing experience, does not correspond to Scriptural usage. For authoritative teaching on this subject, we need to turn to the Epistles.

2. Filling of the Spirit. This expression is used in three ways: The term is basically a hebraism and means that the Spirit is the dominant influence in our behaviour. It is what characterises our life. It certainly does not imply the passive filling up of an empty receptacle. It means:

a). **Mature Christian character:** it refers to a person in whom the fruit of the Spirit is evident. This was an important requisite for the diaconate.

b. **Empowering for crisis situations:** giving special boldness for witness or preaching under difficult circumstances.

c. **A continual process involving confession and repentance:** Paul exhorts Christ to be being filled with the Spirit. It refers to a consistent walk with the Lord.

In view of the above usages, it cannot refer to a once and for all experience. Its essential reference is therefore not to spiritual gifts or to special experiences, but to spiritual fruit.

3. Gifts of the Spirit:

I. Definition: these are essentially witnessing and serving abilities — for expressing Christ in the believing community and so building it up, and for the evangelistic proclamation in the world, so extending the church.

II. Lists of gifts

a. Gifts relating to utterance:

I. apostles: the word really means plenipotentiary or representative of Himself. Strictly speaking it applies only to the 12 chosen by Jesus and to Paul; but it could also be understood as applying to certain apostolic men who assisted Paul in his work: Barnabas, Andronicus, Junias, James and Jude (Acts 14,4-14; 1 Cor 9,5-6; 2 Cor 8,23; Gal 1,19). Against this interpretation, it has to be pointed out that Paul says he is the last of all the apostles, born abnormally late (1 Cor 15,8). The apostles in the special sense had certain special qualifications:

- i) they received their commission directly from God or from Jesus Christ.
- ii) they were witnesses of the life of Christ and especially of his resurrection.
- iii) They were conscious of being inspired by the Spirit of God in all their teaching, both oral and written.
- iv) They had the power to perform miracles and used this on several occasions to ratify their message

v) They were richly blessed in their work as a sign of the divine approval of their labours.

Nowhere does Paul encourage anyone to seek this gift. They were personal representatives of Christ, directly commissioned by Him. In the nature of the case, this can only apply to the first generation of Christians because all subsequent commissioning was done by churches.

II. prophets: these are mentioned in Acts 11,28; 13,1,2; 15,32; 1 Cor 12,10; 13,2; 14,3; Eph 2,20; 3,5; 4,11; 1 Tim 1,18; 4,14; Rev 11,6). They gave a direct message from the Lord, usually in the first person (like the book of Revelation). The message usually contained specific instructions as to what to do in a certain situation. It was also a message of edification, exhortation, consolation. If the gift was not exercised by an apostle, it was probably not a source of fresh revelation which could be incorporated into the canon of Scripture.

III. evangelists: these are mentioned in Acts 21,8; Eph 4,11; 2 Tim 4,5. Philip, Mark, Timothy and Titus were all evangelists. They seem to have operated as Paul's right-hand men. Their work was to preach and baptise but also to ordain elders (Tit 1,5; 1 Tim 5,22) and to exercise discipline (Titus 3,10). They seemed to have fitted in somewhere between the apostles and the elders.

IV. discernment: this gift enabled people to discern whether a message (a prophecy or a tongue) came from God or from some other source (demonic or carnal).

V. teaching: the teacher expounded and applied established Christian doctrine. He did not bring fresh revelation.

VI. tongues: was the ability to praise God in an unknown language. When it was translated, it enabled other believers to listen in to this and thus be edified. In the case of tongues, man speaks to God, whereas in prophecy, God speaks to man. This means that tongues plus interpretation is not the equivalent of prophecy, and therefore not as important. It is in fact the least important gift of inspired utterance. The apostles on the day of

Pentecost exceptionally did not need this translation. It was also a sign to unbelieving Israel that God was setting them aside in favour of the Gentiles. In fact, this seems to have been its primary purpose, since praise to God does not have to be given in a tongue. The speaking in tongues which accompanied initial experience also seems to have been an authentication (of reception of the Spirit) particularly for the benefit the Jewish apostles, but it was exceptional and occurred when new ground was broken – it was evidence that God was incorporating into his church samaritans, gentiles and disciples of John (people previously thought in Jewish eyes to be beyond redemption). The fact that Paul asserts that not all speak in tongues, shows that the early church did not demand this as a sign of being baptised by the Spirit.

Paul forbade speaking in tongues without interpretation during a church service. He did not forbid the use of the gift as such, but he urged those who had it, to seek the gift of interpretation, so that it could be of benefit to the church as a whole. It is also clear that not everyone had the gift – it was just one among many. But what do we see today? In pentecostal and charismatic circles, all are urged to get the gift of tongues. When was the last time you heard a charismatic praying for the gift of interpretation, or for the gift of prophecy? And what about the gift of the discernment of spirits? This shows that many charismatics are only prepared to obey the apostle Paul when it suits them. The same applies to women pastors.

Paul also maintains that the exercise of the gift of tongues is inappropriate in an evangelistic service: it is prophecy (the gift of reading other people's minds) that is needed, as a proof of God's presence (see John 4,19: after Jesus has revealed information which he could only have gained from a divine source, the Samaritan woman says: Sir, I see that you are a prophet!). It is this particular exercise of the gift that Paul probably has in mind here.

b. Gifts which equip for practical service, which can be subdivided into: gifts of power (faith, healing, miracles), gifts of sympathy (helpers, liberal giving, works of mercy, practical service) and gifts of administration (administrators and leaders).

I. faith relates to a special gift of faith which enables special deeds to be accomplished.

II. healing: refers to performing of miracles of restoration to health.

III. miracles: performance of some spectacular sign. (Acts 9,36; 13,11; 20,9-13; Gal 3,5; Hebr 6,5)

IV. helpers: special care for the sick and needy.

V. liberality: a gift that obviously trusts God to reimburse in a miraculous way.

VI. works of mercy: care of the sick or visiting prisoners for the faith.

VII. service: probably means the work of a deacon or deaconess

VIII. administrators: the gift to govern and direct the local church (as exercised by bishop or presiding elder)

IX. leader: probably means pastor — caring for people's spiritual needs.

c. Cessationism: This is the theory that states that the more spectacular spiritual gifts (the so-called 'sign' gifts) have ceased. There are two sorts of cessationism:

I) Classic cessationism, II) Modern cessationism

I). **Classic cessationism** was found among the Church Fathers (Augustine, Chrysostom and Gregory the Great) who explained the comparative lack of miraculous gifts in their own day as due to the more special need of them at the beginning of the Church – to accredit the Christian message and launch the Church. This did not exclude a continuation of the gifts, but a cessation of their intensity. Later on, at the time of the Reformation, Calvin allowed that the signs might appear where

the Gospel came to new frontiers (i.e. in pioneer missionary situations) or where the church was weak.

II). **Modern cessationism** really starts with B.B. Warfield who maintained that the sign gifts died out when the canon was completed. Dispensationalists developed this theory further to fit their theology.

Warfield's hard-line approach does not really stand up to proper exegetical analysis. Classic cessationism, on the other hand, has much to commend it. However, Pentecostals and charismatics still have to explain why, if they are to be believed, there should be such a remarkable resurgence of gifts on a scale not seen since the apostolic period, when such a resurgence is only promised to Israel when the Messiah returns. The essence of the matter is that the Pentecostals are trying to hijack promises that rightly belong to Israel's national conversion at the end of the age, which is what Joel's prophecy primarily refers to. It is almost a case of replacement theology (the view that the church has permanently taken the place of Israel). It is not accidental that many charismatics have no place for Israel or for a millenium in their eschatology: they are essentially postmillennial.

d. Use of gifts. Paul gives the most systematic teaching regarding spiritual gifts and their use. In it, he lays down the following principles:

- I. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in the distribution of gifts.
- II. He gives different gifts to different people. Not everyone has the same gift and no-one has all the gifts. A gift results in a function or a ministry. They are given to be used for the good of the body, not primarily for personal edification.
- III. The more spectacular gifts are not necessarily the more important ones.
- IV. The gifts must be used under the Lord's direction. Their use must be overseen and tested by those with authority over the congregation or with mature spiritual discernment.

e. Need for Scriptural balance:

I. Tongue-speaking cannot be held to be the universal, invariable and exclusive sign that a person has received the Holy Spirit, although in Acts the Spirit's coming is evidenced on several occasions by spiritual phenomena such as tongue-speaking or prophecy, but there is no indication that these became permanent gifts of the recipient.

II. There are other lists of gifts besides 1 Cor 12. The fact that these lists differ shows that they are unlikely to be exhaustive. There is no universal agreement as to what some of these actually refer to. Some Christians tend to take their experience first and then try and make it fit in with Scripture, or even expound Scripture in the light of it. This is not a sound procedure.

III. If one takes all the lists together, some of the gifts seem to be inborn or learned abilities or aptitudes sanctified and possibly heightened by the Holy Spirit, whereas others are more clearly supernatural endowments.

IV. It must also be admitted that the pentecostal claim to the renewal of **all** the spectacular gifts that once authenticated the apostles' personal ministry (Hebr 2,3-4) is debatable.

f. Practical aspects of the spiritual life:

I. Factors militating against balance: It is clearly desirable to have a balanced Christian life with progress and stability. However, many Christians fail to experience this for two reasons:

- i) Either they do not know the will of God or they don't do it.
- ii) Unbalanced teaching in which they are taught a false conception of the constitution of man.

II. Elements in balance. Balance involves the holding of two seeming contradictions in tension. They seem to be contradictions, because of our finite understanding. We must accept seeming contradictions rather than try and concoct a nice neat little system to explain things away.

- i). Balance and progress: while our standing before God never changes, our state may change. Whereas stability is based on standing, we need to make our calling and election sure (to our own satisfaction) by pressing towards the mark.
 - ii). Statement and command: faith (grasp of biblical doctrine) which leads to obedience is the biblical teaching. If people do not grasp doctrine, they will find it hard to grasp orders based on these doctrines. Indicatives are directed towards our belief whereas imperatives are directed towards our obedience. In the epistles, indicatives are the basis for imperatives.
 - iii). Passive and active: the Christian life is sometimes pictured as a rest and sometimes as a conflict. Unhelpful teaching concentrates on one aspect to the exclusion of the other. We are seated with Christ in the heavenly places (above Satan) and yet we are to walk.
 - iv). Weakness and strength. It is as we are aware of our own weaknesses and of His resources, that we can become truly strong.
 - v). Liberty and service: God has liberated us, but in order to serve Him (Galatians). The same epistle tell us to avoid the dangers of legalism but also those of licence. Christian freedom is translated through Christian gratitude to Christian service
 - vi.) Preservation and perseverance: we are kept by the power of God, but he preserves us through our perseverance. Growth is never automatic but occurs as we co-operate with the Spirit. This is the message of the book of Hebrews.
 - vii). Crisis and process: the Christian life begins with the crisis of conversion. Is there a need for a further crisis of the same kind (a second blessing)? Some would maintain that there is. Some people undoubtedly do have a second experience, but we are not entitled to make this into a norm for others.
- It is clear that when we are converted we are brought under the authority of Jesus as Lord as well as Saviour. If we do take this fact seriously, this produces steady growth. If we do not, it is bound sooner or later to produce a crisis — this is especially true of child conversions. There may well be a need for further

commitment if Christ has been dethroned, but this is not the NT norm. We are to take our norm from the NT and not from other people's experiences, however interesting and dramatic they may be.

III. The biblical emphasis. We are talking here about principal emphasis rather than one to the exclusion of the other.

i). It must be on Scripture rather than experience: Scripture should control experience: it must be developed and guided by Scripture.

ii). On mind and will rather than on emotions: the rôle of the mind is to grasp truth and that of the will is to act on truth. Emotions come into it, but this must not be the decisive factor.

iii). Inward rather than outward: it is who we are rather than what we do that is important. If the emphasis is upon character, conduct will follow. True faith (i.e. a living relationship to God) produces works. Nevertheless, conduct is an important barometre of character (cf. James and John).

iv). Power for service rather than spiritual one-upmanship: we need to be possessed by the Spirit rather than possess the Spirit, in the sense of manipulating him.

v). Christ rather than the Spirit in isolation: the Spirit is always concerned to glorify Christ and not to claim worship of himself, though this is proper in a Trinitarian context.

vi). God rather than man: God must never be treated as a means to an end (hallmark of paganism). We are to be at his disposal to serve him.

D. HISTORICAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There was not much discussion of the Person of Holy Spirit among the church fathers. Arius held that the Spirit was the first created being produced by the Son, an opinion very much in harmony with that of Origen. Athanasius asserted that the Holy Spirit was of the same essence of the Father but the Nicene Creed contains only the indefinite statement: And I

believe in the Holy Spirit. The Cappadocian Fathers followed Athanasius in maintaining the homoousios (homoousios) of the Holy Spirit. Hilary of Poitiers held that the Spirit must be divine as he searches out the hidden things of God.

However, the two main heresies of the early period were Montanism and Macedonianism.

1. Montanism Montanus thought that (canonical) revelation did not cease at the end of the NT period. He held that he himself was the source of important new revelations. As Jesus had been the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity, Montanus saw himself as the incarnation of the Holy Spirit!

2. Macedonianism Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople accepted the full deity of the Son but held that the Spirit was a created being, not unlike the angels. This was an attempt to compromise with the Arian position.

Subsequent discussions revolved around the precise relationship of the Spirit to the Father and to the Son. It was here that the Eastern and Western Church were divided in their opinions. The Council of Constantinople met in 381 to endorse the wording of the Nicene Creed. Under the guidance of Gregory of Nazianzus they said: 'And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who is glorified with the Father and the Son, and who speaks through the prophets.' But there were two objections to this formulation:

- a. The homoousios was not used of the Spirit.
- b. The relation of the Holy Spirit to the other two Persons of the Trinity was not defined.

3. The Synod of Toledo. At the Synod of Toledo in 589 the Western Church added the phrase: 'and from the Son' (*Filioque*). They did this because of the influx of Visigoths in Spain who had been arians: they wanted to emphasise the deity of the Spirit. The Eastern Church objected to this as being an unwarranted addition to a decision of an ecumenical church council which was infallible. The final formulation was provided by John of Damascus who stated that the Trinity

comprises three Persons in one divine essence. The Father is characterised by 'non-generation', the Son by 'generation' and the Spirit by 'procession (he derives from)'. This formulation still smacks of Greek subordinationism. The West refused this and stood firm on the Filioque clause. It was one of the factors which led to the split between East and West. Be that as it may, too much seems to have been read into John 15,26 which really talks about Him coming from the Father to replace Christ on earth during his physical absence and not about His eternal relationship to the Father.

However, the Western formulation can be seen as valid.

Although the Scriptures do not speak of the Spirit as deriving from the Son, they do refer to the Holy Spirit as being the Spirit of Christ (Rom 9,9; 1 Pet 1,11; Acts 16,7, Phil 1,19). Jesus himself baptised with the Holy Spirit (Mt 3,11; Mk 1,8; Lk 3,16; Jn 1,33) and sent the Spirit (Jn 20,22; Acts 2,33). Eph 4,9-10 seems to imply that Jesus returned at Pentecost in the person of his representative, the Holy Spirit. Moreover the Holy Spirit indwells men only as a result of what Christ has done.

4. Augustine. The Western conception of the Trinity reached its final statement in the great work of Augustine *De Trinitatis* in which he says that each of the three persons of the Trinity are fully God, but they are interdependent. However he did not develop this line of thinking because of his sacramental theology in which grace imparted by the sacraments replaces the operation of the Spirit.

5. The Reformers. Much later, the Reformers tended to react against the charismatic extremism of the Anabaptists. To safeguard the doctrine they insisted that the Spirit never acts in contradiction to the written Word. However, Calvin did speak much about the inward working of the Spirit. Wesley started the idea of the Second Blessing, but this was really an attempt to read back his own experience into the New Testament, which was not entirely successful.

ECCLESIOLOGY

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Introduction

1. We need to be clear as to what the Church is. Is it the consummation of God's plan? Is it a parenthesis which fits into the 'Church Age'? In how far does it replace Israel? Should it aim to infiltrate and change society or should it be content to remain 'the little flock'?
2. In the face of excessive individualism among some believers, we need to return to the biblical idea of the community of believers or 'church'.
3. The church itself must constantly re-examine itself in the light of Scripture.
4. Can we hope to return to the apostolic age or must we recognise that within the NT there is an evolution of ideas?

A. THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH

1. The essential idea contained in the word 'church' is that of a community set apart for God's use. In Genesis 1-12 we read of a Godly line of people and even families but not so much of a worshipping community. We see the idea develop in God's dealings with Abraham. God chooses a man who produces a family and eventually a whole nation, Israel. This nation is seen as a people set apart by God for His use and service. This was to be reflected in their conduct. They form an assembly (*qahal*) or congregation (*eda*). They are bound together by a covenant which expresses itself in the Law which has three sections: moral, ceremonial and civil. However, it is a provisional covenant until the Messiah shall come.

2. As Israel's apostasy becomes more and more blatant, we begin to hear of the doctrine of the remnant. Only a remnant has remained faithful compared with the 7000 of the time of Elijah. Only a remnant will survive the deportation.
3. During the Inter-Testamental period, the only group that kept the idea of the remnant alive were the Essenes at Qumrân and possibly elsewhere. They reckoned themselves to be the true remnant who would form the new Israel after God had judged the rest. They spent much time studying eschatology. They had certain things in common with the Church which was to come: they used the same prophecies, they were critical of official Judaism and they were a closely knit community. But they were different in that they were fanatically legalistic and nationalistic with no time for the Gentiles.
4. John the Baptist probably studied for a while in an Essene community but his emphasis was different in that he invited people to repentance, not to separate themselves from the world. He called the people to repent because the Messiah was coming to sift his people. The only way to belong to the remnant and escape the judgment was to repent, be baptised and receive the Holy Spirit.
5. Jesus continued the same message. He announced to them the Gospel of the Kingdom: they could become the nation that God wanted them to be if they repented and believed the Gospel, but they rejected the King and the Kingdom. Then a turning point arrives. Jesus starts to speak to the people, no longer openly but in parables, and to devote himself to the formation of a 'church'. Israel is set aside until such time as it will repent on a national scale at the time of the Messiah's second coming. In the meantime, Jesus founds a 'messianic community'. This community is unique because of its relationship to the Messiah. Unlike the disciples of John, Jesus

calls his disciples. Each member has a unique relationship to Him. His disciples are His brothers. He is their representative, the Son of Man. The disciples are legally associated with Him in His rights and in the benefits of His sufferings. Jesus presents Himself as the Bridegroom which suggests that the church is His bride. Jesus says He is the shepherd which means that they are His flock. The church is unique, not only in relation to its head, but also in relation to the future. They will reign with Him. As this reign will be not only over Israel but also over the Gentiles, this means that His disciples will include Gentiles. The church is a sort of 'pilot project', a sort of 'first fruits of the new creation'. It gives some indication of what God is going to do on a far wider scale in the future. The unity of the Messiah with His community and also the destiny of this community is summed up in Revelation 5:9:-

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to break open its seals
For you were killed, and by your sacrificial death, you bought
for God
people from every tribe, language, nation and race.
You have made them a kingdom of priests to serve our God
and they shall rule on earth."

6. Paul elaborates the doctrine of the Church to include the Gentiles. He gives much additional teaching about the nature of the Church and its relationship to the Messiah.

7. Finally, in Revelation we see the Church united with the saints of the OT in the form of the Messianic Jerusalem and New Jerusalem, the community of the saved and glorified ones.

B. MEANING OF THE WORD CHURCH

1. The meaning of the word 'church'. The Greek word used is '*ekklesia*' which is the word which the Septuagint uses to

translate the word '*qahal*' in the OT. In secular Greek, the word means 'the assembly of the people', a public meeting of the Greek inhabitants of a town. It is used in this sense in Acts 19:32,39,41. This accurately translates the meaning of '*qahal*': the people called out of their tents to a public meeting, which was normally a meeting of a religious nature. It is therefore the word that is used of the community gathered together for worship during the time of the desert wanderings (as depicted in the Book of Numbers). It is used of the gathering of the people at the foot of Mount Sinai to hear the Law of God. It is also used of the 'day of assembly' (*haYom haQahal*) which was an occasion for the people to meet together for worship or prayer, or for a corporate expression of repentance (Ps 22:23, 1Ki 8:14-22). Another word used was '*eda*' which referred to God's people, not necessarily assembled together in one place. In the Greek Septuagint, '*eda*' was translated 'synagogue' and '*qahal*' was translated 'ekklesia' (cf. Ac 7:28, Heb 2:12). The word '*ekklesia*' is used by Jesus in Mt 16:18, 18:17. It was not a word that He used in public because it might have been misunderstood: people might have got the impression that He was going to set up some schismatic sect. In the OT '*qahal*' (*ekklesia*) was the Assembly of the Lord God and so it is significant that Jesus said 'I will build my church (*qahal*) consisting of those who share Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah. This points to the divinity of Jesus. It also points to the fact that the church in the strict sense did not exist in the Old Testament period.

In Acts and in the Epistles, the word '*ekklesia*' is frequently employed. In fact, whenever the word is used (apart from Acts 19) it is understood as followed by '*theou*' (God's) or '*Christou*' (Christ's). So '*ekklesia*' is really an abbreviation for God's assembly or the Messiah's assembly, in much the same way that the word 'kingdom' (*basilea*) is really an abbreviation for God's Kingdom. Thus the character of the church is derived primarily from its Head and not from its members.

The word '*ekklesia*' is sometimes used of Christians gathered together in one locality for worship (1Cor 11:18, 14:28, Ro 16:5) but it is also used of Christians in one locality even when not assembled (Ac 5:11, 8:3). It is also used of the universal church but mostly in Ephesians (Ac 9:31, 1Cor 12:28, Eph 1:22, 3:10 etc).

2. New Testament titles of the church and descriptions of it

a) Those titles taken over from Israel: 'the chosen race', 'the King's priests', the 'holy nation', 'God's own people' (1Pet 2:9 cf Ex 19: 5-6). The 'Israel of God' (Gal 6:16) meaning 'God's chosen people'. It is also referred to as 'a nation bringing forth the fruits of the kingdom of God' (Mt 21:43). Christians are referred to as 'saints', and expression which in the OT refers to the Godly remnant of Israel (Dan 7:18-27).

b) Other expressions applied to the church are based on the idea of the family. Believers are referred to as 'God's beloved' (Ro 1:7) – a term of family endearment, as 'beloved of the Father', as 'the household of God' or 'the family of God' (Eph 2:19, 1Pet 4:17), as 'heirs of God' (Eph 3:6) and as 'brethren' (Ac 9:30, Ro 14:10).

c) There are expressions which are based on an attitude of heart shared by all. The words 'believers' and 'disciples' all point to an idea of common dependence. The church is also said to consist of 'all who call upon the name of the Messiah' (Ac 9:14, 1Cor 1:2) and of God's servants' (Ac 4:29).

d) Then there are other miscellaneous expressions used of the church: 'the Body of Christ' (ie the Messianic community – 1Cor 12:27, Eph 1:23, 5:30), the 'Bride of Christ' (Eph 5:27, Rev 21:2 – God was called the 'husband' of Israel), the 'flock of God' (Ac 20:29, 1Pet 5:2, John 10:16), 'God's field', God's building (1Cor 3:9), God's Temple' (1Cor 3:16-17, 2Cor 6:16). Paul's particular contribution to the doctrine of the church is found in the expression 'the body of Christ'. This imagery is primarily taken from marriage. Just as husband and wife are legally one unit before the Law, so the church is legally one

with Christ. In addition, it is practically one because of the indwelling Holy Spirit in each member and among the church. The Messiah is therefore one with His people, the Messianic community. Another image of the church which assumes increasing importance as we read through the NT is that of the New Jerusalem, the Heavenly City.

3. The characteristics of the church

a) **The church as ideal and actual.** There is a distinction to be made between the church as it exists ideally in the mind of God (completed and glorified) and as it exists now. Indeed the church is not static, but a dynamic reality, for it exists in time and so partakes of change. According to the Nicene Creed it is 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic'.

(I) It is 'one' because it is under one Head (Christ – Eph 4:4ff). There is one (united) church, but experimentally this unity must be maintained.

(II) It is 'holy' but not yet perfect. It is already 'holy' in the sense that it belongs to Jesus Christ. It will only perfectly exhibit the qualities of the Person to whom it belongs (which is what the word 'glorified' means) when it is completed on the return of Christ for His Church. In the meantime, it is certainly called to holiness as is each individual member.

(III) It is 'catholic' in the sense that is universal. It includes both Jew and non-Jew and indeed members of all races. It is to become universal because it is universal by nature.

(IV) It is 'apostolic' in the sense that it has an historic link with the NT church. The link is primarily that of being built on the same apostolic doctrine, though of course there is also the human continuity.

b) **The church as local and universal.** It is made up of any company of people in a given locality who belong to Jesus Christ but it is also part of a worldwide church and indeed even of the part of the church that is already in heaven. The Epistles

of Paul were addressed to individual churches because of their different problems, but these churches were conscious of their unity with other churches. Paul often asks that his letters be read in the other churches. In the book of Revelation, Christ appears in the midst of the seven candlesticks which shows that through His Spirit He is present among them. The churches are related to each other because they are related to Him.

c) **The church as visible and invisible.** There are those who belong to the outward church and there are those that are true believers (regenerate). Many object to the term 'visible' on the ground that unregenerate 'members' are not really members of the church at all. Yet Paul addresses groups of professing Christians as 'the church at Ephesus, Galatia' etc. on purely practical grounds. The tone of the Epistle to the Hebrews certainly suggests that there is a mixed group otherwise the warnings make little sense. In fact, only the Lord knows those who are truly His (Ac 20:30, 1 John 2:19, 2Tim 2:19).

d) **The church as militant and triumphant.** This expression refers to the church on earth and the church in heaven respectively. We are at one with the church in heaven (1Thes 4:13-17).

4. **The purposes and functions of the church.** Its purpose is outside itself as regards its origin and destination. It exists 'for the glory of God' (ie, in order to manifest His character) who has brought it into being as His church (Eph 1:5-6). Its functions are four-fold:

a) **Worship.** The church consists of a people whose lives are orientated towards God (Ac 13:2, Phil 3:3, Eph 2:18). Worship is essentially a proclamation of God's worth or attributes in praise and thanksgiving. It also implies that we manifest these very attributes in our everyday lives (Rom 12:1-2). Christian worship is trinitarian: it is through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that we present ourselves to the Father. Only God can be

the right object of worship (Isa 42:8, Mt 4:10, Heb 1:6, Rev 5:8). It follows therefore that the church must have a correct attitude to worship (John 4:19-24, Phil 3:3). As far as its function and purpose is concerned, the church is the temporary continuation of Israel.

b) **Witness**. This is a continuation of the task already given to Israel. The church is to proclaim the Gospel (Ac 1:8, 8:4, 1Pet 2:9).

c) **Fellowship**. The word in Greek is 'koinonia' which literally means having in common, sharing and being involved in a common task. We share with God Himself and so with all others who are in fellowship with Him. It is the Spirit who is the author of this fellowship (2Cor 13:14). Sharing also shows itself in a concern for the material needs of the church members (2Cor 13:13, 1John 1:3,7, Phil 1:5, 2Cor 8:4).

d) **Teaching**. This is an internal function in the church but there is also a teaching element in all preaching. There is much stress in the NT on teaching disciples (Ac 2:42, 2Tim 2:2). We are to seek the upbuilding of the church. All are called to edify each other but some have special ministries in this respect (1Thes 5:11, Ac 20:28, 2Tim 4:1).

C. THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO GOD

1. **Its relation to God the Father**. The church is the sphere in which God's rule is recognised on earth. The church are already citizens of God's kingdom which is to come. They are the firstfruits of His new creation. The church is also the people of God in the same sense in which Israel was the Israel of God (Ro 9:25-26, Eph 2:11ff, 1Pet 2:9-10, Rev 21:3). It is also the city of God in the sense that the church will be the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem (Gal 4:24-27, Heb 12:22, Rev 21:3). It is also the city of God in the sense that the church will be the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem (Gal 4:24-27, Heb 12:22, Rev 21:2,9,10, 22:19). The church is also the family of God. This is

perhaps the most intimate term for it based on the words of Christ Himself (Mt 12:46-50, Eph 2:19).

2. Its relationship to God the Son. It is the Bride of Christ. This expression brings out its dependence on Christ and it also brings out its purity. It is simply one metaphor among many. It is also the Body of Christ but in the sense that is the abiding instrument of Christ to achieve His purposes here on earth. Any other definition is unhelpful and misleading – for instance, it does not share His divinity. Christ is also the Supreme Head of the church (Eph 5:23ff) and the church is subject to Him. Each person owes his place in the body to his relationship with the Head (Ac 5:14, 11:24). It is said in Ac 2:42, 47 that the Lord added to the church daily – He had said 'I will build my church'. Christ is also the cornerstone of the church and its foundation. The cornerstone keeps the whole building together and without it the building would be unthinkable structurally. He is also the foundation upon which all the other stones are built in order to construct a building. The first such stone to be built onto the foundation was of course Peter, but he was first in time (the first Christian) but not first in the church (Eph 1:22-23) which means that the church is directly linked to Christ who is seated in the place of supreme authority, above all subordinate and even satanic authorities. Without this real authority, the church's task of rescuing men from Satan's kingdom would be impossible, but Christ is also the Head of each individual Christian. It is Christ also who chooses those who shall minister in the church – for instance, He chose Saul for a special ministry and therefore the initiative was His (Ac 15:7-8). The growth of the church depends of Christ (1Cor 3:7). The sin of Diotrephes in 3John v 9ff was that he usurped the authority of Christ.

3. Its relationship to God the Holy Spirit. The church is the temple of the Holy Spirit (individually: 1Cor 6:19-20 and collectively: 1Cor 3:16-17). A temple is both a building and a

place where God is worshipped – in both senses of the word, the church is the 'temple of God'. The members of the church also enjoy the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2Cor 13:14) and it is through the Spirit that Christ administers the church (Rev 2:3). Where the church is true to her calling, she and the Spirit speak with the same voice (Rev 22:17, Ac 15:28).

D. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH TO THE WORLD

1. **It is a divinely established society within a society.** The church is the embryo (pilot scheme) of the new theocratic society, the community of the called-out ones. It is a separate and separated community (1Pet 2:11f, Phil 3:20). It is a society under the sovereign authority of God. This society exists in the midst of an hostile environment (John 15:18-21, Mt 11:39, 17:17, Ac 2:14, Gal 1:4). It is drawn from all sections of society (Ro 16) – it consists of slaves and masters (1Cor 1:26). The ethical teaching of the Epistles shows this to be so (Eph 6:5). It produces divisions within society (Mt 10:21,34-39, Mk 10:29-30).

2. **The church and the world:** Christ and Citizenship. The church respects the pattern of authority in human society. It recognises the place of the State (Mt 22:15ff, Ro 13, 1Pet 2:13). It respects the pattern of the family and it does not shut itself away from the legitimate concerns of man in society. It treats daily work as a divine vocation. It places earthly possessions in their true perspective. It recognises that riches may keep people out of the kingdom of God (Luke 14:15-24, 1Cor 7:31, James 2:5). Riches and material possessions are not evil in themselves but the Christian is to use them for the advancement of the kingdom of God. The emphasis in Scripture is upon responsible stewardship, for which we shall be held to account.

3. **The church is separate from the world:** Christian sanctity. The church is a holy community indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:25ff, Rev 19:7-8, James 1:27). It is a sanctified (set apart) entity. It is set apart for God's use as Israel was in the OT. The Cross itself has separated the church from the world for it has been cleansed by the blood of Christ. The church has been redeemed from this present evil age (Gal 1:4) – purchased by the blood of Christ. Therefore, the loyalty of the church must be to Christ over and above any other secondary loyalty (Mt 10:37-8, Mk 3:33-6, Luke 14:26-9, Ac 4:19-20). Christians must therefore not be worldly in conduct or attitudes (Titus 2:12, 2Cor 1:12, 1Pet 4:3ff, Eph 4:17-5:20). The Christian must also have an eye to the effect of his life on the non-Christian onlooker (Phil 2:14, Titus 2:8). Worldliness is above all, an attitude (2Cor 5:16, 1John 2:15-17) and therefore inconsistent with a Christian walk. Christians should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2Cor 6:14-7:1). A Christian is formally forbidden to marry a non-Christian for they are worlds and even universes apart. The church needs discipline in order to maintain its purity (1Cor 5:1-13).

4. **The paradox of the church's position.** It is in the world and yet not of it (John 17:14-15). The church is the salt in the world and the light of it in that it bears God's purifying Spirit and His revelation. Both these qualities depend on distinctiveness (salt and light come from a link with God through the Holy Spirit) and yet it must be in the other element (rottenness and darkness) in order to do its job properly (Mt 5:13, Phil 2:15).

5. **The church's mission to the world.** This is determined by the nature of its relationship to the world. Because it is different, it can give something to the world: a message from God and life from God by pointing to the One in whom both are found – Jesus the Messiah. In this context, evangelism is the task of the whole church. It is the whole church which has a

commission from Christ to evangelise and to make disciples (Ro 10:9-10). The church is a witness to God in Christ in the sense that it is a living and tangible witness, not only to the love of God for the world, but also to His transforming power. It is both a witness by word (1Pet 3:15, Ac 8:1-4) for it has a precise message to pass on regarding the way of salvation and a witness by life, for unless the world sees a transformed life, Christianity remains a philosophy (1Pet 1:15-18, 2:12, 3:1,2,16, John 13:35, 17:17-23). It must also be a witness which is energised by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26-27, Ac 1:8, 1Cor 2:1, 1Thes 1:5). The result of the church's witness is to be the salvation of men and women (it is to bear fruit), it follows that the church is a self-propagating body (Mt 13:8,23, Ac 2:47, 5:13, 2Tim 2:2). A rejection of the messengers is a rejection of the message and of the One who sent it (God) and therefore the church has both a noble standing and an awesome responsibility (1Tim 3:15, 1Cor 6:2).

E. INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS OF THE CHURCH

1. **Christian fellowship** (*koinonia*) comes from '*koinos*' which is, having something in common. Christians have fellowship with God and with each other within the context of the church. This fellowship is moreover created by the Holy Spirit (1John 1:7, 2Cor 13:13). This fellowship is both of a spiritual and a material kind. It is a fellowship in the same spiritual realities and in the same task (evangelism, Phil 1:5, 2:1). It is both 'having a share' and 'giving a share' within the body of Christ and towards the world (James 2:14).

2. **The nature of the church's unity.** It is God-given and not a matter of human divising. It is a unity within the context of the people of the New Covenant. It is a body and so possesses *opso facto* unity and this comes in practise via the relationship to the

Head (Eph 4:6). It is a unity which is likened to that of the Trinity (John 17:22). This corporal unity is intimately related to unity of doctrine (Eph 4:4-6, John 17:6,14,17,20). It is only through a common allegiance to the NT (deposit of apostolic doctrine) that we can have such a unity. The unity of the church transcends social barriers (Col 3:11, 2Cor 5:16, Gal 3:28). It does not obliterate natural relationships but rather, sanctifies them. It is a unity which spans local churches. The fact that Paul sent circular letters proves this. Even if local churches have different constitutions they are still, in God's eyes, in fellowship with one another if they consist of regenerate people. This unity is to be maintained experimentally. The way to do this is by humility and love (Col 2:1, 1Pet 3:8, Phil 2:2, Eph 4:1-3). Much in these references applies to unity within the local church fellowship. It must start there otherwise it is a mockery.

3. **Expressions of the church's unity**. The apostle's doctrine is the first essential expression of this unity. The NT is the literary expression of apostolic truth – compared with all the promises of Christ to His apostles regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in reminding them of all that Jesus said and of revealing to them what is to come. Fellowship, which is another expression, expresses itself concretely in the ordinances of the church, the Lord's supper and Baptism (1Cor 1:17, Mt 5:23). Fellowship is especially evident in prayer. In prayer times, especially in intercessory prayer, the church shared together. In Eph 6:18 Paul exhorts his readers to pray for all the saints.

4. **Christian unity**: the contemporary situation and our attitude. Evangelicals have four views on this question:

- a) Work within the movement in order to influence it in an evangelical direction.
- b) Others are strongly opposed to it and seek to establish evangelical unity outside.

- c) Other evangelicals seek to keep in close contact with each other and to express their unity at a local level.
- d) Others do not feel able to cooperate with anyone because of a very strong doctrinal emphasis.

Are there any Biblical principles for the average Christian to follow? The NT recognises only the local and the universal church and one finds no hint of denominations there. We therefore face a situation which did not exist in NT times. The true nature of the church must always be born in mind in discussions about unity. Christian unity must reflect the true nature of the church. The only valid standard by which to judge current discussions is that of the NT which is as follows:

- a) Christian unity, to be valid must recognise the supremacy of Scripture in all matters of faith and practice.
- b) The NT does contemplate an outward manifestation of the spiritual unity of the church but it was in terms of the official representatives of local churches travelling from church to church, administering collections for other less fortunate churches or celebrating the Lord's supper.
- c) Christian unity must be the work of the Holy Spirit and not that of man, otherwise it is a pathetic counterfeit.

The problem with the ecumenical movement is that it tries to persuade Christians that they really all believe the same thing and that minor differences can be overlooked in the interests of Christian unity. Not only has this been applied to relations between protestants and catholics but also between Christians and those of other faiths. A more honest and effective approach is to recognise that there are important differences, but that in spite of these we can agree to cooperate in certain joint action. This might be to oppose anti-Christian legislation or even to undertake a joint translation of the Bible. Joint action is not the same as a feigned unity. We must also be aware of some of the hidden snags in the ecumenical movement. The State approves of it because it unites the various churches in an organisation

that is easier to dominate and control. The Catholic church hopes that the ecumenical movement will be instrumental in bringing 'separated brethren' back to the Catholic fold.

F. MINISTRY AND GOVERNMENT IN THE CHURCH

1. **The church is seen in scripture as the ministering body of Christ**, therefore His ministry must be its example. Christ is the pattern of all ministry (John 20:21). He is called the Great Apostle (Heb 3:1), the Shepherd and Bishop (1Pet 2:25), and Minister (Mark 10:45). During His earthly ministry, Christ was compared to a bond-slave, a willing executor of the Father's will (Phil 2:1-11). The whole church is called to ministry (Mark 10:45) so it affects everyone. Christ's ministry was first of all to His Father, whereas ministry – (diakonia) is the general ministry of the church; the ministering function of each member of the body must be taken into account. In 1Cor 12 Paul emphasises the variety of the church's ministry and this variety is for the good of each other, ie for the edification of the saints in the body of Christ. One part of the body of Christ cannot do without the other part (1Cor 7:11) therefore, the most insignificant Christian is to be esteemed by all (1Pet 4:7-11, 1Thes 5:14, Heb 12:12-13). We are all to provoke one another to love and good works. There are special ministries involving special tasks to which God calls certain people (Ac 13:1, 20:28) and these are God's gifts to the church (Eph 4:8). Ministry must therefore be regarded as ministry to the church.

2. **Gift and office in the ministry of the church**. Two points of view on this have arisen in the history of the church:

- a) Every ministry must come from the possession of a gift from God.
- b) All ministry must correspond to an office.

In the case of the apostles, we see the combination of gift and office. They had a gift ('charis', an example of unmerited favour of God to man). Paul uses the word over and over again in relation to the work that God gave him to do, yet Paul was also appointed to the office of apostleship (Ro 1:5, 15:15-16, 1Cor 15:9-10, 2Cor 4:1, Gal 1:15, Eph 3:2,7-8). The inference is that the gift covers a wider field than office. Scripture emphasises the sovereignty of the Spirit in ministry (Ac 13:1ff. 20:28, Heb 2:4). The purpose of gift and of office is the edification of the church (Eph 4:12-16, 1Cor 14:12, 17, 26).

3. **The various functionaries in the NT church.** In Eph 4:11 and 1Cor 12:28 Paul gives lists of functionaries.

a) **Apostles**: It is important to distinguish between the 12 Apostles and Paul (whose office could not, by reason of its unique nature, be handed down to others) and 'apostles' in a broader sense (ie, representatives of local churches: delegated messengers, often missionaries). The Twelve and Paul were vehicles for the establishment of NT revelation.

b) **Prophets**: A prophet was someone who through inspired utterance encouraged the church, but prophecy was tested against scripture and by those with the gift of discernment.

c) **Evangelists**: Quite possibly refers to church founders. It was not used in the loose sense of anyone who evangelises. Such men, like Philip, had a definite gift for bringing men to Christ and founding churches (Ac 21:8, 1Tim 4:5).

d) **Pastors and Teachers**: While many pastors were teachers, it did not follow that every teacher was a pastor.

e) **Elders and Bishops**: According to some, both words refer to the same ministry. What is more likely is that the bishop was a presiding elder – ie, he was an elder with special responsibilities. It is quite clearly a mistake to read back into the title 'episkopos' what we today understand by the word 'bishop'. It is not a valid argument to maintain that because 'presbuteros' is the translation of an Hebrew word and because

'episkopos' translates a Greek concept, therefore they are just a Jewish and a Gentile way of saying the same thing.

f) **Deacons** ('diakonoi') : were literally 'servants'. 'Diakônia' is a service of any kind. Normally it referred to material service of some sort. The ordination of 7 deacons in Acts 6 set the pattern for most other churches. Women could and did exercise this ministry – it was the only permanent one to which they could be ordained (1Tim 3:8,11, Ro 12:7, 16:1, Luke 8:2).

4. **Modern forms of church government**

a) **Episcopalianism**. This is government by bishops ('episkopoi'). This is found in the Anglican and Lutheran churches. These churches recognise three orders of ministry: bishops, priests (in the sense of pastors) and deacons/deaconesses. In actual practice, a deacon is a probationary pastor. Only bishops are allowed to ordain other pastors to the ministry and confirm believers. This is based on the idea of apostolic succession. Although the local church does not elect the pastor, he cannot act in this capacity independently of the church council. At the national level there has to be agreement between the three houses of laity, clergy and bishops. In addition, the Anglican church is bound by the 39 articles which in turn depend on scripture.

b) **Presbyterianism**. This is government by elders (presbuteroi) and characterises the Reformed and Presbyterian churches with certain episcopal modifications. This group only has presbyters and deacons. The pastor is regarded as a teaching elder who is in theory equal to the other elders. Above the local church is a system of church boards (presbyteries) or councils with a supreme council at the top. The congregation does have a say in the selection of ministers. Deacons are concerned with the practical day to day running of the church. All ministers are of equal status.

Methodism is a modified version of presbyterianism but in America they have bishops.

c) **Congregationalism**. The two distinctive features of this type of church government are the independence of the local church and government by the whole local congregation. It is characteristic of the Baptist, Congregational, Pentecostal and independent churches. All matters of policy are submitted to the whole congregation in which the minister, deacons and elders (if any) are on the same level as all the other members. Ministry is usually two-fold, ministers (pastors) and deacons, though in some cases the pastor shares responsibility with a number of elders. The Brethren would come in this category although for them the pastoral office rests on all elders without distinction (ie, they have no pastor). Exclusive Assemblies have a central oversight. Both types of Brethren also have travelling.

d) **Roman Catholicism** has two unique features: the primacy of the bishop of one particular city (the bishop of Rome) who decides all matters of faith and doctrine and secondly, the sacerdotal conception of the priesthood (they are sacrificers and form a special 'caste'. Mention must be made here of some house churches involved in the 'shepherding movement' which, on the basis of a claim that all the spiritual gifts have been revived, claim to have 'apostles' at the top of a rigid hierarchical structure of authority. The apostle is then seen as the final court of appeal (even to the extent of overriding scripture). Prominence is also given to 'prophets' who because of inspired utterance, also lay claim to exceptional authority.

5. Varying conceptions of ministry.

a) **The catholic conception:**

(I) The ministry is seen in terms of a priesthood which is offering a literal sacrifice almost according to the OT pattern. This happens during the mass, however, this is not a scriptural use of the term. In the NT the language of priesthood is applied to believers but it is spiritualised and universalised (Rev 5:10, 1Pet 2:4-10) – a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. It is

claimed that Ro 15:16 supports the Catholic view but this is plainly ridiculous: you cannot drag the Gentiles along to an altar and sacrifice them. Phil 2:17 and Heb 13:10 have to be interpreted figuratively as well.

(II) The theory of apostolic succession arose in the early church in opposition to the Gnostics. Irenaeus and Tertullian had to face a perverse use of scripture along with claims of secret apostolic traditions. To counter this, appeal was made to an unbroken line of bishops of apostolic faith stretching back to the apostles.

Cyprian even claimed that bishops had apostolic authority which had been handed down as a spiritual gift through the laying on of hands at ordination. In other words, the rise of the doctrine had been a matter of expediency. Conceivably, 2Tim 2 could be quoted in support of this, but it refers to teaching not to sacramental grace. The references to the laying on of hands (1Tim 4:14 and 2Tim 1:6) refer to elders who were neither bishops nor apostles.

(III) The theory of Petrine supremacy. It is claimed that Peter had a special supremacy over his fellow apostles (Mt 16:16-18) which was transmitted to the bishops of Rome. Three issues are involved here:

i). **The historical argument.** Peter's primacy among the Apostles was no more than conspicuous leadership during the earliest Christian mission. He clearly receded into the background as the church moved out from Jerusalem as Paul was commissioned to pioneer the mission beyond Israel and as John struggled to repair the churches from the ravages of false teachers. At the Council of Jerusalem it is not Peter who presides but James (Ac 15) and the incident in Galatians 2 shows Paul rebuking him publicly.

What was the relationship of Peter to the church in Rome? Christianity must have first of all taken root amongst the large Jewish community which we know existed in Rome. However, in AD 49 all Jews were expelled by Claudius, probably because

the preaching of the Gospel among them had led to such an uproar. This meant that the church, most of whose members were Jews, virtually ceased to exist. When Nero came to power in AD 54, the edict of his predecessor was no doubt revoked and the Jews were allowed back into Rome. It was possibly on this occasion that Peter came to Rome to reinaugurate the church. He may well have come accompanied by Mark who had been his interpreter on his missionary journeys in north-west Turkey.

The Catholic claim (based on a passage in Eusebius' Church History) that Peter was bishop of Rome for 25 years (AD 45-67) is probably a garbled version of another tradition that Lactantius reproduces in his work: "the apostles were dispersed throughout the world to proclaim the Gospel and for 25 years until the beginning of Nero's reign, they laid the foundations of the church throughout all the provinces and cities. Nero was already emperor when Peter came to Rome" (on the deaths of the persecutors).

Peter's main area of missionary interest seems to have been what is now north-west Turkey where he probably founded many churches. During a subsequent stay in Rome he wrote his first letter (1Pet) to these churches in about AD 63 and perhaps in AD 64 (2Pet), warning them that what was already happening in Rome would soon be coming their way. In AD 64 he was probably executed in the persecution that followed the great fire of Rome.

Peter could, at a stretch, be called the patron of the church of Rome in that he may have refounded it, but thereafter he seems to have used Rome as a staging post for his missionary work in north-west Turkey. He returned to Rome only from time to time. There is no evidence that he was ever bishop of Rome or that he nominated his successor. He does however say that he was an 'elder', whatever that may mean. Historical evidence seems to indicate that there was no monarchical bishop in Rome until the middle of the second century. In the Shepherd of Hermas, Clement is mentioned not as bishop but as church

secretary for foreign affairs; he was obviously one of a team of elders.

ii). **The exegetical argument.** How are we to understand Mt 16? Current interpretations by protestants claim that the rock either refers to Peter's confession or to Christ Himself. This is no caprice but has much support among the Church Fathers: 17 of them took Peter to be the rock, 8 refer it to all the apostles, 44 refer it to Peter's confession and 16 refer it to Christ Himself. Thus there was no unanimous consent among the Early Church Fathers. In any case, the Greek word used does not allow Peter to be the rock. It says: "You are Peter ('petros' is stone) and on this rock ('petra' is cliff) I shall build my church." The two are related but not the same. If as some claim, the word would be the same in aramaic ('kefa') why are two different words used in the Greek text? In actual fact, the word 'kefa' can be either masculine (having the same meaning as petros) or feminine (with same meaning as petra) – it is the adjective that enables a person to see whether it is being used as a masculine or a feminine. In any case, Peter himself is quite clear as to what the correct interpretation is. In 1Pet 2,4 he says that he is one of the living stones which has been laid on the foundation stone which is Christ Himself. Paul makes the same point in 1Cor 3:11c. Theologically, the doctrine of petrine supremacy finds no support in the scriptures. To say that Peter takes Christ's place is an arbitrary assertion and there is absolutely no suggestion of it in the text.

We must therefore conclude that the words of Jesus are a prophecy: Peter is the first stone of the house that Jesus is going to build. By his confession, Peter places himself on the Rock which is Jesus Himself. Peter's historic rôle will be to open to the kingdom to the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles (Ac 2,8, 10).

b) **Charismatic conceptions of the ministry.** This hinges on the assertion that all the gifts have been resurrected, including

that of apostleship. Apostles and prophets are said to be the mouthpieces of Christ Himself. Therefore what they say is authoritative. This tends to bypass the authority of scripture. A further development of this idea is the 'shepherding movement' which maintains that every believer is part of an authoritarian structure (called a 'pyramid') with an apostle at the top. Each believer has to be 'covered' by the believer set over him; that is, he has to submit to his spiritual advisor in all matters.

Objections to this view are as follows:

(I) The office of apostle was unique and unrepeatable. An apostle had to have been a witness of the earthly life of Jesus and a witness of his resurrection (Ac 1:21-22). Although Paul was not a witness of the earthly life of Jesus, he was a witness of the resurrection and was recognised as an apostle by the other apostles (Ac 26:16-18, Gal 2:8-9). He also implies that he was the LAST of the apostles (1Cor 15:8).

(II) As apostolic authority is unique, so is the NT which is a recording of what the apostles wrote. Therefore any subsequent authority must bow to and be tested by the NT which is the Word of God.

(III) The apostles laid down general guidelines for behaviour and taught doctrine. They did not meddle in people's private decisions. They only exercised discipline with regard to heresy and immorality.

(IV) Apostles were accountable to each other and to the Lord. When they disagreed on policy they did not excommunicate each other.

(V) Elders (called in the shepherding movement 'shepherds') held authority in matters of faith and practice but they did not claim infallibility. Although deacons or elders were often proposed from above, the matter was submitted to a congregational vote (Ac 6). Most other matters of church order were decided on this basis as well. Discipline was exercised in accordance with principles laid down in the Gospels by Jesus Himself. Elders did not have dictatorial powers over every aspect of the life of those under them.

6. General principles of ministry.

- a) The qualifications for ministry in the NT are predominantly spiritual (Mt 23:1-12, Mk 9:33-37, 10:35-45, 1Tim 3, Titus 1:5ff).
- b) The ministry of each member of the body should be encouraged. There must be a wide encouragement of the use of everyone's gift. All gifts cannot be concentrated in one man or group of men. However, some may be set apart for more or less full-time ministry. The NT lays down the principle of financial support for such people.
- c) The church should be concerned with the spiritual and material well-being of its members (Ac 6).
- d) Spiritual qualifications are required even for those doing menial tasks.

7. Church Discipline.

- a) The need for discipline. The church is the body of Christ consisting of men and women on whom God has put His seal (ie, staked His reputation). God's glory (reputation) is at stake. Israel was judged by God for causing His Name to be blasphemed (Ro 2:24).
- b) The purposes of discipline. It is for the Lord's sake and for the church's sake (1Cor 5:6-7).
- c) Occasions for discipline. In the NT they were predominantly moral as well as for heresy. If there is a false teacher in the church, he must be disciplined, however, heresy hunting is not desirable (2Cor 2:5).

G. THE ORDINANCES AND SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances for they were ordained by the Lord Himself but the word 'sacrament' was also applied to the above in the form of Greek 'mysterion' because

these ordinances became intimately connected with the central mystery of the Christian Gospel (Christ Himself). 'Mysterion' was translated into Latin as 'sacramentum' (a sacred thing). It was the word that was used of the vow of a new Roman soldier. It was Tertullian who first used this term but as time went on, priestly notions came to be associated with the word sacrament. The Reformers retained the term though at first they were somewhat suspicious, but they agreed to keep it as they were satisfied as to its original meaning.

1. The number of sacraments. The Reformers denied the word to anything that did not pass three tests:

- a) It had to have been instituted by Christ Himself.
- b) He must have commanded his followers to keep it.
- c) It had to be intimately bound up with the divine revelation in Christ. They believed that only baptism and the Lord's Supper conformed to the above criteria.

However, the Roman Catholic church holds to seven sacraments: confirmation, penance, holy orders, matrimony, extreme unction, baptism and the Lord's supper. The protestants recognise five but certainly not as sacraments. The elevation of these practices to sacraments took place in the middle ages and was completed by 1439 (Council of Florence) which fixed the number at seven.

2. The sacraments as a means of grace. They are only so in that the Word of God is involved. The Roman Catholic church however exalts them above the Word of God and says that they work 'ex opere operanto'. The Council of Trent said 'the grace signified is contained in the very nature of the sacraments themselves so that it is always conferred ex opere operanto on every receiver (ie, a person who does not oppose some positive obstacle). Augustine said that it was a visible form of an invisible grace. Zwingli, who represents the opposite extreme said that there is a blessing to be found by obeying God's command.

3. Baptism. There has been much discussion about the meaning of the word '*baptizo*'. Some say with good reason that the original meaning was to immerse, but others hold that it had acquired other senses by NT times, such as 'to dye or to wash'. The antecedents of Christian baptism are as follows: in the OT there were various ritual ablutions connected with the work of the priests. There was also the cleansing of lepers and the cleansing from contact with dead bodies. At Qumran, great stress was laid on ritual ablutions, but these men realised that they could not obtain moral purity by these means. It seems highly probable that the baptism of proselytes was practised prior to the Fall of Jerusalem in AD70. It indicated the desire of the proselyte to make a clean break with paganism. For Jews, John the Baptist's idea of baptism connected with repentance was new. What John was in fact saying, and what the Jews found so repugnant, was that they had to give up any special claim on God's favour and consider themselves as pagans before God, pagans who needed to be baptised (symbol of repentance) to enter the new messianic community to whom the future belonged. Christian baptism went a stage further for it was linked with salvation and the reception of the Holy Spirit for between the two stood the Cross (the sacrificial death of the Messiah for the sins of His people, and for as many as God would call to Him -John 11:52) which was the means of salvation. Baptism for the Christian is linked with the beginning of the Christian life. It is linked with forgiveness (Ac 2:37, 9:17-18, 22, 16). It is linked with regeneration (Titus 3:5). It is also linked with union with Christ (1Cor 10:2). It is a public identification with Christ's death and resurrection (Ro 6:3-4, Col 2:12). It is also an outward symbol of that salvation that is appropriated by faith. In 1Pet 3:21 it is said to save us because it is linked with the work of Christ and the reference is to the inner attitude of the person concerned. The word baptism implies the confession of faith and the faith behind the confession. It in the deepest soteriological sense, baptism can

be said to 'save' us, it is because of the confession which it implies and the faith which lies behind the confession. Christians are never referred to as 'the baptised'. Baptism is the normal rite of initiation into the Christian community and the NT knows nothing of an unbaptised Christian.

a) **Arguments in favour of believer's baptism:** The Gospel commission of Christ implies that the believers only are to be baptised. Baptism by its very nature is meaningless unless it is preceded by repentance and faith, which cannot be exercised by a baby. There is no explicit case of the baptism of infants in the NT. The New Covenant by its very nature includes believers ONLY. It is radically different from the Old Covenant which included the whole nation of Israel. It must also be remembered that the New Covenant was intended forIsrael (prophecies relative to it in the OT have Israel primarily in mind) and that is why it was radically different from the Old Covenant. The only way into the Messianic community founded by Jesus was by regeneration (John 3:3). There is no clear evidence for the practice of infant baptism in the early church until the last quarter of the 2nd century and then it was linked with Cyprian's sacramental theology which was propounded to bolster up his own claims against his ecclesiastical opponents – another case of expediency.

b) **Arguments in favour of infant baptism:** According to this line of reasoning, it is 'highly probable' that some NT households which were baptised contained children (eg Ac 16:33). Against this it must be argued that in cases that are reported in the NT there is no indication that anyone in any household was baptised without a confession of faith or on the confession of faith of someone else. It is true that Paul does associated baptism with circumcision (Col 2:11-13) but the circumcision which he has in mind is a circumcision of the heart (ie, regeneration) which was prophesied in any case in Ezekiel concerning the New Covenant which was to come. The

children of Christian parents have an important place in the economy of God (Ac 2:29, 1Cor 7:14). This is true, but the NT nowhere claims that their children are automatically members of the New Covenant for that reason, even after baptism. All scripture says is that they are 'sanctified for their parents sake' which surely means in the context of Paul's argument that they are the object of God's tender care (for their parents sake) which is a secondary effect of the covenant (cf Ac 27:24 for an example of the same principle at work). The children of converts from paganism to Judaism were often baptised along with their parents. Once again, this is not a convincing argument as the two covenants (OT and NT) are radically different.

4. The Lord's Supper. This is variously referred to in churches as: the breaking of bread, communion, Eucharist, mass (from the latin phrase *'Ite, missa est!'* which refers to the sending away of the non-communicants before the communion). It was instituted by Christ at the Passover season. After Pentecost, we find the disciples observing this feast, although in Ac 2:46 it had not yet become a special service. In Ac 20 we see that they met on the Lord's day to 'break bread'. In 1Cor 11 we see the beginning of the movement to separate the Lord's Supper from the main meal (agapé or love-feast). What was its significance in the NT? Is it legitimate to use John 6 in reference to the Lord's Supper? This chapter does not refer primarily to the Lord's Supper but rather to the death of Jesus and the appropriating of the benefits of that death. The link between the two is that both refer to the atonement. The words of Christ in the institution of it make reference to the broken body and the shed blood.

In the Roman Catholic church the words 'this is my body' (Mt 26:26) are used to support their doctrine of transubstantiation (that during the Mass the bread and wine literally turn into the body and blood of Christ). However, this is an extremely arbitrary interpretation. The verb 'to be' fulfils the same function

as in Mt 13:38 'the field is the world' obviously means 'the field represents the world'. Besides, in the Jewish Passover feast on which the Lord's Supper is modelled, the head of the household said, as he took the unleavened bread (which is exactly what Jesus said, but giving it a new significance) 'this is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in Egypt', obviously meaning: this REPRESENTS the bread of affliction. When Jesus spoke these words, He had not yet died on the Cross and so neither had his blood been shed nor his body broken. In fact, in the Last Supper, He is referring to a future event. In John 6:63 Jesus warned His hearers against a materialistic interpretation of His words on this subject.

Another passage that is sometimes invoked in favour of sacramentalism is Hebrews 13:10 – 'We have our own altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat'. This passage taken in context probably means: 'We Christians have an altar (the Cross) from which those who serve at it do not eat' (as in Leviticus 16), the sacrifice for sin did not result in a meal because the body of the victim was burnt outside the camp. So, under the New Covenant, it is not a question of eating good to 'strengthen the heart' even if it only has a spiritual effect. Do not be led astray on this point by all sorts of strange doctrine (ie, sacramentalism). Notice furthermore, that the fate of the victim in Leviticus 16 prefigures the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish leaders which implies that we should make a complete break with Judaism. In the Lord's Supper, we not only look back in gratitude to His atonement but forward to His Return (1Cor 11:26). It is also a public demonstration of fellowship. Lest it become a hypocritical demonstration, discipline is urged (1Cor 10:16-27). Failure to realise its significance in the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit in the gathered company is extremely serious.

5. **Divergent views on the Lord's Supper**

a) **The Roman Catholic view.** According to this view, the mass is a sacrifice and extension of the death of Christ. The

priest has the mystical power to consecrate the elements which then become the real body and blood of Christ. The bread and wine still appear as such but have in fact been transformed in substance. The host (from *hostea* = victim) that is, the consecrated elements, should be adored by the faithful. The whole Christ is present in each of the two elements but only the priest receives the wine (communion in two kinds). This view seriously compromises the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. The value of His sacrifice is infinite because He was crucified as an infinite Person (Second Person of the Trinity). By saying that His sacrifice must be repeated or prolonged, the element of infinity is taken away from His Person (thus leaving Him a mere man) and transferred to time but the scripture affirms that by one sacrifice of Himself He has procured an eternal salvation (Heb 10:12). If we deny the sufficiency of His sacrifice (and with it the certainty of salvation) we ultimately deny His divinity.

b) **Luther's view.** This differs from the Roman Catholic one. Luther rejected the idea of the mass as a sacrifice. He also rejected the adoration of the host and the doctrine of transubstantiation (a change of substance). His version is known as consubstantiation (the body of Christ received with the bread and wine). This retains the idea of Christ being bodily present and of the believer feeding on His body, not in the bread and wine but with them. Thus the words of Christ: 'This is my body' are interpreted as meaning this (bread) accompanies my body. Needless to say this is a most unlikely interpretation of Christ's words and comes up against the problem that Christ's material body is in heaven – He is only spiritually present on earth through the Holy Spirit.

c) **Calvin's view.** The emphasis is on the spiritual presence of Christ, not on any physical presence. While our Lord's glorified body is not partaken by the communicant and the substance of the elements is unchanged, yet the communicant by faith enters into a special spiritual union of his soul with the glorified Christ. The Lord's Supper is thus seen as a means of grace.

Failure to participate in the Lord's supper thus results in the spiritual loss of the Person concerned.

d) **Zwingli's view**. He regarded the Lord's Supper as purely an act of remembrance: the emphasis is on our act of remembering Christ. He was probably close to Calvin's view but with a slight change of emphasis.

H. DIFFERING CONCEPTIONS OF THE CHURCH

These can be divided into 3 groups: 1 Catholic; 2 Protestant; 3 Independent.

1. CATHOLIC.

a) **The Roman Catholic church**. The continued incarnation of Christ in the church whereby Christ = Church. Christ is therefore no longer the head of the church but He IS the church, or rather, the soul of the church. This idea has been variously traced back to Origen who believed that the Word (Christ) is the soul of the church. Others have connected it with Augustine's manicheism. Divine life is mystically communicated to the church. Christ is also seen as a continuous living sacrament (or sign) of the reconciliation of all humanity (Origen's idea which borders on universalism). The church is also seen as the depository of the Holy Spirit (He is limited and controlled by the church) – an idea which we find in Irenaeus. This is also Cyprian's point of view because for him baptism administered by an heretic is not valid, because the church is the custodian of the Holy Spirit. Because the church is all of these things, it is to the church that we must come for salvation. As Cyprian said: 'Outside the church there is no salvation'. However, catholics in the interest of ecumenicity tend to tone this down. As Mary is the mother of the body of Christ, she is the mother of all believers. As Christ is the second Adam, she is the second Eve. Similar ideas are found in the writings of Irenaeus. Mary is an

original source of grace for the church. She is the aqueduct between Christ and the church. However, since 1950 there has been a playing down of the doctrine in the interests of the ecumenical movement.

As we can see, most of these ideas started with the Church Fathers, whose writings the Catholic church accept almost on a par with scripture. Then these ideas progressed and were added to by prominent thinkers in the church. Over the last two centuries, two tendencies have become apparent: (i) the deification of what is human – Pope and Mary and (ii) since Vatican II, catholicism has become a sort of hinduism that embraces everything with of course the Pope at the tope of the pyramid. It is essentially a man-made system that disregards the Bible and which deifies man at the expense of God. It robs God of His glory.

There is an inherent monophysite tendency in catholicism to divinise what is human. As they cannot conceive of the divine element dwelling among the human, they make the human divine. Hence, Mary is divinised because she bore Christ who only has one nature (divine). The church is divine because the Holy Spirit indwells it. Another tendency is to deny the once and for all aspect of the Cross and to prolong it in a metaphysical sphere. This is why catholics play down the resurrection and ascension. The ascension shows that Christ's work on earth is finished and that He is no longer bodily present. But the catholics would say that Christ continues to live on in His apostles and their successors. To this we must reply that the apostles had no successors. Their ministry was a ministry of the Word (Ac 6:2) – they were Christ's ambassadors because Christ spoke through them. The only way in which they continue Christ's ministry is as that of prophets. It is the Holy Spirit who is the vicar of Christ (His representative) who directs the apostles and their successors. It is not for them to manipulate Him. As we read the NT we see that there are 2 missions: the mission of the Son (which ends at the ascension) and the mission of the Holy Spirit) which begins at Pentecost).

The continuity is provided by the apostles. The catholic church, by saying that the church is the incarnation of Christ thereby completely leaves out of the picture the other two members of the Trinity: the Father and the Holy Spirit.

b) **The Orthodox church.** This church separated from the Roman Catholic church in 1054. They are not regarded as heretics and their episcopate and sacraments are still regarded as valid by Rome. The chief causes of division were the exclusive claims of the papacy and the idea that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son. By and large, it would be true to say that the orthodox church is where the catholic church was in 749 because from the time of John of Damascus, there has been no theological development.

The key word in the orthodox way of life is 'mystery'. Their starting point is the theology of the incarnation which they take even further than the Roman church. The church is the mystic body of Christ. They had no St Augustine and no Reformation to keep any semblance of Biblical language. They have completely dematerialised the faith. Man does not so much cooperate in his salvation: he is transfigured by divine energy (an almost Gnostic or thorsophic concept). The church is where heaven and earth meet and where man is taken up to heaven. Services in the church are essentially mystical – there is often no ministry of the Word. The Eucharist is not so much a transsubstantiation as an 'appearance of Christ'. It is the icon which is the channel of divine grace. Doctrinally it is still Catholic but in practice it is much more vague and mystical. It is even more infected by platonism than is Rome. It has a horror of anything concrete or material.

c) **The Anglican church.** It has been said that this church is half-way between Rome and Geneva, that is to say at Florence, the centre of the Renaissance. Many see it as being very much under the influence of Erasmus – a sort of Reformed Catholic Church. It would be truer to say that the Anglican church is a

compromise between Lutheran and Calvinist theologies. The Lutheranism tends to come out in the liturgy whereas the Calvinism tends to come out in the doctrine (especially the 39 Articles of belief). Many people tend to judge the Anglican church today by what they see in the high church section. The church really consists of three sections: the high church; the evangelicals and those who are 'middle of the road'. The high church, interestingly enough has the reputation of being both catholic and 'critical' (ie, liberal). It is really only the evangelicals who are true to the 39 Articles. The middle of the road tendency tend to be both liberal and universalistic.

2. PROTESTANT

This is characterised by the two 'rediscoveries' which were made by the Reformation:

- a) Justification by faith alone
- b) the invisible church made up of those who have true faith.

a) The Lutheran Church

The experience of Luther was essentially subjective: the word of God creating faith in God and communion with God.

Lutheranism started off by being a fairly loose fellowship of people who had the same experience of conversion. Luther was careful to avoid using the word Church when referring to them. For him, they were part of the invisible church of true believers, as opposed to the outward organisation of the catholic church. So how did the Lutheran church come to be what it is today? Luther reacted against Anabaptists and other mystics. He was also basically conservative himself. He made a hasty reaction and recovered some aspects of the Church from which he had come, without really thinking through a biblical position on the matter. The process was completed by Melancthon who encouraged the formation of a State church (Landeskirche)

b. The Calvinist church

Zwingli had no qualms about forming a State church. He based his idea on the OT theocracy. The same idea is followed by Calvin, although he favoured a church less dependent on the state.

The Reformers founded their idea of the church on that of covenant theology. The new covenant was seen as being of the same type as the old covenant. This meant that the children of believers were automatically included in the covenant.

3. FREE CHURCH CONCEPTION

This is characterised by the rejection of any idea of a State Church. Closely allied with this is the rejection of infant baptism. On these two key issues they differed from the Reformers. According to the Free Church conception, only those who are regenerate are members of the local church, as opposed to the invisible church.

ESCHATOLOGY

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS

Introduction

Eschatology is the study of the 'eschaton' – the final period of earth's history and the culmination of God's purposes. However it covers not only final events but also final questions – the final destination of the saved and the lost. A balanced eschatology demands that we take the OT as well as the NT seriously, and not seek to spiritualise the one at the expense of the other. Greek philosophy has had a distorting influence upon biblical eschatology, and so it is important to start with what the Bible actually says and then proceed from there. It is also important that eschatology have a practical bearing on our lives. It is taught in Scripture to encourage the discouraged believer and to spur him on to holy living and action for God. The New Testament contains two kinds of eschatology: realised and unrealised. Realised eschatology is that which has already been fulfilled by the first coming of Christ, and unrealised eschatology is that which has yet to be fulfilled. In both the Old and New Testaments, the completion of God's purposes, the end of Satan's rule and the establishment of the kingdom of God, are seen to depend upon the intervention of a person, the Messiah. He is the link between realised and unrealised eschatology.

In Judaism, time was divided up into 'this present age' (under Satan's rule) and 'the age to come' (under the Messiah's rule). The dividing line between the two was the coming of the Messiah. The contrast was therefore not so much between 'earth' and 'heaven', but between this age and the age to come, both occurring on this earth. Due to Christ's first coming, believers find themselves in the peculiar position of living in this present age, and yet belonging to the age to come. Already they are already living spiritually in the age to come, for they

have received the Holy Spirit and eternal life. It is in this sense that 'the end of the ages has come upon Christians' (1 Cor 10,11). They live in the tension of the 'already' and the 'not yet'. They live in the last days (Hebr 9,26; 1 Pet 1,20) which in the OT refers to the period immediately before the coming of the Messiah and the setting up of his kingdom. Hence, the term 'realised eschatology' is a term which is relative to Christians and not to the world at large.

I. TERMS USED RELATIVE TO ESCHATOLOGY

A. ETERNAL LIFE

The term refers not so much to duration but to a quality of life: God's life as mediated to us through the Holy Spirit. This is also the primary meaning of the term 'immortality'. It is life that is beyond the reach of death, life lived in another dimension. In the eschatological sense it is life that is characteristic of the final state of things: enjoyment by the redeemed of perfected fellowship with God and the full measure of divine blessings. This entails a glorified existence which can only come through resurrection (for those who have died) or instantaneous transformation for those who have not died. In the Gospel of Matthew it is synonymous with being in the kingdom of God. In its final manifestation it means living with God in a perfect universe.

In its intermediate manifestation in the millenium for the Church and saints of the Old Testament it means being a citizen of the New Jerusalem. For a regenerate but not yet glorified Israel it means living in God's presence in a transformed land of Israel.

At present it means to have this new quality of life through the indwelling Holy Spirit and to live with access to a new dimension: the dimension where God lives. It is to 'know God and Him whom He has sent, Jesus Christ' (John 17:3)

B. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

This term refers in its primary sense to a group of people living under the direct rule of God: the sphere where God's will is realised. These people are his servants.

In this present age those who have submitted themselves in this way to God's rule through Christ belong to this kingdom. It is to be in the centre of God's purposes. We are told in the Gospel of Matthew that the kingdom was taken away from Israel. By this is meant that they ceased to have the privilege of serving God and being in the centre of his purposes.

In the millenium, the present members of the kingdom will inhabit the New Jerusalem, where they will live in glorified bodies. But Christ will also rule directly over a regenerate Israel, and in this sense 'the old theocratic kingdom' will be restored to Israel. Christ will also rule over the whole world, even though many apparently will still be unregenerate.

But the phrase 'to enter the kingdom' is synonymous with possessing eternal life, or possessing salvation. It does not mean merely living on earth during the time of the millenium. In its final stage, living in the kingdom means living in God's presence in a perfect universe.

C. RESURRECTION

This term primarily refers to the resurrection of the body, which of course is a vital, integral part of the total personality. It is the necessary prelude to a glorified existence in the age to come. Resurrection is also connected with judgement. People are resurrected in order to give an account of themselves to God and then to receive the divine verdict on their lives. If there is no resurrection, argues Paul, (and therefore no judgement), then let us eat, drink and be merry.

The first resurrection will occur at the return of Christ prior to the setting up of the millennial kingdom. It will certainly involve the Church and also the saints of the Old Testament period. It will be a resurrection to a glorified existence. Believers will receive spiritual bodies: that is, bodies that are the perfect

instrument of the the spirit, and able to materialise and dematerialise and thus exist in several dimensions. (I Cor 15:50-53, Rev 20:4-6)

The Bible does admittedly talk about the resurrection of unbelievers (to judgement) but this seems to be more in the nature of a resuscitation of the old mortal body. Unbelievers will be thrown bodily into the lake of fire, for it was in their bodies that they committed deeds of which they are guilty. (Rev 20:12-15)

This will occur for the Jewish nation apparently at the beginning of the millenium and for the rest of mankind at the end of it. (Daniel 12:2, Mt 25:31-45)

D. GLORIFICATION

This term refers to a transformation which results in the person fully reflecting the purpose for which God created him. Man was created in the image of God and presumably would have eventually acceded to a glorified existence had he passed the test and resisted Satan's invitation to join him in his rebellion against God. According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, only in Christ can we regain what was lost in Adam and what Adam could potentially have become.

It was the intention of God in creating man that he should display his glory (that is, His character, His likeness) in him. Thus we read in Romans 3:23: 'for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God', a statement which probably means that the glorious image of God in man is less than what it ought to be.' This image can only be restored in man through faith in Jesus the Messiah and through the consequent indwelling of the Holy Spirit who begins his work of transformation in us. At the resurrection our bodies will be so transformed that they will henceforth fully reflect the image of God.

The Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* wrongly confuses glorification with divinisation. Peter does talk about our being partakers of the glory of God, but that surely refers to the

indwelling Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our future glorification,

II. ISSUES INVOLVED

A. JUDGEMENT

1) General Principles

As is the case with many other Hebrew words in Scripture, the word translated as 'judgement' (hebr. *shafat*) can have a wide variety of meanings, according to the context in which it is used. It can mean 'to assess', 'to pass a sentence of guilty (to condemn), or 'to carry out the sentence (i.e. to punish) '.

Unfortunately, older translations tend to be rather wooden, and so produce a rather imprecise idea in the mind of the readers.

In the Old Testament, God's judgements mostly came in immediate and physical form. When David prayed for God to judge his enemies, he meant that He should send them misfortune or kill them. He did not have in mind the Last Judgement. In fact little is said in the OT about the Last Judgement or eternal punishment. We also have to remember that in ancient Israel, the king was also the head of the judiciary, unlike in our societies.

The concept of judgement is based on the accountability of man to God. As man is made in the image of God, he is placed in an authority structure in which he has certain responsibilities. He is therefore accountable to God for his actions. It is therefore logical that there should be at some stage a judgement. This judgement has the following characteristics:

a) It will be universal: Although all people will not be judged at the same time or in exactly the same way, it will affect every person. Moreover, the Bible affirms that not only man will be judged but also supernatural beings, for they also were originally placed in an authority structure by God who made them.

- b) The judgement will be carried out on an individual basis. The Bible just not just say that all will be judged, but every single person.
- c) Judgement will be the work of God's Son: God has committed judgement especially to His Son. Christ is eminently fitted to judge because he is both Son of God and Son of Man. As the former, he is Lord of all – the Lawgiver who has all knowledge, but as the latter he has intimate knowledge of what it means to be a man. Moreover, he has suffered more (in intensity) than anyone else has suffered. No one can excuse himself by claiming that God cannot judge him because he has suffered so much. Christ represents the Law, the State but also the people.

2. **The Judgement of unbelievers**

- a) **This judgement is not simply a process but also an event:**
In some passages of Scripture (cf. Rom 1,18) judgement is seen as a process that is even now going on in the world. Man reaps, even in this life, what he sows. In other passages we hear how God judges the world as a whole physically by sending catastrophies. The most notable example of this was the Flood. The Bible also tells us that one day God will judge the world with fire. But this does not alter the fact that one day every person will have to appear individually before God to be judged according to what he has done, in other words, to answer for his actions.
- b) **Judgement will be carried out on the basis of God's Law.**
As man is made in the image of God, we are held accountable for how we have reflected this image or lived up to it. God is holy and he has decreed that man be holy also as he has an important role to play in God's economy. God's character is revealed in His Law, and even more completely in the character of Christ. God will judge even inner motives.
It is important to realise that man is sent to hell not primarily because he has rejected the Gospel (although this increases his culpability still more) but because he has broken God's law,

because he is a sinner. The Gospel is a means whereby men who are already under condemnation, may be acquitted. This raises the difficult question of those who have never heard the Gospel. It is clear that everyone receives light of some kind, either through the Law (a written revelation of God), or through conscience, but in neither case has there been an entirely positive response. Paul discusses the question and arrives at the conclusion of Romans 3,23 'For all (all categories of men) have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' Therefore all are lost and need to hear the Gospel in order to be saved. The Gospel is therefore relevant to everyone. If this were not so, then Paul's argument entirely loses its point. In Eph 2,12 Paul says that all men outside of Christ (i.e. apart from the Gospel) are without God and without hope. So on what basis could men in the OT enter into a saving relation to God. The answer is on the basis of God's election, later expressed through faith, whereby he imputed to them the sacrifice of the Messiah. Some object that that justice demands that the Gospel be offered to all men, but the Bible says that according to justice, all are condemned. If we want to invoke God's justice, we face condemnation. Salvation can only come on the basis of grace (Christ's atoning sacrifice) through faith. However, if we look further behind the scenes, we also see that God's election is at work.

Do not all religions lead to God? No, they do not. Only one has a sufficient sacrifice for sin, which is the principal problem confronting sinful man facing a Holy God. In fact, Paul says that the worship of other gods is related to the worship of demons (1 Cor 10,20). In the syncretistic and ecumenical age in which we live, this is not something that people like to hear. Some object that such a doctrine is inconsistent with the mercy of God. But the mercy of God has to have a basis, and that basis is the atoning sacrifice of Christ. On no other basis can God have mercy, and yet remain true to his righteous character.

c) **The judgement will occur for Israel** (unregenerate and regenerate) at the beginning of the millenium, and for the rest of mankind at the end of the millenium.

3. The Judgement of believers

a) It is made very clear in the NT that there will also be a judgement of the believer. Some passages speak of a judgement seat (hebr. *bema*) which refers to a raised platform in the synagogue, or a podium at an athletic contest on which judges sat in order to assess the performance of athletes and to distribute prizes.

b) This judgement will be on the basis of works. We shall be judged on the basis of what we have done with what God has given us. It will also involve our motives, for no man's works can be properly understood without a knowledge of the motives behind them.

c) This judgement will not issue in condemnation of believers, for Christ has borne their condemnation. But, it may be objected, are there not passages in the Gospels which speak of even 'servants' being thrown into hell? A close examination of the passages concerned, seems to indicate that the servant concerned never stood in a saving relationship to Christ. He did not know him and entirely misjudged his character. By his action (or lack of it) he proved his true spiritual state. Therefore we must conclude that the context of this passage is either in the judgement of Israel (unregenerate and regenerate) or of the whole of the professing Church.

d) The life of the believer will be assessed and rewards will either be given (or withheld). It is clear from Scripture that rewards will be given in terms of further responsibility in government, i.e within the context of further, higher service. These rewards are given according to use of the spiritual capacity which God has given us.

e) This judgement of believers occurs after the return of Christ to earth and just prior to the Millenium.

B. THE INTERMEDIATE AND FINAL STATES

The intermediate state is the state of men between death and resurrection. The final state is that which comes after resurrection and judgement. The former is disembodied and incomplete and the latter is with a body.

1) The nature of death:

There are three senses in which the word death is used in Scripture: physical, spiritual and eternal. They all imply separation of some kind. Physical death is the result of sin. It is part of God's judgement on sin. It results in the (temporary) separation of both soul and body. As we are all subject to physical death, this is a proof that we are all sinners. However, for the believer, the character of physical death is changed. It has lost its 'sting', that is, its penal character. Spiritual death means separation from God. Eternal death means eternal separation from God.

2) The OT doctrine of Sheol:

This Hebrew word is translated by the words: 'the pit' or 'the grave'. It is the equivalent of the NT expression '*haidos*' often mistakenly translated by 'hell'. It really means the world of the dead, the place of departed spirits. Life there lacks the physical element. Thus the inhabitants of *sheol* are referred to as the *Refaim* – the shades (almost carbon copies of what they had once been). However, this place was never envisaged as being outside the scope of divine sovereignty. Indeed, the believers of the OT did not look forward to a disembodied life in *sheol*, but rather to the resurrection of the body. Unbelievers, presumably, anticipated with dread the resuscitation of their bodies to appear before the Last Judgement. In the OT period *sheol* was the destination of all men, both good and evil. Samuel, for example, expected Saul to join him in *sheol*. When he was called up by the witch of Endor, he did not give the impression of having been in 'paradise' (1 Sam 28,19). God did however, make an exception in two cases, those of Enoch and Elijah, and

bypass *sheol* and take them into his immediate presence. These however are exceptions and cannot be used to establish a universal rule.

There are two other places mentioned in connection with departed spirits. These are '*abaddon*' and '*bor*'. These were reserved for fallen angels. However it is not clear whether this was a department of '*sheol*' or another place altogether.

3) The inter-testamental and NT doctrine of the intermediate state.

Most Jews in the inter-testamental period believed in a two-fold division of *sheol*. However, there is evidence that some Jews even believed in a four-fold division: 1) for martyrs, 2) for the righteous dead, 3) for moderate sinners, 4) For really bad sinners. One can perhaps see here the beginning of a doctrine of purgatory. Nearer the time of Christ, there was more and more the tendency to use *sheol* to designate the place of the wicked dead and to employ the word 'paradise' for the place of the righteous dead. The rabbis used the word paradise in three ways: 1) the garden of Eden (past), 2) the messianic kingdom (future), 3) the concealed paradise (present), where the righteous even now enjoy the presence of God. IV Maccabees speaks of someone 'reclining in Abraham's bosom – for they believed that the patriarchs were there.' In Lk 16,23 the rich man is said to be in torment in *hades*. In this parable, Christ seems to be endorsing the rabbinic concept of 2 distinct divisions of *hades* into the place of the blessed dead and the place of the unrighteous dead.

All things considered, it would seem that Christ after his death descended into *sheol* where he liberated the OT saints and took them with him into paradise. It is clear that Christ's death brought about a major change in the state of the righteous dead, and we could even go so far as to say (in spite of rabbinic speculation) that paradise was not open to anyone before the death of Christ.

The NT position is that after death the believer goes to be with Christ, but this is not his final experience because he is still in a disembodied state. He awaits the resurrection. The unbeliever, already in a state of torment, also awaits the resurrection and consignment to hell.

We are also told that Christ announced his victory to the rebellious angels mentioned in Genesis 6 (cf. 1 Peter 3,20), thus making his triumph complete. The reference in 1 Peter 4,6 probably refers to those who had heard the Gospel (and accepted it) but are now dead. Although they had to die physically like everyone else, yet they are now rewarded. Peter seems to be countering the argument of scoffers who said that believers have to die physically like everyone else, so what advantage do they have?

4) The final state of the saved.

The Bible speaks, not so much of heaven in an ephemeral sense, but of God living among his people in a totally new world.

- a) God will be seen and worshipped. We shall be together with God and Christ.
- b) There will be a reunion with departed saints. The NT speaks of the whole company of the redeemed. When we are joined to Christ, we are automatically joined to each other. However, marriage and family relationships will no longer exist, because conditions of life will be different.
- c) The effects of the fall will be removed. God will make everything new. After the Millenium there will be absolute perfection, and even before that (during the millenium) everything will be perfect within the New Jerusalem, from where the saints will reign over the earth with Christ.
- d) It will entail both rest and service. Heaven will mean rest for earthly believers but there will still be work to do
- e) There will be fulness of life there.

5) The final state of the unsaved.

This is called 'hell' or 'the lake of fire'. The word Gehenna (hell) is used in Scripture for the final place of punishment. All but one reference to this place come from the lips of Christ himself. Gehenna is a contraction of the words *Ge-Hinnom* (the valley of Hinnom) which was situated not far from Jerusalem. It was here that apostate Jews had sacrificed infants to the god Moloh. Because the valley had been used for this vile purpose, it was deemed unfit for any other use than as a rubbish dump: there were fires burning there continually. Every Jew regarded the place with horror. In the inter-testamental period, the place became the symbol of a place of future punishment. The terms used to suggest an endless dissolution of the personality by a condemning conscience (worm), an agonising awareness of God's displeasure (fire), the knowledge of loss, not merely of God but of all that is good and of everything that made life worth living (outer darkness), self-condemnation and self-loathing (gnashing of teeth). Above all there is the knowledge that it is eternally too late: the door is for ever closed.

- a) It is banishment from the presence of God for ever. Paul speaks of everlasting ruin, away from the presence of the Lord. Those condemned by Jesus are told to depart from him into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels
- b) It is a place of eternal punishment. The awfulness of this condition is continually stressed in Scripture.
- c) It is to abide for ever under the wrath of God.

6. The doctrine of purgatory

The Roman Catholic Church and, to a lesser extent, the Orthodox Church, teach this doctrine. According to them, purgatory is the place where the souls of those who have died in a state of grace are purified and made ready for heaven itself. Canonised saints go straight to heaven, but those with mortal sin on their souls go to hell. However, most believers go to purgatory.

This doctrine depends on a distinction being made between mortal and venial sins. Mortal sins are those committed 'with

full knowledge and full consent', and which exclude men from heaven altogether if they die unconfessed. But if they have repented and received absolution from the priest, but have not yet performed the penance (punishment due to sin) prescribed by the priest, they will go to purgatory. Purgatory is thus a place for the removal of lesser or venial sins. However, the inhabitants of this place are sure to reach heaven ultimately. This has the practical effect of blunting peoples senses to the urgency of the Gospel call, and lulling them into a semi-universalism. As those in purgatory cannot accumulate more merit, they can be aided by others from outside, by having requiem masses said for them and also prayers for the dead. In the Middle Ages, indulgencies were sold to shorten the stay in purgatory. This office of seller of indulgencies was only abolished at the second Vatican Council.

The doctrine of purgatory was taught from about 200 AD onwards by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, both of whom were strongly influenced by platonism. Augustine even developed it and Gregory the Great amplified it considerably. Thomas Aquinas said that the pains of purgatory are more grievous than all the other pains of this world.

The Reformers rejected the doctrine emphatically, regarding it as an insult to the finished work of Christ.

The chief passage adduced by the Catholic Church in support of this doctrine is 2 Maccabees 12,39-45. 1 Peter 3,18 and 1 Cor 3,11-15 are also invoked.

How can we reply to this?

1) The passages in question do not bear this interpretation. 2 Maccabees is a book from the apocrypha which is not part of the Palestinian canon. 2 Macc 12,45 says: 'That was why they had this atonement sacrifice offered for the dead, that they might be released from their sin.' The sin they had committed was one of idolatry for which they had been killed in battle. In OT times this was a mortal sin, for which there was no sacrifice provided. In other words, they were praying that their comrades would go from hell to heaven. Even this is recognised by the

Catholic Church as an impossibility. Besides, the practice of praying for the dead is not found anywhere in the canonical books, and reflects the corruption that had crept into Judaism since the Exile. No wonder this book was not included in the canon! Besides this, it is historically inaccurate on many points. 1 Peter 3,8 is quoted to back up the theory of the second chance. Even if the verse in question meant that (which it probably does not), there is no intimation that Jesus is going to repeat this procedure at a future date.

1 Cor 3,11 says: 'That day will begin with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.' There is nothing here about fire purifying men's sins. Besides, the context refers to the judgement, by which time it will be too late.

2) The Bible speaks of the completed work of Christ. The word purification is really an OT word for forgiveness. If we are pure, or purified, it means that we can have continued access to God. The Catholic Church interprets the word in terms of Plato's philosophy. Hebr.1,3 says: 'Having made purification for our sins, he sat down.' Since he has purified our sins, there can be no further purification.

b) According to the Bible, all sin is abhorrent to God. The wages of sin is death – the eternal consequences of any sin is death (separation from God). Scripture does admittedly say that there is a sin that does not lead to death (1 Jn 517), but in the context of John's controversy with the Gnostic heretics, it probably means 'a sin that can be forgiven.' The Gnostics had committed the eternal sin by resisting God's grace until the end, which proves, John says, that they were never born again. (1 Jn 2,19). John is saying, in effect, that there is no point in praying for the Gnostics, as they have rejected God's grace and gone their own way, in debauchery and licence. But, he continues, by all means pray for a brother who has 'fallen into sin' that he may come to his senses, repent and be restored to fellowship. Yet another important verse in this connection is Romans 8,1: 'There is now no condemnation for those who live in union with Christ Jesus.' The word condemnation (katakrima) is a

legal term referring to which the guilty man receives and to his ensuing punishment (penal servitude). Paul is probably referring to the second part of the meaning, because he has earlier dealt with the problem of legal condemnation (Rom 5). In Romans 8, he is referring to the power of the Holy Spirit to live a holy life. He is saying in effect that the believer is set free from both the law's power over him and any punishment which it could inflict upon him as a convicted law-breaker. Both penance and purgatory are classed as 'punishment due to sin', but this text declares that the believer has been set free from all this, so that he can get on with the business of living in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The only remedy for sin, is the Cross. It is not the fire of purgatory. The doctrine of purgatory has its origin in paganism (especially platonism) and possible apostate judaism, which knows nothing of the completed work of Christ, full forgiveness and an eternal salvation.

7. The doctrine of universalism

Both the doctrine of universalism and the doctrine of annihilationism have been developed in reaction to the orthodox doctrine of hell (eternal punishment), which some find too strong to swallow. Universalism represents the view that all men will ultimately be saved. It has appeared in various forms. The following are the arguments that are used to support it:

a) **The universality of atonement.** There can be no question that the sacrifice of Christ potentially covers all men, but its application depends on repentance and faith. In fact the Bible implies quite clearly that all men will not be saved. John 3,16 states that Christ died for the world, but that those who do not believe shall perish.

b) **The cosmic character of reconciliation.** The same book (Colossians) which declares that reconciliation has been made on behalf of all, speaks also of the coming wrath of God, precisely because men refuse God's offer of reconciliation. All

that Col 1,15-20 says is that the One who created the universe will himself remove all the disharmony which has crept in (*'ta panta'* meaning all things). Paul is thinking of the universe as a whole which will be restored (after the rebels have been dealt with).

c) **The completeness of Christ's victory.** The NT declares that Christ will triumph at last over all (1 Cor 15,24-8; Phil 2,10-11). The submission spoken of here does not necessarily refer to willing submission; they will bow to Christ whether they like it or not.

d) **Use of the term 'everlasting' (*aionios*).** The word means literally 'of the ages' or 'eternal'. It is claimed by universalists that this means 'age- long, which suggests the passing of the age of punishment and the existence of another age beyond it. In the NT the sense of the word must be 'eternal'. It cannot mean 'age-long' in the universalist sense, for the same word (*aionios*) is also used in the following contexts: of God (Rom 16,26), of the Son of God (Hebr. 9,14), of the glory to which Christians are called (2 Tim 2,10; 1 Pet 5,10).

e) **Certain passages in 1 Peter** (1 Pet 3,18; 4,6). Three possible interpretations have been advanced for these.

I) Historical: this represents the view that it refers to the Spirit of Christ preaching through Noah to those who are now spirits in prison, because they had rejected the message of repentance. The main objection here is that this interpretation disturbs what seems to be the chronological succession in the passage from Christ's death to his resurrection.

II) The second chance. According to this interpretation, Christ went and preached (between his death and resurrection) to disembodied spirits of the disobedient, thus giving them a second chance to be saved. But why in this case is reference only made to one particular group of sinners? Why should those of the days of Noah be mentioned and no others? Is it likely they would listen a second time, bearing in mind the principles set forth in Luke 16,27-31? Besides, the Greek word

for to preach (*kerouso*) may mean nothing more than proclaim, not necessarily to preach the Gospel.

III) The fallen angel view: According to this, the spirits mentioned there are not human but are fallen angels mentioned in Genesis 6 and also in Jude. Thus Jesus would be announcing to them that Satan, their leader had been overthrown.

But whichever interpretation of this passage is adopted, the least likely one is the theory of the second chance, as it contradicts the rest of Scripture.

8. The doctrine of annihilation.

This doctrine is also known as 'conditional immortality'.

According to this view, the wicked will not be punished eternally, but at the last judgement will be annihilated. Their sufferings therefore occur between their death and their appearance at the last judgement.

Upholders of this doctrine argue as follows:

- a) They maintain that conditional immortality was generally accepted in the Early Church until its thinkers tried to combine Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul with the teaching of the Bible. This unequal yoke, they claim, spawned two bastard offspring: universalism (as taught by Clement and Origen of Alexandria) and unending torment (as taught by Tertullian and Augustine). However, there is nothing to indicate that Tertullian was ever a platonist, so where did he get this idea from, if not from the Bible? They also object to the doctrine of eternal torment in hell, which they claim is unbiblical. They say that eternal punishment is everlasting in its effects (like the punishment of eternal fire which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah – Jude 7) but not in its pains. It is an everlasting punishment, but not an everlasting punishing.
- b) They also argue that immortality is a gift of God by grace, for 1 Tim 6,15-16 states that God alone has immortality. But they are thereby interpreting a Hebrew expression in a platonistic way. The biblical use of the word does not primarily

imply life that goes on for ever. It is really a synonym for eternal life – that is, life beyond the reach of sin and death.

c) They claim that death means annihilation. But in the Bible, death means essentially separation, not annihilation, and is always understood in relation to sin. To be dead in one's sins means to be cut off from God.

d) They claim that biblical use of the word 'destruction' means annihilation. But the biblical word primarily means 'ruin'. The Greek verb '*apollumi*' (Jn 3,16; 2 Thes 2,10; 1 Pet 3,9) means 'lost and damned'. It is used in other contexts where it cannot possibly mean annihilation (Mt 8,25; Lk 11,51). The noun '*olethros*' (ruin, damnation) is used of future punishment in 2 Thes 1,9 and 1 Tim 6,9 where it cannot possibly mean annihilation. Another word used in this context is '*katargeo*' (to destroy) in 2 Thes 2,8 cannot mean annihilation either, as it is also used in Hebr 2,14 (to destroy the Devil means to render him inoperative). Both the Devil and the Antichrist are later depicted suffering the torments of hell for ever (Rev 20,10).

e) Fire, it is claimed, is essentially a destroying agency. But in Mk 9,48, Rev 14,10 and 20,10 fire is used as a punitive agent.

f) It is objected that the word eternal (as used in the expression 'eternal punishment') really means 'belonging to the world or age to come'. Eternal life, they say, means life of the age to come, so eternal death must mean punishment of the age to come. Eternal life has been made available by the coming of Jesus, but eternal death will be administered by Jesus when he utters the final judgement. Thus, they argue, the two expressions really refer to the finality of what happens when the new age starts. But this argument rests on a false dichotomy. Eternal life not only refers to life of the age to come but also life that continues in God's presence. It is not a question of either/or, but both/and. Besides, just as a person can here and now have eternal life, so a person can also be here and now eternally condemned in the sense that he is under sentence of death.

The clinching argument is found in 2 Thess 1,6-10 where eternal perdition is defined as being cut off from the presence of the Lord.

⁶It is just that God should balance the account by sending affliction to those who afflict you, ⁷and relief to you who are afflicted, and to us as well, when the LORD Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in blazing fire. Then he will mete out punishment to those who refuse to acknowledge God and who will not obey the gospel of our LORD Jesus.

⁹They will suffer the penalty of eternal perdition, cut off from the presence of the LORD and the splendour of his might, ¹⁰when on the great day he comes to reveal his glory among his own and his majesty among all believers; and therefore among you, since you believed the testimony we brought you.

C. THE RETURN OF CHRIST AND THE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY.

1) Historical discussions and divergent views:

Most discussion hinges around the time of Christ's return relative to the millenium (1000 years reign of Christ on the earth). Hence pre-millennialism means a view that situates Christ's return before (pre-) the millenium. Post-millennialism situates Christ's return after (post-) the millenium. A-millennialism is essentially a simplified version of eschatology which has no place for a literal earthly millenium.

a) **Pre-millennialism** has a number of variations relative to the Great Tribulation; pre-tribulationism (Christ returns for his church before the tribulation), post-tribulationism (Christ returns for his church after the Tribulation and sets up His kingdom almost at the same time). The most extreme form of pre-millennialism is dispensationalism which drives a very rigid wedge between Israel and the Church (in the millenium, the

Church will be in heaven and Israel will be on the earth – both having entirely different destinies).

b) **Post-millennialism** is of two main types; in its earlier form it expected the millenium to come towards the end of the world but before Christ's Coming – the progress of the Gospel would usher in a period of rich spiritual blessings for the Church, a golden age, in which the Jews would also share in the blessing. This view is held in some charismatic circles, especially those in which 'kingdom theology' is taught. In its later form it was hardly a Christian doctrine: man himself would usher in the new age by adopting a constructive policy of world-betterment (a sort of evolutionary theory).

c) **A-millennialism** has a number of variations, some of which have a place for the conversion of the Jews prior to Christ's return, and some of which do not. The millenium is roughly equated with the church-age. When Christ returns, there will immediately follow the general resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous and the Last Judgement, followed by the final state (the state of absolute perfection). It is essentially a telescoped or simplified version of eschatology which fails to distinguish between Israel and the Church, or to allow for a special place for Israel in God's plan (i.e. a fulfillment of the OT prophecies in Jewish terms).

2. **Historical discussion:** It is generally true to say that most of the Early Church Fathers who wrote during the Second century were pre-millennial (though not dispensational) in their views on eschatology. There is no trace of the doctrine in the case of some of them for the good reason that their writings are either ambiguous or do not contain a discussion of the subject at all. There were two factors which made millennialism more and more unpopular in theological circles, (i) the impact of Gnosticism, and more important (ii) the impact of Greek philosophy from the beginning of the 3rd century onwards. In

particular, the allegorical interpretation of Scriptures, introduced by the Alexandrian school, and sponsored especially by Origen, had a chilling effect on millennial interpretations. The Alexandrian School really did not take the OT seriously at all, regarding it as a mere mine of proof texts for Christianity. The Jewish accusation of Christians being "dangerous trimmers" was certainly true in their case! Pre-millennialism died out quickest in the East but, due to the influence of Augustine (who was A-millennialist) it also came to die out in the West as well. As most of the Reformers were firm Augustinians, it is not surprising that they inherited Augustine's firm A-millennialism. According to Augustine the millenium was the period of the kingdom of Christ on earth from Christ's resurrection until His Return and the Last Judgement. Others of Augustine's time reckoned that it began from the end of the Roman persecution of the Christians (i.e. from the Fall of the Roman Empire). According to Augustine, the first resurrection represented baptism (Rom 6:1-10, Jn 5:25-28). However, it is extremely instructive to examine exactly what Christian writers of the 2nd century did believe regarding the Coming of Christ.

a) Justin (100-165) who was engaged in controversy against both Gnostics and Jews was firmly pre-millennial. According to him, Christ will return in glory to Jerusalem where He will be recognised by the Jews who as a race had previously dishonoured Him (cf Rev 1:7, Zech 12:10 – 13:1) as the sacrifice that avails for all penitent sinners and where He will eat and drink with His disciples; and He will reign there 1000 years. Jerusalem will be rebuilt and enlarged and the Christians, along with the Patriarchs and prophets, will dwell there with Christ in perfect felicity. Justin confesses that he knows pious, pure-minded Christians who do not share this belief, but like others of his time, he considers it plainly authorised by the predictions of Isaiah, Zechariah and the other prophets, not to mention Revelation, and this pre-millennial view clearly counts in his eyes as an unquestioned article of orthodoxy. As far as

the resurrection was concerned, Justin maintained that the saints rose at the beginning of the millenium and that the unbelievers rose to judgement at the close of the millenium.

b) Irenaeus (130-208) had even more to say about the subject. According to him, the present world would endure for 6000 years (that is, from the creation), corresponding to the 6 days of creation. Towards the end of this period, the sufferings and persecutions of the pious will greatly increase, until finally the incarnation of all wickedness appears in the person of the Antichrist. After he has completed his destructive work and has boldly seated himself in the Temple of God, Christ will appear in all His glory and triumph over all His enemies. This will be accompanied by the physical resurrection of the saints, and the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth. Unlike Justin, he held that the just and the unjust rise together and that a Judgement takes place before the millennial reign of the saints upon earth. The period of 1000 years, will correspond to the 7th day of creation – the day of rest. Jerusalem will be rebuilt and the earth will yield its fruit in rich abundance and righteousness and peace will prevail. At the end of the 1000 years the Final Judgement will ensue, and the new creation will appear, in which the redeemed will live for ever in the presence of God.

c) Barnabas taught that the Son of God, appearing at the beginning of the 7th millenium (the Millenium) would reign with the just until a new universe was called into existence at the commencement of the 8th millenium. The heretic Cerinthus elaborated on the material, sensual enjoyments with which the saints would be rewarded in Christ's earthly kingdom. Papias looked forward with wide-eyed wonderment to the literal fulfillment of that epoch of the OT prophecies of unprecedented fertility of field and vineyard. Tertullian (155-250) was a moderate pre-millennialist who allegorised part of this eschatology. The millennial doctrine also found favour with

the Ebionites (Hebrew Christians who held some heretical views regarding Christ's divinity) and the Montanists.

Harnack summarises the theological situation at the end of the third century thus: In places where philosophical theology (i.e. influenced by Greek thought) had not yet penetrated, millennial hopes were not only cherished and defended against opposing explanations of Scripture, but were held to be matters of orthodoxy. According to the same author there wasn't a single bishop in the 3rd century in the West who dared oppose pre-millennialism. He adds that throughout the 3rd and 4th centuries, the Latin theologians who escaped the influence of Greek speculative thought, were pre-millennialist to a man. An article in the Encyclopedia Britannica claims that belief in the millenium was still a point of orthodoxy in the West even in the 4th century.

The Reformers mostly adopted an inconsistent attitude to the doctrine of eschatology: whereas they rejected the allegorical method of interpretation pioneered by Origen which consisted in spiritualising the prophecies of the OT relative to Israel in order to make them apply to the Church (the new people of God), the only realm in which they kept the method was in their interpretation of prophecy. Thus the doctrine of eschatology was never really reformed, for reasons which are hard to understand. The reasons given at the time were that the Reformers wanted to protect their conception of the Church as the Israel of God in the NT, and that they wanted to eliminate belief in the millenium (which presumably was held by their theological rivals which they considered sectarian). It seems that Luther refused to accept the canonicity of the book of Revelation largely because of certain preconceptions which he had.

3) The relation of Israel and the Church

This is undoubtedly the determining factor in any discussion of eschatology. However, a careful balance needs to be maintained, otherwise we run the risk of falling into ridiculous extremes. A rigid dispensationalist viewpoint claims that the Church is a unique body of believers: it did not exist in the OT and it will not exist during the last 7 years of this world's history (chiefly the great tribulation). It has a heavenly destiny and therefore will not be on the earth during the millenium, but in heaven. But is this viewpoint supported by Scripture? Not really.

During the OT period there was within Israel a (regenerate) remnant saved by grace. The Church can therefore be seen as an extension of this remnant to include those among the Gentiles that God has elected to save. Jesus speaks about one flock and one shepherd. Paul speaks about one olive tree, not two, into which branches are either grafted or from which they are broken off. Hebrews tells us that the OT believers have to wait until the completion of the NT church before they can be resurrected together with us. The New Jerusalem consists of the NT believers and the OT believers. Those who remain of the nation of Israel (after the tribulation has annihilated two thirds of the population), will be saved right at the end, when the Messiah returns, after the rapture of the church. Hence, only regenerate Israel will enter the millenium. During the millenium national converted Israel will have a different role to perform from that of the church, for two reasons:

1. So that OT prophecies relative to Israel can be fulfilled. Jesus does not deny that the kingdom will be restored to Israel; he merely tells the disciples to mind their own business.
2. Having come to faith after the rapture of the church, they will not go into the millenium in a glorified state.

The church (citizens of the New Jerusalem that will have come down to earth) and the converted nation of Israel during the millenium, while having different ministries, are still members of the same household of believers.

Who, then are the 144,000 portrayed in the book of Revelation? There are two things to be said about them:

a. Even if it refers to Israel, it is not said that they were saved at the moment of their sealing. They are sealed so as to be physically preserved from the divine judgements that come upon the earth.

b. They could refer to the church. According to some exegetes, they must be the same as the great multitude which no man could number. To argue otherwise invites an absurdity: only the Jewish Christians receive the protective seal, yet it is only the Gentile Christians who, without the seal, survive the great ordeal to enter the presence of God. John heard 144,000 mentioned, but when he looked, he saw the great multitude which no man could number. Similarly, he heard a voice mention the Lion of Judah, but when he looked, he saw a Lamb. The two are the same, described from two different viewpoints.

Dispensationalists claim that during the last 7 years (because of the absence of the church), covenant relations will be resumed between God and Israel. Is this accurate? Not quite.

Covenant relations have never ceased between God and Israel, and that is precisely why their history has been one of divine displeasure. The curses (listed in Deut 28,15-50) resulting from disobedience have been the lot of the Jewish nation during the church age. These reach a new intensity during the last 3,5 years because the nation falls into open idolatry by worshipping the beast in the restored temple, but all these events serve to lead up to a national conversion right at the end.

The question is, (i) what is the nature of the Church? and, (ii) have prophecies relative to Israel in the OT been fulfilled by the Church? Unfortunately, any discussion of the above question has been bedevilled by the following factors: (a) A serious neglect of OT scholarship, particularly among evangelicals, (b) A blind faith in the Reformers and the Augustinian tradition, (c) An automatic acceptance of non-

literal interpretation of the OT prophecies, which goes back to an allegorical approach to Scripture and thence to the influence of Greek philosophy which is diametrically opposed to Hebrew thought, (d) An overemphasis on the NT and neglect of the OT whereby the OT is interpreted in the light of a certain interpretation of the NT: Admittedly the NT does complete the OT picture, but it cannot contradict it. The OT gives us the framework within which we must work when interpreting NT prophecy. We must interpret the NT in terms of the OT, if we are to take the OT seriously at all. The OT, for instance, taken in isolation from the NT; quite clearly yields a pre-millennial eschatology. The OT cannot be spiritualised away if we are to take the doctrine of inspiration of Scripture seriously.

It is clear from the Bible that Israel still has a future in God's plan. The destiny of Israel does not entirely coincide with the destiny of the Church during the Millennium nor is it entirely disassociated from it. But the destiny of the two does coincide after the millennium; it is important to keep a balance. From the OT viewpoint (which was that of Christ Himself) the church is a parenthesis in God's time-table; it is a special body of people chosen by God to fulfill a specific task – not only to be a vehicle of His revelation and salvation now, but to reign with Christ over the earth during the Millennium. But the fact that, from the time point of view, the Church occupies a parenthesis, does not mean that it is not important or that it is an afterthought in God's plan and strategy. The Church is important in God's plan for this earth, but so is Israel, although after the millennium, the two destinies will coincide. During the millennium, Israel is to lead the world in the worship of the Messiah and of God the Father – it is to be a beacon nation, and it is to teach the world God's ways and will. They are to be a blessing and a light to the nations, once they are converted. Thus they will perform a different, yet complimentary ministry to that of the Church. The Church will, on the other hand, replace the present angelic government under Satan (- that is

why they will have to have resurrection bodies and be "like the angels in heaven".)

Hence, the special destiny of Israel is linked with the Millenium – the two are intimately connected. It is quite clear that the conversion of Israel as a nation is not so that they can be added to the church, but so that they can perform God's special plan for them, which God always had in mind in the OT: Any eschatological view which takes seriously the conversion of the Jewish nation, is logically obliged to posit a future for the nation.

It emerges very clearly from an study of biblical prophecy that God has a special plan for the nation of Israel. God's plan for this nation has always been that: (a) They should be saved from their sins, (b) They should become a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart from God's use, who would lead the world in worship of God and teach the nations God's ways and will, (c) They should receive a king of David's line, to rule over them for ever, (d) they should inherit the land which had promised for them, a territory stretching from the Wadi El-Arish (between Gaza and Egypt) to the river Euphrates (Genesis 15:18, 17:8, 21:12, Ezekiel 47:13-23). These themes run right through the Old Testament from beginning to end, and these promises have yet to be fulfilled on a national scale – they have never been abrogated. The Person who is the key to this whole plan and who is to lead the nation to its God-appointed destiny is called the Messiah. This is the very person whom Jesus claimed, and claims to be.

Nineteen centuries ago Jesus the Son of God came into this world and presented Himself to His own people as the looked-for Messiah; the kingdom for which they had waited for centuries and the ruler so long promised were available to them, but on God's terms. To enter into His destiny for them, they would have to repent, (consider themselves as pagans –

hence the ignominy of baptism – with no special claim on God), turn to God and be saved by believing in the sacrifice and Person of the Messiah (John 8:24) but they rejected the Messiah and in refusing the king, they refused the kingdom (John 1:11, Matthew 23:37-39). Nevertheless, Jesus the Messiah (the Christ) accomplished part 1 of the divine plan in that He died on the Cross for the sins of His people (Matthew 1:21), so as to make their destiny possible. But part 2 of the divine plan for them is as yet unfulfilled, and once again it is the Messiah who is the key to the fulfillment of it. They refused the kingdom at the time of the Messiah's first coming because their election had become for them something egoistic; they had been refusing to take seriously the responsibilities of this election. They were unprepared to pay the price of repentance and conversion, so as to be used as God's servants as a means of blessing to other nations. Their blessing (though not their election, cf. Romans 11:28-29) was accordingly deferred and the fulfillment of the ancient covenants with Abraham and David was still further delayed. What looked like a tragedy (the death and rejection of the Messiah) happened in fact according to the plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23, 3:17-18) and in fulfillment of countless prophecies. It was God's way of bringing even greater blessing (Romans 11:11-12). The Cross was not after-thought on the part of God – it is the pivotal point of history. Without the death of the Messiah on the Cross, the Church would never have been born and Israel could never enter into her destiny.

III. ESCHATOLOGICAL EVENTS

A. THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

The fact of the rapture is not in doubt. It is quite clearly endorsed in Scripture. Disagreement among those who accept this fact centres around the time of its occurrence relative to the tribulation, or to the day of the Lord.

The purpose of the rapture of the Church would appear to be as follows:

a) It is the occasion on which the living and dead members of the Church are united, either by resurrection or by instant transformation. The members of the Church are at this juncture given glorious resurrection bodies to enable them to reign on earth with Jesus over the nations.

b) The main reason for the rapture is to enable the Church to escape the great tribulation or the Day of the Lord.

Dispensationalists think that this expression refers to the whole tribulation period, but it more likely that it refers to a special judgement right at the end of the tribulation period.

1. Arguments for a pre-tribulation rapture:

There are passages in the Bible that can be adduced to support a pre-tribulation rapture, but this is largely on the basis of a dispensational a-priori that allows for no overlap between Israel and the Church. Many of the passages quoted to prove this can be interpreted either way (i.e. escaping the tribulation or being preserved through it), depending on which a-priori you happen to have. Here are the passages in question: Luke 31,36; I Thess 1,10; 2 Cor 4,14; Rev 3,10, John 14,1-4.

1) The pretribulational point of view has the advantage of preserving the idea of the imminence of his coming.

2) It does explain why the scenarios linked with the end of the age (kingdom parables) do not seem to fit the idea of a rapture.

3) It is highly probable that Jesus gave his tribulational discourses according to the perspective of Daniel's 70-week prophecy. This would explain why the first Christians expected the Lord's coming in their life-time. It is really left to Paul to apply what Jesus said to the Church, but even he is not 100% clear as to the timing of the event.

4) If we place the passage in Rev 21,9-22,5 in the millennial period, the descent of the church in the form of the New Jerusalem pre-supposes that it had been raptured at some juncture prior to the end of the tribulation. The problem is that

we are unable to pinpoint the exact moment when this occurs. According to the logic of the dispensational system it should be prior to the commencement of the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy, but it hard to prove by reference to specific verses. It is really an argument from silence, and as such, may or may not be true.

OBJECTIONS:

The logic of the dispensationalist system almost demands a pretribulationist rapture. Others would maintain that a more natural reading of the references pertaining to the Second Coming would place the resurrection at the end of the tribulation and at the beginning of the millenium.

a) The link between the resurrection and the rapture. In the passage in 1 Thess 4,13-18, Paul seems to be reassuring the Thessalonians that those believers who have died will not miss out on the Parousia. It seems rather pointless for those who have died to return to earth with Jesus all the way from heaven only to have to go all the way back again with their resurrected bodies to heaven. After all, a resurrected body is suited to life on this earth: it is not necessary for life in heaven. In the book of Revelation, the first resurrection is squarely placed at the end of the tribulation period and at the beginning of the millenium. In chapter 20 where this reference occurs, John does have a special interest in the Jewish martyrs, but this does not exclude the rest of the church.

b) The importance of overlap. The idea of a pre-tribulation rapture also arbitrarily assumes that there can be no overlap between the Church and Israel. But there has already been such an overlap in the period 30-70 AD, which, although not part of the 69th week of Daniel's prophecy, is nevertheless mentioned in it.

c) The definition of the word 'wrath'. Such a view also arbitrarily assumes that the term 'wrath' refers to natural disasters and not the final judgement and assignment to hell. But it includes both. In any case, the typology used in Revelation is taken from Exodus where, though the plagues fell

on Egypt, God kept his people safe. Dispensationalists admit that Jewish believers are involved in this scenario, so why should other believers be exempt? References in various Scriptures to 'escaping the Tribulation' could equally well be translated by the phrase 'to come safely through the tribulation' (i.e. without denying the faith).

d) Some verses claimed by pre-tribulationists do not refer to the second coming at all. The reference in John 14,1-4 is sometimes taken to refer to the rapture, but a more natural reading of the verse seems to infer that Jesus comes to receive the apostles into glory when they die, much as he did Stephen. It can hardly refer to the rapture, because the apostles (to whom Jesus was speaking on this occasion) would not be alive when the event occurred. They would already be in heaven. There are other references of this type (Lk 12,45; Jn 21,22). In Lk 12,45 we are told that of the servant misuses his privileges, his master will suddenly 'come' and remove him from the scene. This quite clearly does not refer to the second coming as such, but to Christ coming to judge that particular person by death.

Yet another passage where the Second Coming cannot be in view is found at the end of the Gospel of John (21,22) : 'If it is my wish that he (John) stay until I come, what is that to you (Peter) ?' John actually tells us that certain people had misinterpreted this to mean that John would survive until the Second Coming. A possible interpretation of this enigmatic verse is that it refers to Jesus returning to judge Jerusalem in AD 70. for as far as we know, John was the only apostle to survive until that date, but of course his death did not occur at that time, but later. More probably it may mean quite simply mean that John was to outlive them all. Jesus was going to 'come' (cf. Jn 14,1-4). for John, but a long time after the others.

e) The position in time of the 'last trumpet.' We are told by Paul in 1 Cor 15 that the resurrection (and rapture of the Church) will occur 'at the last trumpet'. Most people look in Revelation for such a trumpet, but in the Gospel of Matthew there is a

reference to a trumpet occurring after the Tribulation (Mt 24,29-31 and 1 Cor 15,51). This trumpet summons the Jewish diaspora to the judgement. This would then also place the rapture at this juncture.

f) The witness of Early Church History. It is also significant that among those who did believe in a millenium in the Early Church, none of them mention a pre-tribulation rapture. The Jewish view about especially pious Jews escaping the tribulation does not necessarily imply that they believed in a rapture. It is also significant that there was a cult of the martyrs in the Early Church. It is difficult to see where they could have got this idea from, if not from the book of Revelation. If this is so, those thus portrayed cannot be just tribulation Jews, but must also be gentile members of the Church.

g) It is generally true that the simplest answer is the correct one. If we have to resort to making sub-section after sub-section to our theological systems, this does seem a bit suspicious.

2. Arguments for a mid-tribulation rapture;

Statement of the view: Half-way through the 7-year period the Messiah returns for his church. Already they will have gone through a great persecution, but God in his mercy intervenes to take them to heaven before he judges the earth by fire during the period (comprising the last three and half years of the earth's history) which is known as the Day of the Lord – the time of his wrath. This intervention of God on behalf of his church is a public and spectacular affair. It is referred to in Mt 24 and 1 Thess 4,13-18, and corresponds to events described in Revelation 6,12-17. In chp. 7 the church then appears in heaven. At this juncture, God marks out (for survival) 144,000 from the tribes of Israel who are to be his witnesses on earth during this final period of judgement that falls on the earth and annihilates a large proportion of its population. From chp. 7-20 attention is principally focussed on this group who remain faithful to God amidst the apostacy of the others and amid the

terrible persecution which comes from the human agents of Satan.

COMMENT: In this case, the first 3,5 years are not the tribulation but a preliminary period described in Mt 24 and Rev 6,12-17 which is characterised by: conquest, war, famine, plague persecution of God's people and culminating in a gigantic earthquake. God's wrath in this case extends over the second period of 3.5 years, during which time the church is absent

OBJECTION: This view necessitates a chronological interpretation of events in Revelation, which is improbable. It is

also unlikely that the coming of Christ described in Mt 25 refers to an event half-way through the tribulation.

3. Arguments for a post-tribulational rapture:

1) The book of Revelation is not strictly-speaking chronological: The semitic style of the book would favour the view according to which seals, trumpets and bowls find a concurrent fulfillment, as follows:

seals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7									
trumpets					1	2	3	4	5	6	7					
bowls										1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Typical of semitic style is to first give a broad summary of the events, with later regressions to add more details.

Chronologically, the apocalyptic visions dart back and forth with a swiftness that bewilders our western minds. For instance the subject of martyrdom is touched upon in 6,9-11 but expanded in the following passages: 12,13-17; 13,7.8.15; 14,13 In 7,9-17 we are introduced to the large multitude of saints who come out of the Great Tribulation which takes us to the end of the Tribulation (cf. 7,15-17; 21,3.4). Chapter 11 also brings us to the end of the tribulation. The vision of ch.12 takes us back to the birth of Christ and extends to the end of the tribulation (v.14). In 13,5 the 42 months again bring us to the end of the tribulation. The vision of the 144,000 standing with the Lamb

on Mt Zion (14,1-5) can have its fulfillment only after Christ comes to earth. In 14,17-20 we arrive at Armageddon and again at 16,16. Finally the full detailed description of the battle comes in 19,11-21. In view of this semitic style, it does not seem that the seals trumpets and bowls follow one another in smooth succession.

The sixth seal leads us to the final catastrophe of judgement when Christ returns, for the wrath of the Lamb is just about to strike the wicked who are calling upon the rocks to hide them (6,12-17). The celestial phenomena portrayed as occurring under the sixth seal are those which Jesus said would occur immediately **after** the tribulation and just prior to his return (Mt 24,29.30). It follows that the seventh seal must deal with the second coming itself.

Again, the statements uttered under the seventh trumpet cannot have their fulfillment until the actual coming of Christ after the close of the tribulation (11,15-19). For the kingdoms of the world will not become Christ's and he will not begin to reign over it until his actual return (v.15). The time of the nations' wrath will be Armageddon (v.18). The judgement of the dead and the reward of the saints will come after the tribulation (v.18). It is clear therefore that both the seventh seal and seventh trumpet coincide chronologically.

All seven bowls are clustered at the end and poured out immediately before and as Jesus returns. They are the last, because they are poured out at the very last (15,1). Notably Armageddon is mentioned by name in the sixth bowl (16,16) and the fleeing away of the islands and mountains (16,20) corresponds to the sixth seal (6,12-17).

The seventh seal, the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl cannot be separated, because their identical content and consummate character cannot have three successive and separate fulfillments. Thus God's wrath does not stretch throughout the whole tribulation. Those passages in Revelation which speak of divine wrath deal, rather, with the close of the tribulation.

b) It is true that the book of Revelation (chp. 6-19) has primarily to do with Israel, but the church (especially the martyrs) is still there, albeit in the background.

Dispensationalists are forced to recognise the existence of a body of believers who are not Israel, but they mistakenly label them the 'tribulation saved' (a group that are neither fish nor fowl). It is much more logical to see them as the Church, with particular emphasis on the martyrs. In Rev 12, the Woman representing godly Israel, is kept in a safe place during the tribulation, but we also read of 'the rest of her descendants, all those who obey God's commandments and are faithful to the truth revealed by Jesus'. Surely this must refer to gentile Christians. This means that the resurrection in chp. 20 has primarily Israel in view. This also explains why the rapture, which has to do primarily with the Church, is not mentioned. It is typical semitic style to deal with one thing at a time, but this does not claim to present the total picture.

Summary of order of events: The first half of the 7-year period is characterised by:

1. Great instability, produced by war (?): famine, earthquake, etc. It is these events that are called 'the birthpangs'.
2. Spiritual anarchy and deception.
3. Preaching of the Gospel among the Jewish diaspora... it is their last chance.

The second half of the 7-year period is characterised by:

1. The Antichrist reveals himself in his true colours.
2. This provokes the Great tribulation which occurs in Israel – the body of Jewish believers separate themselves and are divinely preserved.
3. Preaching of the Gospel in Israel itself.
4. Various cosmic disorders announce the imminent return of the Messiah.
5. The Second Coming itself occurs just before the final catastrophe (judgement by fire).

a) At this juncture the diaspora is brought back to Israel for judgement (hence the weeping and wailing), and kept in a safe place so that the final cataclism does not affect them.

b) At the same time, the church is raptured in full view of everyone.

c) The fiery cataclism falls. This is the Day of the Lord.

d) The Church returns to earth to reign. Only the righteous, who have shown by their deeds that they are born again, will inherit the kingdom.

6. The judgements of the Jewish nation (Jews gathered from the diaspora, as well as resurrected Jews) occurs.

7. The judgement of the Church occurs: the life of every Christian will be assessed with a view to the giving of rewards and responsibility in the kingdom.

8. The New Jerusalem (dwelling place of the saints) comes down from heaven.

9. The survivors of the nations send delegations to Jerusalem to worship God.

Conclusion: It is clear that there will be a rapture of the church, but it is not altogether clear when it will be. Every system has its flaws – places where a text has to be forced to fit into a particular system, but the expositor knows that it does not quite fit. May it not be that God does not intend us to know? If I knew that the Rapture was going to occur before the tribulation, I might be tempted to slack off, but if I knew that I had to go through the tribulation, I might grow very depressed. Jesus stressed the ethical implication of the Rapture (Be ready!) rather than encouraging speculation as to the exact time.

B. THE PROPHECY OF THE SEVENTY PERIODS OF SEVEN YEARS

It is important that we understand that OT prophecy in its primary sense always concerns the nation of Israel. During the time when Israel has not been a theocratic state with a Temple, we must not expect to see prophecy fulfilled in its primary

sense: there is a long gap taken up by the age of the Church, during which time Israel has been set aside. However, when the Temple is rebuilt, it appears that many prophecies will be fulfilled in rapid succession leading up to the end, when the true Messiah returns to defeat his enemies and set up his kingdom.

To appreciate this principle we have only to look at the prophecy of the 70 periods of 7 years occurring in the book of Daniel. Here is an analysis of the passage:

At the time of the Babylonian exile of the Jews, Daniel asked God how long it would be until the messianic kingdom (the kingdom of God) would be set up. God sent the angel Gabriel to give Daniel the answer: '70 weeks (70 x 7 years) are decreed for your people and for your holy city, for putting an end to transgression (i.e. until the conversion of the nation of Israel), for placing the seals on sin (= to bring sin under full restraint – cf. Revelation 20,1-3), for expiating crime (The Cross only becomes effective for the nation of Israel when the Messiah returns – cf. Zech 12,10; Rev 1,7), for introducing everlasting integrity (to be effected by an inward moral transformation – cf. Jer 31,33.34), for setting the seal on vision and prophecy (when the people cease sinning, the disciplinary oracles of the prophets will no longer be necessary), for anointing the Holy of Holies (rededication of the Temple following the results enumerated above in the 5 previous promises. cf. also Ezekiel 40,1-4; Isaiah 4,2-6). 'Know this then and understand: from the time that this message went out (Edict of Artaxerxes Longimanus made in 445/444) : 'Return and rebuild Jerusalem' to the coming of the Messiah (messianic entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday), seven weeks and sixty-two weeks (49 years for the rebuilding of Jerusalem with its walls + 434 years – in all 483 Jewish years (a Jewish year has 360 days) = 476 of our years) with squares and ramparts restored and rebuilt (i.e. the whole town), but in a time of trouble. And after the 62 weeks (i.e. at the end of the 69th week), the Messiah will be cut off (i.e. killed) and there will not be for him (any posterity – cf.

Isaiah 53,8 – a tragedy for a Jew) – the city and the sanctuary will be destroyed by a prince who will come (Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70). His end will come in catastrophe and, until the end, there will be war and all devastation decreed (this refers to the intervening period between the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the 70th week – cf. Matthew 24,6). He (i.e. the European dictator, successor to Titus – continuation of the same Roman empire in a different form) will make a firm covenant with many (i.e. with the majority of the Jewish nation under the leadership of the antichrist – the false messiah), for the space of one week (i.e. for 7 years) ; and for a space of one half week (3 and a half years) he will put a stop to sacrifice and oblation (he will stop the Temple cult and introduce idolatrous worship of himself), and on the wing of the Temple will be the abomination (idolatrous statue) that leads to disaster for the nation (i.e. to God's judgement and the Great tribulation), until the end (when the Messiah comes), until the doom assigned to him who causes devastation (the antichrist whom Jesus will kill when he comes cf. 2 Thess 2,8).

C. THE GREAT TRIBULATION

A seven-year period precedes the coming of the Messiah. This coincides with a treaty made between a United European Confederacy led by the Beast, and Israel led by the False Messiah (Antichrist).

The seven-year treaty will be broken after three and a half years, probably at the instigation of the devil who will at that time be cast out of heaven. The Beast will suddenly put a stop to the revived Mosaic ritual and worship, and force idolatry upon the Jews and the Roman Empire. The False Prophet will enter the Temple, claiming to be God and seeking divine honours for himself and the Beast, an image of the Beast, (the abomination of desolation) being set up in the Temple itself. At this sign, the godly will flee to the mountains, as foretold and directed by the Lord himself. During the next three and half years, throughout the Roman Empire as well as in Palestine, all

will be compelled on pain of death to worship the Beast and to receive his mark in their right hand or in their forehead, no trading being allowed without the mark, the name, or number of the name. The Great Tribulation will be characterised by God's judgement of guilty Judah and by the outpouring upon earth of the divine judgements of the seals, trumpets and vials of Revelation 6 to 16 with the ultimate result of universal chaos and the complete disruption of civil and political society. Even during this period, God will have His witnesses and many will be converted. (Rev 11, Rev 7 and 14)

This three and half years is called the Great Tribulation. It is variously referred to as 'one half-week (Daniel 9,27), '1,260 days' (Revelation 12,6), 'the time, times and half a time = one year, two years and half a year (Revelation 12,14) and 42 months (Revelation 13,5). It all culminates in terrible battles that deluge the land of Israel with blood. It is at this point that the Messiah intervenes to save Israel and set up his kingdom. Here is a list of the principal actors in the drama of the final 7-year period. As will be seen, at the present time, they have already come on stage, and this means that the drama is shortly to begin. When the curtain goes up, the identity of the actors will be openly revealed and events that have been prophesied will follow in quick succession.

1) **ISRAEL**: having partially returned to her land in unbelief, is ruled over by a counterfeit Messiah who is variously referred to as the Antichrist, the False Prophet, the Man of Sin, the Rebel and the Wicked One. This person eventually promotes worship of the first beast (the head of the Western confederacy) in the Temple at Jerusalem which will have been rebuilt. According to the various descriptions given of him, he will be in league with demonic powers. He is a perfect counterfeit of the Messiah – he had two horns like a lamb but made a noise like a dragon.

Israel is already established in her land now, in partial fulfillment of the prophecy concerning her return. The rest of

Israel will be brought back to the land when the Messiah returns (Jeremiah 16,14, Ezekiel 36,24).

An Israeli tourist guide reported that he attended the recent rededication of the restored main Jewish synagogue in the Jewish quarter of Old Jerusalem, with hundreds of Israelis present. The officiating rabbi stirred the crowd by predicting: 'As the city has been reunited in our own lifetime, so will the rebuilding of the Temple be accomplished in our life time. The rebuilding of the Temple will signal the imminent resumption of (temporarily) suspended covenant relations between God and the nation of Israel. The return of some of Israel and the constitution of the State of Israel (political entity) have also been a preparatory move in this direction.

2) **A WESTERN CONFEDERACY**: made up of ten kingdoms and ruled over by a dictator called the (first) beast. This confederacy will be a revived version of the Roman Empire and according to Daniel 9,27 it will enter into a treaty with Israel for a 7-year period. In a dream given to Nebuchadnezzar of the great image constructed of various metals, it was revealed that four world empires were to appear upon the world's stage, and that following these there was to come a theocratic kingdom on earth (Daniel 2). This period covered by the four empires represented by the statue which Daniel saw, extends over a period of 70 periods of 7 years (ignoring the parenthesis of the church age) during which time Israel, although a theocratic state whose focus was the Temple, was under Gentile domination (i.e. without a king of the Davidic line). Although Israel has been without a king ever since the deportation of 587 BC, the period of 70 x 7 years started in 444 BC when the Persian king Artaxerxes gave permission for the building of the Temple to be completed (i.e. for the refounding of the theocratic state of Israel). The empires which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his vision, were: a) The Babylonian, b) Medo-Persian, c) the Grecian and d) Roman (not named but implied) empires. In a dream and in a

subsequent vision given to Daniel (Dan 7), details were given of the fourth empire, which have not been seen in history. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, other empires have since arisen and disappeared, but no reference is made to them because they have had no dealings with Israel as a theocratic state. There is a long gap of centuries (the Church age) since the fulfillment of part of the prophecy and its complete fulfillment. The final state of the fourth empire is portrayed in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as ten toes of iron mixed with clay (Daniel 2,42). There is nothing in history that corresponds to this description, so this implies that there is still a future for the fourth empire. The creation of the EEC makes a United Europe a strong candidate, especially as it will become the richest trading block in the world and will be forced to re-arm to fill the vacuum left by the USA. It is logical that such a power would replace the USA as Israel's guarantor.

It is clear that many in the Beast's empire will be martyred for their faith. But it is often overlooked that the Beast's empire is probably confined to Europe, in spite of the hyperbolic language used about 'every tribe, people and nation (compare Daniel 3,4; 4,1 where the Babylonian empire is referred to). This seems to be confirmed by the descriptions of the final battles of the tribulation period which involve other power blocks (the king of the North, the king of the South, the kings of the East etc).

Charlemagne, Napoleon and Hitler all attempted to revive the old Roman empire, but none met the conditions of the prophecy. It is only now that the existence of a revived Roman Empire (the EEC) coincides with the existence of Israel as a sovereign state, and soon as a theocratic state. (Daniel 7,8).

It is surely also significant that for the first time in history, there are now enough nuclear bombs and missiles in the world to make the scenario described in the book of Revelation an almost instant reality. All that is required is the pushing of a few buttons.

Closely allied with the Western confederacy is the False Religious system known as Babylon. This is a revived version of paganism in its final and most potent form, with the full force of occult delusion. No doubt nominal Christianity will be associated with this syncretic system. While the church is described as the Bride of the Lamb, the false religious system is described as the Great Prostitute (Rev 17,1). She is described as 'sitting on many waters', thus indicating that many nations will be bewitched by her. It is clear that she will be closely associated with the revived Roman empire and the Beast, but in the end they will turn against her and destroy her whole system.

3) **THE KING OF THE NORTH AND THE KING OF**

THE SOUTH: Hostile powers to the north and south of Israel. These are referred to in Daniel 11. Verses 1-35 of this chapter refer to the struggles between the kingdoms of Syria and Egypt (remnants of Alexander the Great's empire down to the days of Antiochus Epiphanes – king of Syria – and the Maccabean struggle. From verse 36 onwards, however, incidents are described which are specifically stated to belong to the 'time of the end'. As in Daniel 2 and 7, there is a parenthesis of many centuries between verses 35 and 36. Verse 36 introduces the Antichrist who rules over Israel, who is attacked from the south and then from the north. The south appears to refer to an Egypt + Afro-Arab alliance (vs. 43 mentions Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia – peoples living west and south of Egypt). It is not difficult to guess the identity of the northern power. It is significant that both to the north and south of Israel today there are powers that are intent on crushing her. Daniel 11,40-45; Ezekiel 39.

4) **THE KINGS OF THE EAST:** (Rev 9,13-15; 16;12). Such verses imply that vast hordes of eastern races will pour into the battle that will be raging in the Middle East.

It is clear that the Middle East is to be the centre of interest for the whole world, with forces pouring into it from every side

and where blood will be flowing like water (Rev 14,20). From south, north, and east the armies will come. The northern invasion will necessarily invoke the implementation of Israel's treaty with the West European power and it seems clear that forces will pour into the land from that direction also, to raise the siege of Jerusalem and to deliver the people. These efforts however will be completely unavailing and Israel will suffer as never before.

D. THE RETURN OF THE MESSIAH

Immediately before the Messiah appears in the sky above the earth, there will be the most tremendous upheaval in the solar system – the planets will apparently leave their present orbits and the earth will probably run into swarms of asteroids or similar bodies (from the tail of a comet perhaps). This would explain the reference to 'the stars falling from heaven'. The changed axis of the earth might cause the raging tides described in the Gospel of Luke. For the inhabitants of the earth, all will seem to be lost as their planet heads to its doom. Shortly afterwards the cause of all the cosmic turbulence is revealed as the Messiah appears in the sky.

If we place the rapture of the church at this juncture, then the living Church will be the first to go out to meet the returning Christ as he appears over the earth, bringing those believers back with him who have already died.

This procession will be seen by the whole earth as it spins on its axis for 24 hours, after which the procession will end on the Mount of Olives, as many prophecies attest.

Jesus will return to deliver Israel. When he descends, he will find the armies of the Western empire arrayed against the besiegers of Jerusalem. But the western ruler and his confederate, the ruler of Israel, will be snatched from the scene and thrown into the lake of fire, while their armies will be annihilated (Rev 19,18-21). The immense armies of the east will simultaneously meet their end at Megiddo (Rev 16,12-21). The northern armies, intent on finishing off the southern

kingdom, will hear of the coming of the deliverer and turn back to attack him, but he and his armies will be utterly destroyed. (Daniel 11).

In Daniel 12,11-12 we read that the Great Tribulation lasts for 1,290 days and that 'blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,225 days (presumably the setting up of the kingdom). Before the kingdom is set up, it is probable that various judgements will take place; presumably those of the Church and Israel. Mt 25,31-45 is taken by most dispensationalists to refer to a judgement of the nations prior to the millenium. However, a close analysis of the terminology used in this passage and in Ezekiel would seem to indicate that it is the Jewish Diaspora that is in view here. They are judged according to how they reacted to the final preaching and preachers of the Gospel. Their actions will have proved their true allegiance.

E. THE MILLENIUM

Then comes the millenium or thousand-year reign of Christ. The Messiah's kingdom will be set up in Israel, consisting of a regenerate Jewish nation and a glorified Church (inhabiting the New Jerusalem). Beyond this will be the nations that have survived the Great Tribulation. Although the Messiah's kingdom (in the strict sense of the term) is limited to the land of Israel, his rule will extend over the whole earth. The lifting of the present curse on the natural order will be obvious for all to see in the land of Israel (my Holy Mountain), but the extent to which its benefits will extend to the nations, will depend on their attitude to his rule (Zech 14,17-20). Although Satan will be bound, death will still exist and so will sin, but where rebellion manifests itself, it will be instantly judged. Doubtless many will be converted during the millenium, but at the end of this period, at the instigation of Satan, the nations will rise up in rebellion against God's rule, thus proving that the human heart is still as wicked as ever (Ezek 38, Rev 20,7-9).

The ministry of regenerate Israel during this period is to lead other nations in the worship of the Messiah and of God the Father, to teach them His ways and will. At the centre of the Messiah's administration will be the heavenly Jerusalem which will have come down from heaven to earth.

Whereas the regenerate nation of Israel will have a priestly sphere of service, the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem (the Church and the Saints of the OT period) will have a ruling sphere of service. They will be the administrators of the Messiah's kingdom, coming and going from their headquarters (the Heavenly Jerusalem). Thus the inhabitants of this heavenly city will replace the present evil administration of Satan and his angels. These are called the 'principalities and powers in heavenly places, who at present rule over unregenerate mankind, because of man's sin (Eph 6,12; Gal 4,9).

Outside the New Jerusalem will be the Temple, with an Israelite priesthood. This acts as a meeting place between a Holy God and a largely unregenerate world. In the OT period, when God established a covenant with Israel, most of the nation was unregenerate, and so a Temple was needed where God could meet his people and be worshipped by them. In the same way, during the millenium it appears that God will have a similar relationship with the world at large. Delegations from every nation will come to worship God in the Temple. If a nation refuses to send such a delegation, it will be punished. Moreover, it appears from Ezekiel 45,16-18, that the Messiah will appoint a deputy called the Prince to whom he will delegate certain power in connection with the administration of Israel.

The millenium closes with the final rebellion of mankind, which results in the annihilation of the rebels (Ezk 38, Rev 20,7-9). The great deceiver, Satan, will then be consigned to the lake of fire for ever (Rev 20,10). Then earth and sky vanish, leaving no trace. The story of the old world will have finished.

F. THE LAST JUDGEMENT AND THE FINAL STATE

Then comes the last judgement which is presided over by God himself in the person of his Son. Before him will be summoned the dead, great and small, to be judged according to their works. All those whose names are not found written in the Lamb's book of Life will be thrown for ever into the lake of fire. At this point, the whole of human history comes to an end. From then on, nothing imperfect is permitted to remain. Finally, God will create a new heaven and a new earth, perfect and with no trace of sin. Christ will then deliver up the kingdom to the Father, no longer to reign as mediator but as God (1 Cor 15,24-28).

ANGELOLOGY

ANGELS, DEMONS AND SATAN

Introduction

In spite of the fact that we are living in what professes to be a materialistic age, there is still a fascination, particularly in Bulgaria, with what may broadly be called the para-normal and the psychic. In view of the fact that there much deception perpetrated in this area, we would do well to turn to the Bible, God's infallible Word, in order to discover the truth about such things and to see them from God's perspective.

The first thing we discover is that we are not the only personal beings in the universe. There is a visible world, but also an invisible world which is just as real and which is inhabited by good and evil beings – angels and demons. God himself is by nature invisible and He is the Creator. He not only created a visible universe, but also an invisible one. Science has shown us that this is not such a preposterous idea after all – we hear of matter and anti-matter. We also hear of black holes in the universe which lead (probably) into a different dimension. The theories of Albert Einstein and developments of them, have led us to take such things seriously. Let us look in turn at the beings (besides God himself – which is the subject of another study) that people this invisible universe.

1. **Angels** They are essentially created spirit beings. They are referred to as 'sons of God' probably because sonship implies likeness, being spirit beings they are like God (Genesis 6, Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7, Hebr 1:4). We know them as 'angels' (lit: messengers) because they are often encountered in the context of bringing messages from God to men. In nearly all contexts in the Bible it is clear whether angels are meant or men, though references in the letters to the churches in the book of Revelation could indicate either. In Greek, the word is *angeloi*

(from which we get our word 'angel') and in Hebrew *malah* (cf. Malahi = my messenger).

It is clear from Scripture that angels are very numerous indeed (Ps 68:17, Mt 26:53) and that they are wiser and more powerful than man in his present state (2 Sam 14:20), but they are not omniscient (Mt 24:36). In certain respects they seem to be like human beings (in that they have personality), but in other respects they seem to be unlike (in that they are incorporeal). They are spirit personalities and do not essentially have bodily form (Hebr 1:14, Eph 6:12), but they are able to materialise themselves (hence their confusion on occasions with men). They do not die and there is no difference of sex among them (Luke 20:36, Mt 22:30) although they are treated as masculine. However, there is not a race of angels (that is propagated), as there is a race of men. It is significant that Jesus took the form of a man, not an angel, so that He could be related to us (Hebr 2:16).

a) It seems that they were **created before the material creation** (Job 38:7). Some of them subsequently fell from heaven with Satan when his rebellion was quashed, presumably because of their pride and desire, like Satan, to exceed their rights and status (Ezk 28:11-19, Is 14:13-14). Whereas these became demons who were able to roam around at liberty, actively co-operating with Satan in opposing God's purposes in the world (Rev 12:7-9, Dan 10:12,13,20,21), a further group left their proper abode and engaged in sexual relations with women on earth (Gen 6). From this union emerged a form of demonised humanity which was a major factor in God's decision to end life on earth by sending a world-wide flood. For this these angels were consigned to the pit (*tartaros*), to wait the final judgement. Angels are without any excuse and God has no plan to redeem them. Their fall was total, from the angel to the demon: demons are unbelievably and totally wicked.

b) **Their position in relation to God:** they cannot be compared with God as He is incomparable (Ps 89:6-8). They are created by Him (Ps 148:2,5, Col 1:16) and so are subordinate to Him (Rev 22:9). They are also subordinate to Christ (Hebr 1:4 ff) and are fellow servants of the saints (i.e. Christians). Christ is the head over all of them, for He is the head of all principality and power – i.e. angelic hierarchies (Col 1:16). He is far above all angels and over them for us (Eph 1:20-21, Phil 2:9-10, Col 2:10). Therefore it is apostasy to worship even good angels (Rev 19:10, 22:8-9). Worship of the armies of heaven in the OT may well have involved worship of fallen angels, since they were closely associated with the heavenly bodies.

c) **Their relation to each other.** Medieval schoolmen arranged them in three orders: 1. Seraphim, Cherubim, thrones, 2. Dominions, virtues, powers, 3. Principalities, archangels, angels. Whether or not they are arranged precisely in this order, the fact remains that these expressions refer to angels. The Seraphim (lit. the blazing ones) are only mentioned once by name in Isaiah 6:2,6. They are concerned with worship and holiness. They reflect God's glory and uphold His holiness. The Cherubim (hebr. *kēruvim*) are mentioned in several places (Gen 3:24, 2 Kings 19:15, Ezk 10:1-20, 28: 14-16). These are probably the 'living beings' referred to in the book of Revelation. They are upholders of God's throne and of His judicial integrity. Satan may well have been one of them before he fell (Ezk 28:14-16). Thrones (*tronoī*) refer to angelic beings whose place is in the immediate presence of God. These are probably to be equated with the 24 'elders' – members of the heavenly court (Rev 5:8), who are pictured as seated on thrones in heaven. Principalities (*arhai*) seem to refer to angelic rulers over distinct peoples or nations. Thus Michael is said to be Israel's prince (Daniel 10:21, 12:1) and we read of the prince of Persia and of Greece (Daniel 10:20). The powers (*exousiai*) are possibly subordinate authorities. The term archangel occurs only twice in Scripture (1 Thess 4:16, Jude 9). Michael is also

an archangel with angels under him (Rev 12:7). It would seem that Gabriel also qualifies as an archangel who is particularly associated with revelation.

d) **The relation of angels to men:** Hebr 2 says that men have been made 'for a little while' lower than the angels, which means that our destiny as redeemed men and women, in the plan of God, is to rule over them, in our glorified state. Angels at present serve 'those who are to inherit salvation' (i.e. Christians). 1 Cor 6:3 says that we shall 'judge' the angels, which probably means that we shall rule over them. Because Jesus rules over the angels, we, because of our association with him, will also rule over them.

e) **The ministry of angels:** they stand before God and worship Him (Mt 18:10, Rev 5:11). They protect and deliver God's people (Gen 19:11, 1 Kings 19:5, Ps 91:11, Dan 3:28, 6:22, Acts 5:19, 12:11, Hebr 1:14, Dan 10:13,21). They guide and encourage God's servants (Mt 28:5-7, Acts 8:26, 27:23,24). They interpret God's will to men (Job 33:23, Dan 7:16, 10:5,11, Zech 1:9,13,14 etc). They are executors of judgements towards individuals and nations (Acts 12:23, Gen 19:12-13, 2 Sam 24:16, Ezk 9:1,5,7, Rev 16).

It must also be said that there was a remarkable increase in angelic activity during the ministry of Jesus on this earth (Lk 1:26-38, Mt 1:20, Lk 2:8-15, Mt 4:11, Jn 1:51, Lk 22:43, Mt 26:53, Mt 28:2-7, Acts 1:11).

In reference to the future, when Christ returns to establish his kingdom, he will be accompanied by many angels (Mt 16:27, 25:31). It is the angels who will gather together his people from every part of the earth. It is the angels who will separate the wheat from the chaff at the judgement (Mt 13:39,49,50, 24:31). During the millenium they will stand in front of the gates of the New Jerusalem to prevent anything that is unregenerate from entering (Rev 21:12). There is every reason to believe that the

good angels will continue in the service of God throughout all eternity.

2. **Demons and Evil Angels**

Strictly speaking, there are two groups of evil beings referred to: evil angels that are kept in chains in *Tartaros* because of their immorality (2 Pet 2:4, Jude 6), and angels that are active in this world under the leadership of Satan (Mt 25:41, Rev 12:7-9). Their chief occupation seems to be that of supporting their leader, Satan, in his warfare against the good angels and God's people and cause. Then there are demons who are variously referred to as 'evil spirits, unclean spirits' (Deut 32:17, Ps 106:37). Demons are called unclean spirits, because they are unfit to enter God's presence. There has been some disagreement as to what demons actually are, but it is a reasonable assumption that they are fallen angels not confined to *Tartaros* (Dan 10:13, Rev 12:7,9). However, there have been other views. Philo, and many of the early Christian writers thought that demons were the souls of bad men who had died, but the Scriptures represent the unsaved dead as confined in the place of the dead and awaiting the last judgement (Lk 16:23, Rev 20:13), not roaming around at liberty. Others have seen them as the disembodied spirits of a pre-Adamic race, but the Bible makes no reference to a pre-Adamic race, an idea which was concocted to fit the Gap Theory (Interpretation of Genesis 1 which claims that there is a gap between vs. 1 and 2 during which time Satan's rebellion devastated the earth and that the Genesis account in reality describes the re-creation after this cosmic catastrophe).

a) **The origin of demons and evil angels:** They are all fallen spirit beings (angels) that fell because they joined Satan's rebellion.

b) **Their present activity:** Assuming that evil angels and demons are one and the same thing, their activity is as follows:

I) Demons are manipulators of the 'occult', that is of 'hidden practices' forbidden by God and referred to as 'an abomination' because practised in connection with the worship of idols. Such practices deceive, ensnare and bring people into bondage to Satan who delights to twist everything that God has created or commanded. Crooked crosses, names spelt backwards and perversions of various kinds are all typical products of the warped mind of Satan. Spiritism also comes under God's ban: that is, communication with the evil spirits, often in the guise of communication with those who have died. Those who indulge in any of these practices, knowingly or not, leave themselves open to demonic interference, harassment, influence and, in extreme cases, to demonic possession (that is: total dominance by a demonic power). The longer such practices are indulged in, the worse it is and the more difficult it is to be set free. The occult includes horoscopes, fortune-telling, and astrology, all of which are systems designed to bring the person into bondage to Satan. Under this heading also comes necromancy (communication of the living with the dead) involving the consultation of 'mediums' and attendance at 'seances'. What actually happens at such 'seances' is that demons imitate the voice of the person who has died. Occultism in its extreme form involves witchcraft (the performance of satanic ritual and rites) and the actual worship of Satan. All these activities are strictly forbidden by God (Ex 7:11-12, 22:19, Lev 19:26,31, 20:6,27, Deut 18:10-14, 1 Sam 28, 2 Kings 17:8,17-18, 21:1-6, 23:24-25, 1 Chr 10:13-14, Is 2:6, 8:19-20, 47:9-15, Jer 27:9-10, 29:8-14,21-23, Ezk 13:17-23, Zech 10:2, Mal 3:5). In all these cases, it must be stressed that the underlying principles are deception and concealment. God's antidotes are faith (a reliance on God's Word and acting upon it) and confession followed by forgiveness (the things of the darkness are exposed by the light and robbed of their power). This must be followed by a close walk with God and continued repentance (a continued walk of obedience) ;

otherwise the person is liable to fall back into his old ways again. For a non-Christian who has been involved in such practices, the only solution is conversion to Christ followed by the type of life elaborated above.

II) Demons are behind idolatry, which is nothing less than worship offered to demons (1 Cor 10:20, Deut 32:17, Ps 106:37). During the tribulation period it appears that there will be a great increase of demonic activity, resulting in open worship of Satan in the guise of the dragon (Rev 16:13,14, 13:4). Satan is always concerned to take away from the true worship of God and divert it to himself.

III) Demons are also referred to as lying spirits and disseminators of false doctrine (1 Kings 22:21-23, 2 Thess 2:2, 1 Tim 4:1). They are thus behind all theological liberalism and false ideas about God.

IV) They serve to promote Satan's way of thinking, his world-view, which is seen supremely in the openly occult system established just before Christ's return.

V) They can inflict disease and mental disorders and make men slaves to moral impurity, but this is usually because the people concerned had dabbled in something that God had forbidden in the first place. However, we cannot say that all disease or mental illness is the result of demonic affliction. In the case of mental illness there is usually an improvement or calming down if the Word of God is read or if prayer is made, whereas if it is of demonic origin, the reaction can be quite violent (Mk 5:6, 9:20). However, the term 'demon possession', as described in the Bible, seems to be a general term which covers what we would call psychiatric disorder and also demon possession properly speaking. A similar broadness of definition is found in the word leprosy which can refer from anything

from skin-disease to mildew on a wall. In both cases the language of phenomena is being used.

VI) They oppose God's children in their spiritual progress (Eph 6:12). Any attempt by a Christian to make a new start and live closer to God will be strenuously resisted by Satan.

VII) They are sometimes used by God in the carrying out of His purpose and designs, especially to confirm men in their rebellion against Him (Jude 9:23, 1 Sam 16:14).

It is most important to realise that the kingdom of evil spirits is within God's control, though not acting upon His direction. God allows spirit activity, just as he allows evil men to prosper within the boundaries of his ultimate plan for men. God has sovereign control even over the realm of evil spirits (1 Kings 22:18-23). From this passage it is clear that God overrules the world of evil spirits and permits them to do their work when it accords with His sovereign will and purpose. The incident in 1 Sam 28 is the only account of God's permitting a departed person's spirit to return to earth. The medium screamed in fear when she saw Samuel himself – apparently she was only used to communicating with evil spirits.

c) **The destiny of evil spirits**. The lake of fire (the second death), i.e. hell, has been specifically prepared for Satan and his demons. This is their ultimate destination where they will be tortured for ever (Mt 25:41, Rev 20:10).

3. **Satan** is essentially a fallen angel and now the leader of the evil spirits opposed to God's purposes, yet in subjection to the sovereignty of God. Without God's permission, he is not able to do anything. Together with all evil, God has permitted him to continue chiefly as an outworking of God's justice and a means of sifting men's ultimate loyalties.

a) His titles are indicative of his character. The word Satan, which occurs 35 times in the NT, means 'adversary' (Job 1:2, Zech 3:1, 1 Chr 21:1). He is the enemy of man and, more definitely, the enemy of God. He is the enemy of man, in that, as public prosecutor, he always demands the maximum penalty, and enemy of God in that he always opposes God's purposes of salvation for man. This means that any attempt to evangelise and fulfill the great commission of Jesus, will be strenuously resisted by Satan.

Another of Satan's titles is '*diabolos*', which means 'mud-slinger' and so 'accuser' (occurs 37 times in the NT). The word means an opponent in a law-suit. in this case Satan is a malicious opponent. He accuses man on every point possible (Rev 12:10 cf 1 Jn 2:1). He seeks to misrepresent God to man (Gen 3:4,5). He seeks to destroy the reputation of every one. He is also called 'the Evil One' or 'the Wicked One' (*ho ponéros*), a title which has for OT equivalent '*Belial*' (worthless, wicked – Mt 5:37, 13:19,38, Jn 17:15, Eph 6:16, 1 Jn 5:18-19, Deut 13:13, 1 Sam 1:6, 2 Cor 3:15). He is called 'the Tempter' and 'the Serpent', and is always concerned to reproduce his likeness in other people (Mt 4:3, 1 Thess 3:5). He is the Prince and Ruler of this world, in the sense of 'mankind organised apart from, and in opposition to, God' (grk '*kosmos*' – the world system or world order). He is the Prince of the power of the air, which indicates that he operates from the atmosphere – a sphere higher than the merely human, but lower than that of God. He is the God of this age, as opposed to the age to come (the millenium). He is also known as Ba'alzebul, originally the name of a heathen god but modified and applied to Satan, with the meaning 'Lord of the Flies' or 'Lord of the Dunghill', which emphasises his authority over his swarms of demons. He is the instigator of all pagan religion (1 Cor 10:20).

b) His origin: like the other angels, he is a created being, who, at a time prior to the creation of material beings, rebelled against God. Ezk 28:15-17 and Is 14:12 may give some

indication regarding his former state and his subsequent fall. The motive for his fall seems to have been the desire to supplant God because of his pride. For some mysterious reason, a being created perfect, succumbed to evil and fell. God never forces his lordship on any being, so there has to be an element of choice. It would seem that he had been one of the cherubim (upholders of God's righteousness), in view of his later involvement in condemnation and accusation: rather like a policeman who went crooked. His fall predated the fall of man (1 Tim 3:6, Is 14:12, Ezk 28:11). The passage in Ezekiel 28 primarily refers to the king of Babylon and the king of Tyre, but because of their devilish pride, they are types of Satan: they point beyond themselves to Satan.

c) **His present activity**: Satan has a set purpose: that of opposing God and seeking to frustrate His will. Jesus recognised a kind of master-plan opposed to God's desire to save man. He had tried to kill Jesus while a child and made subsequent attempts upon His life, but God was in charge and ensured that not a hair of his head would be touched until 'his hour came', which Jesus also calls 'the hour of the powers of darkness'. Jesus also recognised Satan as working through the agency of men. He employs various methods for the realisation of his purpose. Since he cannot attack God directly, he attacks God's master-creation.

The Bible mentions the following methods that Satan uses: lying. He is the fountainhead of all lies and calls others to lie (Jn 8:44, Acts 5:3) ; tempting, whereby he makes the object of the temptation supremely reasonable and desirable and advantageous (Mt 4:1) ; robbing (Mt 13:19), especially a compulsive desire to steal; harassing (2 Cor 12:7), especially of those engaged in evangelism; hindering (Zech 3:1, 1 Thess 2:18, Eph 6:12) ; sifting (Lk 22:31) ; imitating (2 Cor 11:14,15, Mt 13:25). Accusing (Rev 12:9,10) ; afflicting with disease (Lk 13:16, 1 Cor 5:5) ; killing and devouring (Jn 8:44, 1 Cor 5:5) ; possessing (Jn 13:27).

As far as Christians are concerned, his desire is to deflect us from God's will (Mt 4:10, 16:23, 1 Cor 7:5). As far as the world is concerned, he desires to keep men in bondage to evil teaching and evil living. The subtlety of his approach is underlined in the Bible (Eph 6:11, 1 Tim 3:7, 2 Tim 2:26).

d) **Satan's power and limitations**: he is a person to be reckoned with. He has power over other fallen spirits (Mt 25:41, Eph 6:11-16, Rev 12:7). He also controls the world of unregenerate men (Mt 13:38-39, Acts 13:10, 26:18, 1 Jn 3:8-9). He has a degree of authority over men but he is in essence a usurper, because Christ is the rightful heir to all the kingdoms of the earth (Lk 4:6). In His temptation, Christ was tempted by Satan to worship him in return for the kingdoms of this world, but these had already been promised to Jesus as Messiah by the Father.

Satan is said to operate in certain realms: death and disease (Lk 13:16, Jn 8:44, 2 Cor 12:7, Hebr 2:14). Yet, on the other hand, the actual execution of death is sometimes ascribed to good angels and sometimes to God himself. Satan is therefore connected with disease and death because he is responsible for both. As far as death is concerned, the Christian is in the hand of God, just as Job knew that he was in the hands of God even though he was passing through disease and suffering. As far as the Christian is concerned, nothing can happen without the express permission of God.

e) **His destiny**: The great adversary of Satan is God Himself. God has allowed the presence of Satan in the universe, but He has also set in motion a process by which Satan will be overthrown completely. Satan has been defeated by Christ on the Cross of Calvary. This is a fulfillment of Gen 3:15 (1 Jn 3:8). During His earthly life, Jesus overcame Satan and demonstrated His absolute superiority over Satan at every stage

of his life; by the exorcism of demons, the healing of sickness, the forgiveness of sins. The Cross involved the defeat of Satan's allies also (Col 2:14 ff, 2 Cor 2:14). The imagery of both passages is connected with the Roman custom whereby the Roman general, having won a victory, would send to Rome requesting a public ceremony of honour (a 'triumph'). If granted, he would ride with his men ceremonially into Rome, with the most notable prisoners chained to his chariot and after executed. In a similar way, Christ had a notable victory and was awarded a 'triumph' by the Father. Satan is also defeated by the power of Christ in His people (Lk 10:19, Rev 12:11, Rom 16:20, Eph 6:12, 1 Jn 5:18 f).

The ultimate doom of Satan has already been prepared; hell (Mt 25:41, Rev 20:10). Satan is at present 'in the air', with access to both heaven and earth (Job 1:6,7, 2:1, Eph 2:2, 6:12). This seems to have been his headquarters ever since the fall of man. We are told that during the tribulation he will be thrown down onto the earth where he will wreak havoc among the inhabitants of the world. During the millenium he will be confined to the 'pit'. At the end of that period he will be set free for a little while to confirm men in their rebellion (Rev 20:3). His last rebellion will be quashed and then he will be consigned for ever to the lake of fire (Rev 20:7-10, Mt 25:41). Those who have made common cause with Satan, will also join him in the same place. Even after the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, it seems that there will always be a corner of the universe (a sort of black hole) where Satan and all rebels against God will spend eternity.

BIBLIOLOGY

THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

This is an extremely important doctrine because all others stand or fall by it, being dependent on Scripture. It also has an extremely wide range of crucial sub-sections: Revelation, Inspiration, Authority, Inerrancy, Canonicity, Text and Interpretation. There has hardly been any time in the history of the Church when this doctrine has not been under attack from at least one quarter. Even today there is still widespread misunderstanding as to what the various terms like "verbal inspiration" actually mean. There is thus great need for precision in definitions and for general clarity.

A. REVELATION

1. **The Biblical Terminology**

In the OT the word that is used is "gala" (to unveil, reveal, disclose). It implies that something previously covered (or hidden) has been uncovered (2 Samuel 7:27, Ps 98:2). In the NT the word used is "apokalupto" (to make known religious realities). It is used technically for religious revelation (Lk 10:21, 12:2, Eph 3:5, 2 Tim 1:10). Other words used in connection with divine revelation are: word (Hebrew *davar*, Greek. *logos*). This implies that God makes Himself known through speech or writing (Isaiah 1:10, 2:3, Mark 4:14, John 17:8). It is knowing God through what He says. Another expression used in connection with revelation is "to cause to be known, to make known" (Hebrew *Hodia* – from *Jada* and Greek *egnôrisa* – from *ginosko*). These words occur in Ex 18:16 and Jn 15:15.

2. **Man's need of Divine Revelation**

The Bible assumes that God must first disclose Himself before man can know Him. The Aristotelian idea of an inactive God whom man can discover by argument and reasoning is quite unbiblical.

a) **Man is finite and God is infinite:** Man cannot see God, nor find Him out by searching, nor read His thoughts by shrewd guesswork (Jn 1:18, I Tim 6:16, Exodus 33:20, Job 11:7-23:3-9, Is 55:8 ff). Even before Adam sinned, God still had to reveal Himself to him (Gen 2:16). Furthermore, it is up to God to reveal Himself. He takes the initiative in revelation, usually within a covenant relationship bound up with certain stipulations.

b) **Man is a sinner and God is holy:** Man not only fails to respond to God's general revelation in creation, providence and conscience, but he deliberately misinterprets it. The non-Jew falls into idolatry and immorality by worshipping God's creation instead of God. The Jew interprets God's mercy to His nation in a perverted way also: he interprets the law as being the way of salvation and has no time for the Messiah who is the fulfillment of the law. Paul outlines this argument in detail in Romans chapters 1 and 2.

This means that God has to reveal Himself to man in the context of salvation, if he is to learn anything about Him (Mt 11:25-27, I Cor 2:10).

The same principle is true of ongoing revelation. It is as we are obedient that God gives more light (i.e. revelation). Mt 13:12, Lk 11:35.

3. General and Special Revelation

a) **The meaning of the distinction**

i. General revelation is God's revelation of Himself to all men everywhere, chiefly through creation and conscience. Man is sensitive to this revelation because he is made in the image of God – an image which has been distorted but not destroyed. Therefore he is without excuse when he refuses this testimony to the existence of God (Rom 1:14-20, 2:1-16).

ii. Special revelation is revelation accessible within the context of God's plan of salvation for man. In this category can be included the OT which is God's revelation to the nation of Israel, with whom He had a covenant, that is, a special relationship with salvation in view.

b) The Media of General Revelation

i. The natural universe testifies to God's intelligence, wisdom and greatness as Creator. It also testifies to Him as a God of mercy in that He provides for His creatures and also in that He sets limits to the extent of the effects of sin (Acts 14:17, 17:26).

ii. Human nature: the image of God in man, though marred, is still discernible in the ways in which he differs from animals – he is a personal being with a will etc.

c) The limits of general revelation

We can learn many things about God from general revelation but this cannot in itself lead us to a personal knowledge of God. To learn of the grace of God in Christ we need contact with special revelation in the Bible.

d) General Revelation and Natural Theology:

I. General revelation is God's revealing of Himself to all men everywhere whereas natural theology is man's understanding of that general revelation. Natural theology consists of efforts on

man's part to reach conclusions from general revelation, especially those which are relative to the person of God. . This understanding is largely embodied in the proofs for God's existence. Romans 1:18 ff shows that man has erroneously interpreted the general revelation of God because of his evil disposition towards God (Romans 2:12-16, Acts 14 and 17). Psalm 19, on the other hand is a correct interpretation of God (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) because the psalmist already had a personal knowledge of Him. Acts 17 deals with the natural theology of the Epicureans and Stoics, which is totally contrary to the special revelation of God.

II. General revelation and special revelation: both are held by Scripture but special revelation makes possible a true understanding of general revelation.

4. **The Character of Special Revelation**

a) **It is conditional**

God only reveals Himself to those who are prepared to trust and obey Him. To such people He binds Himself by a covenant.

b) **It is propositional**

It tells man about God's purposes. It tells man who He is, what He has done, is doing and will do, and what He requires them to do. God does not leave man to draw his own conclusions from natural or supernatural phenomena, but communicates with him verbally. God took Noah, Abraham and Moses into His confidence, telling them what he had planned and what their part in His plan was to be. He declared to Israel the laws and promises of His covenant. He disclosed His purposes to the prophets (Amos 3:7). Jesus told his disciples everything He had heard from His Father (Jn 15:15) and promised them the Holy

spirit to complete His work of instructing them. God revealed to Paul the "mystery" of His eternal purposes which are bound up in the messiah (Eph 1:9, 3:3-11). Jesus revealed to John "what must soon take place" (Rev 1:1).

c) **It is personal**

It reveals God's person. When God speaks to men, He confronts them with Himself. God comes to individuals to make Himself known to them (Gen 35:7, Ex 6:3, Num 12:6-8, Gal 1:15). In the OT God sometimes appeared to them in a theophany and spoke to them personally (Jn 1.14).

d) **Liberal theologians** tend to water down God's revelation, largely because they are rationalists and do not accept the supernatural. They speak of revelation in terms of God directing biblical history, and making individuals aware of his presence, activity and claims. For them, revelation is essentially non-verbal in character. For them, the Bible records a human response to non-verbal revelation. But the Bible says that God reveals Himself both by words and deeds. Where it is by deeds, God adds a verbal commentary, lest there should be any misunderstanding. Then God enlightens people to recognise this fact (this is called illumination). The NT writers recognise the OT as being God's revelation, whatever the genre used (prophetic, poetic, legal etc – Mt 19:4f, Acts 4:25, Hebr 1:5f, 3:7 f).

5) **The Media of Special Revelation**

a) **Nature** This is true of general revelation but also of special revelation. God chooses certain aspects of nature for special displays of Himself, e.g. the burning bush (Ex 3:2) and the pillar of cloud (Ex 13:21f) – a natural phenomenon put to special use. In I Kings 19:11-13 God reveals Himself in the "sound of gentle stillness" (sound of a gentle breeze).

b) **An audible voice** (Ex 19:9, Mt 3:17)

c) **Angels** These are essentially God's agents, often in that they deliver a message for Him (this is what the word means). This is particularly true in apocalyptic (Daniel 8:16, Rev 1:1). But they also deliver other messages (Luke 1:11-12, 26).

d) **Dreams and visions** These are ones which carry their own interpretation with them, either because they are so clear that they do not need any interpretation or because some audible voice interprets. There are also ones where there is need of the supplement of the spoken word, outside of a dream or vision (Dan 2, 4, 7, 8, 10).

e) **Miracles God** employs miracles as a means of revelation, showing His purposes and work (i.e. showing what kind of a person He is). These can be classed in three categories:

I) *dunamis*: designates an act of power Acts 2:22, 8:13

II) *teras*: designates an act of power in terms of the emotional impact on the observer – it is a wonder, something which fills with awe. Mt 24:24, Acts 4:30

III) *sêmeion*: an act of power in terms of a sign (i.e. in terms of its inner significance. This is the word that John uses most as a sign of revelation – a testimony to the deity of Christ. Lk 23:8, Jn 2:11 etc.

f) **The angel of the Lord** This is a very special angel who appears within the context of OT history. On the one hand he seems to identify himself with God, but on the other he distinguishes himself from Him. He is seen as an anticipation of the incarnation: the 2nd Person of the Trinity in pre-incarnate form (Gen 16:7, 13; 31:11, 13; Ex 3:2, 6; Josh 5:13-6:2). This phenomenon is known as a Theophany.

g) **Urim and Thummim** These were two small stones kept by the priests for casting lots, and through which, in particular instances, the will of God was made known (Ex 28:30 etc).

6) **Special Revelation in History**

This special revelation is found exclusively within the pages of the Bible. It gives some insight into the way God treats the nations. However, we need to be careful how we apply these principles to history today. For instance, is it true that a nation's prosperity depends on its attitude to Israel? Special revelation in history has the following traits:

a) **It centres on the nation of Israel**

the nation through whom God chose to reveal Himself. From Genesis 12 onwards other nations are touched upon but only in so far as they had dealings with Israel. Even New Testament history starts in Israel which was the cradle of Christianity. At the present time, the church is at the centre of God's purposes.

b) **It reveals God's purposes of salvation**

Special revelation tells us that God's primary wish is to save the world, not to condemn it, that this plan centres on Israel and the coming Messiah. This is why the preservation of the nation is so important. This is why Jesus came. We would not otherwise know this.

An outsider looking at the history of Israel could certainly observe the principle of judgment at work, but probably not the principle of salvation, especially as that salvation is turned mostly towards the future. An outsider could observe that God kept His people from going under, but for what purpose? Only revelation can tell us this.

c) It culminates in the Messiah

As Jesus himself intimated, the whole of the OT revelation looks forward to the coming of the Messiah. He acts essentially as the Father's agent to complete his purposes of redemption. He was to give us a fuller revelation of God the Father. He was also to come as the Father's representative to bring Israel to its appointed destiny, to wind up history, to establish God's eschatological kingdom and to expel Satan from the world, and to be the judge of mankind. Only a divine person could do this. One through whom God's purposes broaden out to concern every nation. Not only is the Church (the Messianic community) to consist of people from every nation, but the Messiah is going to rule over every nation during the millenium. It is only when we come to the Messiah that we can talk about the progression of God's revelation. The basic revelation of God in the OT is found in the Pentateuch. Most other material consists of God calling His people back to faithfulness to the principles found in the Pentateuch. This other material does of course also contain prophecy regarding the future and thus reveals more of God's plans for the future and of the implications of God's election of Israel.

d) It gives us an authoritative interpretation of history.

In the Bible we are dealing with history in its pure sense – events themselves. As history deals with human events there cannot be an exact science of history. The writing of history always depends on the differing opinions and interpretations of historians. This means that God's revelation needs an authoritative interpretation which man is unable to give without God. The prophets and apostles who are the human authors of the Bible interpret Biblical history through the inspiration of God. The great historical deeds of God require interpretation and this itself is part of revelation. For instance, the Exodus and

the entry into Canaan need to be understood as God's acts: we need to be told that this is God saving His people from their enemies. At Calvary there were three crosses: no one could know that on the middle cross God was accomplishing a great work of salvation, until the event is divinely interpreted.

Biblical history is a combination of deeds and divine interpretation – everything is seen from the point of view of God's relationship with Israel. In Deut 7:7, 9:4 we see Moses attacking a possible misinterpretation of history. Judges chapter 2 is the key to history of the book of Judges. The events are interpreted as the hand of God is seen in them. In Isaiah 10 the Assyrian, without knowing it, is an instrument of the judgement of God. Again, everything is seen from the divine point of view. In John 1 the coming of Jesus is interpreted as the Word of God becoming flesh and dwelling amongst us.

7. Special Revelation in the Spoken Word

Language is the distinctive feature of Human life for it implies reason. God in His special revelation communicates to men verbally, which means that He communicates rationally. This He does not do in general revelation.

a) The audible voice of God

We find God speaking in an audible voice in the giving of the ten commandments (Ex 19:9, 19, 20:1). This serves to emphasize its importance because the Decalogue gives the fundamental laws for man's life. There is no other reference to the audible voice of God being heard publicly until the coming of Christ. However, there are other examples of God directly speaking to individuals: Moses (Num 12:6-8), Elijah (I Ki 19:12). When God speaks again on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah are both there. During the ministry of Christ, God speaks three times in public. On the

central occasion, the Transfiguration, God says "Hear Him" (i.e. Christ). Christ is thus the extension or incarnation of the audible voice of God (the Word).

b) Spoken Prophecy in the OT

This is one of the most important means of revelation in the OT. In Ex 4:15-16 we see what prophecy is: God gives a parallel between the relationship between Himself and Moses, and then Moses and Aaron. Moses speaks the words that God gives him to Aaron, and Aaron then transmits them to the people. The prophet is the spokesman of God: God's mouthpiece. Primarily, a prophet is a forthteller before he is a foreteller. However, a test of his genuineness is whether his predictive prophecy actually comes true. We don't always know exactly how the Word of God was communicated to them – sometimes at any rate by dreams, visions, angels etc. The prophet became an additional link between God and the people, though God sometimes spoke directly to them. Numbers 12:6 shows us that dreams and visions were connected with the prophetic ministry. In many cases prophets may have been totally passive, but it is not possible to rule out the possibility of reflection on a situation. In the case of Habakkuk for instance, it was through his reflection that God spoke to him. Sometimes God gave revelation to the prophet in the context of his own experiences (eg Hosea). In 2 Sam 7:3-5 the prophet could distinguish clearly between his own thoughts and the word of God: Nathan first gives advice and then passes on a message from God which is contrary to his own advice.

c) The Teaching of the Lord Jesus

Men detected immediately the difference between His teaching and that of the Scribes and Pharisees. He spoke with authority and asserted the eternity of His teaching (Mt 24:35). He claimed that His teaching would outlast even the present form

of the universe. In Jn 8:26-28 He asserted that His teaching originated from the Father. His spoken revelation was continuous with earlier revelation – often His revelation was interpretative of earlier revelation. In Mt 5 for instance He interprets the OT Law. He implied that He was the consummation of revelation, that revelation had its climax in Him, the Second Moses, the Prophet.

d) The Preached Word in the NT

The Apostles were as much inspired vehicles of God as the OT prophets were, for they were entrusted with the revelation of God in Christ. For this ministry they were equipped by the Spirit (Acts 4:29-31, I Thes 1:5, Heb 2:4).

e) The Value of Revelation in Verbal Form

It has great value because it is the usual way in which men communicate with each other when it is essential for that communication to be clear.

f) The Need for Words to be Transferred from Oral to Written Form

One problem with oral transmission is the possibility of corruption. God could have safeguarded supernaturally a completely oral tradition but He has not done this. God does not normally perform a miracle unless it is necessary; He is the God of nature as well as of the supernatural. So God gave oral prophecies written form in Scripture.

8. Special Revelation in the Written Word

a) The written word is the record of special revelation and so embraces all other channels of it. A considerable part of the divine revelation was originally given in oral form, eg the

Sermon on the Mount, the sermons in the Acts of the apostles, the prophecies. So that these discourses could be preserved for posterity, they were put in writing.

b) The Bible is itself revelation, not simply a record of revelation (Ex 17:14, 32:15-16, Jos 1:8, Isaiah 30:8, Jer 30:2, Mark 7:13, Rom 3:2).

c) The Bible does not merely contain the Word of God, or become it, but it is itself the Word of God: (Mark 7:13, John 10:34-35). For the writers of the NT "what the Scriptures say" is another way of saying "what God says". It is therefore not sufficient to say that the Bible merely becomes the word of God when a person reads it and as God speaks through His word (that is the point of view of Karl Barth): it is the Word of God (it is charged with the power of God to achieve His purposes) whether He speaks at a given time to a believer or not. Barth in fact confuses revelation and illumination.

d) God's revelation takes written form because God inspires the authors (II Tim 3:16).

In the Bible it is asserted that God guided the prophets by his Holy Spirit as they actually put pen to paper, so that what they wrote was an accurate record of what God actually said. If this were not the case, then God could not be fair in punishing those who disregarded his word, and Israel would not have preserved these oracles which testify against them as a nation.

Jesus is not only the ultimate author of God's revelation (the Bible) but also its focus, because His is the Messiah (the answer to man's dilemma and mankind's dilemma).

9. Special Revelation in the Living Word

a) **Christ is the word of God incarnate.** (Jn 1:1-18, 8:12, 9:5, 12_35, 14:8-10, I Jn 1:1-3). Only God is capable of revealing God perfectly. When Jesus said he was the light of the world, He was talking primarily about revelation – He is the revelation of the Trinity in the OT as well as in the NT.

b) **In Him the faith was once and for all delivered to men** (Jude 3). In Jesus, we have God's final word to men.

c) **All previous revelation is fragmentary though true:** (Heb 1:1, Mt 17: 3-5). In OT we find a partial revelation of God whereas in the NT there is a full revelation, albeit veiled in flesh from the eyes of those who refused to believe. Heb 1 and Jn 1 imply that nothing less than Christ in His totality is the Word of God, not just what He said.

d) **The whole Bible speaks of Him** (Luke 24:25-27, 44-48) and so finds its unity in Him.

e) **He was the revealer of God**, even in OT days (Jn 1:4-5, 1 Pet 1:10-12, Jn 12:37-41).

g) **So all other revelation is gathered up in Christ.**

h) **The Bible is the record of this revelation in Christ** and, because written under inspiration, is itself Divine revelation.

God has not left fallible man to try and work out for himself what God actually said or was trying to say through some event. Otherwise God could not be so demanding in insisting that His word be obeyed to the letter, neither could he expect that men should take seriously His prophecies regarding the future.

10. **Our Response to Divine Revelation**

a) **The proper response to revelation is faith** (I Cor 15:1-11, 1 Thes 1:2-10, 2:13). As God speaks, so man believes: revelation and faith are therefore correlative terms.

b) **Faith appropriates the Living word** in the written word and is constantly nourished by that word (I Peter 1:8 – 2:10). We are to trust in what God says to us, especially about Christ. Thus we come to trust in God's revelation and thereby to believe in Him, because a man and a man's word are considered inseparable in Scripture. It is as we feed on God's revelation that our faith in Him grows.

B. INSPIRATION

1. The Term "Inspiration"

"A supernatural influence of the Holy spirit upon divinely chosen men in consequence of which their writings became trustworthy and authoritative" (Karl Henry). Hence the term refers to the actual writing down of what God put into the minds of the biblical authors. The word used in Scripture is "theopneustos" (2 Tim 3:16) which means "God-breathed" (i.e. breathed out by God). This means, not that the Scriptures are "inspiring", but that they are a divine product and must be approached and estimated as such.

In order to appreciate the implications of this, we must look at the use of the word "Spirit of God" in the OT. The breath or spirit of God denotes the outgoing of divine power whether in creation, preservation, revelation, regeneration or judgement. The NT reveals this divine "breath" (pneuma) to be a Person of the Godhead. God's "breath" (i.e. the Holy Spirit) produced Scripture.

2. The Relation between Inspiration and Revelation

a) It is closely related but not identical: revelation is concerned with God's disclosures of truth to men in various ways. Inspiration is concerned with the communication of that truth in verbal form to others.

b) Inspiration gives permanent form to revelation when written.

c) Much modern theology emphasizes revelation but not inspiration. Older liberal theologians (prior to WWII) reacted against both terms, but more recent liberals (after WWII) speak of revelation, but tend to avoid the term inspiration.

3. The Inspiration of the Old Testament

a) The OT phenomenon of inspiration

I) Some OT writers reveal a consciousness of their inspiration. This is particularly true of the line of prophets in the OT from Moses onwards. These men were very much aware that they were channels or mouthpieces of God (2 Sam 23:1-3, I Ki 22:14). David was fully aware that he spoke the word of God (Acts 2:30) and he is in fact described as a prophet. A true prophet was not only an inspired person but someone who was conscious of this fact. They frequently said: "Thus saith the Lord" or "the Word of God came to me" (Jer 36).

II) Sometimes the word passed through several channels: What mattered was that the Word remained unchanged. Moses received the word of God but it passed to people through Aaron (Ex 4:15, 28, 30). It was no less the Word of God when spoken by Aaron as long as he transmitted it faithfully (Ex 24:3-7, 31:18).

III) The prophet could distinguish his own thoughts from the Word of God: In II Sam 7:3 ff Nathan distinguishes advice he gives David from the word of God which comes later.

IV) There is a clear distinction between true and false prophecy: as this was not always open to direct testing, certain tests were laid down in the OT. (a) was the Word fulfilled? (b) does it fit in with revelation already given, especially revelation given through Moses? (Deut 13:1 ff, 18:15 ff, Jer 23:9 ff, Eze 13:2-9, I Ki 22:19-22). It is not so much fulfillment as non-fulfillment which constitutes the actual test. If the prophecy is obviously not fulfilled, it is false.

b. Christ's testimony to its inspiration

I) The OT came through human authors: Christ recognised human authorship and often makes reference to it (Mt 15:7, 22:43, 24:15, Mk 7:10, Jn 5:46) but He saw these as instruments of the divine spirit.

II) Its ultimate author is God: it is said that the Word came "through" the prophets, which means that they were channels of someone else who communicated the truth in the first place (Mt 21:4f, Lk 18:31). For Christ, Scripture is the Word of God (Jn 10:34 f where "your law", Scripture and the Word of God are identified). In Mk 7:1-13 there is a distinction made between the commandment of God and the traditions of men. The commandment of God, the word of Moses and the Word of God are all equated over against the traditions of men. In Mk 12:35-37 it is not just a case of a better human authority over against a poorer (eg David against the Scribes), but of David, inspired by the Holy spirit, speaking with divine authority.

III) Jesus calls Scripture the "Word of God" (Mt 15:6, 19:4-5).

IV) Jesus believed all the OT (Mt 23:35, Lk 24:25-27, 44-45)

V) Jesus accepted OT characters as authentic and true (Adam and Eve – Mt 19:4-5, Cain – 23:35, Noah – 24:38, Abraham, Isaac Jacob – 8:11)

VI) Jesus accepted OT events as authentic and true (Creation – Mt 19:4, murder of Cain – Mt 23:35, Flood – 24:37-38, Lot – Lk 17:24-32, Jonah – Mt 12:39-41 where great fish is rendered "whale" in the Greek).

c) **The testimony of NT writers:**

I) Their attitude was identical to that of Christ

II) They recognised human authorship: there is frequent reference to human authors (Acts 3:22, Rom 4:6).

III) But they also emphasize divine authorship: this is particularly striking in Hebrews where it is worth studying the way in which the writer introduces quotes from the OT he always introduces them as the direct Word of God (Heb 1:5-8, 13, 2:6). In James 5:10 we read that the prophets spoke in the name of the Lord, they spoke for Him. In Mt we frequently find the expression "the Lord spoke through the prophets" (cf also Acts 1:16, 28:25, Rom 9:25). The Scriptures are also said to be the oracles of God, that is, those writings in which the voice of God can be discerned and heard (Acts 7:38, Rom 3:2, Heb 5:12). In certain passages Paul seems to treat as interchangeable the words of Scripture and the words of God (Gal 3:8).

The acts recorded in Rom 9:17, Gal 3:8 and James 4:5 could only be attributed to Scripture as the result of such a habitual identification in the mind of the writer (ie Paul, James etc) of the text of Scripture with God as speaking, that it became natural to use the term "Scripture says" when what was really intended was "God, as recorded in the Scripture, said" (cf Mt 19:4-5).

4. Inspiration of the NT

a) **The Apostles and NT Prophets as Men of the Spirit:**

I) The period of the NT was a new era of prophecy: Before this there had been a long gap in the prophetic movement as had been predicted by God if His people would not obey or listen.

*After the silence a new era began just prior to the birth of Christ. The first prophecies after this were a testimony to Him (Lk 1, 2). In Acts 2:17 Peter refers to prophets of the NT era. After Pentecost there are further references to prophets (Acts 11:28, 13:1, 15:32, 21:10). I Cor 12:28 f and Eph 4:11 contains Paul's teaching relative to prophets in the Church. John claims to be a prophet in Rev 1:3. * Amos 8:11.

II) The apostles were special organs of the Spirit: we cannot overestimate the significance of this. In the Gospels we notice the enormous amount of time which Jesus spent teaching and training the Twelve. He seems to have regarded them as having a special work to do and He gives them special promises relative to the work that He has given them (Jn 14:16 ff, 25, 15:26, 16:12-15). In the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth which is a title used relative to these promises. Christ said that the Spirit of truth would bring to their remembrance all that He had said to them ... that He would guide them into all truth ... and show them things to come. The primary application of all these references must be specifically to the 12. While there may be a secondary application for us, this is an explicit reference to the work of the apostles in establishing written records – our New Testament. The resulting New Testament is a direct fulfillment of these promises. It was a promise that the spirit Himself would complement and complete the instruction which Christ Himself gave to the Twelve.

b) Their Consciousness of Inspiration:

In the OT some writers were conscious of inspiration and some were not, but that is not a criterion of whether they were actually inspired or not. There is a very real consciousness of it in some NT passages. In I Jn 4:1-6 we find the interesting expression "we are of God": Who does John mean by "us"? From the context he is obviously not referring to all Christians: presumably he is referring to the same people as at the beginning of the Epistle (1:1 ff) where it is clear that it is an apostolic "we". John here is saying that apostolic truth is one of the test of prophetic truth (I Cor 14:37). apostolic truth is the norm: the Spirit has most clearly spoken through them (I Cor 2:9 f, 13, 7:40, Eph 3:5, I Tim 4:1, Rev 1:1-3, 10 ff, 22:18 f). In I Thes 2:13 Christians recognised Paul's word as that of God and not that of men for the Spirit had wrought conviction of truth in their hearts (I Thes 1:5). The only form in which we now have inspired utterances of the apostles is in written form, and that is why the NT is important and unique.

5. The Character of Biblical Inspiration

a) The Spirit is the Ultimate Author of all Rightly called Scripture:

There are many human authors but behind them stands the Spirit (II Tim 3:16). While this reference primarily refers to the OT, if we discover other books to which the Bible writers give the term Scripture, than the statement can be applied to them as well. But claims to inspiration occur in the NT as well as in the OT. II Peter 3:15 ff clearly implies that the letters of Paul are given the status of Scripture.

b) All Scripture is of Full and Equal Inspiration:

II Tim 3:16 indicates the plenary inspiration of Scripture. Therefore we must reject the idea of degrees of inspiration. While revelation does admit a degree (God may disclose more or less of Himself in a book), inspiration does not – a book is either God-breathed or it isn't (the ultimate author of it is God or it is not).

c) The Writers were Controlled by the Spirit

The Greek word actually means "carried, borne along", and effectively means "controlled". What is borne is taken up by the bearer and conveyed by the bearer's power, not its own, to the bearer's goal, not its own" (2 Peter 1:21).

d) The Spirit Used the Individuality of the Writers:

When the Spirit used different writers, He did not override or suppress their individuality. All had different backgrounds, environments and qualities. Thus it is that we have great variety of styles in the Bible.

For instance, a comparison of Paul and John reveals great variety and difference of style. Paul's language is complex, he has long sentences, many clauses whereas John's writings has simple sentence structure. In Lk 1:1-4 Luke says that his Gospel is the result of much work and research: the Spirit used that work in the production of the word of God. Inspiration operates through human language and expression, through human personality but under the control of the Holy Spirit. It is hardly a question of mechanical dictation – an erroneous concept found in Islam.

e) The "Verbal" Character of Inspiration

Inspiration must in the nature of the case be verbal for it is concerned with literature which is made up of words – it is

concerned with the communication of truth through language. However, this does not infer actual dictation of words. It involves the background, upbringing and education of the authors, all of which God uses to bring about the final expression of His word. Thus verbal inspiration does not refer to the method but the end product. The words are not just man's but God's. The way in which they come to be so is a long story and differs according to each book. However we cannot go as far as to think that the writer was given the inspiration and then left to himself as to how he would express them. There are several passages which emphasize the words used (Ex 4:30, Jer 1:9, Ezek 2:7, I Cor 2:13, Rev 22:18 f). There are passages in Scripture where the stress is on the actual word used (Mt 22:29-33, Jn 10:34-35). In Galatians 3:16, Paul lays stress on the fact that a singular rather than a plural is used. The emphasis therefore is not just on the word used but on its form. On the other hand, we must be careful not to fall into the error of giving the words of Scripture an importance apart from their meaning. It is their sense which is important. Words are simply vehicles to express meaning. This explains the fact that certain NT writers give free renderings of OT verses: as long as they maintain the sense of the passages, that is what is important.

f) Inspiration is a Finished Work while Illumination is Continuous.

It is a unique work belonging to the actual writers of Scripture. Between us and the original, lie the processes of transmission and translation. Whereas God continues to illumine our minds, inspiration is finished and complete for the text has been given once and for all.

6. Erroneous Views of Inspiration

a) Partial Inspiration

This theory states that the Bible is inspired when speaking about matters of faith and practice but not when speaking of history or science. Not only is this view inconsistent but contradicts the biblical view of inspiration which states that "all Scripture is inspired by God ..." (II Tim 3:16). Besides, the faith of Israel was founded on the Acts of God (His interventions in history) with accompanying commentary. The commentary cannot be separated from the event. What makes Christianity unique is the fact that it is founded on historical events. It is therefore not a philosophy or a mystery religion. The theory of partial inspiration is based on a view of religion held by 19th century sociologists.

b) **Concept View**

This theory maintains that only concepts communicated by God are inspired – not the actual words used. This makes out Biblical revelation to be a philosophy in a Hebrew mould. Concepts are built on words and it is hard to see where one ends and the other begins. The biblical view of inspiration goes beyond that concepts – the words are also inspired (cf Jn 17:8). The Holy Spirit guided the authors as to the choice of words.

c) **The Intuitive View**

This confuses inspiration and illumination, and elevates private illumination to the level of inspired Scripture. This is a canonical question. The canon has been closed, and only what agrees with the canonical writings can be accepted. Besides, the recipient of illumination can hardly be said to be an apostle (in the restricted sense) or a member of the apostolic circle.

d) **The Dynamic View**

maintains that the Church continues to be a source of revelation through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Once again this

is a canonical question, to which previous remarks in this connection apply.

All these views come to grief because they start off with one of two a-priori:

I) God does not reveal Himself. Religion is basically man trying to reach an understanding about God through the observing of natural phenomena or through making his own interpretations of experiences he has undergone. Revealed religion is rejected.

II) A failure to accept apostolic authority as final. The unique aspect of their ministry is denied and human religion is established in which man replaces God as an administrator of grace.

C. AUTHORITY

1. Definition

Authority is the right or power to require obedience:

a) Its relation to inspiration: it is because the Scriptures are inspired (i.e. God is the author of them) that we accept them as the final word in all matters of faith and conduct. We submit our lives to Scripture because we submit our lives to God.

b) Possible neutralisation of authority: this authority is effectivel neutralised if we either add to or subtract from the Scriptures. The Roman Catholic Church effectively neutralises the authority of Scripture by adding tradition to it. It claims to be the continued incarnation of Christ and therefore it never sees the need to submit to the judgment of Scripture. This authority is also neutralised when we set ourselves up as judges of Scripture: we decide what we will and will not obey. This is

usually done on the basis of some philosophy which we hold as an a-priori, or it can be done through our own personal preferences, often backed up by some form of liberal criticism. We are not prepared to accept what such and such a passage says, so we claim that it is a late interpolation, even though there is not a scrap of manuscript evidence for this.

2. The Authority of the Old Testament

a) Its recognition within the OT Period

There is evidence for the recognition of parts of the OT during the OT period itself (Josh 1:7 ff, 8:30-35, 22:5, 23:6). The Law is frequently recognised as binding because of God (I Ki 2:3, II Ki 14:6, 22:8). There is a close connection between turning to the Lord and obeying the precepts of the Law (II Ki 23:24, Dan 9:10-13, Amos 2:4, Mal 4:4). In Ps 119 the Psalmist recognises the Law as God's truth and thus as authoritative for his life. He had a love for God's revelation (the Law), not a legalistic attitude as the Pharisees were to adopt later.

The prophets were also treated as authoritative. There are a number of passages where the prophets are told to write down their prophecies for posterity (Isaiah 30:8, Jer 30:1, 36:1 ff Hab 2:2 ff). In Daniel 9:2, Daniel sees Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the 70 years of exile as the Word of God and prays on the basis of it. In Ps 89:4, the Psalmist bases prayer on Scripture (II Sam 7:14-16). The historical books were called the "former prophets" by the Jews because the authors were prophets (ie they were inspired by God).

b) The NT Formulae used in quoting the OT

These are of two kinds:

I) Descriptive formulae in which Scripture is referred to in some way. Many terms are used. The word Scripture sometimes occurs in the singular, sometimes in the plural. When used in the plural, it seems to refer to the OT in its totality but when in the singular, it seems to refer to one passage in particular. No other literature outside the OT is ever referred to by this term. When a NT writer uses the word, he is either quoting from or referring to the OT. The use of so many different forms emphasizes the NT belief in the authority of the OT Scriptures. The most commonly used descriptive formulae are: -

Scripture, the Scriptures: 1 Pet 1:16, Gal 3:8, 22, Mk 12:10, Jn 19:37, Jn 7:42

Holy Scriptures: Rom 1:2, II Tim 3:15

the thing written: Lk 20:17, 18:31, Rev 1:3, 22:18 f

the Book: Lk 4:17, II Tim 4:13

the Word of God: Mk 7:13, Rom 9:6, Heb 4:12, Lk 8:21, Acts 6:7, I Thes 2:13

the Oracles* of God: Acts 7:38, Rom 3:2; Heb 5:12, I Pet 4:11

the Law: Mt 12:5, Lk 2:23, Jn 10:34, 15:25, I Cor 14:21

the Prophets: Mt 5:17, Rom 1:2, Mt 11:13, 26:56, Rom 16:26, Lk 24:27

the Old covenant: II Cor 3:14

the Law and the Prophets: Mt 5:17, Lk 16:16, Rom 3:21

the Law, Prophets and Psalms: Lk 24:44

* supernatural communication of God

II) Introductory formulae:

It is written (= it stands written); I Cor 9:9, Mk 1:2, Jn 2:17, 20:30

He (God) says, it (Scripture) says: Mt 19:4 f, Acts 28:25, Heb 10:5, James 4:5

The Lord says: Rom 12:19, I Cor 14:21, Acts 7:49, Heb 8:8-12, Rev 14:13

III) Its Recognition by Christ.

Jesus did not quote the rabbis which was unusual during that period. The rabbis quoted from each other a great deal and the Talmud quotes the rabbis time and time again. Although Christ was designated as a rabbi by the people, He did not quote from others: He spoke with authority and not as one of the Scribes. However, He frequently quoted from the Scriptures and thereby stressed a number of things: He stressed the present relevance of the OT Scriptures: (it is written, it is written). In Mt 22:31 ff He says, when quoting from what God said to Moses: "have you never read what God said to you?" By this, Jesus is saying that the OT has a present relevance and that it is binding on His hearers (Mt 11:10, 13:14, Lk 20:42, Jn 5:45). Jesus also declared the eternal character of Scripture (Mt 5:17-20, Jn 10:35) "The Scripture cannot be broken", it cannot be set aside as of no account. Jesus treated Scripture as authoritative, even for His own life (Mt 4:1-11). As a man, Jesus was subject to the Law of God, and recognised and accepted this. He assumed the historical reliability of Scripture. He makes reference to the accounts in the OT as if they were actual events (Mt 19:4 f, Lk 17:26-32). In some cases the whole point of His argument would be invalid if the OT stories to which he refers were not historical. Thus it is not valid to say that Jesus simply used accepted stories but that they were not necessarily historical. Mt 12:41 – how could fictitious men rise in judgement? The account must be based on reality. In Lk 11:50 f we get a comprehensive view of the martyrs of the OT from Abel onwards.

d) Its recognition by the NT writers

Jews and Christians completely agreed on one issue: the authority of the OT even though they disagreed on its interpretation relative to the Person of Jesus. Therefore it is not

surprising to find many places in the NT where it is a questions of Christians arguing with Jews as to the correct interpretation of the OT. For instance, in Acts 2:24-36 Peter argues for a particular interpretation of Ps 16. In Acts 17:2-3 the Jews did not believe that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead.

The Christians of the NT also treated the OT as being of contemporary authority (Rom 1:2). In Romans 4:3 Paul says not what did Scripture say but what does Scripture say, which suggests that Scripture has a living voice for today (Rom 4:24 f, 15:4 f). In I Cor 9:9 we are told that Scripture still speaks for our sake (II Tim 3:16). The OT is not just a record but God caused it to be written in such a way that it could subsequently be used for our instruction (I Cor 10:6-11, II Cor 7:1).

3. The Authority of the New Testament

a) The Nature of Apostleship

The apostolic office was unique and unrepeatable. The work of an apostle was many-sided, and there are aspects of their work which still go on. But there are other aspects which are unique. It is to be noted, for instance, that the Pastoral epistles contain no instructions for the appointment of apostles, although Paul deals carefully with the appointment to other offices in the church. An apostle is not only a messenger (such as an angel) but a delegate of the person who sends him. He is entrusted with a mission and he has powers conferred upon him. The term apostle seems to have been used in a narrower and broader sense in the NT. When used in a narrower sense, it refers to apostles of Christ, whom He called, ordained, taught and commissioned (Lk 6:13, Gal 1:1, I Cor 9:1, Acts 1:8, 22). In a number of passages the word is used in a broader sense to indicate messengers, who seem to be men commissioned and sent out by the church to do a specific work as its delegates or

representatives (II Cor 8:23, Phil 2:25, I Thes 1:1, 2:6, Rom 16:7, Acts 14:14). Therefore, apostle in a narrow sense is an apostle of Christ whereas apostle in a broader sense is an apostle of the church. Was Barnabas an apostle? Acts 14:14 needs to be seen in the light of Acts 13:3: Paul and Barnabas were sent out together as missionaries of the church (they are apostles of the church in this sense). Thus the reference in Acts 14:14 is probably to the broader sense of the word: apostle of the church (though Paul was an apostle of Christ also). Were James and Jude and also apostles? In Gal 1:31 Paul seems to treat James as one. If this is the case, then I Cor 15:7 probably refers to the appointment of James by Christ to be an apostle, for an apostle had to have seen the Lord after his resurrection and known him personally previously. Both had been his brothers. Such is the importance of the office (in the narrower sense) that Jesus spent a whole night in prayer before the appointment of the Twelve. (Mk 3:13-19, Mt 10:1-11:1).

b) The Nature of apostolic Tradition

In the NT, tradition is sometimes rejected and set aside but at other times accepted and considered important. The NT writers reject Jewish tradition but they accept Apostolic traditon (Mk 7:1-13. Gal 1:14/Lk 1:2, Acts 2:42, Rom 6:17, I Cor 11:2, 23, 15:1 ff, Gal 1:9, 12, Phil 4:9, I Thes 2:13, 4:1, II Thes 2:16, 3:6, Jude 3). The Jews possessed a very large vocabulary of terms connected with tradition (lit: "that which is handed over"): they spoke of "receiving, keeping, holding, standing in and handing over traditon". This vocabulary was used of the oral tradition of the earliest rabbis who had handed over traditions to their followers. Jesus was opposed to rabbinic traditions when they were put on an equal standing with Scripture (Mk 7:1-13).

Apostolic tradition was authoritative because the Lord Jesus Himself was the source of it (Acts 1:1, I Cor 11:23). Furthermore, the apostles were completely at one as transmitters of such authoritative traditon (I Cor 15:9-11). Gal

2:11 f seems to contradict this but what in fact was happening was that Peter was acting against his own convictions, and that made him a hypocrite.

In I Cor 11:23 when Paul says "this is what I received from the Lord", he means "this is what I as an apostle received from the Lord and am handing on with His authority." These instructions were authoritative for all Christians because directed by the Spirit. In I Cor 7:25, 40 Paul makes a difference between the words of Jesus and his own teaching, but the fact remains that even his own teaching was given as apostolic and is therefore binding also: Paul was not just expressing an opinion because he spoke with the authority of an apostle. In 1 Cor 14:37 Paul says that it should be recognised that what he is writing to them is by command of the Lord. In 2 Cor 13:3 Paul says that he will give the Corinthians proof that "Christ is speaking through me".

c) **Apostolicity and the Authority of the NT**

The Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20, 3:4 f, 4:11). The authorship of the NT from the human point of view was not confined to the apostles: those who were prophetically guided by the Holy Spirit were also included, although these people had to have contact with the apostolic circle in order to qualify. A parallel in the OT is the fact that what we know as the historical books are classed as the "former prophets" in the Hebrew canon. However, in I Jn 4:1-6 we see that apostolic truth is the test of all that claims to be prophetic truth (I Cor 14:37, I Thess 5:27, II Thes 3:14, Rev 22:18 f). Although the writers of the NT were not always conscious of the fact that their writings were to be authoritative for posterity, they were nevertheless aware of the fact that their writings were binding for their contemporaries.

D. INERRANCY

1. The nature of inerrancy. The term means that the Bible is free from error of any kind as written in the original manuscripts. It is free from error, not only in its description of events but also in its commentary on them. Although it is not written in the technical jargon of 20th century science and technology, it is free from error in its references to scientific phenomena. However, it is important to bear in mind the following factors:

a. The doctrine does not cover copies, translations or the massoretic pointing of the text. As all the manuscripts that we have are copies, we cannot claim inerrancy for any particular manuscript or text (such as the Hebrew masoretic text or the Greek *Textus Receptus*) that is in our possession. Neither can we claim inerrancy for the masoretic pointing of the text (that is: the insertion of the vowels by means of diacritical marks below and between the consonants in the text) which was not put in writing until the Middle Ages. There obviously have been some errors in oral transmission of the vowel sounds. Textual criticism enables us to restore the original text to a degree of 99.9%. This is done by comparing the various manuscripts and ancient translations (some of which were made from MSS older than those that are in our possession).

b. The biblical authors write according to certain criteria of their culture and time. This doctrine takes account of the conventions of the time in which the various books were written. For instance, they saw nothing inconsistent in using round numbers, in the presentation of some material in non-chronological fashion or in the description of natural phenomenon from the position of an observer on the earth or without any reference to secondary causes. It is also possible that numbers concerning the strength of armies or of those killed in battle followed an agreed convention, of which we are unfortunately ignorant. There are obviously some copyist mistakes, but most numbers given seem to be deliberate. We

have to give the biblical author the benefit of the doubt. Authors frequently use figures of style like hyperbole, poetic language or summaries. We have no right to impose on them our own conventions.

2. Evidence for the doctrine of inerrancy in Scripture. This is seen in three areas:

a. By implication. Obedience cannot be demanded if there is doubt as to the accuracy of the text.

b. By certain formal declarations. 1 Sam 3,19; Ps 19,7-9; 119; Mt 5,17-19

c. By the use of biblical texts: not only did Jesus and his apostles never doubt any detail of Scripture but used it to clinch arguments: Mt 12,3ff; 22,44, Jn 10,34ff; Gal 3,16ff.

3. Objections and replies.

a. **"Evangelicals start off with a presupposition.** They presume that Scripture is inerrant and then try and find reasons to back it up. It is better to use an inductive approach".

In fact, belief in inerrancy is definitely attested in Scripture. In holding to inerrancy, we are but following the example of the OT prophets and of Jesus himself.

b. **"Inerrancy only covers the original manuscripts.** But we do not possess these anyway, so the argument for inerrancy falls down."

The original text *can* be reconstructed by comparing MSS and ancient translations.

c. **"The apostles quote from the Septuagint which itself contains errors of translation from the original Hebrew."**

This does not imply that the apostles approved of the entire translation. They were satisfied that what they quoted was an accurate translation and that the paraphrase brought out a meaning that was implicit in the text which they wanted to stress.

Sometimes OT quotations in the NT are not quite the same. It was often deliberate policy to use a conflate or to develop a

text by use of an exegetical paraphrase (under the influence of the Holy Spirit). This latter procedure was called *midrash pesher*.

d. "Science has 'proved' that there are mistakes and contradictions in Scripture." There are various branches of science. Such a statement is often based on a scientific theory (in biology or physics) which is later superseded.

The difficulties that remain come from our imperfect knowledge of the biblical languages and background.

4. Biblical difficulties in the Old Testament

1. TEXTUAL DIFFICULTIES

a) Types of mistake made by copyists: Textual criticism compares the various manuscripts and translations and asks: "What is the most likely reading?" and "How did the copyist come to make the mistake?" The accuracy of the original MS is shown as follows: one of the copies of the MS or translation obviously has the right answer: where did the copyist get it from? We have enough material available to be able to reconstruct the original.

What were the sorts of mistakes that scribes made?

I) Writing a word once that should have been written twice. The Septuagint makes this mistake in Isaiah 26,3 (*shalom... shalom*).

3 jetser samuḵ titsor šalom šalom ki vë-ḳa baṭuax

3 You, LORD, give **perfect** peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.

II) Writing twice what should have been written once. MT makes this mistake in Ezek 48,16 (*hamesh hamesh meot* = 55

hundred), but this was corrected by subsequent copyists. It should be 4,500 cubits

III) Inversion of letters. MT (masoretic text) has this mistake in Ezek 42,16 (*emot* = cubits, instead of *meot* = hundred), but corrected by the LXX (Septuagint, Greek translation).

IV) Fusion of two words. This occurs in MT of Amos 6,12 where it says: "Does one plough with oxen?" (*běqari(y)m*) for "Does one plough the sea?" (*běqari yam*). It also occurs in MT Leviticus 16,10 where the proper rendering is *ez azel* (the goat of dismissal) and not *Azazel* (interpreted by some as the name of a demon).

V) Incorrect separation of one word into two. The MT makes this mistake in Isaiah 61,1 – there should be no hyphen (it should be "release" – *peqaxqax* and not the "opening of prison" – *peqax-qax*). MT makes a similar mistake in Isaiah 2,20 rendered as a "to a hole of rats" (*laxpor perot*), whereas it should be probably "to the field mice" (*laxreporim*).

VI) Words sounding alike but misspelt. This occurred as the text was being dictated to a group of scribes. MT Isaiah 9,3 has "not" (*lo*) whereas it should be "to him" (*l'o*). The same thing occurs in Micah 1,15 where "my father to you" (*avi lěka*) should be "I will bring it to you" (*Avilěka*).

VII) Misreading similarly shaped letters: these are principally D and R, yod (J) and vav (V). The question is further complicated in that letters before the Babylonian captivity were not written in square script, which could lead to even more confusion. Confusion of D and R occurs in Chronicles "*Dodanim*" for Genesis "*Rodanim*" (a more likely rendering). The same confusion occurs in Zech 12,10 where the LXX has the mistaken reading as "They will look on me, because they will dance (*rakaru*) in triumph over me" for MT

"they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced (*dakaru*)!" Confusion of Yodh and Vav occurs in the following examples: MT Psalm 23,6b mistakenly has "and I will return" (*veshavti*) for LXX "and I will dwell" (*veyashavti*). Also in Ps 22,16 where MT has "like the lion my hand and my feet" (*kaari*) for LXX "they, like dogs (*kaeru*), have pierced my hands and my feet". In Amos 9,11-13 the LXX rendering is confirmed by Acts 15,17 to mean not "so that they may possess the remnant of Edom" (MT) but rather "that the remnant of men may seek the Lord" – the difference between *at* and *ot*, and *edom* and *adam*.

In 1 Chr. 20,3 we find the same problem: MT has *vajasar* (sawed them through!) whereas it should be *vajasam* (cause them to saw, put them to work to saw). A final damaged M looked like an R.

VIII) Missing out a section containing the same final word. This happened in the MT of Psalm 145,13 YHWH *bēkol*/YHWH *lēkol* when the verse 14 begins with s and not with n (which was the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet): "The Lord is faithful in all His Words and gracious in all His works." LXX supplies the missing verse.

Missing out a section containing the same initial word: MT of I Samuel 14,41 "And Saul said to the Lord: "O God of Israel, ...grant me a perfect one". LXX supplies the missing part of the verse. The copyist jumped 26* Hebrew words when he saw "*Elohe Yisrael*..." (God of Israel) as the initial word of the sentence, to... *Yisrael hava*.

*Saul said to the Lord, the God of **Israel**: "Why have you not answered your servant today? Lord God of Israel, if this guilt lies in me, or in my son Jonathan, let the lot be Urim (negative). If it lies in your people **Israel**, let it be Tummim (positive)".

IX) Accidental omission of words. I Sam 13,1 has two missing words: "And Saul was ... years old and he reigned

....and two years". These figures dropped out even before the LXX was translated so we have no idea what they were. However, some Greek MSS have "30" and "22" respectively. Also in 1 Kings 4,8-13 some of the names of Solomon's officials are missing (only the patronymics are given). Part of the right-hand side of the MS must have been torn off by accident.

X) Variants based on pointing (diacritical marks), as indicated by other translations. In Isaiah 7,11, MT has "make the request deep" which should probably be "to the deep, to Hades". In Isaiah 9,5, MT has "and he shall call his name" which should be "he shall be called". Micah 5,1 should probably read, not as MT (the thousands of Judah), but "the princes or leaders of Judah", as is quoted in Mtth. – *allufe* instead of *alfe*. (What is being referred to is the tribal capitals). In the first line of Ps 2,9 "break them" should probably be "rule them". The rod is the sceptre of a king (cf. Gen 49,10): *tirem* (will rule) instead of *tërôem*. (will break). This is confirmed when this verse is quoted in the LXX version in Rev 12,5; 19,15).

i) 2 Samuel 21,19 originally probably said exactly the same thing as I Chronicles 20,5. The copyist probably had a blurred MS in front of him and misread the text.

MT 2 Sam 21,19 says: "Elhanan the son of Yaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite. I Chr 20,5 says "And Elhanan the son of Jair killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite." Hence the second (shorter) rendering as found in I Chr 20,5 is correct. This tells us that Elhanan was not another name for David. It refers to a separate person who killed Goliath's brother whose name was Lahmi.

*vayyak elhanan ben ya're orëgim bet hallahmi et golyat
hagitti veets hanito kimnor orëgim*

*vayyak elhanan ben ya'ir et lahmi ahi golyat hagitti veets
hanito kimnor orëgim.*

This comparison shows how, in the process of transmission, the order has been changed and mixed up.

ii) Jeremiah 27,1 MT has Jehoiakim whereas it must be Zedekiah. Probably a scribe copied in the words of Jeremiah 26,1 as the heading for chapter 27.

iii) 2 Samuel 24,1 and 1 Chr 21,1 appear to contradict each other: Was Satan the instigator of the census or God? Both are correct: it depends from which point of view you see the question, because God can use even the devil to achieve his purposes. In this context Satan is working as an agent of God.

b) **Mistakes involving numbers**

As tens are indicated in the written text by tiny strokes, it is easy for copyists to make mistakes if the manuscript is damaged or the light is bad.

There are 18 cases of numerical discrepancies between Chronicles, Samuel and Kings. In a third of the cases, the higher numbers are found in Samuel and Kings, so this cannot mean that the Chronicler is guilty of idealising and increasing these numbers. All these cases are examples of copyist errors: decimal strokes were incorrectly copied due to damaged MSS etc (comp. 2 Sam 10,18 and 1 Chr 19,18; 2 Kings 24,8 and 2 Chronicles 36,9; 1 Kings 4,26 and 2 Chr 9,25; 2 Sam 23,8 and 1 Chr 11,11).

I Samuel 6,19: 50,000 men sounds rather a high figure. There are more textual errors in I Samuel than in any other book of the OT. Josephus refers to it as only 70 men, and some Hebrew MSS omit 50,000 men. The construction is most unusual, pointing probably to an error.

I Samuel 13,5 mentions 30,000 chariots (this would make it the largest chariot force in history!), and they only had 6,000

horsemen. The number was probably 3,000 due to a copyist's error. Syriac and Arabic support this. Therefore *sheloshet alafim* must have been misread for *shëlsshim elef*.

2 Samuel 8,4 (cf. 1 Chronicles 19,18) is at variance with 1 Chronicles 18,4? Is it 700 or 7.000? 7.000, because Hebrew and Greek texts of 1 Chr agree against the text of 2 Samuel. It is easier to drop a zero than to add one. Besides, 20.000 (and not 40.000) foot-soldiers is the more probable reading. The fact that there are two contradictory verses in the space of two consecutive chapters (18 and 19), proves that the author is not at fault, but the copyist.

2 Samuel 10,18 is at variance with 1 Chr 19,18. Is it 700 chariots or 7000 soldiers? Is it 20.000 calvary men or foot soldiers? The more probable variant is: 7000 charioteers and 20.000 foot soldiers.

2 Samuel 23,8 contradicts 1 Chr 11,11. Is it Takmoni or Hakmoni? Is it 800 or 300? It is clear that both the name and the figure have been miscopied (1 Chr is right in both cases).

2 Kings 8,26 is at variance with 2 Chr 22,2. There is a copyist's mistake. 2 Kings 8,26 is correct.

2 Kings 18,14 – 14th year is probably a scribal error for 24th year (M mistaken for H). Other references make it clear that Hezekiah was crowned as co-regent in 728 and became sole king in 725. (1 Ki 15,30, 16,1-2, 17,1).

2 Kings 24,8 contradicts 2 Chr 36,9. Is it 8 or 18? 18, because this is the more probable figure. Is it 3 months or 3 months + 10 days? The first figure is approximate, but not necessarily wrong.

2 Kings 8,26 says Ahaziah was 22 when he began to reign but 2 Chr 22,2 says 42. We can work out that the correct number is 22 (2 Kings 8,17 tells that Ahaziah's father was 32 when he came to the throne and that he died at 40, so his son could not then have been 42!).

2 Kings 24,8 says Jehoiachin was 18 when he came to the throne but 2 Chr 36,9-10 says he was 8. As he was treated as a responsible adult, it seems that 18 is to be preferred.

Most of these problems have been cleared up modern translations of repute, so many of these criticisms only apply to older translations such as the Russian Sinodalnyi translation or Daničić/Karađić.

c) Contextual difficulties

I. Selective genealogies

Other difficult passages concern the principle of selectivity: Exodus 6,16-20 seems to infer that there were only 3 generations of Israelites in Egypt during a period of 430 years (1875-1445) but 1 Chr 7,25 tells us that there were 9 or 10 generations between Jacob and Moses. If one generation is 42 years this works out very well. This means that Exodus 6 is a selective genealogy.

A similar problem occurs in David's genealogy at the end of the book of Ruth where 10 generations cover 7 centuries from 1700 to 970. Matthew quotes from the same genealogy. 1 Chr 2 shows that some names have been omitted

II. The solution to apparent numerical discrepancies

i) There seems to be statistical discrepancies between the number of Israelites mentioned in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7: but this can be explained if Ezra's was the official list drawn up of those who volunteered to go, whereas Nehemiah's list is of

those who actually reached Palestine (some died, there were last minute cancellations or additions).

ii) The numbers of the census in 2 Samuel 24 (800,000 in Israel + 500,000 in Judah) and 1 Chr 21,1 (1,100,000 in Israel and 470,000 in Judah) also appear to contradict one another.

However, there is an explanation for this. One has to take the following factors into account when considering the figure quoted in Chronicles:

1. The figure of 1,100,000 is for all Israel – not just the Northern kingdom.

2. This figure excludes 200,000 of the tribes of Benjamin and Levi which, it is stated, were not included. This makes a total of 1,300,000.

The figure of 500,000 in 2 Sam 21 for Judah is made up of 470,000 + 30,000 of the tribe of Benjamin, which, when added to the 800,000 Israelites of the Northern kingdom, also comes to 1,300,000.

Even so, the figures are exceptionally large for such a small country and one wonders if they should not be divided by 10 (see below):

iii) Many of the OT numbers referring to censuses, troop strengths and casualty figures seem to be impossibly large, when one considers that a large Assyrian army rarely exceeded 100,000 and that the total strength of the coalition forces facing the Assyrians at the battle of Karkar was 70,000 at the most. The Assyrian general estimated enemy losses at 14,000 (see: *Les Assyriens* by Maurice Veyra, Editions du Seuil, Paris 1961). Unfortunately we do not have the key to interpret these figures. Various solutions have been suggested, but all of them, it must be admitted, are speculative.

(a) Was there such a thing as epic style which automatically allowed an author to multiply by ten the figures in a census or the account of a battle? This was a common convention in Egypt. It is possible that the biblical writers quoted from source documents that were written in epic style, but did not see fit to amend these figures, simply because their readers were perfectly aware of the conventions relating to them.

(b) Does the word commonly translated 1000 (*elef*) in fact mean a military unit of variable strength (*aluf*)? Could this same word also be translated in certain contexts as "officer or tribal leader"?

For instance in Isaiah 37,36 (parallel to 2 Ki 19,35), a death toll of 185,000 sounds awfully large, but if the word for thousand actually means officer, then this would mean that the entire officer corps of 185 were killed (all officers camped together), leaving the army leaderless. Alternatively the true number might be 18,500. The 10,000 Edomites who were thrown over the cliff could well have been 10 edomite tribal leaders (2 Chr 25,11). On the other hand, the number 10,000 occurs with great frequency, leading one to believe that it perhaps referred to a whole army contingent of variable size. Also the reference to the wall of a town falling onto 27,000 soldiers and killing them all, might refer to 27 officers or to 2,700 soldiers, but even that is an incredibly high number – either there has been a copyist mistake or it involves a convention in the writing of military history, of which we are unaware (1 Kings 20,30). The Biblical writers have a habit of selecting the bare minimum of information from available sources, simply because it is their aim to write history from a

divine standpoint. In Joshua 8, for instance, we are probably to translate vs 3 as follows: He chose 30,000 warriors and dispatched (5000 of) them by night, and vs 12 as follows: Joshua had (previously) taken 5000 and had set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai – there is no pluperfect tense in Hebrew, so the correct tense has to be deduced from the context.

Numbers in 2 Chronicles seem abnormally large, but if we divide them by 10, everything seems much more probable. For instance Ahaz of Judah is defeated and loses 120,000 of his best men. This could mean 120 officers or 12,000 soldiers (2 Chr 28,5-6).

We simply do not know the answers to these questions. This is basically a linguistic problem and not one of trying to reconcile apparent inconsistencies within Scripture.

Needless to say, this does not affect the inerrancy of Scripture, but just shows either our linguistic ignorance or our ignorance of literary conventions governing the writing of military history in Ancient Israel.

d). Problems caused by lack of knowledge of biblical background

In solving other supposed discrepancies, it is often useful to know the following:

1) Kings often had more than one name. Sometimes the name was a dynastic name, like Avi-Melek in Philistia or Darius in Persia. The kings of Israel and Judah often had two names: Gidʿon/ Jerubbaal, Solomon/ Jedidah, Abijah/ Abijam, Jehoahaz/ Shallum (k. of Judah), Jehoikim/ Eliakim, Jehoia-chin/Jeconiah, Zedekiah/Mattaniah.

II) In dealing with the dates of the kings of Judah, it is important to realise that in many cases, the beginning of the reign is dated from when the son became co-regent with his father and not from when his father died (thus I + II Kings seem to contradict each other).

III) Sometimes the beginning of the king's reign was dated from the year when he became king and sometimes from the first complete year after his accession.

IV) It is also important to bear in mind that places can be referred to in terms of the region or the specific location: hence Kadesh-Barnea is in the desert of Paran, Sinai is a peak in the mountain range of Horeb, and Mount Hor was a peak in the mountain range or region of Moserah.

e) **Importance of an intelligent approach to OT textual problems** As we have seen, even the earliest and best manuscripts that we possess are not totally free of transmissional errors. Numbers are occasionally miscopied, and the mistakes that any copy typist makes are in evidence from time to time, like writing once what should have been written twice, haplography, inversion of letters, skipping lines, writing words together or not separating them, mishearing words, misreading similarly shaped letters. Added to this is the question of pointing which was normally transmitted by oral tradition and only finally written down in the Middle Ages. Slight changes in pointing can change meaning.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, which might cause one to doubt inerrancy, the following procedures should be followed:

I. Various manuscripts and ancient translations should be compared. It is a weakness of many older translations of the Bible that either this principle was not followed or the translators just did not have the MSS which we now have, at their disposal.

II. Various passages in Scripture should be compared.

III. A good background knowledge should be acquired of archeology, geography and ancient semitic languages. This access was limited at the time of the Reformation when many of the classic translations of the Bible were made. This criticism is also applies to some 19th century East European translations that were in fact based on Luther's Bible or the English AV/KJV, rather than on the original texts.

f) **Biblical difficulties in the New Testament**

When looking at the synoptic Gospels it is important to remember:

I) Sometimes the material is in chronological and sometimes in logical order.

II) Jesus very probably said the same thing in different words on several occasions.

III) The writers often select material in order to bring out a theme or a point. They might mention one beggar as opposed to two or report different parts of Jesus' speech just as two different newspapers might do. This is especially true of the resurrection accounts. In Mt 26 we are told that Jesus appeared to and commissioned the 11 disciples, but there may have also been 500 present. If Jesus commissioned 500 Galilean disciples to go out and start churches, then clearly the church got off to a good start.

IV) The biblical writers did not record everything that Jesus did (cf: John 21,25)

Some examples:

i) Matthew refers to the exorcism of two demon possessed men but in Mark there is only a reference to one. It seems that Mark wants to highlight personal encounter. This one may also have been the more vocal and best remembered. Mark uses compression and selection in a way which today would be inadmissible but which then was common practice.

ii) We read that Jesus met Bartimeus on the way into Jericho whereas another passage says he met him on the way out. One writer is apparently thinking of the old city and another is thinking of the new city, so both are correct, but geographical background knowledge is useful here.

iii) We need of course, to make sure that two accounts are parallel before we jump to unwise conclusions. One writer mentions the feeding of the 5,000 only whereas another writer mentions the feeding of the 5,000 and of the 4,000. Both are obviously different: the 5,000 were probably Jewish pilgrims (judging by the word used for bag or basket into which the leftovers were gathered), whereas the 4,000 were probably Gentiles who used a much larger agricultural basket rather like a grape hopper.

g). **Problem of apparent chronological discrepancies.** It is clear that the synoptics and John use two different methods of calculating time. For instance Mark uses the Roman system (which calculates a day from morning to morning), whereas John uses the Hebrew system (calculating from evening to evening). This would explain the apparent discrepancy between Mark and John's account of the time of the Last Supper. When John says that an event occurred at 6 o'clock, this could either be taken to mean 06.00 or 18.00 hrs. This would also mean that in John's Gospel the Samaritan lady came to the well at 18.00 hrs, the son of the king's servant was healed at 19.00 hrs and Jesus was led out to be crucified shortly after 06.00 hrs.

i) New Testament References to the Old Testament

In the NT there are further alleged discrepancies when writers or speakers are referring to OT incidents:

I) In Mtth 1,9 Uzziah is referred to as the father of Jotham. Uzziah's other name was Azariah.

II) Is Mtth 2,6 a distortion of Micah 5,2? No, it is two quotes in one (Micah 5,2 + II Sam 5,2). The practice in a conflate was to refer to the more famous of the two authors. There are other examples of combined quotations (Mtth 27,9-10 combines Zech 11,12-13 + Jer 19,2,11 + 32,6-9/Mark 1,2-3 combines Isaiah 40,3 + Malachi 3,1).

III) Mtth 23,34-35 indicates that Zechariah son of Berechiah was the last martyr of the OT period but in II Chron 24,20 he is called son of Jehoiadah the priest, probably after his famous grandfather who had recently died at the age of 130 (II Chron 24,15). Matthew must have had access to documents that named his father. On the other hand, since this Zechariah is referred to in the OT passage as son of Jehoiada, why would Jesus want to change this? It is significant that in the parallel passage in Luke, Zechariah's parentage is not mentioned. It is a strange coincidence that both these Zechariahs should have a father of the same name. It is therefore possible that some well-meaning scribe mistakenly added this word to the text at some stage, although there is no manuscript evidence for this.

IV) In Mk 2,26 it says that David ate the showbread in the days of Abiathar the high priest. This does not mean that he was actually high priest at the time, but was alive. Besides, he became a much better known person than Ahimelek under David's administration.

V) In Acts 7,4 Stephen says that Abraham did not leave Haran until his father Terah had died, but according to Gen 11,32 Terah did not die until he was 205. Since Genesis 11,26 seems to say that Terah was 70 when Abraham was born (whereas in fact he was 130), this would contradict Gen 12,4 which says that Abraham was 75 when he migrated to Canaan. The solution is as follows: Gen 11,26, in accordance with the convention of the day, mentions when the first son (Haran, not Abraham) was born, but then lists Abraham first because he was the most important son.

VI) In Acts 7,14 it says that 75 people went to Egypt with Jacob, whereas the Massoretic text says 70 people, but one figure added the 7 grandsons and subtracted Jacob and his wife.

VII) Acts 7,15-16: Was Jacob buried in Hebron or in Shechem? It is clear that he was buried in Hebron (Gen 50,13). Acts 7,15-16 is really a conflate of two accounts:

- i. Jacob was buried in Hebron (Gen 49,24) and
- ii. Joseph (one of the patriarchs) was buried in Shehem (Josh 24,32)

In Stephen's mind Abraham also bought the cave at Shehem in the person of his descendent Jacob (see a similar idea in Hebrews 7.10 where Levi (as yet unborn) is said to have received a tenth from Melchizedek in the person of his ancestor Abraham).

It is significant that in neither of these two examples did the Jewish leaders challenge the accuracy of Stephen's statements, which indicates that this was acceptable practice at the time.

VIII) In Acts 7,16 Stephen says that Jacob's plot of land had been bought by Abraham.

This is another conflate of two incidents:

- i. Abraham bought the cave at Hebron from the Hittites (Gen 23,16) where Jacob was later buried.

ii. Jacob bought the land at Shehem which he gave to Joseph (Josh 24,32), where Joseph was buried.

IX) In Galatians 3,17 Paul says that Moses received the law only 430 years after the promises made to Abraham. The solution to this seems to be that these promises were repeated to Isaac and to Jacob. Paul is referring to the period from the end of Genesis to the Exodus or 1876-1445 (if we accept the longer dating of this period).

X) Hebrews 11,21 refers to Jacob-Israel (leaning on the head of his staff) whereas Genesis refers to him leaning on the head of his bed. It seems that the MT has misvocalised the word and that it was originally "the head of his staff". LXX also has "staff". It is the difference between *mattah* (staff) and *mittah* (bed)

5. NT Writers Use of Various Translations

The Practice of the NT writers: they were the ones involved in the question of translation: they were writing in Greek but quoting from the OT which was written in Hebrew in its original form. It has been calculated that there are about 300 OT quotations in the NT. It has been said that 10% of the NT text is made up of either OT quotations or allusions.

a) **The various courses open to them:** they could employ existing translations. The only one which we know for certain to have been in existence at the time was the Septuagint. They could make their own translation from Hebrew into Greek. They could make the existing translation the basis of their quotation but give an independent translation of any word or phrase that they felt had been inadequately translated in the Septuagint.

b) **The methods which they employed:** they employed each of the above methods but the most common one was to quote from the Septuagint without modification. The writer who uses the Septuagint most consistently is the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (probably Luke translating for Paul) and the one who uses it the least is Matthew. The Septuagint was the version with which most people would be familiar, so it was natural for this translation to be used.

c) **Free translations and summaries:** there is a problem when the Hebrew and Septuagint texts differ in meaning. Within Judaism there were different types of translation: literal, idiomatic, paraphrastic, midrashic (interpretative). We must remember that translation from Hebrew to Greek was especially difficult because the two languages are very different. Sometimes it was better to make a free translation in order to convey the meaning, especially where figures of speech or colloquialisms were involved. Sometimes the Septuagint summarises the Hebrew and expresses the same idea in far less words, and alters the text considerably in order to express the same thought. Matt 12:21 quotes the Septuagint version of Isaiah 44:2, but the difference is so radical that we cannot find any major word that the two renderings have in common, yet the same sense is there. The MT of Ps 40,6 is 'My ears you have pierced', but this is translated by the LXX as 'A body you have prepared for me' (cf. Hebr. 10,5), the one is a free translation of the other, but preserves and brings out the sense, for when a slave had his ear pierced, it was a symbol of his giving of himself for lifelong service (Ex 21,6). We must remember that the writers of both testaments were inspired, so the writers of the NT were entitled to use renderings which would bring out their point of view to the best advantage. They could do this provided they did justice to the thoughts and ideas of the OT text.

d) **Pesher quotations**: The full term is "*Midrash Pesher*" and it means "interpretative quotation" and is a process by which the interpretation is actually put into the body of the quotation. This was standard procedure in NT times in Jewish circles. For example, Eph 4:8 quotes Ps 68:18 where Paul makes two major changes: he changes "thou" to "he" and changes "took" to "gave". The first change is natural but the second one implies that Christ the great conqueror receives gifts and then bestows them with favour on men. There are some indications that this same method is used by the writers of the Gospels. This is certainly true in their arrangement of material (cf. The different use made by Mt and Lk of the same text: Mt 18,10-14 and Lk 15,3-7). In all this they were of course inspired by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the promise given them by Jesus Himself in Mt 13,52 and Jn 14.

e) **The possible use of a more accurate text**. It is possible that in places the Septuagint is based on a more accurate text than our present masoretic text, it may be that the Septuagint rendering was more accurate. The Dead Sea scrolls show the substantial reliability of the Masoretic text but contain some readings which are closer to the Septuagint.

6. Quotations

a) **The use made of OT quotations**:

I. To show the fulfillment of OT prophecy. Matthew in particular quotes at length from the OT to show how these prophecies were fulfilled in what Jesus did and said.

II. To confirm conformity to a biblical principle. James quotes from Amos 9,11-12 to show that what he is doing is biblical.

III. To appeal to the authority of the OT to justify a practice or action. Jesus shows the pharisees that he is basing his argument squarely on the OT – the same book that they took as their authority. (Mt 22,32; Mk 10,8)

IV. To illustrate a NT truth, in the same way in which we would use a quotation: to sum something up in a nutshell (Rm 10,16 and Is 53,1).

V. To apply an OT principle to a NT situation. Paul brings out the innate meaning of a passage to justify what he is commanding (1 Cor 9,11-12; Dt 25,4).

VI. To bring out typology, often via *midrash pesher*. Sometimes Matthew means by 'fulfilled', filled with a higher meaning' (cf. Mt 2,15-23; 13,14. 35; 27,9): it points to an enlarging or heightening of OT statements to refer to Christ. It is not just a correspondance or analogy, but something deeper.

Thus it can be seen that not all quotations were used to show fulfillment of prophecy, and also that use of the word 'fulfillment' does not quite correspond to ours. We might say: 'it was fitting that', or 'it was appropriate that this was the way it happened' because it says so in the OT...

b) **Our own practice:**

I) The extent to which the NT practice may be normative for us. The use of the Septuagint in NT quotes has no real parallel today, for these quotations from the Septuagint have become part of Scripture for us. The Scripture was still incomplete when the NT writers wrote but they completed it and used these quotations. But their practice was normative for us in that they consistently show a reverence for the OT text; when they make alterations they do so for theological reasons to interpret Christian truth.

II) the primary importance of meaning. A good translation is one which best brings out the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek. Sometimes literal translation does that best, but at other times a free translation will do so better, in order to get across the essential meaning. Translations of the original text are the inspired word of God only in so far as they represent a faithful

translation of an accurate text. This means that criticism of a translation is both legitimate and desirable.

There are basically three types of translation:

- a. Literal (cf. KJV, NASB). It is not divided up into paragraphs.
- b. dynamic equivalent (cf. NIV, NAB + GNB, JB, NEB): these aim to translate words, idioms and grammatical constructions of the original language into precise equivalents of the receptor language. It in effect updates matters of language, grammar and style.
- c. A free translation (Philips or LB): aims to translate the ideas from one language to another, with less concern with using the exact words of the original. It is sometimes called a paraphrase and aims to eliminate as much of the historical distance as possible.

III) The faithful translation of individual passages. Every individual passage of Scripture must be translated faithfully: the translator must aim to convey what the author intended. We should not allow our theology to determine or dominate our translation – we must not come with preconceived ideas which we impose on the text, but must always consider the context etc.

IV) The theological unity of the Bible. If a passage may be equally translated in two different ways, that which accords with the general theology of the writer concerned must be taken. We must aim for consistency, harmony, both within an author and within the Bible as a whole.

7. Critical Attitudes to the Bible

a) **Radical criticism**, like that of Bultmann, is usually based on certain presuppositions: the Bible is like any other writing of antiquity; 'much of it presents the Hebrew world view which is not the core of the message: the core of the message is ideas, not specific words: therefore we are justified in expressing this

core (theological ideas) in terms of the philosophy of our day, not only because our philosophy or scientific view point is correct, but also because otherwise no intelligent person is going to listen to our messages' (an apologetic aim). Two very frequently used philosophies in this respect are: existentialism and evolutionary thought (virtually aristotelianism).

"The Bible is full of things which to an intelligent, educated person of today are either quite incredible or at best highly questionable ... the protracted struggle of theology to defend the inerrancy of the Bible (ie its complete truth) against the findings of astronomy, geology and biology has been a series of retreats ending in a defeat which has led all wise theologians to move to a better position" (Miller Burrows, Yale). Most modern theologians today implicitly accept the critical findings of liberal theology of the 19th century, and then move on from there to try and salvage something.

b) **A correct 'critical' attitude** is one that seeks to get back to the original manuscripts, as these alone are inerrant, but having done that to accept them as his final authority in all matters of faith and practice. It also means that we let the Bible speak for itself and not attempt to filter out what does not agree with the current philosophy or our own preferences. We realise that the Bible is not only a divine book, but also a human book (in that the authors were human) which we must seek to understand through normally accepted linguistic means.

8. Solution to Problems of Text and Manuscript

a. Problems of text – which version has the correct reading – MT or LXX etc?

i) Where MT and other witnesses present the same reading, let it stand.

- ii) Where there is deviation, and both readings seem to be sensible, the MT is to be preferred.
- iii) Where the MT makes nonsense, then consideration should be given to other translations, especially if the reason for the mistake can be discovered.
- iv) Where neither the MT nor other MSS give a satisfactory reading, then emendation can be resorted to.
- v) The character of the scribe should be taken into account: does he normally make one kind of mistake? etc, etc.

b. Problems of manuscript – which manuscript has the best reading?

- i) The older reading is to be preferred over a later one
- ii) The more difficult reading is to be preferred
- iii) The shorter reading is to be preferred
- iv) The reading that best explains all the variants
- v) The reading with the widest geographical support
- vi) The reading that most agrees with context and authorship
- vi) The reading that rejects no doctrinal bias of the copyist.

9. The Biblical Basis for our Doctrine of Scripture

a) **The objection to circularity in argument.** Many object that conservative evangelicals prove the inspiration and authority of Scripture from Scripture itself, and that is a circular argument.

This is a valid objection but this should not be our approach. In the nature of the case, we can only take the sceptic to the point of the highest degree of probability, through pointing to things like fulfilled prophecy, unity of the Bible and the confirmation of personal experience. From then on it is a question of his submission to God who is the author of it.

b) **Regeneration and the doctrine of Scripture**: When we become Christians, we are born again by the Word of God (I Pet 1:23). It is through the new birth that we are brought into a lively recognition of Scripture as divine truth. A Christian has a new quality in his approach towards Scripture as divine truth, even if he held it in esteem before his conversion. A truly Christian mind is one that is receptive to the Word of God (I Thess 2:13). This does not mean that we are given all at once a fully worked out doctrine of Scripture but it does mean that we have an inbuilt bias in favour of Scripture, something which pulls us away from scepticism and unbelief to a position of trust and acceptance. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

c) **The place of faith in theology**: we accept the doctrine of Scripture on the basis of faith in its Author, though evidence is not lacking. Faith is essentially translated into obedience, otherwise it is not biblical faith.

d) **The place of reason in theology**: we can either place too much trust in reason or set it aside as valueless. We need a balance in this: the place of reason is, in the presence of God, to consider the implications of the Word of God, which we receive by faith. This involves meditation, analysis of the text and comparison of the various passages of Scripture.

e) **The Trinitarian basis of our doctrine**: Initially it is the spirit of God who persuades us that Scripture is the Word of God and leads us to accept its author. Calvin called this the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. When we read Scripture, we

find the testimony of the Spirit confirmed by the testimony of the Son. He set His seal on the OT and set in motion a process which led to the NT. Behind both the Holy Spirit and the Son is the Father who sent them into the world to do His work. Acceptance of the authority of Scripture is a spiritual matter, not simply an intellectual one.

f) **Growth in assurance of Biblical authority**: The Christian life is grounded in Scripture and so growth in grace is accompanied by growth in assurance – assurance of the authority and truth of Scripture. As we study the Bible, use it and apply it, we discover how true it is in experience, and that it provides a better basis for life than any human philosophy. All this deepens our assurance that the Bible is true, and God's Word.

E. CANONICITY

1. **Definition**: a canon means a collection of books which are normative for all matters of faith and practice.

A canon is always linked in Scripture with the idea of a covenant. It is the text that defines the terms of the covenant. In the OT the idea of a canon would have been familiar anyone of that period.

2. **The OT Canon** The writings of Josephus show that by the 1st century at least the text of the OT was clearly recognised. Jesus also testifies to this (Mt 23,35 which contains a survey of the martyrs of the OT that runs from Genesis to 2 Chronicles which were the two limits of the Hebrew canon). Rabbinic deliberations at Jamnia (90-100) merely served to confirm these limits of the canon. The Church merely inherited the Jewish canon – it was not involved in its formation.

It would seem that the two great watersheds in the collecting and assembling of material considered to be canonical was carried out at the time of David and Solomon (a period of great

literary output), and at the time of Ezra who was head of the Sanhedrin of the time. However, even before this, it is clear that the Torah was accepted as the inspired Word of God given through Moses, and to be used as a point of reference in all matters of faith and practice (cf. Joshua 1,8): II Kings 23 also refers to a definite collection of books known as the Book of the Law and which formed the basis for a religious reform under Josiah in 621. The next important stage was reached when Ezra arrived at Jerusalem in 458 to take charge of religious affairs. The basis of his reform is also the Torah. When, a few years later, the Samaritans separate themselves from the community and leave, the only book they take with them is the Torah.

According to Irenaeus and, later Elias Levita (1538), it was Ezra who collated the Scriptures and divided them into three sections: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. Around 220 BC the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus refers to the Law and the Prophets and the Rest of the Books. It would seem that the canon closed with the writing of I and II Chronicles by Ezra, which rounds off the OT and looks forward to the NT.

The Hebrew canon consists of three parts: the Law, the Prophets and the (other) Writings. The Law contains basic teaching concerning the faith. The Prophets are about the application of this teaching. The Writings reflect the assimilation of this teaching in the form of wise sayings and worship. Unfortunately, this order (originally established by Ezra) has not been maintained in our Bibles. Whereas the Hebrew order of books was mainly theological, the Greek order (which we have inherited) is arranged according to chronology and literary genre.

The Hebrew order of the OT books was as follows:

i. The LAW (*Torah*)

Genesis (bēreshit)
 Exodus (shēmōt)
 Leviticus (vayikra)
 Numbers (bamidbar)
 Deuteronomy (dēvarim)

ii. The PROPHETS (*Nēvi'im*)

a) The former prophets: (nēviim ha rishonim)
 Joshua (Jēhoshua)
 Judges (shofētim)
 I & II Samuel (shēmuel alef/bet)
 I & II Kings (mēlahim alef/bet)

b) The latter prophets: (nēviim ha aharim)
 Isaiah (Yēshajah)
 Jeremiah (yirmjahu)
 Ezekiel (jēhezkel)

The 12 Minor Prophets (hoshea, joel, amos, ovadja, jona, miha, nahum, havakuk cēfanja, hagai, zēharja, malahi)

iii. The WRITINGS (*Kētuvim*)

Psalms (tēhilim)
 Proverbs (mishle)
 Job (ijov)

The Scrolls

Song of Songs (shir ha shirim)
 Ruth (rut)
 Lamentations (ejha)
 Ecclesiastes (kohelet)
 Esther (ester)

Daniel (Danijel)

Ezra-Nehemiah (ezra/nehemja)

I & II Chronicles (divre ha jamim alef/bet)

3. The NT canon The NT canon was probably established by the apostles themselves: John, as the only surviving apostle, and his helpers, must have inherited the Scriptures after the deaths of Peter and Paul in Rome. In this sense, John is the NT equivalent of Ezra, in that he wrote the last books in the canon and closed it. This can be seen in the original order of NT books which is typically Jewish. This order is preserved in the Orthodox Church. Of the authors, two were brothers of Jesus (and therefore of David's line): James and Jude. John was of the priestly tribe of Aaron and Peter was from the tribe of Simeon. Paul came from the least important tribe: Benjamin. This is precisely the order in which we find the writings after the Four Gospels and Acts: James, Peter, John, Jude and Paul. This early canonization by the apostle John is confirmed by the fact that both Clement (100), Ignatius (120) and Papias (100-150) confirm that there was a definite canon of Scripture.

FOUR GOSPELS + ACTS (the NT Pentateuch):

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts (= Luke part 2)

7 GENERAL EPISTLES

James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude

14 EPISTLES OF PAUL

Romans, 1 + II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 + II Thessalonians, 1 + II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews

1 APOCALYPSE

Revelation

The Christian Torah (4 Gospels + Acts) now occupied a pivotal position between 22 books (according to the Jewish division) of the OT and the 22 books of the NT which followed the 4 Gospels + Acts. This makes a total of 49 sacred books (7 x 7).

The break with Judaism and things Jewish at the end of the first century, resulted in ignorance of Semitic languages and a forgetting of the OT canonical list which had been an oral tradition. The order of books was rearranged according to principles that were at variance with original Jewish ones, and a general doubt about the precise limits of the OT canon began. An additional factor was the popularity of the LXX in the Early Church which also contained the apocrypha

Most of the NT books were quoted by the post-apostolic fathers as authoritative and therefore canonical. The first lists of NT books appear in the second half of the second century. This was the result of a necessity to clarify the limits of the canon in the face of challenges from Marcion (who wanted to truncate it) and Montanus and the gnostics (who wanted to add to it). For the next two centuries discussion centred round a few disputed books. Certain elements in the Church were uncertain as to whether the authors were apostles or not (Hebrews, 2 Peter and Revelation). What was lacking was absolute unanimity: most believed that these were canonical, but some did not. Discussion ceased in the East in 367 and in the West in 397 with recognition of the books that we now have in our canon. Jerome's translation (the Latin Vulgate), which appeared about the same time as the two church councils which terminated discussion on the canon, is an important witness to the canon, as it contains the same number of books as we have in our Bibles today.

It was not this discussion that established the NT canon (no more than the council of Jamnia established the OT canon), for that had previously been decided by the apostles (especially

John in Ephesus). In both cases, the discussion was unnecessary and even culpable and reflected to what extent the Church had left its Jewish moorings.

4. Tests of canonicity There were three basic tests applied to each book:

a) **Authorship**: the author had to have been a prophet (a man with a gift which enabled him to receive messages from God and proclaim them or write them down). This gift had to be authenticated by the fulfillment of at least one of his prophecies.

b) **The content**: this had to agree with the teachings of the rest of Scripture, especially the Law.

c) **Self-authentication**: this can be determined by the way in which the texts were used liturgically in the Temple and synagogue services. Only canonical Scripture could be read in public. This admittedly was more of a confirmation for us than a test which the Jews themselves applied.

In the Early Church period the following tests to the NT were applied:

I) The author had to have been either an apostle or someone closely connected with the apostolic circle who was virtually editing the work of an apostle, such as Mark and Luke)

II) The majority of churches had always recognised these Scriptures as the Word of God.

5. The Apocrypha. The word means 'hidden' books because they were not read in public in the synagogue. Only canonical books could be read in public. However, the books of the Apocrypha could be used for private study and edification.

The term covers:

i) certain additions to the canonical books as they appear in the Septuagint (Greek translation)

ii) certain additional books included in the Septuagint translation: 1 + 2 Esdras (added by Christians), Tobit, Judith, Baruch, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom of Solomon, 1 + 2 Maccabees.

Most of these books were translated in Alexandria at the same time as the Septuagint and published under the same cover. This, however, does not prove that they were considered to be part of any canon. The Catholic hypothesis of an Alexandrine canon which included the Apocrypha has no historical basis. The only Jewish canon that is known is the Palestinian Canon, which Jesus endorsed.

No Jewish version of the Septuagint has ever been found, which is not surprising as the translation was outlawed at the council of Jamnia. Each (Christian) edition of the Septuagint has a different set of apocryphal books.

When Alexandrian Jews adopted Aquila's Greek version (as a replacement for the Septuagint), it excluded all apocryphal books.

Philo who lived in Egypt from 20BC -50AD never quotes from any apocryphal books, though often from canonical ones.

The attitude of the Orthodox church has been ambiguous in regard to the apocrypha. In 1672 at the Synod of Jerusalem several apocryphal books were pronounced canonical, but in the 19th century Russian orthodox theologians agreed to exclude them from the Bible. Within the Serbian Orthodox church there is disagreement: the older generation favours the Palestinian canon whereas the younger generation wishes to include the apocrypha.

It is important to realise that the term apocrypha refers to the OT. Attempts were made to add certain books to the NT but these were called the Pseudoepigrapha and were rejected by the church from the start as heretical.

What must be decisive in our acceptance or rejection of the Apocrypha are the following considerations:

a) The Palestinian canon reflected the opinion of the centre of Jewish orthodoxy – the Jews of Palestine never included the apocryphal books in their canon,

b) The view of Jesus himself, who not only accepted the limits of the Palestinian canon but never quoted from the Apocrypha,

c) The attitude of the Early Church as recorded in the NT documents, where there is no quotation from the Apocrypha.

6. Evolution of the (mistaken) acceptance of the apocrypha as a second canon:

Firstly we have to understand that the Catholic church calls the apocrypha the deuterocanonical books, but the pseudoepigrapha the apocrypha!

The Third Council of Carthage in 387 placed OT and Apocryphal books on the same level. A further Council of Carthage in 418 asked Boniface of Rome to ratify this decision.

Pope Gelasius issued a list in which he included the OT Apocrypha, but at this time division still existed between Jerome's canon and Augustine's (larger) canon.

Pope Eugenius IV at the Council of Florence in 1445 declared all books in the Latin Bible (to which the Church had added the Apocrypha) to be inspired. The Council of Trent confirmed this by issuing an anathema against all who disagreed with this. Luther placed the Apocrypha in a separate section between the OT and NT, classifying the apocrypha as edifying, but not canonical. The Reformed Church omitted the apocrypha altogether and rejected any idea that it might even be useful for private edification.

The First Vatican Council confirmed the decision of the Council of Trent and canonised tradition.

The Bible Societies omitted the apocrypha in their 1825 missionary edition of the Bible, saying that the heathen should only read inspired Scripture.

F. TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. The Hebrew Text of the Old Testament

According to Jewish tradition, it was Ezra who not only did the final editing of the Old Testament and closed the canon, but he was also responsible for the establishing of a normative

Hebrew text of the Old Testament. This text is today called the Masoretic text and was handed down from the time of Ezra by a series of scribes who were the copiers and guardians of the text. These scribes were respectively: The *Soferim* (class of scribes of which Ezra himself was the leader) from the 5th-3rd century BC. Then came *Zugot* (2nd-1st century BC). Then the *Tannaim* until the 3rd century AD. (From 200-500 the same scribes edited the Talmud, containing the tradition of the elders and a commentary on the biblical text). The text handed down since the days of the first scribes was without vowels. The vowels had been handed down by oral tradition only. It was the work of the *Masorets* (500-900 AD) to put the vowels into the text by a system of dots and dashes written above and below the line, basing themselves on the oral tradition (*masora*). They worked at Tiberias and in Babylon. However, the correct vowels were not put in the divine name YHVH but instead the vowels of the word Ėdonai (Lord), ĖOA. When the reader came to the divine name, the false vocalisation warned him that he had to say Ėdonai instead of Yahweh. As the word appeared in the text, it had the consonants of YHVH and the vowels of Ėdonai (ĖOH) which if read, produced an artificial word YĖHoVaH (which, of course, was never pronounced).

Before the time of Jesus, the Masoretic text was not the only one that was circulating. There were two other Hebrew texts: the Hebrew text on which the Septuagint translation had been based, and the Samaritan Pentateuch (*Tora*). Where the Masoretic text is obscure and does not seem to make sense, the other two texts (as well as ancient translations) usually provide an acceptable solution between them. At the Council of Jamnia (AD 90) the Masoretic text was reaffirmed to be the only accepted Hebrew text and all other Hebrew texts were outlawed, as was the Septuagint which the Christians kept using to support their claims. Accordingly other Greek translations were made to correspond to the demands of the rabbis.

2. The Hebrew Manuscripts of the Old Testament

According to one theory, distinct varieties of text developed in three centres of Jewish learning during the inter-testamental period: Palestine, Babylon and Egypt. The Septuagint is seen as a witness to the Egyptian text type.

a) The oldest textual fragment of the Old Testament is the priestly benediction of Numbers 6,24-26. This has been dated from the late period of the Judaeen monarchy, around the middle of the 7th century BC. It was found, together with other artifacts, in a cave overlooking the valley of Hinnom, just outside the walls of Jerusalem.

b) The next oldest text of a complete book to have been found is the Qumrân scroll of Samuel, dated in the 3rd century BC. It is closest to the Masoretic text.

c) Next comes the Qumran Isaiah scroll which goes back to 100-150 BC. It is also close to the Masoretic text.

d) The Nash papyrus, dated 2nd century BC, containing the 10 commandments and the Jewish creed (the Shēma – Hear, O Israel ...). It differs slightly from the Massoretic text and is closer to the text on which the Septuagint translation is based.

e) The Geniza of Cairo. The Geniza was a storeroom in the synagogue where old MSS were left to rot, as man was not allowed to destroy them. Among the MSS found are some pieces of the Old Testament text dated 5th century AD.

f) The Cairo Codex (prophetic texts) dated end of 9th century. Aleppo Codex (now in Jerusalem). The Leningrad Codex, dated 1008, which is by far the most complete and is

used as a basis for most Hebrew texts of the Old Testament. These belonged to the family of Ben Asher.

g) Codex Reuchlinianus now kept at Karlsruhe. It is amongst several MSS belonging to the Ben Naphtali family.

h) The oldest copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch only goes back to the 13th century AD.

3. Translations of the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament

Within judaism there were different types of translation: literal, idiomatic, paraphrastic, midrashic, but also in various other languages.

a) **Greek translations**

- i) The Septuagint, translated 250-150 BC
- ii) The Aquila version 130-140 AD
- iii) The Symmachus version 170 AD
- iv) Theodotian version 200 AD
- v) The Hexaplas 240-245 AD prepared by Origen for Jewish controversy.

b) **Aramaic translations** These are called the Targums (*targumim* = translations) and were paraphrases of the synagogue readings, so that the Aramaic speaking Jews in Babylonia could understand the sense.

c) **Syriac translations** Syriac is a Western form of aramaic associated with the Christian church in Syria. The Peshitta (the simple) was a word for word translation and not a paraphrase (hence the name). Probably translated so that Jewish converts in the Adiabene of the 1st century AD could read the Hebrew Scriptures.

d) **Latin translations**

- i) The first one was based on the Septuagint.

ii) The Vulgate was based on the original Hebrew text (completed between 390-405 by Jerome). From the 7th century AD onwards it was accepted as the official Latin version and called the Vulgate (meaning: that which has been distributed everywhere).

G. THE LANGUAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

a) The Old Testament is written in Hebrew and Aramaic. However, the use of Aramaic is limited to Ezra 4:6-8 and 7:12-26, Daniel 2:4b-7:28. There is also a verse in Jeremiah (10:11) and two words in Genesis 31:47.

b) Hebrew belongs to the family of semitic language which is divided into 3 groups:

i) North Semitic: Akkadian (=Assyro-Babylonian) = North-East Semitic. Assyrian, Babylonian, Chaldean.

ii) South Semitic. This grouping includes Southern Arabic (South East Semitic) and Ethiopic languages (African Semitic)

iii) South-West Semitic includes classical Arabic and modern colloquial Arabic.

c) Northern Semitic writing existed well before the time of Moses. We have records going back to the Hyksos period (1700 BC). Moses had a knowledge of Egyptian language and literature. He must also have had a knowledge of Akkadian cuneiform writing which was used in Egypt from 15th century onwards. It is also well known that people similar to the Hebrews had a sophisticated knowledge of writing as far back as 3000 BC.

5. The Structure of the Languages of the Old Testament

a) Hebrew has a number of peculiarities

i) no indefinite article. Definite article ha-. eg. haAdam = the man

ii) -et added to a word to indicate its position as object in the sentence: ani roeh et-ha-adam = I see the man

iii) repetition of the-et at the end of adjectives coming after the noun *ani roeh et-ha-adam et-ha-tov* = I see the man the good (one)

iv) construct case used to indicate genitive. Benot means sons. Bërit means covenant. The sons of the covenant is *bënë bërit*. The vowels of the word benot are shortened to "*bënë*" to show that they are in the construct case.

The relationship between *bënë* and *bërit* is similar to that found in Hungarian. Compare Hebrew "sons of the covenant" (*bënë bërit*) with Hungarian "the dilemma of man" (az ember dilemmája).

v) The paucity of conjunctions and adjectives. Many Hebrew sentences begin with the word "and" (vav), which can be translated in a variety of ways. One result of this is that it is sometimes difficult to follow a Hebrew argument. Paucity of adjectives is seen in such expressions as "a man of God" (= a godly man), or "the mountain of my holiness" (= my holy mountain).

vi) The verb has modes and not strictly tenses: perfect and imperfect (denoting completed and incomplete action respectively). Compare perfective and imperfective aspects in slavonic languages. However, in modern Hebrew (as spoken in Israel) the perfective has become the past and the imperfective

the future tense. Perfective and imperfective are each declined through 7 modes as follows: -

simple active (qal) qatal/yiktol
 simple passive (niphal) niktal/yikatel
 intensive active (piel) qitelyëkatel
 intensive passive (pual) qutal/yëkutel
 causative active (hiphil) hiktil/yaktil
 causative passive (hophal) hoqtal/yoktal
 reflexive (hithpael) hitkatel/yitkatel

All of the above are in the 3rd person masculine. They are declined through all persons; masculine and feminine. Perfective shows this as a suffix whereas imperfective shows this as a prefix (hence: qatalnu = "we have killed" whereas niktol = "we will, may, were kill(ing)" all based on the word for we = anahnu). The meanings of the seven themes are as follows: (in the perfective) : -

simple active = he killed
 simple passive = he was killed
 intensive active = he pursued (intensive of followed)
 intensive passive = he was pursued
 causative active = he sanctified (caused to be holy)
 causative passive = he was sanctified (was caused to be holy)
 reflexive = he showed himself revengeful/they looked at each other/he pretended to be a wise man

The present tense uses the present participle as an adjective:

ani kotel
 anahnu kotelim
 anahnu kotelot

b) Aramaic has the following peculiarities: -

i) definite article in -a (suffix). Hence Magdala (hebr. ha-migdol) = the tower, Golgota (hebr. ha-gulgolet) = the skull, Gabbata (hebr. ha-gaba) = the elevated place, abba (hebr. ha-av) = father

ii) genitive indicated by "di".

iii) tendency to vocalise non-vocal sheva. Hence Kafar-Nahum instead of Kēfar-Nahum. Bar Tolomai instead of Ben-Tolmai = Bartholemew.

The particular aramaic dialect that was spoken in Galilee at the time of Christ had additional characteristics. The letter H tended to be dropped: hence Kafarnaum instead of Kfar-Nahum, Eloī instead of Elohi. The letter Sh was written as S: hence Simon instead of Shimon, Siloam instead of Shiloah, Iskariot instead of Ishkeriot. Even in the Old Testament we find this difference. In wars between Judah and Israel, the password that the Southerners issued was Shibolet because the Northerners could not say it: they said Sibbolet instead and so gave themselves away. Another characteristic was that the letter C became reduced to S: Sion instead of Cion, Bet-Saida instead of Bet-Caida.

H. TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The Greek Text of the New Testament

It seems likely that sections of the New Testament circulated independently of each other for some time, in order to meet the various needs of the church. Then they were collected together and copied at several central points. These were probably Antioch, Alexandria, Caesarea and Rome, (and, later, Constantinople) though not excluding other towns, but more especially those where there was known to be scholarly activity like Bible Schools etc. This would seem to be indicated by the

fact that there are clearly certain families of texts – different groups of texts which have certain things in common. These groupings are as follows:

a) **The Byzantine text** dates from the time when Constantine became emperor in Constantinople in 313. It is probable that he encouraged the church to establish a standard NT text and it was this which became the official text of what is now the Orthodox Church. It is significant that John Chrysostom (347-407), patriarch of Constantinople, is the first church father to refer to it. The men who worked under Constantine's direction unfortunately saw fit not only to make changes in the text, but also to add to it in the interests of harmonisation, and very occasionally, in the interests of the defence of orthodoxy. Being a later text, it has also accumulated certain copyist mistakes. It was brought to the West from Byzantium where it became known as the Greek *Textus Receptus* when produced by Erasmus.

The first edition of this text, which was to serve as a base for all subsequent editions until 1831, was based on late medieval MSS of inferior quality. Three arguments can be levelled against the Byzantine text type:

1) It is full of conflate readings (that is, combinations of earlier readings).

2) Readings peculiar to this text type are never found in the Anti-Nicene fathers, neither East nor West. This is not to deny that readings of this text-type are found in the ante-Nicene period, but almost all these readings are also found in other text-types (mostly Western).

3) Comparison with other texts reveals that these readings are not original. Most of them have been added by well-meaning scribes as they sought to produce a normative text in Constantinople, under the direction of the emperor. Thus we have to conclude that the text of earlier manuscripts have been modified and even added to. The Church (which later became the Orthodox Church) had no right to do this.

Modern UBS Greek text differs from TR in 56 instances (e.g. John 1,34 comp. Is 42,1. Chosen One (i.e. Servant) fits better than Son of God. This was probably changed by an Orthodox scribe, to try and forestall an adoptionist interpretation. Another example of this process, is Revelation 21,24 to which the *Textus Receptus* has added: the nations (of those that are saved). This addition, which changes the entire meaning of chapters 21 and 22, was no doubt inserted by some scribe who wished to combat a millennialist interpretation, and yet, in so doing, he contradicts the prophecies of the Old Testament which are extensively quoted in these two passages, and which, in their OT context, can only refer to the millenium.

In view of the above considerations it is hard to understand how the compilers of the NKJ (New King James Bible) can claim that the Byzantine text is „as good as any of the others“ (so why not use it?). This is simply not true. It has also been objected (by the compilers of the NKJ Bible) that there is no proof for the above assertions re. Constantine, but someone must have modified (i.e. harmonized) the text and who else would have dared to do this unless it was scribes acting under Constantine's orders? It is also significant John Chrysostom (347-407), patriarch of Constantinople, is the first church father to refer to this text.

b) **The Roman (Western) Text** was at one time the standard text of the Church in Rome. It is characterised by aramaisms and has a tendency to expansion. It is represented by the following manuscripts: D, old Latin translations (about 150) and quotations found in the work of early North African Church Fathers (Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine). The Old Antiochene Text has affinities with the Western text and lies behind the Old Syriac Version which itself dates back to about 150.

c) **The Alexandrine text** is relatively free of changes or additions. It is a well edited text probably based on a 2nd

century original. It is possible that both the Western and Alexandrine texts are revisions of an original dating from the first century. The text is represented by Alef, B, C, Coptic translations and is quoted by Alexandrian Church Fathers such as Origen, Athanasius and Cyril.

The Caesarean text is similar to it (represented by W and Q, old Armenian and Georgian translations).

All the manuscripts are written in what is basically koiné Greek but often with heavy semitic undertones, which is not surprising, as the authors were all Jews. They are not easy to read, as they have no punctuation and no paragraphs. Some are written in capital letters (the oldest ones) known as "uncials" and some written in small letters. Some are written on papyrus (the older ones) and some on parchment (i.e. sheep skins). The Papyri (most of which come from the 3rd century AD) only contain fragments of the total text. There are 75 of them, referred to as P1, P2 etc. The parchments (most of which come from the 4th century AD) usually contain complete texts of the New Testament. Manuscripts written in capitals (uncials) number 242 and are referred to by capital letters. Manuscripts written in small script number 2,570 and are referred to by numbers. Although they are much later (dated from the 9th century onwards), they are useful as they are often based on earlier copies written in capitals.

We have a total of more than 5,000 New Testament manuscripts, representing whole texts or part of the text. This means that the New Testament is the best attested text of the Mediterranean area. The earliest fragments of text go back to 50 AD (fragment of Mark 6,52-53 found at Qumrân), and 125 AD (John 18,31-33, 37). Carsten Peter Thiede in his book (*The Dead Sea scrolls and the Jewish origins of Christianity*) claims that pieces of manuscript of nearly all NT books have been found mixed in with the Dead Sea Scrolls) which dates them prior to AD 70 when the Qumran monastery was destroyed by

the Romans. Complete New Testament manuscripts go back to the 4th century AD (Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus), 5th century AD (Codex Alexandrinus) and 6th century (Codex Bezae). In comparison, *De Bello Gallico* by Caesar was written in about 50 BC but the earliest manuscript we have dates from the 8th century AD. The earliest manuscripts of *The Annals* by Tacitus (55-120 AD) date from 9th to 11th century AD.

2. The Greek Manuscripts of the New Testament

a) **Vaticanus** (designated by the letter B), kept in the Vatican library. Dates from the 4th century.

b) **Sinaiticus** (designated by Aleph), discovered in the Sinai monastery in the 19th century, and sold by the Soviet Government (desperate for money) to the British Museum. Dates from 4th century.

c) **Alexandrinus** (designated by letter A) brought from Alexandria to England in the 17th century by Cyril Lucaris and kept in the British Museum. Dates from 5th century.

d) **Codex Ephraem** (designated by a capital C). It is a palimpsest: that is a parchment on which the original text has been rubbed out and something else written on top of it. Fortunately it is possible to reconstruct what was rubbed out (erased) (the New Testament text). It is kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

e) **Codex Bezae** used to belong to Beza (friend of Calvin) who offered it to the library of Cambridge University (where he lectured) where it is now kept. It contains a parallel text in Greek and Latin of the Four Gospels and Acts.

f) **Codex Claromontanus** was discovered at Clermont (hence the Latin name). It only contains the Epistles and is kept

in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris. It previously belonged to Beza.

3. Translations of the Greek Text

These are a second group of documents of great interest to us because they are mostly based on Greek Texts that are older than the ones we have.

a) **The Latin translations.** There is of course the Vulgate, but we possess some 44 other Latin translations which are older. These are called *Vetus Itala*.

b) **Syriac translations** are of interest to us not only because they are very old but also because they are in a language very close to the Aramaic which Jesus spoke. The Peshitta is the most well-known Syriac translation and dates from the 5th century but there are two older ones known respectively as *Syra Sinaitica* and *Syra Cureton*.

c) **Coptic translations** of which certain ones have only recently been discovered. Coptic was the language which Egyptian Christians spoke.

4. Hebrew manuscripts of the New Testament

These are probably the original manuscripts of at least three NT books on which the Greek translation was based but which survived in Jewish circles. These are the Gospel of Matthew (Crawford and Shem Tov), Hebrews and the Book of Revelation. These variants have survived in the text of the Hebrew New Testament. According to Clement of Alexandria, it was Luke who translated Paul's Hebrew text of Hebrews into Greek, in order to make it accessible to a wider (Gentile) audience, which accounts for the very polished style which was uncharacteristic of rabbi Paul.

I. STRUCTURE OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Koiné Greek is the language of the New Testament. It evolved from Classical Greek as follows: Classical Greek was the Attic dialect of Greek. Koiné Greek, which was a blend of all dialects, became the common dialect of Alexander the Great's empire.

By the time of the New Testament, most of those who spoke Greek were not Greeks, so they tended to go in for simple forms. Therefore we find:

- a) Tonic accent became a stress accent, so words became shortened.
- b) There was a tendency towards a weakening of meaning. Fine distinctions become blurred. cf. *agapao* and *phileo*.
- c) Compound verbs replace simple ones.
- d) Partly synonymous words confused: *phileo/agapao*, *kalos/agathos*
- e) Personal pronouns inserted with verbs: Prepositions appear whereas previously the case endings sufficed.
- f) Complicated tenses eliminated.

A further element in the New Testament writings was the semitic colouring, more apparent in some books than in others. Many seemingly clumsy expressions may be attributed to literal translations from the Hebrew or Aramaic.

J. INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE (HERMENEUTICS)

Introduction: This was an important question even within the pages of the NT. Both Jesus and Paul argued with Jews over the correct interpretation of the OT.

Jesus gave his disciples an interpretation of Scripture which is authoritative.

1. The rôle of the Holy Spirit: As He is himself the author of Scripture, it follows that only those in whom He dwells can interpret the Scriptures correctly. There is therefore the prior need of regeneration. Not only does He minister to believers on an individual basis but through the ministry of the Word in the Church. It follows from this that the Scriptures explain themselves (one passage explains another) as here is uniformity of inspiration in Scripture.

2. Importance of the obedience of the believer. The second prerequisite is that the expositor himself should be in continued fellowship with God. God only reveals more of himself to those who are submitted to Him.

3. Principles of interpretation. We are entitled to use principles of analysis that we would use with any other text.

- a. The literary genre should be respected.
- b. Figures of speech should be respected. A knowledge of the most common types of figures of speech used in the Bible is most useful: eg. hyperbole, parable, allegory, typology.
- c. A knowledge of Hebrew thought forms (semitisms) is most useful.
- d. A knowledge of the whole Bible is indispensable. Often, for instance, a passage in the NT cannot be understood without a knowledge of the OT.

e. We must come to the Bible on its own terms and not attempt to interpret it according to a philosophy that is alien to it.

f. We must understand the relationship between the OT and NT. We have to take both into account, rather than one at the expense of the other. NT concepts are based on those of the OT, but are developed, under inspiration, by the authors of the NT. There can never be a contradiction of the two, because the same Spirit has inspired both of them.

DETAIL

There are basically two ways to expound a text:

- 1). What did it communicate to the original readers?
- 2). How can I apply it effectively?

1) to give a **grammatico-historical** interpretation (which tries to determine what the passage meant for its first readers). A text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its authors or its readers (cf. 1 Cor 13,10). "But when what is perfect comes, then what is partial will disappear". To the first readers of the epistle, "the perfect" meant seeing Christ face to face in heaven, rather than the completion of the canon of Scripture. This is also true of the Gospels and Epistles. What Jesus said was primarily addressed to the Jews of his day and what Paul said was primarily addressed either to converted Jews or to those who had been converted from a synagogue background. Dispensationalism can help us in this area but it can be taken to an extreme.

2) to give a **theological** interpretation (what the passage means for us today). Whenever we share comparable life-situations with first century Christians, God's word to us is the same as it was to them (cf. Col 3,12). It is also necessary to extract principles from passages that do not exactly correspond, but these must be applied to genuinely comparable situations.

We have to distinguish between inherently moral matters which are binding on us, and matters that are not inherently moral, like footwashing, exchanging a holy kiss, eating food that had been sacrificed to idols, a woman having her head covering when praying or prophesying, Paul's personal preference for celibacy.

A balanced exegesis will use both approaches to the text. But whichever one is used at any given time, the following lines of approach must be respected:

a) There is an importance in the **use of various words, phrases and expressions**. Every valid exegesis must be based on an analysis of the text. One must take account, for instance, of the history of words in relation to Hebrew thought. The fact that the New Testament is written in Greek does not mean that the thought is not still Hebrew. Therefore, to give a valid exegesis of the New Testament, a knowledge of the Old Testament is absolutely necessary, and a knowledge of Hebrew is very helpful. A knowledge of Greek is less necessary than a knowledge of the Old Testament in order to interpret the New Testament, since the thought forms and allusions are Hebrew anyway.

b) **Figurative or literal interpretation?:** what are the guidelines? This is a particular problem with poetry.

I. Always take a passage in its literal sense unless there is good reason for doing otherwise.

II. The figurative sense is probably intended if the literal would involve an impossibility (cf. Jer 1,18; Rev 1,16; Ps 57,1; Micah 1,2). "He held 7 stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came out of his mouth".

III. The figurative sense is probably intended if a literal interpretation gives a manifest absurdity (Isaiah 55,12). "The mountains and hills will burst into singing, and the trees will shout for joy."

IV. Take the figurative sense if the literal would demand an immoral action, like cannibalism (John 6,53-58). "Eating his body and drinking his blood" (unfortunately Catholics take this literally!)

V. Note whether a figurative expression is followed by an explanatory literal statement (1 Thess 4.13-15; Eph 2,1). "Those who have fallen asleep" (i.e. have died). "Those who are (spiritually) dead"

VI. Sometimes a figure is marked by a qualifying adjective (Mt 6,14; Jn 6,32). "What Moses gave you was not the bread from heaven = heavenly bread (i.e. eternal life); it is my Father who gives you the real bread from heaven."

c) **Symbolical or not symbolical?** A symbol is an object (real or imagined) or action which is assigned a meaning. It is timeless, unlike a type (Adam, the Tabernacle) which points forward in time. Here are some examples: Babylon, the Woman, the Bride, the Great Prostitute, the Two Beasts. There are also symbolic actions like Baptism, the Lord's Supper, foot-washing.

Certain numbers are both literal and symbolic (the numbers 7, 40, 144,000 etc).

Certain names can also be symbolic (Mt Sinai, Jerusalem), but the Bible tells us when this is so.

Certain colours are symbolic (e.g. white or purple). In the tabernacle we find rich symbolism. The most holy place was decorated with gold, purple and blue furnishings because these were the marks of royalty and divinity: it was the throne room of Israel's divine king. Also, red (wine) symbolised blood.

White symbolised victory and purity.

d) **The necessity to take account of the context.** In fact, the meaning of words is often determined by their context. This means that the meaning of words is determined by other words in the same sentence and that the meaning of the sentence is determined by other sentences before and after. There has been

much abuse in this realm. One cannot, for instance, use the text of Colossians 2,21 (Do not taste!...) in order to preach a sermon on temperance. The watch-tower in Genesis 31,49 does not speak of consoling protection but of a threat to would-be covenant breakers.

Sometimes preachers will treat a theme which is biblical but use inappropriate verses to support it. "What you are saying true, but this is probably not what those particular verses mean..."

e) **The necessity of taking into account various literary devices:**

The Bible is a **divine** book, which means that we must acknowledge its inerrancy, authority, unity and mystery (e.g. prophecy, miracles, doctrines logically difficult to understand). These subjects are dealt with under the doctrine of inspiration.

The Bible is also a human book: We need to realise that the Bible is both a human, but also a divine book. Since it is a **human** book, we need to bear the following important principles in mind:

1. What did the words convey in the grammar of the original readers?
2. What was being conveyed by those words to the original readers?
3. How did the cultural setting influence and affect what was written?
4. What is the meaning of the words in their context?
5. In which literary form is the material written and how does that affect what was said?
6. How do the principles of logic and normal communication affect the meaning?

I. Concentration of style: In Genesis 5 and 10 (10 persons before and 10 after the Flood) and also in Mt 1 (14 x 14 x 14) we find selective genealogies. The problem is that we are

ignorant of the criteria used in compiling such a genealogy. We have to ask ourselves: what is the author trying to convey?

The NT writers, all of whom were probably Jews, are fond of biblical shorthand that is based on presumed detailed knowledge of the OT. For instance, John 3,16: "For God so loved the world that he gave (as a sacrifice for sin) His only begotten Son (the Son who is the object of His affection), so that..."

Paul refers to Christ as "our righteousness" by which he means that Christ is the basis of our right relationship with God.

In fact much of Paul's writing (under the influence of Hebrew) is a sort of shorthand. To some extent we can talk about a compressed text that needs to be decompressed in order to be properly understood. In the Gospel of Matthew, the expression "righteousness" is shorthand for "the saving plan of God (Mt 3,15) and for "the covenantal obligations of his people" (Mt 5,20; 6,1).

II. Repetition: there is a great deal of repetition particularly in the older books like Genesis. Sometimes this is to emphasise a point but sometimes it just reflects the style of the ancients. It is also useful to know something of the basic rules of Hebrew poetry. For instance, normally the second line of a verse repeats or reinforces the first line.

Ps. 19,1: The heavens tell out the glory of God: heaven's vault makes known his handywork

If we find in our translation that two lines of the same verse contradict each other, the chances are that we are on the wrong track (Amos 6,12). Do horses gallop on rocks? (of course not). Does anyone plough with oxen? (should be: Does anyone plough the sea?) – Of course not.

III. Figures of speech also need to be taken into account.

However, most modern translations do just this and paraphrase them, otherwise they sound very quaint and stilted.

i) Irony: this is a method of ridicule which consists of saying the opposite of what is intended (1Ki 18,27; 22,15; Mk 7,9; 1 Cor 4,8-10; 2 Cor 11,19).

ii) Litotes: this is an ironical understatement which is very frequent in Luke's writings. (Acts 12,18; 15,2; 19,24; 21,39). We are told that Tarsus was "no mean city". There was "no small uproar" because of the Way.

iii) Hyperbole: this is an exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally. The Hebrew language is very fond of using this literary device. It is often not realised how many of the Proverbs and some verses in the Psalms are framed in the form of a hyperbole. We read of God "loving Jacob and hating Esau" in the Old Testament and in the New Testament of "loving God and hating one's parents." We are told that people of "every language and every tongue" worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnessar erected. What is meant is everyone in his empire, not everyone in the wide world including Incas and Aztecs. We need to read descriptions in Revelation about the Beast's empire in this light as well. It is clearly a European Empire and not a world-wide one (Job 19,3; 2 Sam 1,23; Mt 13,32; Lk 14,26). Other examples of hyperbole are: "a land flowing with milk and honey" and "a city with walls that reached up to heaven".

Another form of hyperbole is the apparent refusal to recognise secondary causes. We are told that God did this or that God did that. We would tend to distinguish secondary causes: although the decision was ultimately God's, yet He used various agencies to achieve this end: natural agencies like wind and fire, supernatural agencies like angels, and human agents.

Yet another form of hyperbole is the Hebrew tendency to say not this but that, whereas what is meant is not *only* this but *also* that. In Ezekiel 18, the prophet appears to be negating a principle of corporate responsibility that is clearly taught elsewhere, but his emphasis is by way of a corrective to people

using this principle as a cop-out from personal responsibility. As a people Israel may be (by nature) rebellious and idolatrous, but as individuals they can be appealed to and, through their repentance, can be saved. Paul says in the NT that he was not sent to baptise, but what he means is that he was not sent primarily to baptise or he was not sent only to baptise. To deny baptism would clearly be disobedience to the Lord's command in Matthew 28 to make disciples and baptise them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

iv) Metonymy: means a part (attribute) that stands for the whole. Examples of this include:

body ... bones: both can stand by metonymy for the man as a whole, i.e. 'me ... I'.

My soul or my spirit means 'me ... I'.

v) Comparison and Metaphor means the application of a descriptive term to an object or action which is not literally applicable. In Hebrew, the word *mashal* has a wide meaning:

mashal: to propose or use a proverb, a parable – to be comparable like, similar, to speak in parables. Hiph. to compare, liken. Hith. to become like.

mashal: comparison, similitude, parable, proverb, saying, satire, by-word.

This applies chiefly to **allegories and parables**. In such cases, one must decide what the point of comparison is and not insist unnecessarily on the figure of speech. Often the clue is given in the context in which the parable is told. One can only use a comparison within the limits imposed by the Bible itself. One must not, for example, suppose that all parables are necessarily allegories. This is the classic mistake of Augustine's exposition of the parable of the good Samaritan: 'Adam is the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, the Samaritan is Christ, the inn is the Church, the innkeeper is Paul, etc, etc'. In a parable we must ask ourselves what the central point of comparison is. What is the author driving at with a view to

some sort of response from his audience? The essence of parable is that I must be able to identify myself with one of the characters in it, and then act upon the truth learned.

This does not however mean that no parable is an allegory. The parables of the sower, the Good Shepherd, and the Vine are all striking examples of the use of allegory and were expounded as such by Jesus himself. But we do not have the right to go beyond Jesus' own interpretation.

So what are we to make of the Song of Songs? A few general remarks: **The Song of Songs** also shows how God's creation can be enjoyed by all those who know Him. What God has created (in this case marriage) is good and part of his plan. It also becomes unsatisfying if it is made an end in itself. The rabbis also saw marriage as a picture of God's relationship to Israel, and Christians later saw it as a picture of Christ's relationship to the Church. It is important to realise that it is, in a general way, a picture (analogy) of these relationships, not an allegory where a parallel has to be extracted from every detail! It is a parallel, not a text to be de-coded.

Although the rabbis at the time of the council of Jamnia favoured an allegorical interpretation, this was in reaction to the way in which this book was being used at the time. We do not know what the rabbis thought before this. To claim that the only reason why it was put in the canon was allegorical is to put us on the horns of a false dilemma. It is clear that its use in the Temple liturgy at Passover tells us that the leaders of the time saw it as a picture of God's relationship with Israel, but this does not mean that we have to interpret it as an allegory. It is not referred to in the NT where Paul speaks a lot about the relationship of the church to Christ. The fact that it is used allegorically in the Early Church does not mean that this was the correct interpretation, but rather reflects the general tendency to favour the Alexandrine school of alegorisation.

We must be careful not to impose absolute rules like a standard de-coding system. Very often the Vine signifies Israel, but this is not inevitably the case (Gen 40,9-10; Judges 9,12). Very often leaven indicates something evil, but in Mt 13,33 this can hardly be the case, because in Daniel 2,35b the same expression is used in the same context to indicate the growth of the kingdom of God to fill the whole earth. Oil does not always signify the Holy Spirit.

VI) It is necessary to take account of **different literary genres**. For example, is the passage in question written in **prose or in poetry**? There is no indication that Genesis 1 and 2 are poetry. But in Exodus there are two accounts of the Crossing of the Red Sea: one is in poetry (ch. 15) and the other is in prose (ch. 14). We need to read the poetic version in the light of the prose version to find out what really happened.

VII) The **Biblical background** must be taken into account. 1 Sam 12 and Eccl 11,4 presuppose a certain knowledge of the topography of Palestine, and James 5,7 presupposes a knowledge of its climate. In Acts 23,23 a knowledge of local custom is invaluable. In Mt 11,30 and 9,5 there are allusions to country life. However, we must be careful not to obscure the spiritual message by a preoccupation with background detail. We must be able to explain the Bible to the man in the street, for God's revelation is addressed to everybody.

VIII) **Lack of harmonization** The biblical writers were not as concerned as we are about harmonization. They favoured multiple perspectives, in preference to a fusion of views in a single utterance because they wanted to develop a literary form that might embrace the abiding complexity of their subjects. We should therefore guard against the temptation to distinguish multiple sources, which is useful but has been taken to an extreme by liberal scholars.

IX) **The linguistic background:** Both the Old and the New Testaments were initially written for an audience that was either Hebrew-speaking or which was familiar with Hebrew concepts (i.e. Gentiles who attended the Synagogue). Their minds were programmed to take account of the broadness of meaning of Hebrew phrases. This meant that they had the ability to interpret (get the right meanings) according to the demands of the context. The same principle is seen when Jews are able to read a Hebrew text without vowel pointings. The Hebrew mind is conditioned to supply the right vowel according to the demands of the context. Unfortunately, we are not in that position, and this has caused problems. Whenever Hebrew language or thought is translated into another language (including Greek), it loses something of its flexibility. In fact, it could be argued that misunderstanding of Hebrew thought and language have led to some of the greatest heresies of the Christian Church: sabellianism, arianism, justification by works, transubstantiation. All these heresies involve the wrong interpretation of such words as "only-begotten Son", "righteous" and "righteousness", "to be righteous" and "to be shown to be righteous", "to be" and "to represent", etc. These misunderstandings have been made worse by the influence of philosophies that are foreign to Biblical thought, chiefly platonism and aristotelianism.

The phrase 'under the Law' is taken by some to mean that we are no longer bound to obey the moral law, but this phrase, which was common in rabbinic circles, actually means 'under the *condemnation* of the Law'. So we are no longer under the law in the sense that we are no longer under the condemnation incurred by a breaker of the Jewish Law.

i) Failure to translate Hebrew words and expressions into a meaningful linguistic equivalent has produced the phenomenon of the language of Zion, used exclusively among believers. Many modern choruses are just a paste-up of religious sounding words, aiming to produce a mood, rather than to convey a clear message. In most cases, the authors are

incapable of writing a proper hymn and so they take the easy way out.

ii) Hebrew tends to use a lot of words to describe actions where we would use few, taking the rest for granted. This device is called a pleonasm. For instance, in Hebrew a verse might say: "He opened his mouth and spoke", or "he lifted up his eyes and saw". There is no particular significance attached to this in Hebrew and we would be right to translate it simply by "he spoke" or "he saw". Similarly the phrase "and it came to pass" (which reproduces a hebraism) can be profitably left out as redundant.

iii) In the Hebrew OT approximately 1,300 words occur only once (about 500 occur only twice). Therefore the meaning of these words cannot be determined by comparing them with usage elsewhere in the Bible. Their use in cognate (related) languages is sometimes a help.

iv) It is important to take account of Hebrew idiom: evil eye (which indicates stinginess – Mt 6,22), blessed is he that comes (Welcome!), blessed be the name (thank God).

iv) It is important to take account of Hebrew idiom: evil eye (which indicates stinginess – Mt 6,22), blessed is he that comes (Welcome!), blessed be the name (thank God).

v) Hebrew superlatives are expressed as follows: The Holy of Holies = the most holy place = the inner sanctuary. The Song of Songs means the best, most beautiful song. The King of kings means the supreme king = the emperor. The phrase 'before the Lord' is also, in certain contexts, a Hebrew superlative. We are told that Nimrod was a might hunter before the Lord, which probably means that he was a very mighty hunter.

vi) The Hebrews loved to use words with double meanings as well as puns (words which sound alike but have different meanings), so many of the biblical names do not follow strict etymology. Iš-bošet (man of shame) was really Iš-baal (man of Baal). When Hannah gives her son the name Samuel, this probably has nothing to do with the verb to ask (*šaal*) but expresses her thankfulness to a God who answers prayer (*šem* = name, *el* = God; the name of God is El)

vii) It is possible that the number forty which occurs so frequently, is actually a loose term referring to a generation. 1 Kings 6 mentions that work on the temple started Four hundred and eighty years after the people of Israel left Egypt. This could be read as 12 generations of 40 yrs, if Israel counted by generations. This calculation is possibly based on the priestly lists as found in Chronicles. This would give a date of around 1260 for the Exodus. If calculated exactly, this would indicate a date of 1446.

viii) The meaning of the word ‘thousand’. In ancient Israel, the tribe was subdivided into ‘thousands’, meaning ‘families’ For this reason numbers based on this sub-unit cannot be used to compute the size of the population, nor indeed of the army, but if we divide these large numbers by 10 this gives us a good approximation of the real number intended.

4. Types of Jewish interpretation:

The rabbinical interpretation thought that Scripture could be interpreted in four possible ways:

a) **The plain sense** of the text (hebr. *pshat*): A grammatico-historical exegesis

b) **hint** (hebr. *remez*): a word, phrase or other element in the text hints at a truth not conveyed by the first interpretation. Matthew frequently uses this interpretation. eg. thus fulfilling the Scripture that He (Jesus) should be called a Nazarene. or: Out of Israel I called my Son.

c) **interpretative** (hebr. *midrash*): interpretation and translation are combined. Paul modifies a text from the OT to bring out the latent meaning.

d) **secret** (hebr. *sod*): a mystical or hidden meaning revealed by adding up the numerical value of the letters. e.g.. 666 = Nero Caesar.

5. **Types of Christian interpretation**: These are mainly three:

a). **Federalist interpretation** or covenant theology. This essentially represents the viewpoint of second generation calvinists like Beza. God's relationship with the world is built around covenants. God, it is claimed, has always treated men on exactly the same basis. There is certainly some truth in this but it can be taken too far. In fact such theologians see covenants everywhere: between God and Adam and Eve, and even within the Trinity! The danger here is to fail to distinguish adequately between the OT and the NT. Walter Kaiser, in his book *Towards an OT Theology* tends to stray too far in this direction in his desire to play down the differences between the OT and NT. Federalists interpret NT baptism in terms of OT circumcision. In fact they have been accused of christianising the OT and judaising the NT.

b). **Dispensationalist interpretation** supposes that God has treated men in different ways at different epochs of biblical history. Thus it is possible to discern certain economies or dispensations. Because of the sin of man, each one of these dispensations ends in failure. This is why even the Church age ends in failure, thus encouraging dispensationalists to claim that the letters to the seven churches in Revelation is a commentary on the church age, ending in the apostasy of the Laodicean Church. It is highly unlikely that this interpretation is correct. The danger here is of exaggerating these differences. For instance, the NT might be carved up into parts that are 'kingdom teaching' (and therefore apply only to Israel), and

parts that apply exclusively to the Church. It is also claimed that there are two Gospels: one for the church, and one for the Jews (the Gospel of the Kingdom).

In fact, the Bible is treated as having only two dispensations: the Old and New Testament. The word dispensation is used in Scripture, not as a testing time, but as an arrangement or administration (cf. Lk 16-2-4; 1 Cor 9,17; Eph 1,10; 3,2.9; Col 1,15; 1 Tim 1,4)

c. **Christological interpretation.** Jesus taught his disciples to interpret the OT in the light of the Messiah (i.e. himself). However, this does not mean that we should attempt to see a reference to Jesus in every single verse. It is clear that Jesus must have used this type of interpretation, when he explained the Scriptures to his disciples after the resurrection. How else could Christ (the Messiah) be in all the Scriptures? This must be seen in terms of OT figures. This interpretation would cover the following: Christ is the fulfillment of the promise given to Eve, he is the Melkizedek, the angel of the Lord, the one to whom the royal sceptre belongs, the star of David prophesied by Balaam, the Second Moses (Prophet), coming king (see Ps 110, 2 Sam 7). He is the Son of Man of Daniel. He is the Suffering Servant (see Psalms and Isaiah). A type relates to a similarity, whereas christological interpretation majors on the fulfillment of OT eschatological figures.

d. **Typological interpretation.** Typology refers to historical events, persons and institutions divinely intended to be prefigurative, quite apart from whether or not the OT authors were aware of the predictive symbolism. The method is extensively used by biblical writers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This a principle that is clearly seen in the Gospel of John and in Hebrews. It is doubtful whether we have the right to use the same method and discover additional types. To say, for instance, that Samson is a type of Christ, is really straining

our credulity. A much for likely candidate is Joseph and yet this similarity is not taken up by any NT author.