

The Doctrine of God

I. The Existence of God

A. Definitions

1. Theology - *Greek theos* - God...*logos* - discourse or reason
2. Natural Theology - study of God as revealed in the universe and in nature
3. Biblical Theology - study of God as revealed in the Scriptures
4. Systematic Theology - study of God through a preconceived mold or system

B. Knowing God - *Isaiah 57:15*

1. God most High - incomprehensible
2. God most Nigh - intimate

C. Arguments for God's existence

1. Reason - cause and effect
 - a. Matter and motion exist eternally - energy from sun and starts depleting - *needs to have beginning*
 - b. Matter and motion emerged from nothing-contradiction-*from nothing comes nothing*
 - c. Matter and motion created-complexity and rationality by design-*points to creator*
2. Nature - designed purpose and orderly movement
3. History - interaction of Divine Providence
4. Human Nature - image of God and moral conceptions
 - a. Cognitive abilities - possession of thoughts, feelings, reason not based on physical nature alone
 - b. Moral abilities - possession of right and wrong with abilities to develop a conscience based on knowledge
5. Universal Belief - every race has a belief system based on the supernatural
6. Scripture - teachings, accuracy, and wide-spread acceptance provide a sound argument

II. The Nature of God

"God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." Westminster Catechism

A. Aspect of God's Nature

1. God is Spirit - *John 4:24*
2. God is Infinite - *Isaiah 40:28*
3. God is light - *I John 1:15*
4. God is love - *I John 4:8*
5. God is perfect - *Matthew 5:48*
6. God is holy - *I Peter 1:16*
7. God is one - *Deuteronomy 6:4*

B. Erroneous Beliefs

1. Atheism - denies the existence of God
2. Agnosticism - denies the human ability to know God
3. Polytheism - belief in many gods
4. Pantheism - belief that God is nature
5. Materialism - denies the existence of the spiritual realm
6. Deism - belief in absentee God
7. Dualism - belief in two opposite realms opposed to each other

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

Midwest City Free Methodist Church

III. The Names of God - *Psalm 9:10*

A. El - God, mighty one - *Deuteronomy 32:4*

1. El Elyon - the Most High - *Deuteronomy 32:8*
2. El Olam - the Everlasting God - *Psalm 32:8*
3. El Shaddai - the Almighty God - *Genesis 17:1*
4. Elohim - God, creator - *Genesis 1:1*

B. Adonai - Lord Master, Ruler - *Genesis 15:1-2*

C. Jehovah - Yahweh - *Exodus 6:2-3*

1. Jehovah-Jireh-Provider *Gen. 22:16*
2. Jehovah-Rapha-Healer *Ex. 15:26*
3. Jehovah-Nissi-Banner *Ex. 17:15*
4. Jehovah-Shalom-Peace *Judges 6:24*
5. Jehovah-Raah-Shepherd *Ps 23:1*
6. Jehovah-Tsidkenu-Righteousness *Jer. 23:6*
7. Jehovah-Sabaoth-Hosts *Ps. 24:10*
8. Jehovah-Shammah-There *Ez. 48:35*
9. Jehovah-Elohim-Creator *Gen. 2:4*
10. Jehovah-M'kaddesh-Sanctification *I Cor. 1:30*

IV. The Attributes of God

A. Absolute Attributes

1. Unchangeable - *Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8* - the same
2. Life-Giver - *John 5:26* - creator
3. Life-Eternal - *I Timothy 1:17* - immortal
4. Omnipresence - *Jeremiah 23:23-24* - everywhere
5. Omniscience - *Psalms 139:1-4* - all knowledge
6. Omnipotent - *Jeremiah 32:17* - all power
7. Sovereign - *Colossians 1:15-17* - all authority

B. Moral Attributes

1. Holiness - *Leviticus 11:44-45*
2. Righteousness (Justice) - *Romans 3:25-26*
3. Love (mercy, goodness) - *I John 4:8-11*
4. Truth - *Deuteronomy 32:4*

V. The Tri-Unity of God

A. The Holy Trinity

1. One eternal God who has revealed Himself
2. Three equal, but distinct Persons, united

B. God the Father

1. First Person of the Holy Trinity
2. Eternal One and reigns supremely
3. He has provided a covenant for redemption and deliverance

C. God the Son

1. Second Person of the Holy Trinity
2. Eternal Son - incarnate as Mary's virgin-born Child - Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ
3. He revealed to us both the fullness of humanity and the fullness of deity
4. By His life, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension He provided the only way of salvation
5. His sacrifice on a cross once and for all was to reconcile holy God and sinners
6. He intercedes now as High Priest before the Father
7. He will return to judge every person, living and dead and to consummate His kingdom

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

D. God the Holy Spirit

1. Third Person of the Holy Trinity
2. Active from the beginning in creation, revelation, and redemption
3. His anointing came upon the prophets, the priests, and the kings for the purpose and power of God in the Old Testament
4. His anointing came upon Jesus of Nazareth without measure
5. He convicts and woos the lost; gives new birth to the penitent; and abides in the believer, perfecting holiness
6. He came to the Church at Pentecost, enabling believers to yield fruit and endowing them with spiritual gifts according to His will
7. He bears witness to Christ and guides believers into His truth
8. He inspired the Holy Scriptures
9. He illuminates God's word to people concerning God's truth and God's will
10. His counsel is always in harmony with Christ and the truth as given in the Holy Scriptures

But true religion, or a heart right towards God and [humanity], implies happiness, as well as holiness. For it is not only righteousness, but also "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." What peace? The peace of God, which God only can give, and the world cannot take away, the peace which "passeth all understanding," all (barely) rational conception, being a supernatural sensation, a divine taste of "the powers of the world to come," such as the natural man knoweth not, how wise soever in the things of this world, not, indeed, can...know it, in his present state, "because it is spiritually discerned." It is a peace that banishes all doubt, all painful uncertainty, the Spirit of God bearing witness with the spirit of a Christian, that he [or she] is a child of God.

—John Wesley

The explicitly Christian references to the *imago* symbol can be summarized succinctly in two interrelated ideas. First, they affirm that Jesus as Christ is himself the image of God. Second, they affirm that those who through hearing, baptism and the work of the divine Spirit are being incorporated into the life of the Christ—that is, believers—are being conformed to the image as revealed and embodied in Christ, and thus renewed according to the original intension of the Creator.

—From "Imaging God" by Douglas John Hall

"Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou discernest my thoughts from afar."

Psalm 139:2

These words sufficiently prove His omnipresence, which may be further proved from this consideration: God acts everywhere, and, therefore, is everywhere—for it is an utter impossibility that any being, created or uncreated, should work where it is not. God acts in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, throughout the whole compass of His creation: “Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways” (v. 3). He sustains all things without which everything would, in an instant sink into its primitive nothing. He governs all, every moment superintending everything He has made, strongly and sweetly influences all, and yet without destroying the liberty of His rational creatures.

—*John Wesley*

If you say that God is good, great, blessed, wise or any such thing, the starting point is this—God is... What is God? He is almighty will moved by loving kindness, virtue, eternal light, incommunicable reason, highest blessedness; He is the creator of minds to enjoy Himself; He endows them to long for Him, enlarges them to receive Him, justifies them to be worthy of Him, fires them with zeal, fertilizes them that they may bear fruit, guides them into sweet reasonableness, molds them to lovingkindness, regulates them for wisdom, strengthens them for virtue, visits them for consolation, illuminates them with knowledge, preserves them for happiness, is about their path for safety. He does not merely sound in ears, He enters hearts.

—*Bernard of Clairvaux*

When we get a vision of the God of whom Jesus speaks we will want fellowship with this one who combines the best qualities of a good father and a good mother. We are children. There is no question about Abba’s receiving us. All we need to do is acknowledge our childishness and come. This is the reason why the broken and simple, the poor in spirit, the anxiety-ridden, the mourning, the meek, the unsatisfied and unfulfilled, the hungry and thirsty, the persecuted and ridiculed find it so easy to turn to the God Jesus reveals. Those who are doing quite well on their own and think they have life securely within their grasp don’t like to admit their ultimate helplessness and come as children before Abba. They don’t feel the need of it.

—*Morton T. Kelsey*

Picturing God must precede any speaking about God, for our pictures accompany all our words and they continue long after we fall silent before God. Images—the language of the psyche—are the coin of life; they touch our emotions as well as our thoughts; they reach down into our bodies as well as toward our ideas. They arrive unbidden, startling, after our many years of effort to craft them.

—*Ann Belford Ulanov*

Whether you are on the sand worshipping, or at the teacher’s desk in a classroom, what does it matter as long as you are doing the will of God?

And if the will of God urges you to seek out the poor, to give up all you possess, or leave for distant lands, what does the rest matter? Or if it calls you to found a family, or take on a job in a city, why should you have any doubts?

“His will is our peace,” says Dante. And perhaps that is the expression which best brings into focus our deep dependence on God.

—*Carlo Caretto*

The Doctrine of Humanity

*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars,
which you set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?*

Psalm 8:3-4

I. The Origin of Humanity

Greek - *eikon tou theou*

Hebrew - *Tselem Elohim*

Latin - *Imago Dei*

A. The Image of God

1. Humanity was conformed to an ideal form which God possesses
2. Humanity's dominion over the earth and its creatures
3. Humanity's rationality and ability to have communion with his Creator
4. Humanity's original holiness, righteousness, and moral nature
5. Humanity's personality of intellect, emotion, and will
6. Humanity's triune being of body, soul, and spirit

B. Different Aspects of the Image of God

1. God is Spirit - man has a spirit
2. God is a Person - man has personality
3. God is Moral - man has a conscience
4. God is Love - man has relationships

C. Created Living Being

1. Body formed from dust

- a. Mortal body will return to dust - *Genesis 3:19*
- b. Dust in the hands of God is something wonderful - *Psalm 139:14-16a*
- c. Mortal body is only a temporary habitat - *II Corinthians 5:1*
- d. Mortal body will reflect new body in resurrection - *I Corinthians 15:44*
- e. Mortal body is a temple of the Holy Spirit - *I Corinthians 6:19-20*
- f. Mortal body is a living sacrifice to God - *Romans 12:1*

2. Breath of God

- a. Life - *Mark 8:35*
- b. Soul - *Mark 8:36* - Hebrew - *nephesh*; Greek - *psuche*
- c. Spirit - *Psalm 31:5* - Hebrew - *ruach*; Greek - *pneuma*
- d. Mind - *Romans 7:25*
- e. Heart - *Ephesians 6:6*
- f. Strength - *Luke 10:27*
- g. Self - *I Corinthians 4:3-4*
- h. Will - *I Corinthians 7:37*
- i. Affections - *Colossians 3:2*

II. The Nature of Humanity

A. Trichotomy - Body, Soul, Spirit

1. *Genesis 2:7* - body of dust and breath of God resulted in the soul of man
2. *I Thessalonians 5:23* - Three parts of man
3. *Hebrews 4:12* - soul and spirit are capable of being divided by God's Word

B. Dichotomy - Body and Spirit

1. *Genesis 2:7* - body of dust and breath of God form a living being (soul)
2. Terms "soul" and "spirit" are used interchangeably - compare - *John 12:27* to *John 13:21*
3. Terms "soul" and "spirit" are used of animals and men - see *Ecclesiastes 3:21* and *Revelation 16:3*
4. The term "soul" is the whole of man - *Mark 8:36-37*

C. Basic Instincts

1. Preservation - *Genesis 3:3*
2. Food - *Genesis 1:29*
3. Procreation - *Genesis 2:24*
4. Domination - *Genesis 1:28*

D. Basic Needs

1. Propitiation - *I John 4:9-10*
2. Justification - *Romans 3:19-25*
3. Reconciliation - *Colossians 1:19-22*
4. Regeneration - *II Corinthians 5:17*

E. Basic Personalities

1. Sanguine - expressive - *Luke*
2. Choleric - big picture - *John*
3. Phlegmatic - amiable - *Mark*
4. Melancholy - analytical - *Matthew*

III. The State of Humanity

- A. Man and woman are fashioned in the image of God and are different from all God's other creatures
- B. God intends that we should glorify Him and enjoy Him forever
- C. Sin has pervaded every person and extended into social relationships, societal systems and all creation
- D. Grace is the only means of positively responding to God's offer for redemption
- E. Only through the justifying, regenerating and sanctifying work of the triune God can we be saved from the corruption of sin and transformed to the image of Christ

Wholeness, when open to the Spirit of God, is a seedbed for holiness. When our center has been reformed in Christ, an environment is created that opens us to the promptings of the Kingdom. In biblical terms, like Bartimaeus we begin to see.

—From “*Invitation of Holiness*” by James C. Fenhagen

The atheist is not always the enemy. Atheists can be among a Christian's best friend. Atheists, for instance, whose atheism develops out of protest: angry about what is wrong with the world, they are roused to passionate defiance. That a good God permits the birth of crippled children, that a loving God allows rape and torture, that a sovereign God stands aside while the murderous regime of a Genghis Khan or an Adolf Hitler runs its course - such outrageous paradoxes simply cannot be countenanced. So God is eliminated. The removal of God does not reduce the suffering, but it does wipe out the paradox. Such atheism is not the result of logical (or illogical) thought: it is sheer protest. Anger over the suffering and unfairness in the world becomes anger against the God who permits it. Defiance is expressed by denial. Such atheism is commonly full of compassion. It suffers and rages. It is deeply spiritual, in touch with the human condition and eternal values.

—From “*Earth and Altar*” by Eugene H. Peterson

You may put a telescope into the hands of a man who is blind, and bid him look at some distant star, or on some lovely landscape. He tells you he sees nothing. Well, his witness is true. But if the blind man goes further, and asserts, that because he sees nothing there is *nothing to see*, his assertion is untrue and his witness is worthless because he speaks beyond the range of his capacity. Such is the value of the natural man's *opinion* when he declares his mind on spiritual things. But the natural man may *become* spiritual. The spiritually blind may be restored to sight. The Agnostic who “knows not” may be brought to see and understand and know.

Evan H. Hopkins

Jesus Christ never trusted human nature, yet He was never cynical, never suspicious, because He trusted absolutely in what He could do for human nature. The pure man or woman, not the innocent, is the safeguarded man or woman. You are never safe with an innocent man or woman. Men and women have no business to be innocent; God demands that they be pure and virtuous. Innocence is the characteristic of a child; it is a blameworthy thing for a man or woman not to be reconciled to the fact of sin.

Oswald Chambers

“What is man, that thou hast such respect unto him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?” Here the Psalmist seems to consider the life of man as a moment, a nothing, compared to eternity. Is not the purport of the former, “How can he that filleth heaven and earth take knowledge of such an atom as man? How is it that he is not utterly lost in the immensity of God’s works?” Is not the purport of the latter, “How can he that inhabiteth eternity stoop to regard the creature of a day - one whose life passeth away like a shadow?” Is not this a thought which has struck many serious minds, as well as it did David’, and created a kind of fear lest they should be forgotten before him who grasps all space and all eternity? but does not this fear arise from a kind of supposition that God is such a one as ourselves?

If we consider boundless space, or boundless duration, we shrink into nothing before it. But God is not a man. A day, and millions of ages, are the same with him. Therefore, there is the same disproportion between him and any finite being, as between him and the creature of a day. Therefore, whenever that thought recurs, whenever you are tempted to fear lest you should be forgotten before the immense, the eternal God, remember that nothing is little or great, that no duration is long or short, before him. Remember that God “presides over every individual as over the universe; and the universe, as over each individual.”

—John Wesley

You feel lost in the world in your suffering, no one cares for you, alas, and you conclude, neither does God care for me. You fool! you traducer, to speak thus of God. No, if there were anyone of whom it were literally true that he was of all the most neglected - he is the one whom God loves. Or if he were not quite the most neglected, if he still had a little human consolation - and that were taken from him: in the very same moment it would be more certain still that God loves him.

—Soren Kierkegaard

As the whole world is God’s, so the whole world is to act for God. As all men have the same relation to God, as all men have all their powers and faculties from God, so all men are obliged to act for God, with all their powers and faculties.

As all things are God’s, so all things are to be used and regarded as the things of God. For men to abuse things on earth, and live to themselves, is the same rebellion against God, as for angels to abuse things in Heaven; because God, is just the same Lord of all on earth, as He is the Lord of all in Heaven.

—From “*A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*” by William Law

The Doctrine of Sin

I. The Source of Sin

- A. God is the Creator of all things but not the author of sin
 - 1. God is holy - *Isaiah 6:3*
 - 2. God is perfect - *Deuteronomy 32:4*
 - 3. God is righteous - *Psalms 92:15*
 - 4. God hates sin - *Deuteronomy 25:6*
 - 5. God does not tempt - *James 1:13*
- B. Satan was the first to lift up his will against God's will - *Isaiah 14:12-14*
 - 1. "I will ascend to heaven" - deliberate, self-determined revolt against God
 - 2. "I will raise my throne above the stars of God" - exerting authority over the heavens
 - 3. "I will sit enthroned in the mount of assembly" - exerting authority over the earth
 - 4. "I will ascend above the tops of the clouds" - possessing the glory of God
 - 5. "I will make myself like the most high" - independent opposition to God
- C. Man was tempted by Satan in the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were the second to lift up their will against God's will - *Genesis 3*
 - 1. Man began in the image of God and fell into sin
 - 2. Man exercised his free choice and chose disobedience
 - 3. Man needed only God, but rebelled against His word
 - 4. Man was tempted by Satan - Satan fell without any outside influence, but man responded to a tempter.

II. The First Human Sin

- A. Process of Temptation - *Genesis 3:1-6*
 - 1. Satan cast doubts on God's Word - v. 1
 - 2. Eve tampered with God's word - vv. 2-3
 - a. Added to God's Word
 - b. Altered God's Word
 - c. Omitted God's Word
 - 3. Satan contradicted God's Word - vv. 4-5
 - 4. Eve succumbed to temptation - v. 6
- B. The Effects of Sin
 - 1. Man's attitude toward himself - guilt and shame
 - 2. Man's attitude toward God - fear and insecurity
 - 3. Man's attitude towards his fellow man - hatred and blame
- C. The Curse
 - 1. Upon the Serpent - *Genesis 3:14*
 - 2. Upon the woman - *Genesis 3:16*
 - 3. Upon the man - *Genesis 3:17-19*
 - 4. Upon the ground - *Genesis 3:17-18*

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

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III. The Nature of Sin

*Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgressions of,
any law of God given as a rule to the reasonable creature.*

Westminster Catechism

A. The Law of God

1. The law is holy and reveals holiness to man
2. The law reflects God's character
3. The law intensifies man's knowledge of sin
4. The law leads man to Christ

B. Expressions for Sin

1. Missing the mark - *Romans 3:23*
2. Crossing the line - transgressions - *I Timothy 2:14*
3. Failure to listen - disobedience - *Hebrews 2:2-3*
4. Failure to stand - *Galatians 6:1*
5. Failure to act - *James 4:17*
6. Failure to learn - *Hebrews 9:7*
7. Failure to give in right measure - *I Corinthians 6:7*
8. Lawlessness - *I John 3:4*
9. Iniquity - *Leviticus 26:40*
10. Godlessness - *I Peter 4:8*
11. Wickedness - *Proverbs 11:31*
12. Unbelief - *Romans 11:20*
13. Unrighteousness - *I John 1:9*
14. Unjustness - *Deuteronomy 25:16*
15. Unholiness - *I Timothy 1:9*

C. Important Considerations

1. Sins of omission - failure to fulfill God's word and God's law - *Malachi 3:8*
2. Sins of unbelief - failure to activate faith in God - *Romans 14:23*
3. Sins of ignorance - failure to find the truth - *Luke 12:47-48*
4. One sin makes one guilty of all - *James 2:10*

D. Universality of Sin - *Romans 3:23*

1. All mankind has sinned
2. Christ died for all

E. Imputation of Sin - *Romans 5:12-21*

1. Adam's sin passed on to the human race
2. Our sin to Christ, as He died for us
3. Our sinful nature - fallen from a right relationship with God, ourselves, and others
4. Our depravity - continuous bias towards evil

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

Midwest City Free Methodist Church

At the beginning of life we do not reconcile ourselves to the fact of sin. We take a rational view of life and say that a man by controlling his instincts, and by educating himself, can produce a life which will slowly involve into the life of God. But as we go on, we find the presence of something which we have not taken into consideration, viz., sin, and it upsets all our calculations. Sin has made the basis of things wild and not rational. We have to recognize that sin is a fact, not a defect; sin is red-handed mutiny against God. Either God or sin must die in my life.

Sin is a thing I am born with and I cannot touch it; God touches sin in Redemption. In the Cross of Jesus Christ God redeemed the whole human race from the possibility of damnation through the heredity of sin. God nowhere holds a man responsible for having the heredity of sin. The condemnation is not that I am born with a heredity of sin, but if when I realize Jesus Christ came to deliver me from it, I refuse to let Him do so, from that moment I begin to get the seal of damnation. "And this is the judgment." (the critical moment), "that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light."

—*Oswald Chambers*

Spiritual awareness for Christians, at its fullest, means a seeing life through God's sound eye. We could use other senses to describe this awareness: hearing life through God's ear, touching life through God's strength, feeling life through God's compassion. Jesus revealed our incredible intimacy with the infinite One we call God, so we can dare to speak of being God's senses in the world. Saint Paul called us to live in the mind of Christ so fully that we can say with him. "Not I, but Christ, lives in me." The "I" that no longer lives then is the one that sees itself as an ultimately self-willed, self-centered being. The new "I" is one that lives moment by moment in the awareness that we are an intimate and unique expression of compassion, utterly interdependent with Creator and creation.

The test of any spiritual discipline is whether or not it assists this deep awareness for us. Without spiritual discipline we become easier prey to the old "I" that is full of possessiveness, fear, greed, anxiety, violence, indolence, untrustworthiness, willfulness, confusion, and all the other marks of life disconnected from our true being in God.

—From Tilden H. Edwards in "*Living with Apocalypse*"

O to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee;
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it; Seal it for Thy courts above. Amen.

"Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" Hymn #2
The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

Midwest City Free Methodist Church

“And lead us not into temptation.” The word translated *temptation*, means trial of any kind. And so the English word *temptation* was formerly taken in an indifferent sense; although now it is usually understood of solicitation to sin. St. James uses the word in both these senses; first, in its general, then in its restrained, acceptation. He takes it in the former sense when he says, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, [or approved of God,] He shall receive the crown of life” (1:12). He immediately adds, taking the word in the latter sense, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is *drawn away* of his own lust,” or *desire* - drawn out of God, in whom alone he is safe - “and *enticed*”; caught as a fish with bait. Then it is, when he is thus *drawn away and enticed*, that he properly enters into temptation. Then temptation covers him as a cloud; it overspreads his whole soul. Then how hardly shall he escape out of snare!

Therefore, we beseech God “not to lead us into temptation”, that is, (seeing God tempteth no man,) not to suffer us to be led into it. “But deliver us from evil,” rather - “*from the evil one.*” He is unquestionable *the wicked one*, emphatically so called, the prince and god of this world, who works with mighty power in the children of disobedience. But all those who are the children of God, by faith, are delivered out of his hands. He may fight against them; and so he will. But he cannot conquer, unless they betray their own souls. He may torment for a time, but he cannot destroy; for God is on their side, who will not fail, in the end, to “avenge his own elect, that cry unto him day and night.”

Lord, when we are tempted, suffer us not to enter into temptation! Make a way for us to escape, that the wicked one touch us not!

—John Wesley

A brother...committed a fault. A council was called to which Abba Moses was invited, but he refused to go to it. Then the priest sent someone to say to him, “Com, for everyone is waiting for you.” So he got up and went. He took a leaking jug, filled it with water, and carried it with him. The others came out to meet him and said to him, “What is this, Father?” The old man said to them, “My sins run out behind me, and I do not see them, and today I am coming to judge the errors of another.” When they heard that they said no more to the brother but forgave him.

—From “*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*”
translated by Benedicta Ward

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy.
Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy.
Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.

Attributed to Saint Augustine

The Doctrine of Salvation

I. Definitions

- A. Atonement - provision of salvation which God made for sinners through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ - *Hebrew 2:17*
 - 1. Propitiation - bringing together; making favorable; turning away wrath by a sacrifice - *I John 4:10*
 - 2. Substitution - taking the place of another - *II Corinthians 5:21*
 - 3. Redemption - to buy back by paying the price; to set free by ransom; to buy from the market and set free - *I Peter 1:18*
 - 4. Reconciliation - exchange, trade - *Romans 5:2-10*
- B. Salvation - provision of security which sets a person in a right relationship with God and is dedicated to God's service
 - 1. Justification - judicial term meaning acquitted and declared righteous - *Romans 5:9*
 - 2. Regeneration - new life imparted by a Divine act - *John 3:3*
 - 3. Adoption - acceptance as sons and daughters of God - *Galatians 4:4-5*
 - 5. Sanctification - dedication, consecration or setting apart for a specific holy use - *I Corinthians 6:11*

II. The Steps of Salvation

- A. Election - a sovereign act of God in grace whereby God chose in Christ Jesus for salvation all those who He foreknew would accept Him - *Romans 8:28-30*
 - 1. Every person is free to accept Christ as his personal Savior, if he will
 - 2. Every person is invited and prompted to do so
 - 3. Every person who refuses Jesus Christ heads for eternal ruin
 - 4. Election is for those people already in the body of Christ
- B. Repentance - a change in mind or purpose; turning - *II Corinthians 7:9-10*
 - 1. Intellectual - change of view in regard to sin, self and God
 - 2. Emotional - remorse is different than repentance; remorse is being sorry for an act of sin; repentance requires a change in the person
 - 3. Volitional - repentance is an act of will; a decision
 - 4. Spiritual - a gift of God resulting in...
 - a. Confessing sin - *Psalms 38:18*
 - b. Forsaking sin - *Isaiah 55:7*
 - c. Turning to God - *I Thessalonians 1:9*
 - d. Bearing restitution - *Luke 19:8*
- C. Faith - belief and trust in God - *Hebrews 11:1*
 - 1. Importance of faith
 - a. Salvation - *Ephesians 2:8*
 - b. Holy Spirit - *Galatians 3:14*
 - c. Sanctification - *Acts 15:9*
 - d. Security - *I Peter 1:5*
 - e. Peace - *Hebrews 4:3*
 - f. Healing - *James 5:14*
 - g. Victory over sin - *Romans 6:11*
 - h. Victory over Satan - *Eph. 6:6-16*
 - i. Victory over the World - *I John 5:4*
 - j. Life - *Romans 1:17*
 - 2. Elements of Faith
 - a. Surrendering your life to God
 - b. Appropriating Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

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D. Justification

1. Pardon or remission of sins - *Acts 13:38-39*
2. Restoration to God's favor - *Romans 5:9*
3. Imputation of the righteousness of Christ - *Romans 4:6-8*
 - a. Not by works - *Romans 11:5-6*
 - b. Not by keeping the law - *Romans 3:19-23*
 - c. By the gift of God's grace - *Romans 3:24*
 - d. Through the substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ - *I Peter 2:23*
 - e. Through faith - *Romans 5:1*

E. New Birth

1. New Testament descriptions
 - a. Birth - *I John 5:1*
 - b. Cleansing - *Titus 3:5*
 - c. Quickening - *Romans 12:2*
 - d. Creation - *II Corinthians 5:17*
 - e. Resurrection - *Romans 6:2-7*

*This is symbolized in Water Baptism. The believer identifies with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.
2. The Necessity of New Birth
 - a. Cannot see the kingdom of God without it - *John 3:3*
 - b. Nature of a person's first birth - *John 3:6*
 - c. Person without New Birth is spiritually void - *Ephesians 2:1*

F. Adoption - God placing us as sons and daughters

1. Witness of the Holy Spirit - *Galatians 4:5-6*
2. Deliverance from fear - *Romans 8:15*
3. Joint-heirs with Jesus Christ - *Romans 8:17*

G. Sanctification - made holy before God

1. Aspects of Sanctification
 - a. Positional - the believer is found in Christ; called saints from time of conversion - *I Corinthians 6:11*
 - b. Practical - Holy Spirit working in a believer's heart and through the believers life - *II Thessalonians 2:13*
 - c. Complete - final and eternal condition of believers - sinless and perfect - *II Corinthians 3:18*
2. Means of Sanctification
 - a. Activate faith - *Acts 26:18*
 - b. Obey the word - *John 15:3*
 - c. Yield to the Spirit - *John 16:13*
 - d. Participate in the Kingdom - *Romans 12:1-2*

H. Assurance - the reality of receiving eternal life here and now; fellowship with God in very tangible and practical ways

1. Lack of assurance
 - a. Self-righteousness - works and rules - *Isaiah 64:6*
 - b. Not born again - religious ceremonies and character reform - *John 3:7*
 - c. Sin-centered - overwhelmed by habitual sin and guilt - *John 1:29*
 - d. Lack of faith - doubt and fear have control - *I John 4:18*
 - e. Lack of obedience - failure to carry forth God's word and will - *James 1:22*

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

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2. Positive Means of Assurance
 - a. Witness of the Spirit - *Romans 8:16* - **Conviction**
 - b. Witness of the Word - *John 5:14* - **Obedience**
 - c. Witness of the Church - *I John 3:11-14* - **Love**
 - d. Witness of the World - *Romans 5:1* - **Peace**
 - e. Witness of the Cross - *Colossians 2:13-15* - **Power**
 - f. Witness of the Heart - *Colossians 3:5-14* - **Change**

III. The Security of Salvation

- A. Calvinism - taught by Augustine first, then John Calvin
 1. Salvation is entirely of God - humanity has nothing to do with it
 2. Repentance and faith - only from God's power
 3. Humanity is in complete bondage to sin
 4. God has predestined some to be saved and others to be lost
 5. God is under no obligation to save anyone
 6. Christ died for the Elect; "once in grace always in grace."
 - B. Arminianism - names after Arminius, a Dutch Theologian, who affirmatively challenged Augustine and Calvin's views
 1. God's will is that all men be saved because Christ died for all
 2. Salvation belongs to God alone-yet humanity has a certain condition to fulfill
 - a. Choose to accept God's grace
 - b. Reject or resist God's grace
 3. Predestination is the foreknowledge of humanity's destiny, but not programming it
 4. Predestination is for the assurance of believers that God is with them
- *Scriptures for loss of grace - *John 6:40; Hebrews 6:4-6; Hebrews 10:26-30; II Peter 2:21; Hebrews 2:3; II Peter 1:10; I Corinthians 10:1-12*

Salvation is more than simply going to heaven with eternal happiness or ascending to that paradise Jesus called "Abraham's bosom." It is much more than the blessing which lies on the other side of death, in the other world. The very words of Paul's text put this beyond all question; "Ye *are* saved" is not something at a distance. It is present; a blessing which, through the free mercy of God, you may now possess. The words also may be rendered with equal propriety, "Ye *have been* saved." Thus, salvation is the entire work of God - from the first dawning of grace in the soul until it is completed in final glory.

—John Wesley

The Christian worker must never forget that salvation is God's thought, not man's; therefore it is an unfathomable abyss. Salvation is the great thought of God, not an experience. Experience is only a gateway by which salvation comes into our conscious life. Never preach the experience; preach the great thought of God behind. When we preach we are not proclaiming how man can be saved from hell and be made moral and pure; we are conveying good news about God.

—Oswald Chambers

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

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Having found for some time a strong desire to untie with Mr. Whitefield as far as possible, to cut off needless dispute, I have written down my sentiments, as plain as I could, in the following terms:

There are three points in debate: (1) Unconditional Election. (2) Irresistible Grace. (3) Final Perseverance.

With regard to the first, Unconditional Election, I believe—

That God, before the foundation of the world, did unconditionally elect certain persons to do certain works, as Paul to preach the gospel;

That He has unconditionally elected some nations to receive peculiar privileges; the Jewish nation in particular;

That He has unconditionally elected some nations to hear the gospel, as England and Scotland now, and many others in past ages;

That He has unconditionally elected some persons to many peculiar advantages, with regard to both temporal and spiritual things;

And I do not deny (though I cannot prove it so)

That he has unconditionally elected some persons to eternal glory.

But I cannot believe—

That all those who are not thus elected to glory must perish everlastingly; or

That there is one soul on earth who has not ever had a possibility of escaping eternal damnation.

With regard to the second, Irresistible Grace, I believe—

That the grace which brings faith, and thereby salvation, into the soul, is irresistible at that moment;

That most believers do at some other times find God irresistibly acting upon their souls;

Yet I believe, that the grace of God, both before and after those moments, may be and hath been resisted; and

That in general it does not act irresistibly, but we may comply therewith or may not.

And I do not deny—

That in some souls the grace of God is so far irresistible, that they cannot but believe and be finally saved.

But I cannot believe—

That all must be damned, in whom it does not thus irresistibly work; or that there is one soul on earth, who has not, and never had any other grace, than such as does in fact increase his damnation, and was designed of God so to do.

With regard to the third, Final Perseverance, I incline to believe—

That there is a state attainable in this life, from which a man cannot finally fall; and

That he who has attained this can say, “Old things are passed away: all things must become new.”

—*John Wesley*

The amazing truth of the kingdom is its availability. The kingdom is not for buying. It is not exclusive. It can't be hoarded. It succumbs, not to power, not to birthright, not even to the magnitude and sparkle of one's achievements. It is available to those born of the Spirit, those imbued with a simple faith. It requires one possession, freedom. The freedom to recognize kingdom-events and to follow a kingdom-course.

—From “*Every Bush is Burning,*” by Joan Puls

The Doctrine of the Church

I. Definitions

- A. Church - *Greek kuriakon* - belonging to the Lord especially in regard to communion and the Lord's Day - *I Corinthians 11:20; Revelation 1:10*
 - 1. Post-apostolic term for building used by Christians for worship
 - 2. Evolved through the Scottish word "kirk"
- B. Ekklesia - *Greek* - an assembly of people; to call out from - *Matthew 16:18*
 - 1. Interdependent relationships - social community
 - 2. Common interests, goals, ideals, beliefs
 - 3. Mutual affairs - food, water, production, protection, education, recreation, government
 - 4. Mutual edification - church collective - past, present, future
- C. Koinonia - *Greek* - having something in common; fellowship; society - *II Cor. 13:14*
 - 1. Interphrothetic relationships - Christian Community
 - 2. Intimate gathering of believers
 - 3. Communion and fellowship in the body of Christ
- D. Oikos - *Greek* - household or home; family and friends - *Acts 2:46*
 - 1. Interpersonal relationships - personal community
 - 2. Primary group of social interaction
 - 3. People with daily or weekly contact
- E. Other terms used
 - 1. Universal Body of Christ - all Christians, everywhere, throughout the ages; both on earth and in heaven - *Revelation 19:6-9*
 - 2. Local Church - geographic locality - *Romans 16:1*
 - 3. House Church - Christians meeting in homes - *I Corinthians 16:19*
 - 4. Collective Church - visible church on earth as one body of believers - *Gal 1:13*
 - 5. Body of Christ - visible church on earth with its function and interaction - *I Corinthians 12:12-31*
 - 6. Holy Catholic Church - universal body of Christ
 - 7. Denominational - a number of local churches organized for legal and administrative purposes
 - a. Non-denominational - independent church acting alone in legal and administrative duties
 - b. Interdenominational - involving two or more different denominations
 - c. Independent - not affiliated with a larger unit; self-governing
 - 8. Cell Church - church structure based on house groups and congregational groups (small and large gatherings)
 - 9. State or Government Church - church structure supported and/or controlled by a government
 - 10. Underground Church - church structure not visible to the world due to persecution

II. Leaders of the Church

- A. Apostles - *Greek apostolos* - messenger; sent on a mission - *Matthew 10:2*
 - 1. Requirements for a New Testament Apostle
 - a. To have been with the Lord - *Acts 1:21*
 - b. To witness the Resurrection - *Acts 1:22*
 - c. To have seen the Lord - *I Corinthians 9:4*
 - d. To have wrought signs, wonders and miracles - *II Corinthians 12:12*

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

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2. Modern Apostles - same meaning as the word “missionary”
 - a. Commissioned to found new churches
 - b. Sent to open new mission fields
 - c. Accompanied with signs, wonders and miracles
3. Must be a distinction between the Apostles for the foundation of the church and the apostles for the advance of the church

B. Prophets - *Greek prophetes* - to speak divine revelations - *Ephesians 2:20*

C. Evangelists - *Greek evangelism* - to bring good news; to preach the gospel - *Acts 21:8*

D. Pastors - *Greek poimen* - shepherd; spiritual leader of the local church - *Ephesians 4:11*

E. Teachers - *Greek dedaskalos* - to disciple or instruct by precept, example or experience - *Acts 13:1*

F. Elders - *Greek presbuteros* - an older person; pastor and/or teacher in charge of a local church - *Acts 14:23*

G. Bishops - *Greek episcopos* - overseer - *I Timothy 3:1-9*

H. Deacons - *Greek diakonos* - servants; helped elders minister in the local church - *I Timothy 3:8-13*

III. The Mission of the Church

A. Preaching and Teaching - *Matthew 28:18-20*

B. Discipling - *Matthew 28:18-20*

C. Fellowship - *Acts 2:42*

D. Worship - *John 4:23*

E. Missions and Evangelism - *Acts 1:8*

F. Equipping the Believer - *Ephesians 4:11-15*

G. Meeting Material Needs - *Acts 6:1-7*

IV. The Ordinances of the Church

Ordinances or sacraments are the outward sign of an inward work of grace

A. Roman Catholic Ordinances

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Communion (Mass or Eucharist)
4. Penance or Confession
5. Extreme Unction - anointing the sick and dying with oil
6. Marriage
7. Ordination of Priests and consecration of nuns

B. Protestant Ordinances

1. Baptism - part of the “Great Commission” and observed through the book of Acts
 - a. *Greek baptizo* - to immerse; to dip
 - b. Baptism identifies us with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus
2. The Lord’s Supper - referred to as breaking of bread in remembrance of the Last Passover Meal Jesus had with his disciples

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

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V. The Church as the Body of Christ

- A. Head of the Church - Jesus Christ - *Ephesians 1:22-23*
- B. One Body or Unity of the Body - *I Corinthians 12:18-26*
- C. Members of the Body - *I Corinthians 12:21-25*
- D. Submission in the Body - *I Corinthians 12:4-7*
 - 1. Submission to God - *Ephesians 5:24*
 - 2. Submission to God appointed leaders of the Church - *Hebrews 13:17*
 - 3. Submission to one another in Christ - *Ephesians 5:21-6:9*
 - 4. Submission to rulers of this world, when such it does not require disobedience to the teaching of Scripture - *Acts 4:19-20; Romans 13:1-7*
- E. Local Body of Christ
 - 1. Jesus Assumed all believers in a local body - *Matthew 18:17*
 - 2. All the Epistles of the New Testament are addressed to local churches or to leaders of local churches
 - 3. All saints are equipped by the local body - *Ephesians 4:11-16*
 - 4. All saints are commanded to partake in communion until His return - *I Corinthians 11:23-26*
 - 5. All saints are encouraged to fellowship with one another - *Hebrews 10:25*
- F. Body Ministry
 - 1. Every person a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - 2. Every gift and grace allowed to be developed and used
 - 3. Every gathering a time of edification and worship
 - 4. Every person bonded in love

VI. The State of Church

- A. The Church of Jesus Christ is the community of all true believers under His sovereign Lordship
- B. The Body of Christ is **one** because it shares one Lord, one faith, one baptism
- C. The Body of Christ is **holy** because it belongs to God and is set apart for His purposes in the world
- D. The Body of Christ is **apostolic** because it partakes of the authority granted to the apostles by Christ Himself
- E. The Body of Christ is **universal** because it includes all believers, both living and dead, in every nation, regardless of denominational affiliation
- F. The Body of Christ is **authenticated** by:
 - 1. Preaching and teaching of the Word of God
 - 2. Celebrating of Baptism and holy Communion
 - 3. Manifesting of the gifts of the Holy Spirit for edification and growth
 - 4. Witnessing of God's love and faithfulness to the world
 - 5. Discipling and Equipping God's people for service
- G. The Body of Christ will ultimately be **joined** with the Lord in triumphant glory

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

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The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
he descended into Hades;
the third day He rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven
and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty;
from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting, Amen.

The Church ceases to be a spiritual society when it is on the look-out for the development of its own organization. The rehabilitation of the human race on Jesus Christ's plan means the realization of Jesus Christ in corporate life as well as in individual life. Jesus Christ sent apostles and teachers for this purpose - that the corporate Personality might be realized. We are not here to develop a spiritual life of our own, or to enjoy spiritual retirement; we are here so to realize Jesus Christ that the Body of Christ may be built up.

—*Oswald Chambers*

That structural position in the church which the humblest Christian occupies is eternal and even cosmic. The Church will outlive the universe; in it the individual person will outlive the universe. Everything that is joined to the immortal Head will share his immortality. We hear little of this from the Christian pulpit to day.

—From "*The Weight of Glory*" by C.S. Lewis

As members of churches we are also members of other groups and institutions - political parties, economic organizations, regional and national associations. Each of these constituencies has its vested interests, its value systems, and its authority figures. We cannot deny our participation in these groups; in fact, it is of the utmost importance that these deny our participation in these groups; in fact, it is of the utmost importance that these memberships be acknowledged, lest we become unconsciously possessed by them. But the challenge before us as followers of Jesus Christ is to make conscious decisions as Christians, honoring our commitment to him above the claims and assumptions of every other authority.

—From "*Seeking God's Peace in a Nuclear Age: A Call to Disciples of Christ*"

The Doctrine of the Scriptures

“All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
II Timothy 3:16-17

I. Introduction to the Scriptures

A. Names and Definitions

1. Bible - *Greek biblos* - a book - *Matthew 1:2*
2. Canon - *Greek kanon* - rule or standard
3. Septuagint - “seventy” - Old Testament in Greek - 180 BC
4. Vulgate - “common” - Old Testament in Latin - 3rd Century AD
5. “The Scripture” - *Mark 12:10*
6. “The Scriptures” - *Matthew 22:29*
7. “Holy Scriptures” - *Romans 1:2*
8. “Words of God” - *Romans 3:2*
9. Word of God - *Mark 7:13*
10. Revelation - God directly communicates truth not known
11. Inspiration - Spirit-moved men to produce Spirit-breathed readings
12. Illumination - influence of the Holy Spirit for understanding

B. Symbols

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Mirror - <i>James 1:23-25</i> | 7. Hammer - <i>Jeremiah 23:29</i> |
| 2. Judge - <i>Hebrews 4:12</i> | 8. Sword - <i>Ephesians 6:17</i> |
| 3. Seed - <i>I Peter 1:23</i> | 9. Milk - <i>I Peter 2:2</i> |
| 4. Laver and water - <i>Ephesians 5:26</i> | 10. Bread - <i>Matthew 4:4</i> |
| 5. Lamp and light - <i>Psalms 119:105</i> | 11. Meat - <i>Hebrews 5:12-14</i> |
| 6. Fire - <i>Jeremiah 23:29</i> | 12. Honey - <i>Psalms 119:103</i> |

C. Divisions

1. Old Testament - *Covenant* - 39 books
 - a. The Law - Pentateuch
 - b. The Prophets
 1. Major - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
 2. Minor - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi
 - c. The Writings
 1. Historical - Joshua thru Esther
 2. Poetical - Job, Psalm, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
2. New Testament - 27 books
 - a. Gospels
 - b. Acts of the Apostles
 - c. Pauline Epistles
 - d. Pastoral Epistles - 1,2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
 - e. General (Hebrew) Epistles
 - f. Prophetic - Revelation

D. Versions

1. Tests for Canonicity
 - a. Apostolicity - Was the book written by an Apostle?
 - b. Spiritual Content - Prove a means of edification?

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

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- c. Doctrinal Soundness - Did the book conflict with the other books?
 - d. Usage - Was the book universally recognized in the churches and quoted by the Church Fathers?
 - e. Divine Inspiration - Did it give true evidence of Divine Inspiration?
 - 2. Early Versions
 - a. Sinaitic Manuscript (340 AD) - Greek - British Museum
 - b. Vaticanus Manuscript (350 AD) - Greek - Vatican
 - c. Alexandrian Manuscript (450 AD) - Greek - not complete text - British
 - d. Ephraem Manuscript (450 AD) - Greek - not complete text
 - e. Beza Manuscript (550 AD) - Greek and Latin - Cambridge University
 - f. Lectionaries - selected passages of scripture designed for public reading; 1800 different lectionaries starting from 400 AD
 - 3. Latin Version
 - a. Old Latin (150 AD) - 20 copies - Vatican
 - b. Vulgate (400 AD) - official Bible of the Catholic Church - translated by Jerome
 - 4. English Versions
 - a. John Wycliffe (1382 AD) - entire Bible
 - b. William Tyndale (NT-1525 AD) - "father of English Bible" - martyred
 - c. Geneva Bible (1560 AD) - chapter and verse divisions
 - d. King James Version (1611 AD) - authorized version
 - e. New International Version (1978 AD) - worldwide scholarship
- II. The Inerrancy of the Scriptures
- A. The Bible is the infallible Word of God
 - 1. Old Testament - writers declare 3808 times to be transmitting the Word of God
 - 2. New Testament - Jesus gives authority to the Old Testament
 - 3. New Testament - writers witness to the perfection of the Old Testament and to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
 - B. The Bible is a unique revelation of truth
 - 1. Insights and truth about God, Mankind, Salvation, Eternity, Righteousness, etc.
 - 2. Revelation concerning Jesus Christ - Son of God
 - C. The Bible is an unchanging revelation - God is the same yesterday, today and forever
 - D. The Bible is right morally and spiritually
- III. The Inspiration of the Scriptures
- A. The Old Testament and New Testament are the written Word of God.
 - B. The Holy Scriptures contain all that is necessary for our knowledge of God's holy and sovereign will.
 - C. The Holy Scriptures are to be received through the Holy Spirit as the guide and final authority for faith and conduct.
 - D. Anything contrary to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures is contrary to God and must be opposed.
 - E. The Holy Scriptures are supremely authoritative for the churches' teachings, rebuking, correcting and training believers for ministry in and through the Holy Spirit.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

Midwest City Free Methodist Church

We do not always realize what a radical suggestion it is for us to read to be formed and transformed rather than to gather information. We are information seekers. We love to cover territory. It is not easy for us to stop reading when the heart is touched; we are a people who live to get finished. Lectio offers us a new way to read. **Read with a vulnerable heart. Expect to be blessed in the reading. Read as one awake, one waiting for the beloved. Read with reverence.**

—From “*A Tree Full of Angels*” by Macrina Wiederkehr

Before I go any farther, it is worthwhile to say something about the authority of Scripture, not only to prepare our hearts to reverence it, but to banish all doubt. When that which is set forth is acknowledged to be the Word of God, there is no one so deplorable insolent-unless devoid also both of common sense and of humanity itself-as to dare impugn the credibility of the [the One] who speaks. Now daily oracles are not sent from heaven, for it pleases the Lord to hallow...truth to everlasting remembrance in the Scriptures alone (cf. *John 5:39*). Hence the Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when [people] regard them as having sprung from heaven, as if there the living words of God were heard.

The Word of God being called our spiritual sword, there is need of our being armed with it: for in this world the devil continually fighteth against us, endeavoring to deceive, and draw us in sin...Where is the Word of God to be found, unless we see it in the Law, and the prophets, and in the Gospel? There it is that God hath set forth His mind to us. To the end, therefore that men may not excuse themselves, St. Paul plainly showeth (in *II Timothy 3:16-17*) that if we will do homage to God, and live in subjection to Him, we must receive that which is contained in the Law and the Prophets. And that no man might take the liberty to choose what he pleaseth, and so obey God in part, he saith, the whole Scripture hath this majesty of which he speaketh,, and that is profitable. To be short, St. Paul informeth us, that we must not pick and call the Scripture to please our own fancy, but must receive the whole without exception...St. Paul saith that all Scripture is profitable. Therefore, if the Holy Scripture be profitable, we are very unthankful in not applying ourselves to the study of it. Who is there among us that doth not desire profit and salvation? and where can it be found, except in the Holy Scripture?...Woe be unto us, then if we hear not the Word of God, who seeketh nothing but our happiness. Moreover, we must not read the Holy Scripture in order to support our own notions and sentiments; but submit ourselves unto the doctrine, agreeable to the whole contents of it; for it is profitable.

—*John Calvin*

We also gladly acknowledge the power of the Word of God when it is preached, since it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith (*Romans 1:16*). We are bound diligently to hear the Word of God not only because we are commanded to do so but also because it is the divine hand which offers and presents grace to the believer, whom the Word itself awakens through the Holy Spirit.

—From “*Pia Desideria*” by Philipp Jakob Spener

There is, in a word, nothing comfortable about the Bible-until we manage to get so used to it that we make it comfortable for ourselves. But then we are perhaps too used to it and too at home in it. Let us not be too sure we know the Bible...just because we have learned not to have problems with it. Have we perhaps learned...not to really pay attention to it? Have we ceased to question the book and be questioned by it?

—From “*Opening the Bible*” by Thomas Merton

CHRISIAN DOCTRINE (Continued)

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To candid, reasonable men, I am not afraid to lay open what have been thought the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life, as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; till a few moments hence, I am no more seen! I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing, the way to heaven: how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He has written it down in a book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*: “A man of one book.” Here then I am far from the busy ways of me. I sit down alone: only God is here. In his presence I open, I read this book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of lights. Lord, is it not your word, “If any be willing to do my will, he shall know.” I am willing to do: let me know your will. I then search after, and consider parallel passages of Scripture, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then, the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach.

—*John Wesley*

The Holy Scriptures are full of divine gifts and virtues. The books of the heathen taught nothing of faith, hope, or charity; they present no ideas of these things; they contemplate only the present, and that which man, with use of his material reason, can grasp and comprehend. Look not therein for aught of hope or trust in God. But see how the Psalms and the Book of Job treat faith, hope resignation and prayer; in a word, the Holy Scripture is the highest and best of books, abounding in comfort under all afflictions and trials. It teaches us to see, to feel, to grasp and to comprehend faith, hope and charity, far otherwise than mere human reason can; and when evil oppresses us, it teaches how these virtues throw light upon the darkness, and how, after this poor miserable existence of ours on earth, there is another and an eternal life.

No greater mischief can happen to Christian people, than to have God’s Word taken from them, or falsified, so that they no longer have it pure and clear. God grant we and our descendants be not witnesses of such a calamity.

—*Martin Luther*

Wesley was well aware that the Bible has to be interpreted. In fact, he knew that no one can read Scripture without bringing to it something of his own interpretation. That’s why Wesley taught that traditions, Christian experience, and reason are all helpful in interpreting the Bible.

He realized there would be differences in interpretation among even the most sincere and informed Christians. But most differences among Christians, Wesley believed, usually concern matters that are not essential to salvation and practical Christian living.

Wesley’s own interpretation of Scripture dealt primarily with three basic areas of biblical truth: (1) the Bible’s teaching about salvation, (2) its teachings about responsible Christian living and evangelistic outreach and (3) God’s promises and blessings.

—*Mack B. Stokes*

At night, passed some hours in meditating on Galatians 2:20. It is very delightful to enter into the spirit of the Epistles in any measure, indeed, of any part of the Word of God. I find that it is the sincere milk by which I grow. In the midst of my vanities and fickleness I find no pleasure at all, save in the views of eternity.

—*Henry Martyn*

The Doctrine of Angels and Demons

I. Introduction to Angels

A. Names and Definitions

1. Angels - *Psalm 34:7* - GK messengers
2. Sons of God - *Job 38:7*
3. Seraphim - *Isaiah 6:2-6*
4. Cherubim - *Ezekiel 11:22*
5. Watchers - *Daniel 4:13,17*
6. Principalities and powers - *Romans 8:38*
7. Authorities and powers - *I Peter 3:22*
8. Ministering spirits - *Hebrews 1:7-14*

B. Conduct

1. To serve God and fulfill righteousness - *Genesis 19:15-22*
2. To execute God's judgments against the wicked - *Acts 12:23*
3. To proclaim the Messiah's birth - *Luke 2:9-14*
4. To minister to the Christ in his trials - *Matthew 4:9-11*
5. To announce the second advent - *Acts 1:9-11*
6. To come with the returning Christ for the judgment - *Matthew 24:31*

C. Scriptural Descriptions of Angels

1. Angel of the Lord - *Genesis 16:7* - searching for Hagar
2. Angel of God - *Genesis 31:11* - speaking to Jacob in a dream
3. Destroying Angel - *I Chronicles 21:15* - God wanted to judge Israel
4. Angel of Light - *II Corinthians 11:14* - Satan
5. Church Angels - *Revelation 2:1-3:14* - standing watch over the church
6. Angels of God - *Genesis 28:12* - running errands between heaven and earth
7. Worshipping Angels - *Psalm 103:20* - angels who praise God
8. Harvesters - *Matthew 13:39* - reaping the harvest of humanity
9. Legions of Angels - *Matthew 26:53* - serving Jesus
10. Holy Angels - *Matthew 8:38* - angels who serve God
11. Tongues of Angels - *I Corinthians 13:1* - heavenly language
12. Elect Angels - *I Thessalonians 5:21* - angels chosen by God
13. Seven Angels - *Revelation 15:1* - judgment angels
14. Twelve Angels - *Revelation 21:12* - guardian angels

D. Jesus Christ and Angels

1. Angels are spiritual beings - *Matthew 22:30*
2. Angels always enjoy the presence of God - *Matthew 18:10*
3. Angels ministered to Christ at the most important periods of His life
 - a. His Incarnation - *Matthew 1:20,24*
 - b. His Birth - *Luke 2:9-15*
 - c. His Temptation - *Matthew 4:11*
 - d. His Agony - *Luke 22:43*
 - e. His Resurrection - *John 20:12*
 - f. His Ascension - *Acts 1:1-11*

II. The Theology of Angels

- A. The Ranking of Angels - *Ephesians 1:20-21* - Dionysius 4th Century
 1. First Order: Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones
 2. Second Order: Dominations, Virtues and Powers
 3. Third Order: Principalities, Archangels, Angels
- B. The Species of Angels - *Colossians 1:15-16* - Thomas Aquinas 13th Century
 1. Angels consist of form matter but have no soul
 2. Angels were created by God
 3. Angels were tested and bound either to heaven or hell
 4. Angels can reason and receive teaching and revelation
 5. Angels are perfect in their obedience to God
- C. The Duties of Archangels - *Jude 9; I Thessalonians 4:16*
 1. Michael (like God) - Prince of Israel - *Daniel 10:13*
 2. Gabriel (devoted to God) - messenger - *Luke 1:26*
 3. Raphael (God has healed) - ministering angel - *Tobit 12:12,15*
- D. The Scope of Guardian Angels - *Matthew 18:10*
 1. God assigns to every person a guardian angel
 2. Guardian angels protect the just and faithful - *I Enoch 100:5*
 3. Guardian angels guide and help the righteous - *Acts 12:15*
 4. Ambrose believed that some were deprived of Guardian Angels to have a harder struggle
 5. Jerome believed that sin drove Guardian Angels away
 6. Thomas Aquinas believed that only certain angels were guardians
 7. Dun Scotus believed that guardianship is the mission of all angels
 8. Guardian angels help present prayer to God - *Revelation 8:3*

II. Introduction to Satan and Demons

- A. Names and Definitions
 1. Lucifer - *Isaiah 14:12-14* - morning star
 2. Devil - *Matthew 13:39* - sower of discord
 3. Satan - *Revelation 12:9*
 4. Beelzebub - *Matthew 10:25* - Lord of the Flies
 5. Adversary - *I Peter 5:8-9*
 6. Dragon - *Revelation 12:3-12*
 7. Serpent - *II Corinthians 11:3*
 8. God of this World - *II Corinthians 4:4*
 9. Prince of this world - *John 12-31*
 10. Prince of the power of the air - *Ephesians 2:1-3*
 11. Accuser of the brethren - *Revelation 12:10*
 12. Enemy - *Matthew 13:39*
 13. Tempter - *Matthew 4:3*
 14. Wicked One - *Matthew 13:19*
 15. Fowler - *Psalms 91:3*

16. Wolf - *John 10:12*
17. Destroyer - *John 10:10*
18. Roaring Lion - *I Peter 5:8-9*
19. Thief - *John 10:10*
20. Father of Lies - *John 8:44*
21. Murderer - *John 8:44*
22. Prince of Demons - *Matthew 9:34*
23. Evil Spirits - *Luke 7:21*
24. Seducing spirits - *Leviticus 20:6-7*
25. Deceiving spirits - *I Timothy 4:1*

B. Conduct of Satan

1. Satan sinned from the beginning - *I John 3:8*
2. Satan was condemned for his pride - *I Timothy 3:6*
3. Satan goes from place to place - *Job 1:6-12*
4. Satan is the ruler of darkness - *Daniel 10:12-11:1*
5. Satan is active in religious affairs - *Revelation 2:9*
6. Satan accuses the Church - *I Peter 5:8*
7. Satan is the author of persecution and tribulation - *Revelation 2:10*
8. Satan attacks, afflicts, and tempts - *John 13:2*
9. Satan has power of humanity until death - *Hebrews 2:14*
10. Satan is doomed to be judged by God - *Revelation 20:1-15*

C. Demonic Activities

1. Demons can cause disease, dumbness, deafness, and blindness - *Matthew 4:23-24*
2. Demons can cause vexation, suicide, and lunacy - *Mark 5:1-18*
3. Demons can promote uncleanness and lust - *I John 2:15-17*
4. Demons can manifest themselves - *Mark 5:18*
5. Demons can deceive, teach heresies, lie and speak false prophecies - *I Timothy 4:1-2*

V. Resisting Evil

A. Jesus Christ is Lord of All - *Philippians 2:5-11*

1. Jesus Christ has overcome Satan and his forces
2. Jesus Christ has overcome death and hell
3. Jesus Christ has overcome this world

B. Jesus Christ Lives in Us - *I John 4:4*

1. We have the Spirit of holiness and truth
2. We have been set free by the blood of Christ
3. We have the Word of God
4. We have faith in God

Whenever the soul continues to be fearful, it is the enemy who is present. The evil spirits do not dispel the fear of their presence, as the great archangel Gabriel did for Mary and Zechariah.

—From the Life of St. Anthony 37

The angel Gabriel came to Zechariah, not to Elizabeth. Why? Because it was through Zechariah that John was going to be in Elizabeth. The angel, in announcing that John was going to come by being born, went not to the receptacle of the womb but to the source of the seed. He announced they would both have a son, but he made the announcement to the father. John, after all, was going to come from the marriage of male and female. And once more the same Gabriel came to Mary - not to Joseph. The angel came to the one from whom that flesh was to begin, from whom it was to take its starting point.

—From Sermon 291

And not in this way does he make his discourse awesome but also by showing the heavens opened. For all the angels will be present with him. They are there to bear witness to the many ways they had served when sent by the Lord for the salvation of humanity. Everything spoken of that day shows that it is fearful. Then “shall be gathered together,” he says, “all nations,” that is, all humankind.

—From The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 79.1

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.

—From *The Screwtape Letters* C.S. Lewis p. 7