

S Y S T E M A T I C T H E O L O G Y

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Introduction:

A. The definition.

The word, Theology is derived from two Greek words: theos and logos. Theos is the word for God; logos is usually translated, word. But logos can mean a discourse, instruction, or doctrine.

Therefore, Theology is the doctrine which has to do with God.

Systematic Theology is the arrangement of that doctrine in an orderly manner.

To state it another way:

Systematic Theology is the orderly arrangement of the doctrines of Scripture in which their true meaning is made clear and their proper and harmonious relationships to each other are made known.

Theology is not just concerned with God by Himself, but also in His relationship with all of His creation.

IS IT NECESSARY?

B. In order to arrive at any Theology at all, we must believe that two things in particular are true:

1. That there is a God. See Heb. 11:6.
2. That God has given us a revelation of Himself. See 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

These two facts will be confirmed as we study the divisions of Theology.

C. Furthermore, we believe that God has revealed Himself basically in two ways:

1. First and foremost, in the Bible -- the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.
2. In creation. See Psa. 19:1-4a.

However, since there is nothing revealed about God in creation which is not also included in the Bible, Systematic Theology, as we shall be considering it, is limited to what we find in the Bible.

D. The procedure to follow in studying Theology:

1. Observe the facts of Scripture -- accurately, and thoroughly.
2. Divide the facts into groups as they relate to particular doctrines of Scripture.
3. Arrange the facts in each group so as to make the meaning of the doctrine clear.

4. Place the doctrines in a systematic order to show their relationship with each other as a logical, harmonious revelation from God.

All of this can only be done by one who knows the Lord in salvation and who is, therefore, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The truth of the Bible, the Word of God, can only be understood as the Holy Spirit is pleased to teach us.

Note: In the study of the Scriptures it is important to note that we are dealing with a divine revelation which is inexhaustible. Every child of God can always learn more about the Bible. Therefore, our understanding of the Theology of the Bible will always be increasing with continued study of the Scriptures.

E. The divisions of Systematic Theology.

Normally we would not be able to identify these until after our study is completed. But we can be thankful that others have devoted years of their lives to the patient, persistent, devoted study of the Word of God under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is possible for us to know as we begin what the major divisions of Systematic Theology are.

The following gives the divisions which will be the outline of our study:

1. BIBLIOLOGY. This is the study of the important facts about the Bible -- how we got it, what it contains, how we can know it, and what it can do.
2. THEOLOGY PROPER. This is the study of the important facts about the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Here we will learn about the nature, the attributes, and the decrees of God.
3. ANGELOLOGY. This is the study of angels -- both the elect angels and the fallen angels.
4. ANTHROPOLOGY. This is the study of man -- his creation, his nature, his fall, and the effects of the fall.
5. SOTERIOLOGY. This is the study of the doctrine of salvation.

Since this is the main theme of Scripture, it is not surprising that under this heading we will be directed into the study of CHRISTOLOGY, which is concerned with the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and PNEUMATOLOGY, which is concerned with the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.

6. ECCLESIOLOGY. This is the study of the doctrine of the Church -- its origin, its nature, its purpose, and its destiny.
7. ESCHATOLOGY. This is the study of prophecy -- with special emphasis upon prophecy which is yet to be fulfilled.

I. BIBLIOLOGY.

The first problem that the theologian faces is the question regarding authority. It was raised by the Sanhedrin in connection with our Lord's ministry. See Matthew 21:23. What source (or sources) can be depended upon as providing us with the truth from which we can formulate a Systematic Theology?

It is the purpose of Bibliology to answer this question.

Historically, and up to the present time, it has been the attitude of professing Christians that this authority rests in the Scriptures, the Bible. However, the way in which the Bible has been used causes us to recognize that the authority of Scripture has been undermined basically in three main ways. We need to examine these before turning to the Scriptures to see what the true doctrine is concerning the Bible.

Three ways in which the authority and the interpretation of the Scriptures have been undermined by those who profess to believe it, are these:

- 1) By Reason.
- 2) By Experience.
- 3) By the Church.

Before we seek to understand what these are, we need to keep certain things in mind:

- 1) There is a sense in which each of the above provides us with a legitimate means for understanding the Bible. This is what makes them potentially very dangerous.
- 2) Each of the three above can be illustrated by mentioning various individuals or groups which actually differ greatly from each other -- from one extreme to the other. We will not try to identify all of them (which would be an impossibility), but to define the common feature which characterizes all who belong to a certain group.
- 3) Some systems of Theology demonstrate that they are a combination of two out of the three, or that they have been influenced by all three.
- 4) In all three there is a transfer from the authority of the Bible to the authority of man who sets himself up as a judge of Biblical truth.
- 5) In all three man finally turns from the Bible to reason, or to experience, or to the Church (or to any combination of the three) as the basis of authority. Thus the Word of God is actually set aside.

The three methods of interpretation clarified:

- 1) The Bible and Reason.

This is called Rationalism.

A general definition would say that Rationalism refuses to accept anything in the Bible which cannot be proved by reason, by logic. If it cannot be reasoned out to man's satisfaction, the rationalist would say that it is not to be accepted.

This has been the fault of Theological Liberalism -- known also by such terms as Modernism, Neo-orthodoxy, and others.

Rationalism makes reason equal to faith.

Obviously we must use our minds and think if we are to understand Biblical truth, but to say that we cannot accept anything as true unless we can reason it out is heresy.

2) The Bible and Experience.

This is called Mysticism.

The false mystic will not accept as true anything which he has not experienced.

Mysticism will choose experience instead of Scripture whenever the two come into conflict with each other. Ultimately the mystic may even go beyond the Scriptures and claim to receive his own independent, personal revelations from God.

It is true that it would be wrong to accept beliefs which contradict all experience, and it would be equally wrong to say that theology does not, or should not, affect man emotionally. But it is heresy to judge the Scriptures on the basis of experience and feeling as the determining factor.

Mysticism is demonstrated by the present-day Charismatic Movement.

Mysticism in its extreme form (which is not related to the Bible in any way) can be seen in the current interest in eastern religions. This would include Transcendental Meditation, and the like.

3) The Bible and the Church.

This is called Ecclesiasticism.

It sets up the Church as the sole interpreter of the Scriptures. It takes on many forms and is often to be seen in Protestant denominations, but it is pre-eminently found in the Roman Catholic Church.

A part of Ecclesiasticism is church tradition. Another part is any present or future declaration of truth by the leaders of the Church, such as Papal Decrees.

Under such a system people are to accept the teachings of the Church (or whatever the group may call itself) even when those doctrines are in conflict with the Word of God.

It is surely to be recognized that no doctrine should be given serious consideration which has not historically had the approval of the people of God, but to make Bible truths dependent solely upon past and present ecclesiastical approval is heresy.

Thus, having seen the problems we face in Bibliology, we now must ask ourselves, What does the Bible teach about itself? What is true Bibliology?

In answering these questions it is necessary, first of all, to clarify what we mean by the Bible. What books do we include?

Therefore, our first consideration is:

A. The Canon of Scripture.

Canon comes from a Greek word which the Apostle Paul uses in Galatians 6:16,

"And as many as walk according to this rule (canon), peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

It originally meant a straight rod, a measuring rod, a rule. (We get our words canal, cane, and cannon from it.)

In the fourth century after Christ the word canon was applied to Scripture. Since then it has been used two ways in theology:

- 1) To designate those books which are to be received as belonging to the Bible, the Word of God. They are received because they conform to the canon, the rules, the standards, which such books must meet.
- 2) To indicate that the books thus accepted become the ultimate authority, or rule, concerning what God wants men to know and to believe, and concerning the way He wants men to live.

1. The books included in the Canon of Scripture:

a. The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament:

1) The books of the Law (5 books):

- a) Genesis.
- b) Exodus.
- c) Leviticus.
- d) Numbers.
- e) Deuteronomy.

2) The books of History (12 books):

- a) Joshua.
- b) Judges.
- c) Ruth.
- d) 1 and 2 Samuel.
- e) 1 and 2 Kings.
- f) 1 and 2 Chronicles.
- g) Ezra.
- h) Nehemiah.
- i) Esther.

3) The books of Poetry (5 books):

- a) Job.
- b) Psalms.
- c) Proverbs.
- d) Ecclesiastes.
- e) Song of Solomon, or Canticles.

4) The books of Prophecy (17 books):

- a) The Major Prophets (5 books --called Major because they are longer, not because they are more important):
 - (1) Isaiah.
 - (2) Jeremiah and Lamentations.
 - (3) Ezekiel.
 - (4) Daniel.

- b) The Minor Prophets (12 books):
 - (1) Hosea.
 - (2) Joel.
 - (3) Amos.
 - (4) Obadiah.
 - (5) Jonah.
 - (6) Micah.
 - (7) Nahum.
 - (8) Habakkuk.
 - (9) Zephaniah.
 - (10) Haggai.
 - (11) Zechariah.
 - (12) Malachi.
- b. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament:
 - 1) The four Gospels:
 - a) Matthew
 - b) Mark.
 - c) Luke.
 - d) John.
 - 2) One book of History: the Acts of the Apostles.
 - 3) The Epistles, or letters (21 books):
 - a) Those written by Paul:
 - (1) To churches:
 - (a) Romans.
 - (b) 1 and 2 Corinthians.
 - (c) Galatians.
 - (d) Ephesians.
 - (e) Philippians.
 - (f) Colossians.
 - (g) 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
 - (2) To individuals:
 - (a) 1 and 2 Timothy.
 - (b) Titus.
 - (c) Philemon.
 - (3) Hebrews. It is not certain that Paul wrote it, nor do we know for certain what group of Hebrew believers originally received it.
 - b) One written by James: James.
 - c) Two written by Peter: 1 and 2 Peter.
 - d) Three written by John: 1, 2 and 3 John.
 - e) One written by Jude: Jude.
 - 4) One book of Prophecy: The Revelation of Jesus Christ.
- 2. The books NOT included in the Canon of Scripture: the Apocrypha (14 books):
 - a. 1 and 2 Esdras.
 - b. Tobit.
 - c. Judith.
 - d. Additions to Esther.
 - e. The Wisdom of Solomon.
 - f. Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach.
 - g. Baruch.
 - h. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men.
 - i. Susanna.
 - j. Bel and the Dragon.
 - k. The Prayer of Manasseh.
 - l. 1 and 2 Maccabees.

3. The basis on which a book was recognized as belonging to the Canon of Scripture:

a. For the Old Testament.

In the New Testament we can tell that the writers accepted the Scriptures of the Old Testament because of their frequent quotations from and allusions to various Old Testament books. Obviously there was a collection of books which they referred to as "the scriptures" (and in other ways) which constituted the Canon of the Old Testament.

There can be no doubt that this included the 39 books of the Old Testament which we now have, and only those books.

The Old Testament Canon rests firmly upon:

- 1) References made by our Lord to the Old Testament.
- 2) References made by the writers of the New Testament to various passages in the Old Testament.

b. For the New Testament.

Basically we can say that the Canon of the New Testament was determined by two things:

- 1) The writers had to be Apostles, or
- 2) If not apostles, the writers had to be sanctioned by the Apostles.

Note Peter's comment about Paul in 2 Peter 3:15, 16. It is clear that even before all of the New Testament was completed Paul's Epistles were already accepted as being equal in authority with the Old Testament "scriptures."

c. Regarding the Apocrypha.

The books of the Apocrypha are to be rejected from the Canon of Scripture because:

- 1) The Lord never quoted them.
- 2) The Apostles never quoted them.
- 3) They contain teachings contrary to the other books of the Bible.
- 4) They contain errors in history, geography, and chronology.
- 5) They contain absurd legends and other information.
- 6) They never were a part of the Old Testament Canon.
- 7) They were not officially accepted until the Council of Trent in 1546.
- 8) They add nothing to the truth revealed in the Old and New Testaments.

d. Regarding the possibility that other books should be included.

It is very significant that the last of the canonical books of the New Testament was completed by the end of the first

century. This certainly signifies that the Scriptures were completed.

In addition, we must note that there are New Testament passages which indicate that the coming of Christ marked the end of what God intended to reveal to man. Cf. Heb. 1:1-3; Col. 1:24-29; 2:8-10; 2 Pet. 1:2-4.

Then consider the following statements:

- 1) Nothing in Scripture indicates that we should look for future revelations. In fact, there are warnings against those who would go beyond what is written.
- 2) All additional revelations do one of the following:
 - a) They simply re-state what is already in Scripture -- which makes them unnecessary.
 - b) They contradict what has been written previously.
 - c) They minimize, or set aside completely, the unique and pre-eminent place which the Lord Jesus Christ has in the Old and New Testaments.
- 3) There is nothing that needs to be added.
- 4) Since in Christ we have God's final revelation of Himself, what possibly could be added?

B. The Claims of Scripture.

The most important factor in understanding the character and purpose of the Bible is to learn from the Scriptures themselves what they claim to be. It finds its parallel in what the Jews asked John the Baptist when he was attracting such large numbers in Israel. They said, "What sayest thou of thyself?" (John 1:22b).

Once we know what those claims are, then we can look at the Scriptures themselves for the evidence in support of the claims.

These are two claims:

1. The Scriptures claim to be a revelation from God.

Two key verses for this claim are 1 Cor. 2:9, 10.

The verb translated "revealed" in verse 10 is the Greek verb, apokalupto. It is the verb from which the book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ gets its name -- The Apokalupsis, or Apocalypse (to use the English word), of Jesus Christ.

It means to disclose, to make something known.

Its use in 1 Cor. 2:9, 10 would therefore provide us with the following information about this doctrine:

- 1) It is something God does.
- 2) He reveals what man has not known prior to the revelation.
- 3) He reveals what man could not know if God had not revealed it.
- 4) The actual work of revealing is done by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, if the Bible is a revelation from God, it would mean that in the Bible we have truths which God has made known to us, truths

which only be found in the Bible, and truths of which we would forever be ignorant if God had not seen fit to reveal them.

This claim would set the Bible apart as being unique among all literature in any land throughout the whole course of human history. This would mean that there is no other book anywhere like the Bible.

There are those who would question that such a thing is possible, but consider the reasonableness of such a thing being true:

- 1) Even in pagan cultures and in false religions there seems to be instilled in the heart of man the idea that it is possible to have some communication between God and man.
- 2) It is to be expected that God would communicate with His creatures.
- 3) It cannot be doubted that a God capable of creating us would know how to communicate with us.
- 4) As is the case in so many other things -- it is not necessary for us to understand how all of this takes place in order for
 - a) It to be true, or
 - b) For us to be able to profit from it.

The Bible indicates that the revelation of God to man falls into two categories:

- 1) The revelation of God which we have in creation.
- 2) The revelation of God which we have in the Bible.

The first is called in Theology, Natural Revelation, or General Revelation. The second is called, Special Revelation, or Supernatural Revelation.

On page 1 of these notes on Systematic Theology it was indicated that we have nothing revealed about God in creation but that reference is also made to it in Scripture. It is important to understand that in this area we are talking about man in his moral constitution as well as the facts and laws of the material universe.

Scripture passages which deal with Natural Revelation are:

- 1) Psalm 19:1-4.
- 2) Psalm 94:8-10.
- 3) Acts 14:15-17.
- 4) Romans 1:18-32.
- 5) Romans 2:13-15.

However, as convincing and as condemning as Natural Revelation is, it is not sufficient without the Special Revelation that God has given in His Word. Note this fact in Paul's message delivered in Athens on Mars' Hill (Acts 17:22, 23 ff.).

Some of the limitations of Natural, or General, Revelation:

- 1) It does not give man a complete revelation of God.
- 2) It does not reveal the true nature of man -- and His need of salvation.
- 3) It tells us nothing of Christ -- either of His Person or of His Work.
- 4) It tells us nothing of the purpose of God.

Thus it is apparent that it was necessary for God to give a Special Revelation which would make it possible for man to have access to truth which could not be known in any other way. The Bible is this Special Revelation.

Scripture passages which support the claim that the Bible is a revelation from God:

- 1) Psalm 19:7-11. This is a tremendously important Psalm in dealing with God's revelations to man since the first part of the Psalm deals with General Revelation (as indicated on Page 9 in these notes).
- 2) Expressions used throughout the Old Testament, such as:
a) "And the Lord said unto Moses" (Ex. 19:9, 10).
b) "Thus saith the Lord God" (Isa. 7:7).
c) "The words of Jeremiah . . . to whom the word of the Lord came . . ." (Jer. 1:1, 2).
- 3) 2 Tim. 3:16, 17 and 2 Peter 1:21. (These passages will be considered more fully under inspiration.)
- 4) David's claim in 2 Sam. 23:2, 3.
- 5) 1 Thessalonians 2:13.
- 6) Acts 7:2, 3, 6, 7.
- 7) Ephesians 3:1-7.

1 Cor. 2:9-16 Gal. 1:1
Heb. 1:1, 2 Eph. 3:1-7
John 15:15
~~Rom. 1:1-2~~

It must be noted that the Lord Jesus Christ is so closely related to the Scriptures in giving us the revelation of God that Christ and the Scriptures are inseparable. He is the living Word; the Scriptures are the written Word. The following are some of the passages which relate the two:

- 1) Luke 24:25-27, 44, 45.
2) Romans 1:1-4.
3) Hebrews 1:1, 2.

To summarize: The Bible claims to be a revelation from God and a revelation of God. It is the very Word of God. It is not enough to say that it contains the Word of God. Neither is their any support for the present-day Neo-Orthodox claim that the Bible becomes the Word of God. It is, in all of its entirety -- in the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, the Word of God. Thus, the Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone become the only foundation upon which to base true Systematic Theology.

This first claim of the Scriptures requires that we ask the question, How can such a thing be? And this leads us to a consideration of the second claim of Scripture -- that it is the inspired Word of God.

2. The Scriptures claim to be inspired of God.

The difference between revelation and inspiration could be simply stated as follows:

- 1) The doctrine of revelation indicates that God has communicated to man truths which man would never otherwise be known.
- 2) The doctrine of inspiration deals with the manner in which those truths have been communicated so as to make them:
a) Permanent.
b) Infallible.

The key passages are 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 and 2 Peter 1:21.^{20,}

a. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

1) Some needed clarifications.

a) Like so many words which are used in Scripture, we must recognize that the word, "inspiration," in 2 Timothy 3:16 does not mean what people have in mind when they speak of a man or a work being inspired. In every-day speech we mean that a person is so aroused, or animated, or impelled, that he does something and writes something which is very outstanding. Such was the inspiration of Browning or Shakespere in literature, and of Beethoven or Handel in music. But this is not what we have in mind when we talk about the inspiration of Scripture. The Lord may enable a person to write great poetry or to compose a great piece of music, but even with such divine blessing the greatest works of men are not worthy to be compared with the Scriptures.

b) A second misconception of this doctrine of inspiration can be given by the word inspiration itself. While we use the word constantly, it is not generally considered to be a good translation of the Greek word which Paul uses.

To inspire means to breathe into. We must not let this cause us to think that the books of the Bible were written and that God then breathed into them His authority, blessing, and approval. The Scriptures are far more than this.

2) The true meaning of the word, "inspiration," as found in 2 Timothy 3:16.

a) The word is only used once in all of the New Testament -- in 2 Timothy 3:16.

b) It can be transliterated, theopneustos. The first four letters give us the Greek word for God; the remainder of the word comes from the Greek word for breath. So, the literal translation should be, God-breathed.

c) It might help us to understand the expression if we would realize that in speaking a person breathes out his words, i.e., a man could be told, "Your words are you-breathed." A person breathes out to produce the words uttered in speech.

d) Thus, we can conclude that Paul means to indicate here that Scriptures are directly produced by God Himself. He has used many different writers. He has employed their personalities and, in many instances, their own understanding of the truth. But He has nevertheless done so in such a way that the writers have been preserved from error in the writing of the books of the Bible.

e) 2 Timothy 3:16 makes it clear that the writings are inspired (in the sense just described), not the writers.

- f) Finally, the inspiration applies to "all scripture." Paul makes no attempt to distinguish between the inspiration of one book as compared to another, as though one were greater than another. Nor does he in any way indicate that one part of any book is more inspired than another part. All of the books of the Bible, and each part of every book, are equally inspired of God.

The second key passage on inspiration:

- b. 2 Peter 1:20,21.

There are four things of importance related to the doctrine of inspiration in these verses:

- 1) The Scriptures did not originate with men: "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."

The expression, "private interpretation," is a difficult term, and has been translated in different ways. See the New Scofield Reference Bible, p. 1339, footnote #3. But relating 1 Pet. 1:20 with the following verse, v. 21 (which explains v. 20), it seems best to translate it as meaning that the Scriptures did not originate with the men who wrote them.

- 2) The Scriptures, however, did come through men. "Holy men of God," or better, "men of God spoke."

- 3) "Spoke" points to the use of particular words, not just thoughts.

- 4) "As they were moved by the Holy Spirit" means that they were driven, or moved along, as the wind would drive a ship. See Acts 27:15, 17 for the use of this same verb.

Therefore, it is proper to say that there were many writers of Scripture, but only one Author: the Holy Spirit.

In putting together the ideas expressed in 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 and 2 Peter 1:20, 21, we can come up with the following definition of the inspiration of Scripture:

The Holy Spirit directed the writers of the books of the Bible in every word which they wrote so that they were kept from any error in the original writings. This applies equally to all parts of every book.

The inspiration of Scripture is frequently described as verbal (having to do with the very words -- not just the ideas), plenary (fully, no part excluded), and infallible (without error and incapable of error.)

C. The Evidence of the Claims.

Since the Bible claims to be a revelation from God, given to man by divine inspiration, we should expect to find evidences within the Bible itself that it is a supernatural work of God.

The most important evidences are as follows:

1. The unity of Scripture.

Nothing in all of the literature of the world can compare with the Bible. It was written by more than 35 writers over a period of 1600 years. And yet there is such harmony and oneness among all of the 66 books that we can truly speak of the Bible as one book.

This unity is seen most clearly in:

- a. The doctrines of Scripture.
- b. The teaching concerning Christ in particular.

2. The fulfillment of prophecy.

See Isaiah 41:21-23. Prophecy is referred to as a confirmation not only of God's Word, but even of God Himself!

A great portion of Scripture was prophetic when it was written. Much has been fulfilled; much remains to be fulfilled. Prophecies vary from Moses' prediction that the frogs would be gone the next day (Exodus 8:8-10) to the prophecies having to do with the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21:1 ff.). The grand subject of prophecy in Scripture is Christ. The manner in which Matthew quotes from Old Testament Scripture to show how prophecy was fulfilled in the birth and early life of Christ is an excellent illustration of the way in which fulfilled prophecy confirms the inspiration of Scripture.

3. The content of Scripture. *its completeness*

The Bible not only answers the essential questions which men ask, but it reveals to us truth which would not even enter the minds of men.

it is not that this is one of many places where we can learn these things; this is the only place!

The main themes where we see that the Bible could only have come from God are in what we learn about:

- 1) God Himself. *his sin,*
- 2) Man -- his origin, his nature, *his sin,* his purpose in life, and his destiny.
- 3) The sovereign, providential purpose of God involving as it does all of creation.

4. The incomprehensible character of Scripture.

If the Bible is from God (and it is), then it is to be expected that it would contain things which we cannot fully understand.

This includes doctrines such as the Trinity, the sovereignty of God's will versus the exercise of man's will, and the problem of evil in a world created and overruled by an almighty, holy God. Read Romans 11:33-36.

5. The permanence of Scripture. Cf. Psa 119:89; Mt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:24, 25.

The Bible does not change, nor does it need to be changed. We may have more up-to-date translations, but the Bible itself cannot be revised. It is as pertinent for today as it has been at any time in the past. Moreover, it applies equally well to any culture in the world at any period in human history.

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Note: The next two points are slightly different in nature, but they are certainly to be included as evidences for the inspiration of Scripture.

6. The preservation of Scripture.

Although the Bible has been attacked as no other book, yet it is available today in more translations and in more languages than at any time in human history. And it continues to be the best seller.

7. The effect of Scripture.

The greatest effect of the Bible is seen in the lives that have been transformed through the Gospel of Christ.

D. False Theories of Inspiration.

It often helps to clarify what a doctrine is by stating what it is not.

It should be remembered that one feature of error which makes it particularly dangerous is the fact that usually there is some mixture of truth in it. Therefore, not everything about the following theories is wrong, but none adequately expresses that the Scriptures themselves teach, ^{regarding} the inspiration of God's Word.

1. The Natural Inspiration Theory.

The lowest of all the views is the idea that men have been inspired to write the books of the Bible just as men have been inspired to write great music or great literature.

This puts inspiration on a purely human plane. It focuses attention on the writers, not on the books. And it emphasizes the human writers and excludes the Divine Author.

2. The Illumination or Mystical Theory.

This has taken on various forms and has had numerous proponents.

It is similar in some respects to what we will be considering under the next main point: the Doctrine of Illumination. Illumination is a legitimate Biblical doctrine, but it has to do with understanding the Word of God, not with the conditions under which the Word was written.

Those who hold to the Illumination Theory of Inspiration believe that the Holy Spirit heightened the powers of the writers, but it only places the writer in a condition where he has the full use of his natural powers. This theory does not eliminate the possibility that any Christian even yet might write Scripture. Another fault in this theory is that it does not recognize that there was a communication of truth to the writers of Scripture beyond what they could discover and comprehend.

3. The Dictation or Mechanical Theory.

This is a sincere attempt to explain how the words written by men could actually be the Word of God. If God dictated it all, of course, there would be no problem.

Obviously some parts of Scripture were dictated. This is true, for example, in large sections of Moses' books, as well as many sections in the prophets.

This theory does not explain the human element in Scripture. We not only have personal comments in the Epistles, to cite one example, but we can detect that Paul had certain characteristics in writing which are distinguishable from John, or from Peter. Such differences would not be there if the Bible had been dictated by God to man.

4. The Concept or Thought Theory.

It is taught by those who hold this view that God gave men the ideas that He wanted expressed in writing, but left the writing up to their judgment.

Under such an arrangement it would be impossible to guarantee the accuracy of what was written. It is equally a mistaken idea that, in translating the Scriptures, we can translate the thought without being careful to translate the very words, and only those words, which appear in the original languages.

5. The Partial Inspiration Theory.

Those who teach this theory believe that inspiration would apply only to those passages of Scripture where doctrine is involved. In passages where personal comments are made, or where history known to the writer is recorded, inspiration is not necessary, according to those who hold to this view.

The main problem is that this does not guarantee the inerrancy of Scripture, but leaves the door open for all kinds of human errors.

6. The Degree of Inspiration Theory.

The contention of those who hold this theory is that some parts of the Bible are more inspired than others. This must carry with it the idea that the more inspired are more important. It also allows for the possibility of error in those less inspired.

And then, who is to determine the different passages as to the degree of their inspiration? Obviously, the reader must decide for himself (even though he may have help from others). It tends, therefore, to make the reader the authority.

Note: The Biblical view of inspiration has been discussed on pages 19-12.

E. The Doctrine of Illumination. Tremendously important because here the true value of Scripture to men is determined.

1. Illumination defined.

Because the Bible is the very Word of God, it must be recognized that it must be beyond the ability of man's finite wisdom to understand what God has made known to man by revelation and by inspiration. See 1 Cor. 2:14; Isa. 55:8, 9. Therefore, we come to this doctrine of illumination by which we refer to that work of God upon the hearts and minds of man so that they are able to understand the Scriptures. If it were not for this work of divine illumination, it would be impossible for man to understand the Scriptures at all.

2. God's provision for our illumination.

All three Persons of the Godhead are involved:

- 1) The Father (Matt. 16:17).
- 2) The Son (Luke 24:32, 45).
- 3) The Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13-15).

However, the New Testament makes it very clear that the work of illumination is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit.

3. The need for illumination.

The need goes far deeper than the fact that we have a situation in which man is faced with the problem of understanding the Word of God. Man, because of his sin, is spiritually blind and ignorant. In his natural state he does not know, cannot know, does not even desire to know, the Word of God.

The need is twofold:

- a. For the non-Christian. See 2 Cor. 4:3, 4; John 16:7-11; Gal. 1:15, 16; Eph. 4:18. Also see again 1 Cor. 2:14.
- b. For the Christian. See 1 Cor. 2:12 (with context); Matt. 13:19-17; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:12-15.

To show that illumination is not automatic and continuing, we have such passages as 1 Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:11-14. The conditions which have to be met even in the life of a Christian are detailed below.

4. The practical means by which a person experiences the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

- a. The Gospel. See 2 Cor. 4:3-6; John 16:7-11. In 6:45 from Isa. 54:13
Jer. 31:33,34

In the work of illuminating, the Holy Spirit may work directly with a person, i.e., without working through some child of God, or He may use human instruments (as He most commonly does).

- b. The New Birth. See John 3:3. Not until a person is saved is it possible for him to come to an understanding of all of Scripture.

- c. The Scriptures. See Luke 24:45. This work of the Holy Spirit is limited to the truth of the Word of God. Therefore, the Scriptures must be heard, read, and meditated upon if they are to be understood.

(CORRECTION)

- d. The Holy Spirit. See 1 Cor. 1:12; John 16:12-15. We can have a knowledge of the facts of Scripture by our own reading, but we cannot enter into the true, spiritual meaning of the Bible without the illuminating work of the Spirit.

- e. The need to be spiritually minded. See 1 Cor. 2:15, 16.

- f. Obedience. See John 7:17.

5. Illustrations of illumination:

- a. Matt. 11:25-27. JOSEPH IN GEN. 40:8; 41:16, 25, 32.
b. Matt. 13:18-23.
c. Matt. 16:13-23.
d. Acts 3:26-39.
e. Gal. 1:15, 16.
f. 1 Peter 1:10-12.

6. The results:

- a. Deep conviction regarding the truth of the Word. Cf. Owen, Vol. 4, p. 123c.

II. THEOLOGY PROPER.

- A. The Definition. This is the division of Systematic Theology which deals with the nature of God and His attributes. Thus, it seeks to answer two questions:

- 1) Who is God?
- 2) What are His characteristics?

To some extent Theology Proper is concerned also with a third question: What are His works? While it will be necessary to deal with this in a limited way in God's relationship with the world, a more complete treatment of the works of God will be taken up under the following divisions of Systematic Theology, such as, Angelology, Anthropology, Soteriology, and so on.

Theologians, scientists, and philosophers who do not accept the Bible as the Word of God will begin their investigation of God with the question, Is there a God? We will need to learn how the Bible deals with this important question, but it will be seen to be very different from the reasonings of men apart from Scripture.

- B. The Three Basic Points-of-View which men hold regarding the existence of God:

1. The Agnostic. This is the person who says that we do not know if there is a God, and we cannot know such a thing.
2. The Atheist. This is the person who says that there is no God.
3. The Theist. This is the person who believes in a god of some kind, although he does not necessarily accept the teachings of Scripture. He may believe in some kind of a power or influence which is not personal, or he may believe in God as a person while rejecting the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

A true Christian is a Theist, but not all Theists are Christians.

Note: There are different opinions which are held by those who would be included in each of the above divisions.

- C. Some False Ideas which men have regarding God and the Universe:

1. False theistic ideas:

- a. Deism. The Deist believes that God created the world, but that He then left it to run by itself. It is taught by those who hold this point-of-view that God does not exercise any control over the universe, nor over the lives of people on the earth.
- b. Polytheism. The Polytheist believes that there is more than one god -- possibly an unlimited number of gods!

There is no similarity at all between the belief of a polytheist as compared with the Biblical teaching that there are Three Persons in the Godhead. The Persons of the Godhead are one in nature (as we will see), but the gods of the polytheist have no need to be alike.

- c. Pantheism. The Pantheist believes that God is nature and that nature is God. God is everything and everything is God.

The kind of idolatry which causes men to worship animals, or the sun, or rocks, etc., is a form of pantheism, but the true pantheist does not make such distinctions.

2. False atheistic ideas:

- a. Materialism. The Materialist believes that matter is eternal -- that it has always existed and it always will. It is opposed to anything spiritual, believing that thought, will, and emotion can all be explained through matter.
- b. Evolution. The Evolutionist does not believe in a Creator. Instead, he believes that all things have developed from the simplest forms of life to what they are today. And they believe that the process of evolving is still going on.

Note: It should be mentioned here that there are some who believe that God created the world by a process of evolution. The Bible gives no support for this. It is an attempt to compromise with the original theory of evolution. As a repudiation of both evolution and theistic evolution, see Exodus 20:11; Psalm 33:6-9.

D. The Reasons for the Conflicting Opinions about God.

There are two:

- 1. The spiritual blindness, ignorance, and pride of man. This has been discussed quite thoroughly under Bibliology. See the Scriptural teaching on this point:
1 Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 4:18; Psalm 10:4; 14; 53.
- 2. Man's rejection of the truth which God has given:
 - a. In creation itself. See Rom. 1:18-25.
 - b. In the Bible. See 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10, 14.

Thus, the only answer to all of the confusion, ignorance, and mistaken ideas concerning God is to be found in turning to the Scriptures with a sincere heart, trusting God to give us the knowledge and understanding which we need.

E. The Importance of Theology Proper.

No doctrine of Scripture is of any greater importance. The knowledge of God forms the foundation for all other knowledge. To be wrong in our ideas of God is to be wrong in everything else. It is only when we come to know and understand God that we are able to understand ourselves and our needs. It is the knowledge of God which brings meaning into our lives. The knowledge of God is our key for understanding the past, the present, and the future. See Psalm 119:97-104, 105, 130.

See also Proverbs 9:10; Hosea 6:3; John 17:3; 2 Peter 3:18; Phil. 3:10, 11.

The Bible is not only a revelation from God, but it is primarily, as to its content, a revelation of God. Of all of the purposes that God had in giving us His Word, making Himself known is the first purpose. See Genesis 1:1; Luke 24:27, 44; John 1:14, 18; 5:39; 14:7-9; 17:4; Heb. 1:1-3.

F. The Divisions of Theology Proper.

We will examine what the Scriptures teach about God under the following five headings:

- 1) The Existence of God.
- 2) The Personality of God.
- 3) The Persons of the Godhead.
- 4) The Attributes of God.
- 5) The Relationship between God and the World.

1. The Existence of God.

The evidences for the existence of God come from at least five different sources:

- 1) The innate knowledge in every man's heart that there is a God.
- 2) The evidence that is provided in nature.
- 3) The providential works of the Lord throughout history.
- 4) The Scriptures.
- 5) The Lord Jesus Christ.

The first impression that one has in looking over this list might make him feel that the first three are extra-Biblical, i.e., outside of or in addition to the Bible, and that only the last two are Biblical. It is true that the first three are evidences to which a person is exposed who never looks at the Bible. But it is equally true that the first three are Biblical also because they are recognized in the Bible as ways in which God has been pleased to make Himself known.

We need to examine each of these briefly.

- a. The natural recognition in every man's heart that there is a God.

We speak of it as being innate because:

- 1) It is not there through experience.

- 2) It is not in man's heart because he has been taught that there is a God.
- 3) It is not something that man has reasoned out for himself. His reasonings may strengthen the conviction, but the conviction was there before the reasonings began.

It can also be demonstrated that this knowledge is in the hearts of all men in every generation. Thus, it is a universal conviction.

This does not mean that every man has the true knowledge of God. In fact, in most cases it will be sadly distorted. But the knowledge that there is some kind of a God is there nevertheless.

The Bible confirms this knowledge. See Romans 1:19; Acts 17:22, 23.

b. The evidence that is provided in nature.

- 1) As it is used in Scripture. See Acts 17:28; Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:20.
- 2) As it has been reasoned out by men.

We give below the four main arguments for the existence of God. They have been described in various ways: naturalistic, rationalistic, philosophic. They are the result of human reasoning, but that does not mean that they are to be rejected. There is an element of truth in each one, truths which are supported by Scripture. But it should be recognized that none of the four is conclusive. They will not necessarily be effective in turning people to the Lord. There doubtless are times when the Spirit of God uses them, but their main value seems to be as a confirmation of faith for those who already know the Lord.

a) The Cosmological Argument.

This is an argument based upon cause and effect. The world is an effect. It had to have a cause which was capable of making it what it is. That cause must be God. (This is the reasoning followed by those who accept this argument.)

b) The Teleological Argument.

Those who hold to this argument point out the evidence of intelligence, of purpose, of order and design that there is in the universe. Such design had to have a Designer. The Designer must be wise enough and powerful enough to produce such a universe. The Designer must be God.

c) The Anthropological Argument.

This is also called The Moral Argument.

Adherents to this argument point to man's intelligence as well as to his sense of right and wrong. It is reasoned that such mental and moral aspects of man's nature would not be there if they did not reflect the same characteristics in the One who is responsible for man's existence. That One must be God. The followers of this argument also feel that in such a God man can find the satisfaction for the desires that he feels in his heart.

d) The Ontological Argument.

In this argument we are taken back to our first point under our present heading. The Existence of God. (See page 20.)

This argument supports the proposition that, since there is in all men the recognition, the consciousness, that a Supreme Being exists, there must be a God. They hold to the idea that such a concept would not be there if God did not exist and if He had not placed it there.

← c. The providential works of the Lord throughout history.

C.F. LK. 9:43a.

RUTH 2:3

1 SAM. 6:9, 12; 17:46

Psalms 9:16a teaches us that "the Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth."

This can be seen in the miracles which God has performed, through answers to prayer, through the way in which even tragic things can be made to serve good purposes.

See Exodus 6:6, 7; John 14:10, 11; 20:30, 31.

← d. The Scriptures.

The Bible does not deal in proofs for the existence of God. The Bible simply recognizes the existence of God to be a fact. See Genesis 1:1.

It is true that the Bible supports the evidences for the existence of God which have already been discussed, but the outstanding feature about the Bible's approach to this all-important subject is that the existence of God is confirmed to the person who approaches the Scriptures "by faith." See Hebrews 11:3, 5, 6.

Paul teaches us in Romans 10:17 that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The Scriptures, as used by the Holy Spirit, carry to the human heart the greatest conviction that God is! Later we

will examine more in detail what the Scriptures say about God, but it is sufficient at this point to point out two things which tend to confirm them as a revelation from a living God:

- 1) The uniformity of the revelation of God throughout the Bible.
- 2) The grandeur of the revelation. The mind of man could never have conceived such a glorious God!

e. The Lord Jesus Christ.

If there is no God, how can we possibly account for the Lord Jesus Christ? All we know about Him, we have learned from the Scriptures. He is the main theme of Scripture. His life and work on earth constitute the crowning proofs that there is a God. In Christ, God is fully revealed. There is no way that the Lord Jesus Christ can be explained apart from the fact that He was (and is) the Son of God and that He came from God and went back to God. See John 16:27, 28; 17:5, 8. See also John 1:1, 2.

Thus, all in all, the evidence for the existence of God is so overwhelming that man is certainly without excuse if he will not believe.

2. The Personality of God.

Extremely important truth. It does not seem that anyone in Scripture made progress spiritually until they recognized God as a person.

Cf Job 42: 5, 6.

Thus far we have established that God exists. Now we must determine what He is like. Is He an impersonal power or influence of some kind, or is He a personal Being? The Scriptures answer beyond all doubt that He is a Person. Personality is not being used here of His character. That will be discussed under #4, The Attributes of God. Personality means the quality or fact of being a person. We will see that God possesses those qualities which identify Him as a person.

a. The definition of personality.

Personality is usually described as including the following four things:

- 1) Individual existence.
- 2) Intelligence.
- 3) Emotion. This is sometimes described by the word, sensibility. A person has the ability to be affected emotionally, to be responsive.
- 4) Will.

b. The Scriptural evidences that God is a Person.

- 1) The language of Scripture. No one can read the Bible and get any other idea, from Genesis to Revelation, than

David in 1 SAM. ¹⁷26,
36, 37

Also Psa. 23:1. Shepherd
24:7-10 King

that God is a Person. He is identified by names that belong exclusively to Him. He speaks. He expresses His will. He is pleased with man's obedience to His will, and is displeased when man rebels against His will. His words and ways throughout Scripture manifest infinite wisdom. Where God's Names are not used, pronouns are used.

To illustrate the points in the definition given above, the following Scriptures are cited:

GOD IS UNCREATED,
ETERNAL, EXISTING APART FROM
ALL THAT HE HAS CREATED.
Heb. 11:6

a) God's individual existence. See Genesis 1:1 where He is described as being distinct from everything He created. In Genesis 3:9, 13, 14 God is seen to be distinct successively from Adam, Eve, and the serpent. The same distinction is to be seen throughout the Word of God.

Directs ←
GOD IS OMNISCIENT

b) God's intelligence. See Isaiah ^{13, 14}40:26b; Romans 11:33-36. He has knowledge and wisdom.
Psa. 139:1-6

Desires ←

c) God's emotion. See Genesis 6:6; Exodus 2:23-25; 4:14; Psalm 118:1; John 3:16; Romans 12:19.

Determines ←
GOD IS OMNIPOTENT

d) God's will. See Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11. This includes power to carry out His will.

2) Man -- created in the image and likeness of God. See Genesis 1:26, 27. Such a statement in Scripture enables us to reason that, since man is a person, God has to be a Person because man was created in His image and likeness. ^{Acts 17:29} (See NASB.)

This does not include man's sinful nature.

"We should be careful not to set up man's personality as a standard by which the personality of God must be measured. The original form of personality is 'in God' (Berkhof, 84)."

Related to the Anthropological Argument for the Existence of God.
This is confirmed in at least two ways by the Scriptures:

a) The anthropomorphic terms which are used of God. By this we refer to the parts of the human body which are ascribed to God. Since "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24) and therefore man's likeness to God is not a physical likeness, these terms are used to help us to understand that God is a Person.

UNLIKE IDOLS:
PSA. 115:4-8

(1) God's eyes and ears (Psalm 34:15).

(2) God's mouth (Isaiah 1:20).

(3) God's arms (Isaiah 40:11).

(4) God's hands (John 10:28, 29).

(5) God's feet (Nahum 1:3).

b) God is said to do what man does.

(1) God speaks. Statements like Leviticus 1:1 are found over and over again in the Old Testament.

(2) God sees. See Genesis 6:5; 12.

ANTHROPOMORPHISMS:
GOD FORMED - ISA 43:10

- (3) God hears (Psalm 34:17).
- (4) God loves (Jer. 31:3).
- (5) God cares (1 Peter 5:7).

Note: Many other statements could be added to these.

- 3) The Name, Jehovah. Formed from the Hebrew verb, to be, this Name of God not only establishes His existence eternally and unchanging, but it also points to His specific identity as a Person. See Exodus 6:1-8.

The same point can be made by referring to the other names for God which are used in Scripture and which will be referred to under the division, The Attributes of God.

- 4) The Theophanies.

A theophany is literally an appearance of God. In Theology it is used of the pre-incarnate appearances of Christ, i.e., the appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. See John 1:18 for proof that the Old Testament appearances of God have to be appearances of Christ.

- a) The appearance of God to Hagar (Genesis 16:7-14).
- b) The appearance of God to Abraham (Genesis 18).
- c) The appearances of God to Jacob:
 - (1) At Bethel (Genesis 28:10-17).
 - (2) At Peniel (Genesis 32:24-30).
- d) The appearance of God to Moses (Exodus 32:12-23; 34:27-35).
- e) The appearance of God to Joshua (Joshua 5:13-15).

- 5) The Lord Jesus Christ.

The Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ provides the greatest possible proof that God is a Person. See John 1:14, 18: 14:7-11; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3.

We can also see evidences of the Personality of God in what our Lord taught about God, His Father. See Matthew 6.

Even the prophecies concerning the coming of Christ add to the evidence that God is a Person. See Isaiah 7:14; 9:6,7.

Note: More evidence for God's Personality will be given under The Attributes.

3. The Persons of the Godhead.

a. The Doctrine of God in the Old Testament.

We have the following evidence in the Old Testament that there is more than one Person who is God.

1) The use of the Name for God, Elohim.

- a) The im ending in the Hebrew is a plural ending. We have other illustrations in the English translations for cherub (singular), cherubim (plural), and seraph (singular), seraphim (plural), and Baal (singular), Baalim (plural).
- b) Sometimes this plural name, Elohim, is used with a singular verb in the Hebrew. See Genesis 1:1, "created"; 1:3, "said"; 1:4, "saw," "divided," and so on through the chapter.

Thus, with a plural noun and singular verb we have the suggestion of a God who is more than one, and yet one -- or, at least, acting as one (if we are not to assume too much at this point).

- c) There are other times when this plural name, Elohim, is used with a plural verb. See "caused" in Genesis 20:13 and "revealed" in Genesis 35:7.

This clearly gives the idea that there is more than one who is God.

- 2) A distinction is made between God and the Spirit of God in Genesis 1:1, 2 and also between Lord and "My Spirit" in Genesis 6:3.

- 3) The passages where God refers to Himself as "us." See Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8.

These unquestionably indicate that there is more than one who is God.

While neither of these passages is clear enough to establish the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as being a Person distinct from God, the Father, yet with the teaching given later in the Scriptures, the two passages above become texts which definitely show that there is more than one Person in the Godhead.

- 4) There are other passages which draw clear distinctions between the Persons of the Godhead:

- a) Genesis 19:24.

- b) Psalm 2. See esp. vv. 2, 7, 11, 12. In this connection, see John 5:17, 18 for the meaning of sonship to the Jews.

- c) Psalm 110. See vv. 1, 4. For their use in the New Testament, see respectively Luke 20:41-44 and Hebrews 5:5,6.
- d) Two Old Testament passages which indicate that there are Three Persons in the Godhead:
 - (1) Isaiah 48:16.
 - (2) Isaiah 63:9, 10. To appreciate this passage it is important to remember from page 25 that the angel of the Lord is a term which usually designates a theophany in the Old Testament. "The angel of his presence" in this passage seems to be a synonym for the angel of the Lord.
- e) Hosea 1:7.
- 5) Some Messianic passages:
 - a) Psalm 45:6, 7.
 - b) Zechariah 12:8-10.
- 6) The emphasis upon one God. This aspect of Old Testament teaching cannot be overlooked even though it does seem at first to be in conflict with the passages that have just been cited.

The key verse: Deuteronomy 6:4. This is called "the Jewish confession of faith" in the New Scofield Reference Bible, p. 225.

Other passages which teach the oneness of God are: Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; Isaiah 43:11; 44:6; 45:5, 6; and many others
- 7) A summary of the teaching of the Old Testament about God.

Believing the Old Testament to be the very Word of God, we know that there are no contradictory teachings in the 39 books that comprise the Old Testament. We must therefore seek to harmonize those truths which seem to be contradictory. How can God be one, and yet be three? (We have found nothing in the Old Testament to indicate that there are more than Three Persons in the Godhead, but we have found evidence of Three: God, or Jehovah; the Son; and the Spirit of God. We may be assuming at this point that there are only Three, but it does seem clear that the Old Testament passages on the Son, the angel of the Lord, and the Messiah can all be shown to be identified with each other.)

The simplest answer (which we might not be able to give without help from the New Testament) seems to be that there are Three Persons in the Godhead, but that in some way they are all one! Since God is unchanging and eternal, it is impossible to conceive of any differences of nature among the Persons of the Godhead. Therefore, even from the incomplete revelation of

God in the Old Testament we can conclude that there are three Persons in the Godhead but that They are identical as to Their nature, i.e., as to Their Deity. This is what we mean by the term, the Trinity.

b. The Doctrine of God in the New Testament.

At this point we need to see where we stand in establishing the Biblical doctrine of the Godhead.

Under Bibliology we established the fact that the whole Bible, Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God. The New Testament may contain revelations not found in the Old Testament (and it does). It may complete and clarify the teachings of the Old Testament (and it does). But it can in no way contradict or deny the teaching of the Old Testament -- since they are both equally and totally the divinely inspired Word of God.

Therefore, we should expect to find the same basic teaching regarding the Persons of the Godhead in the New Testament that we have found in the Old Testament!

1) Evidence from the records of the birth of Christ:

a) Matthew 1:18-25.

(1) The Holy Spirit (vv. 18, 20).

(2) Jesus (vv. 21, 25). This means Jehovah is salvation. By itself it is not evidence of Deity because there were many others who were named, Jesus. But v.23 leaves no doubt as to the Deity of Mary's child.

(3) The Lord in v. 22. Since the Lord is referred to as speaking about the child who was to be born, we must assume a difference as to persons between "the Lord" and "Jesus." Thus, this must be a reference to the Father.

b) Luke 1:26-35.

This is an excellent passage because it helps to clarify the identification of the Messiah and the Son of God --- that they are one and the same.

(1) Jesus (v. 31). He is "the Son of the Highest" (v. 32), "the Son of God" (v. 35), but also the Messiah (vv. 32, 33).

(2) "God" (v. 30), "the Highest" (v. 32), "the Lord God" (v. 32), and "the Highest" again in v. 35

are all expressions that are distinguishable from Jesus and from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they have to be references to the Father of our Lord, usually referred to in Theology as the First Person of the Godhead.

(3) The Holy Spirit (v. 35).

- 2) Evidence from the record of the Baptism of Christ: Matthew 3:16, 17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22.
- 3) Evidence from the teachings of Christ.
 - a) Christ claimed oneness with the Father. See John 10:30; 14:7-11; 15:23; 17:20-22.
 - b) Christ taught that He and the Holy Spirit were alike. See John 14:16, 17.
 - c) Christ commissioned His disciples "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19b).

There are at least two significant things about this statement as it relates to the doctrine of the Trinity:

- (1) The names of all Three Persons are used here together. While there are many New Testament passages which refer to the Three Persons (i.e., Eph. 2:18), they are named in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20, 21.
 - (2) It is important that the Lord said, "in the name" (singular), not in the names (plural). Thus, we have again what we discovered was the teaching of the Old Testament, i.e., that the Godhead is made up of Three Persons who are one.
- 4) Evidence from the general teaching of the New Testament.

It would be impossible to take up all of the related passages of Scripture because there are so many. But, since the questions center mainly around the Deity of Christ and the Personality, as well as the Deity of the Holy Spirit, we will spend our time on a few of the passages which will clarify these points. We will go into greater detail when we study Christology and Pneumatology.

- a) Concerning the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (1) His Deity is clearly taught in connection with His miraculous conception. See Luke 1:35. Note carefully the emphasis indicated by the angel's use of the word, "therefore."
 - (2) His Deity is specifically taught by the writers of

the New Testament. See John 1:1, 14, 18. In the latter verse "the only begotten God" has better manuscript authority than "the only begotten Son" (although both clearly teach the Deity of Christ).

From the writings of the Apostle Paul, see Romans 9:5; Philippians 2:6; Titus 2:13.

In Hebrews we have two excellent illustrations from quotations of Old Testament passages made in Hebrews 1. See verses 8 (compare Psa. 45:6), 10 (compare Psa. 102:25). Thus, the writer of Hebrews not only expresses his own belief in the Deity of Christ, but indicates clearly that the Psalmists also believed in His Deity.

Additional testimony is given by John in 1 John 5:20.

(3) He claimed Deity for Himself.

- (a) As indicated by the things that He said. See Luke 2:49; John 8:58 (a statement which should be connected with the I am's of our Lord in John's Gospel: 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5). See also Luke 22:70.
- (b) By receiving worship from men. See John 5:23, 20:28. Also see Matthew 14:33; 28:9.
- (c) By claiming for Himself the right to forgive sins. See Mark 2:1-12.
- (d) By manifesting His divine attributes. See His omniscience (John 1:47-49). See His omnipotence and His omnipresence as indicated by His words in Matthew 18:20; 28:18, 20. Also Matthew 14:15, 21; John 2:1-11.

(4) He is identified as the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe. See John 1:3, 10; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16, 17; Hebrews 1:1-3; 3:3, 4; Revelation 3:14.

b) Concerning the Personality of the Holy Spirit.

Review the material we have already covered on The Personality of God on pages 23-25.

We can firmly establish the fact that the Holy Spirit is as much of a person as the Father, or the Son, or any human being, in the following ways:

- (1) Personal pronouns and personal titles are used in Scripture to refer to Him. See John 14:26; 16:13, 14. The title, "Comforter," is the same word that is translated, "Advocate," in 1 John 2:1

where it is used concerning Christ.

The use of the personal pronoun in the Greek text is even more remarkable because the Greek word for Spirit is neuter. Normally the Greek would use a neuter pronoun to refer to a neuter word (and occasionally it does when referring to the Holy Spirit -- see John 14:16, 17). But the fact that we have masculine pronouns in the passages cited in the preceding paragraph gives very strong evidence that the Holy Spirit is a Person.

- (2) He is spoken of in Scripture as one who does what only a person can do. He speaks. He guides. He intercedes. He teaches. He comforts. He hears.

See Luke 12:12; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 8:29; 10:19, 20; 13:2. Rom. 8:26, 27

- (3) He can be affected like any other person by the things that people do. He can be grieved. Men can lie to Him. As with the Father and the Son, it is possible to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Men can rebel against Him.

See Matthew 12:31; Acts 5:3, 4, 9; 7:51; Ephesians 4:30.

- (4) He is associated both with the Father and the Son as well as with men in such a way that the relationship adds to the proof that the Holy Spirit is a Person.

See Matthew 28:19; John 16:14; Acts 15:28.

c) Concerning the Deity of the Holy Spirit.

We have established from Scripture that:

- 1) There are three distinct Persons in the Godhead.
- 2) The Holy Spirit is one of these Persons, separate and distinct Himself from the Father and the Son, and in every sense a Person.

Such truths and the relationship which we have seen as eternally existing between the Holy Spirit and the Father and the Son would establish His Deity. But, in order that there may be no doubt as to the Deity of the Holy Spirit, we have the following conclusive evidence from the Word of God.

- (1) The Holy Spirit is positively identified as God.
 - (a) As the Author of Scripture. Compare 2 Timothy 3:16 with 2 Peter 1:21.
 - (b) As indicated in the account of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. See Acts 5:3, 4.

- (c) As the One who indwells every child of God.
See 1 Corinthians 3:16.

(2) He possesses the attributes of God.

Although we have not yet considered the attributes of God (see below), it is necessary for us to consider them briefly here as a proof of the Deity of the Holy Spirit. We have established the oneness of the Godhead--that the Persons of the Godhead are one in nature. Therefore, it has to be shown that the Holy Spirit possesses the divine attributes if we are to establish the fact that He is Deity.

- (a) His eternal nature (Heb. 9:14).
- (b) His holiness (Eph. 4:30).
- (c) His omniscience (1 Cor. 2:9, 10).
- (d) His omnipresence (Psa. 139:7-16).
- (e) His omnipotence (Acts 1:8).
- (f) His life (Rom. 8:2).

(3) He does the work of God.

- (a) In creation (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13).
- (b) In conviction (John 16:7-11).
- (c) In regeneration (John 3:5-8).
- (d) In sanctification (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2).
See also Galatians 5:16, 17, 22, 23.

4. The Attributes of God.

We have established the facts that (1) there is a God, (2) that He is a personal God, and (3) that there are three Persons in the Godhead -- The Father, and Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are one in nature, but, at the same time, distinct from each other as separate Persons. It is now necessary for us to determine what the characteristics of God's nature are. These characteristics are known in Theology as the Attributes of God.

The attributes of God will be examined under the following headings:

- 1) The Importance of the Attributes.
- 2) The Methods of Determining the Attributes.
- 3) The Division of the Attributes.
- 4) The Attributes Defined.
- 5) The Attributes and the Names of God.

a. The Importance of the Attributes of God.

1) The heart of Theology -- the need to be right.

Theology is the knowledge of God. Therefore, there is nothing among all of the doctrines of Biblical Theology that is more basic than this. If a person is wrong in what he believes about God, then it is impossible for him to be right in the other areas of doctrine. He may be accurate in some respects, but nothing can fully compensate for error in what one believes about God.

Therefore it is absolutely imperative that we understand correctly the attributes of God because only then will we be able to approach a true understanding of God Himself.

2) The need to be thorough.

A person may be right in some things that he believes about God, but he may at the same time be incomplete as to the amount of truth which he needs to know. And he can be sincerely ignorant of his failure to have all of the facts. The result can only be that in the final analysis he has a distorted, an incomplete, an erroneous conception of the nature of God. Therefore, it is important that we have all of the facts in mind. We may not ever be able to comprehend fully all that we do know (for who would claim to know God perfectly?), but we must be sure that we are not leaving anything out.

A present-day illustration: There are many people today who believe that "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16) who do not believe, or do not want to believe that "He is righteous" (1 John 2:29). We have no right to accept the first, but to reject the latter. To do so with these attributes, or with any of the others, is to have a false idea of the nature of God. And such error can have eternally disastrous results.

3) The practical importance of knowing God's attributes.

a) As ^{they} ~~it~~ relates to salvation.

ROM. 1:16-32

" 3:24 - GRACE

" 3:25 - RIGHTEOUS

" 5:8; JOHN. 3:16

EPH. 2:4-7

1 PET. 1:3-5

JN. 10:27-29

A person's consciousness of his need for salvation will be in direct proportion to his knowledge of the character of God.

In addition -- no person can understand the dreadful nature of sin who does not understand to some extent the nature of God.

Therefore, in seeking to lead others to Christ it is important to teach people about God.

b) As ^{they} ~~it~~ relates to the Christian life.

Consider the significance of the following Scripture passages in this connection: Isa. 26:3, 4; Dan. 11:32; Matt. 11:28-30; Eph. 1:15-23; Phil. 3:10; Heb. 11:6; 2 Peter 1:2, 3; 3:18.

- c) As they relate to the world and to conditions in the world.

See Exodus 9:14-16; Isaiah 40:9-17; 43:13; Daniel 2:20-22; 4:17, 25, 32, 34, 35; 5:21; John 19:10, 11; Romans 13:1, 2.

b. The Methods of Determining the Attributes of God.

Theologians have followed two methods in seeking to determine the characteristics of God's nature:

1) The Rationalistic Method.

This is similar to the arguments for the existence of God. See pages 21, 22. Its main weakness is that it begins with the world and with man, and then moves toward God. This method has certain values in that it confirms what we have in the Scriptures. But, if it is used alone, it is inadequate and is confronted with insurmountable difficulties. This can be seen by examining the three main divisions of this method.

a) The way of causality.

This method begins with what we find in the world, and then goes on to conclude that God is the kind of a Being required to explain the world. Thus, we see in creation the evidence of God's wisdom and power, which is justified by Romans 1:20. Yet, we must recognize two problems.

- 1) Creation does not and cannot tell us all that we need to know about God.
- 2) This method fails to take into consideration that there are things in nature which are different now from what they were when God originally created the heaven and the earth. Since Adam's fall, creation has carried the effect of his sin.

b) The way of eminence.

This method ascribes to God in a perfect degree the virtues which are found in a more limited way in man. Thus we see the kindness of man, and come to the conclusion that God is kind.

There is an element of truth in this method also because the Scriptures teach that "God created man in his own image" (Gen. 1:27).

Its weaknesses are at least twofold:

- 1) It fails to take into consideration how sin has affected man.
- 2) It assumes that all of the attributes of God are to be found in man.

c) The way of negation.

This method also begins with man, but in the opposite way from the way of eminence. It looks at man's imperfections

and concludes that God must be just the opposite. Thus we are to conclude that God is infinite because man is finite.

While there are ways in which man is and always will be different from God, yet it is easy to see the fallacy of such a method if used alone. Its inadequacy arises from the assumption that all of God's attributes are in contrast with the nature of man -- which, according to Scripture, is not true.

Let us recognize certain values in the three rationalistic methods, but let us also see the errors:

- 1) Each one is incomplete in itself.
- 2) Each one is based upon the reasoning ability of man apart from the revelation that God has given us in His Word.

The only reliable way to determine the attributes of God is:

2) The Scriptural Method.

Since we have already established under Bibliology that the Bible is both a revelation from God and a revelation of God, the Bible is, therefore, our primary and only completely authoritative source of knowledge concerning God, His nature and His works.

To obtain this knowledge, the following points need to be kept in mind:

- 1) The facts of Scripture must be accepted as our basic authority.
- 2) Our searching of Scripture must be thorough. See page 32. It must include the Old Testament as well as the New Testament -- and all of the books of both Testaments.
- 3) Our study must always be under the direction of the Spirit of God. The knowledge of God must be "spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).
- 4) Such knowledge must always have practical results in the life of the child of God.
 - a) To cause us to worship God.
 - b) To strengthen our faith in God.
 - c) To increase our obedience to God and His will.

In the study of the Attributes of God it is important for us to keep in mind that God has revealed what He wants us to know, not just what man has requested, nor what man feels that he needs to know. This is another reason for giving the most careful consideration to all of the Word of God.

c. The Division of the Attributes. ~~A~~ PSALM OF THE ATTRIBUTES - PSALM 86.

Various divisions have been suggested by theologians throughout the history of the Church to help us to understand the attributes of God. It would seem that the most practical division is twofold:

- 1) Those attributes which God possesses perfectly in Himself, and which cannot be transmitted to man.
- 2) Those attributes which God possesses in perfection, but which also, either by creation alone or by creation and by salvation, are to be observed in man also.

By way of explanation, when considering the fact that some of the divine attributes are communicated, or transmitted, to believers, this does not mean that the people of God will eventually become Deity. The other fact -- that some of the divine attributes are not and cannot be communicated to the saints -- is evidence that there will always be a difference between God and His people, a difference which will continue throughout eternity!

Also, we must remember that it is impossible for us to claim ultimate and final knowledge of God. We are limited to what God has revealed in His Word, but no one in this life will ever be able to comprehend fully what has been revealed. We grow spiritually as the Spirit of God enlarges our understanding of the revelation of God in Scripture. But it is impossible for finite minds to grasp completely the knowledge of an infinite God.

In identifying and categorizing the attributes, it is important, first of all, to recognize the essential nature of God -- a fact of Scripture which is vitally related to both the incommunicable and communicable attributes.

1) The essential nature of God: "God is a spirit" (John 4:24a).

This is referred to in theology as the spirituality of God. It is in itself an attribute. We set it by itself because it is so basic to the other attributes.

2) The incommunicable attributes of God.

Note: Incommunicable means that they cannot be imparted, transmitted, passed along, to man.

- a) *The eternity of God*
God's eternity.
- b) *The self-existence of God*
God's self-existence, or His independence.
- c) *The immutability of God*
God's immutability.
- d) *The infinity of God*
God's infinity, or His immensity, His omnipresence.
- e) *The unity of God*
God's unity, or His simplicity.

3) The communicable attributes of God.

- a) God's holiness.
- b) God's knowledge and wisdom. *His omniscience.*
- c) God's righteousness.
- d) God's goodness -- including His love, His grace, His mercy, His patience and longsuffering, and His faithfulness.
- e) God's will.

- f) God's power -- His omnipotence. ~~His~~ sovereignty.
- g) God's wrath.

d. The Attributes Defined.

1) The spirituality of God.

The key text is John 4:24. Many ideas are contained in our Lord's words, "God is a spirit," or, God is spirit. Some of the main ideas are:

- a) God is different from man.
- b) God is above man.
- c) God is a living Person.
- d) God is both intelligent and moral.
- e) God cannot be seen, nor can He be touched.
- f) God does not have a body. He cannot be explained at all in terms of material substance.

It is true that there are passages in which we read of God's face, God's hands, etc (see pages 24, 25), but these are anthropomorphisms, terms with which God is condescending to accommodate Himself to the limitations of human thought. He wants us to understand that He is a Person. But the fact that He is also "spirit" means that He is capable of acting without bodily members in the same way we do with bodily members, i.e., He sees, He hears, and so on.

Related Scriptures: Numbers 16:22; Isaiah 31:3; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:15, 16; Hebrews 12:9.

The spirituality of God is absolutely essential to His incommunicable attributes in particular.

- 2) The incommunicable attributes of God. These are the characteristics of God which "separate God by an impassable chasm from every work of His hands" (Thornwell, I, 189). "These are the badges of Divinity -- that glory which He will not and cannot give to another" (Ibid). "Without these, He would only be man or an angel on a larger scale. These, too, constitute the veil which hangs over the mystery of His being -- a veil which, according to the inscription upon the temple of Isis, no mortal will ever be able to remove. We can only stand afar off and gaze at the ineffable glory. We can adore where we cannot understand" (the complete quot. is from Thornwell, I, pp. 189, 190).