

A word cloud in the shape of a heart, composed of various religious and theological terms. The most prominent words are "Christ", "God", "Church", "Book", "Holy", "Faith", "Word", "Sacraments", "Baptism", "Grace", "Sin", "Father", "Son", "Lord", "Jesus", "Scripture", "Nature", "Authority", "Works", "Doth", "Yet", "Hath", "Man", "Christian", "May", "Ordnained", "According", "Made", "Substance", "Every", "Forth", "Paradise", "Received", "First", "Sacriment", "Lords", "Unto", "Given", "Necessary", "Called", "Rites", "Life", "Overlasting", "Judgment", "Everlasting", "Whereby", "Things", "Sign", "Mystery", "Communion", "Carnal", "Flesh", "Blood", "Wine", "Bread", "Body", "Set", "Therefore", "Men", "Wherefore", "Rightly", "Take", "Dominate", "One", "Second", "Without", "Engraving", "Spirit", "Judge", "Testament", "Ghost", "Neither", "Time", "Receive", "Vigilance", "Supper", "Pious", "Meaning", "On", "Trinity", "Resurrected", "Living", "Imagined", "Conspicuous", "Glorious", "Powerful", "Mighty", "Gracious", "Merciful", "Compassionate", "Kind", "Good", "True", "Real", "Present", "Future", "Past", "Eternal", "Infinite", "Unlimited", "Boundless", "All-encompassing", "All-inclusive", "All-sufficient", "All-wise", "All-knowing", "All-seeing", "All-hearing", "All-feeling", "All-loving", "All-giving", "All-saving", "All-redeeming", "All-restoring", "All-renewing", "All-transforming", "All-conquering", "All-triumphing", "All-glorying", "All-honoring", "All-majesty-ing", "All-dominating", "All-sovereign-ing", "All-potent-ing", "All-virtuous-ing", "All-righteous-ing", "All-just-ing", "All-fair-ing", "All-merciful-ing", "All-gracious-ing", "All-kind-ing", "All-good-ing", "All-true-ing", "All-real-ing", "All-present-ing", "All-future-ing", "All-past-ing", "All-eternal-ing", "All-infinite-ing", "All-unlimited-ing", "All-boundless-ing", "All-all-encompassing-ing", "All-all-inclusive-ing", "All-all-sufficient-ing", "All-all-wise-ing", "All-all-knowing-ing", "All-all-seeing-ing", "All-all-hearing-ing", "All-all-feeling-ing", "All-all-loving-ing", "All-all-giving-ing", 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"All-all-all-all-all-all-all-all-all-all-inclusive-ing

THE 39 ARTICLES

Edited by : Bishop Warwick Cole-Edwardes

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THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES

ARTICLE 1

THE SUBSTANCE OF FAITH.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD.

“There is only one living and true God. His existence is everlasting, without beginning or end. As a spiritual being, not limited by a body and bodily members, and free from bodily desires and impulses, His power, wisdom and goodness are infinite. He is the creator and preserver of all things, whether seen or unseen. In the unity of this one true God there are three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are one in being, power and eternity.”

INTRODUCTION.

The 39 articles begin with the doctrine of God. Because it is the most crucial of all of the doctrines. Once we have a good understanding of who God is, it moulds and shapes our lives.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

“There is only one living and true God.”

Nowhere in the Bible is an attempt made to prove the existence of God, but on the contrary, this existence is presumed. In Genesis 1:1, for instance, we read:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

In Hebrews 11:6, again, we read:

“But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

While the Bible has taken the existence of God for granted, philosophers have put together a number of proofs to try to prove the existence of God. These are the following:

- The ontological argument.
- The cosmological argument.
- The teleological argument.
- The anthropological argument.
- The Christological argument.
- The moral argument.

THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.

This argument is based on the perfection of God and the philosophers assumed that there must be somebody in the universe who is perfect. Based on this assumption, they now sought to establish the existence of God.

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.

In terms of this argument, it was stated that God was the first cause of everything. There could not be a created order unless there is a God. From there they sought to prove that there is a God.

THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.

This argument presupposes an intelligent creator. The wonderful order has been created and did not come about by reason of some fantastic accident, but is the remarkable product of a superior intelligence.

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.

This argument presupposes that God is a person and not just a force or an influence or a power. Because of the fact that He is a person, He loves and cares for us.

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.

In terms of this approach, it is said that God is love and Jesus Christ is the complete and perfect revelation of God.

THE MORAL ARGUMENT.

In terms of this argument, the morality of man must have been derived from somewhere. That source is God himself who is a moral being and from whom moral laws are derived.

Each of the above proofs concerning the existence of God, are, however, limited and each of these proofs deal with only one aspect of this debate. In order to be most effective, each of these proofs must be viewed in the light of the whole and therefore, they are merely aids to help us in our understanding of God, but the Bible assumes His existence. The Bible teaches that there is only one living and true God.

THE NATURE OF GOD.

The article, having stated the existence of God, now goes on to describe His nature. The following aspects can be identified here:

- His unity.
- His life.
- His truth.
- His eternity (eternal existence).
- His spirituality.

HIS UNITY.

The article tells us "There is but one God". John Gill, in treating of this subject in his book, *Doctrinal Divinity*, page 157 says:

"Having treated of the attributes of God, I shall now proceed to prove that this God, who is possessed of all these great and glorious perfections, is but "one". This is a first principle, and not to be doubted of; it is a most certain truth, most surely to be believed, and with the greatest confidence to be asserted; as he is a fool that says there is no God, he is equally so, who says there are more than one; and, indeed, as Tertullian observes, if God is not one, he is not at all."

The following are Scriptural texts on which this article is based.

1. Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" This text is also quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:28-30 in the context of what the greatest command is.
2. 1 Corinthians 8:4-6: "Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. For even though there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom there are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live."
3. James 2:19: "You believe that there is one God. You do well. The demons also believe--and tremble."
4. Isaiah 44:6: "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God.'"

5. Isaiah 44:8: "Do not fear, nor be afraid; have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed, there is no other Rock; I know not one."
6. Isaiah 45:5-6: "I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, that they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is none other."
7. John 17:3: "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You sent."

HIS LIFE.

The article tells us "There is one living God." What we are taught here is that God is life and the source of all life. Some supporting Scriptures include the following:

Jeremiah 10:10: "But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, and the nations will not be able to endure His indignation."

Daniel 6:26: I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end."

Matthew 16:16: "Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.""

Romans 9:26: "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God."

Hebrews 3:12: "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the Living God."

HIS TRUTH.

In further describing the nature of God, the article mentions "one true God" This aspect of the nature of God is further described for us in Titus 1:2 where we read: "in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,"

HIS ETERNITY.

The article tells us "He (God) is everlasting". Supporting Scriptures include the following:

Romans 1:20: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,"

1 Tim. 1:17: "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen."

HIS SPIRITUALITY.

Concerning His spirituality, the article reads: "As a spiritual being not limited by a body and bodily members". This is further emphasized in John 4:24 where Jesus said: "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in truth."

From what has been said, it must be noted that He is without body and without bodily members. John Gill writes that if He had a body, he could not have been the creator of all things. He further points out that various references in Scripture to the bodily parts of God such as the eyes of the Lord or the hand of the Lord, should merely be taken figuratively.

It also follows that if God does not have a body, that he would be free of the bodily desires such as are experienced by human beings.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

The article tells us: "His power, wisdom and goodness are infinite." There are three attributes of God that need to be considered, namely:

His infinite power.

His infinite wisdom.
His infinite goodness.

HIS INFINITE POWER.

Some of the Hebrew renderings of the names of God, are translated as "God Almighty". The following are Scriptures which illustrate this.

Genesis 17:1: "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.""

Exodus 6:3: "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I was not known to them."

Job 11:7: "Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?"

Revelation 1:8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

In some instances, the word "Omnipotent" is used instead of the word "Almighty". In Revelation 19:6, for instance, we read: "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

HIS INFINITE WISDOM.

The following Scriptures deal with the infinite wisdom of God:

Daniel 2:20-22: "Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him."

Romans 16:27.

1 Timothy 1:17.

HIS INFINITE GOODNESS.

One of the titles that is given to God in accordance with Psalm 86:5, for instance, is the word "good", denoting His goodness. The attribute of goodness is essential to God.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN NATURE.

The article further tells us: "He is the creator and preserver of all things, whether seen or unseen." Here the work of God in nature is stated by way of a summary. There are two things that should be noted here.

He is the maker of all things, and he is the preserver of all things.

HE IS THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS.

This statement is supported by the following Scriptures:

Genesis 1:1-2: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."

Job 33:4: "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life."

Isaiah 40:12: "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?"

John 1:3: "Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

Colossians 1:15-17: "He is the image of the living God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

These verses are clear about one thing, namely, that God is the creator of all things. Louis Birkhoff once said: "Creation may be defined as that free act of God whereby He, according to His sovereign will and for His own glory, in the beginning, He brought forth the whole visible and invisible universe, without the use of pre-existent material and gave it an existence distinct from His own and yet always dependent on Him."

HE IS THE PRESERVER OF ALL THINGS.

This great truth is supported by the following Scriptures.

Psalms 136:25: "Who gives food to all flesh, for His mercy endures forever."

Nehemiah 9:6: "You alone are the LORD; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You."

Acts 17:28: "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'"

Hebrews 1:3: "who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,".

This means that God has not left the world that He created but takes an active part in it day by day. Birkhoff said: "This work of God in which He preserves all His creatures, he is active in all that happens in the world, and He directs all things to their appointed end."

SUMMARY.

As we review this statement, it is clear how it speaks against Atheism, materialism, polytheism, pantheism and agnosticism.

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN CHRIST.

In this regard, the article further reads: In the unity of this one true God there are three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are one in being, power and eternity."

There are three things that should be noted here, namely:

The doctrine stated.

The doctrine confirmed.

The doctrine of the Trinity anticipated in the Old Testament.

THE DOCTRINE STATED.

The Bible clearly teaches that while God is one, He exists in three persons called Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are not three persons in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather, they are three forms in which God exists. Therefore, we believe that God is one: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is one and yet also three, but all the persons are equally and eternally God.

THE DOCTRINE CONFIRMED.

There are two aspects that should be noted here:

The unity of the Godhead.

Distinctions within the Godhead.

THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD.

Here the unity of God is stressed.

DISTINCTIONS WITHIN THE GODHEAD.

There are three aspects that should be considered here.

- The Father is God.
- The Son is God.
- The Holy Spirit is God.

THE FATHER IS GOD.

The Bible tells us in various places that the Father is God. He is God in his own right, for as John Gill, says:

“Now we call the Father the first person, not that he is so in order of time or causality, and as if he was “fons Deitatis”, the fountain of Deity, as some good men have wrongly called him; for rather the Deity is the fountain of the divine persons, from whence they arise together, and in which they subsist, and in which they have no superiority and pre-eminence of one another; but as it is necessary to speak of them in some order, it seems most proper to place the Father first, whence we call him the first person, and then the Son, and then the Spirit; in which order they are usually put in scripture; though to show there is a perfect equality between them, this order is sometimes inverted.”

Some supporting Scriptures include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Matthew 11:25: “At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.”
2. Romans 15:6: “that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
3. Galatians 1:1: “Paul, an apostle (not through men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead),”
4. Ephesians 4:6: “One God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

THE SON IS GOD.

In various places in the New Testament in particular, we are also told that the Son is God. He is God in the same way as the Father is God. Supporting Scriptures include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
2. John 20:28: “And Thomas answered Him and said, “My Lord and my God.”
3. Acts 20:28: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

THE SPIRIT IS GOD.

There are several places in the New Testament as well, where we are told that the Spirit is equally God together with the Father and the Son. Supporting Scriptures include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Acts 5:3-4: “But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”
2. 1 Corinthians 10:11: “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.”
3. Ephesians 2:22: “in whom you are also being built together for a dwelling place for God in the Spirit.”

Therefore, as we have seen from the Bible the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct from one another, and yet together, there is a unity.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY ANTICIPATED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

It is apparent from the text of the Old Testament that the Godhead comprises of more than one person, each of whom, as we have previously seen, is equally God and while they are one, are yet distinct persons. This is evident from the following Scriptures:

Genesis 1:26-27: "Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So, God created man in His own image; in the image of God, He created him; male and female He created them."

Genesis 11:7: "Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

Furthermore, there are numerous instances in the Old Testament where the angel of Jehovah is represented as a divine person. Some instances of such Scriptures include the following:

Genesis 16:7-13. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar after she had left Sarah's employment.

Genesis 18:1-21. The Angel of the Lord came to tell Abraham about the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

There are a number of instances in the Old Testament, also where specific reference is made to the Holy Spirit as being one of the persons of the Godhead. Some of the Scriptures are:

Isaiah 48:16: "Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit have sent Me."

Daniel 5:14: "I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you."

CONCLUSION.

The articles cover every major doctrine of the Christian faith, but they begin with the doctrine of God, and it is a magnificent summary of the existence of God, His very nature, the summary of His attributes, His work in nature and His revelation as a Triune God. Article 2 will now focus on the person of Christ.

ARTICLE 2

THE SUBSTANCE OF FAITH.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

"The Son, who is the word of the Father, is the Son of the Father from everlasting to everlasting. He is truly and eternally God, one with the Father in being. He took our human nature to Himself in the womb of the Virgin Mary, so that two full and perfect natures, His divine and our human nature, were united in the one person of the incarnate Son, never to be divided. There is therefore one Christ who is truly God and truly man, and who truly suffered, was crucified, died and was buried. By Christ's sacrifice of Himself, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men, God was reconciling the world to Himself."

INTRODUCTION.

The doctrine of the person of Christ is also of great importance to us today. All of the cults for instance, do not believe in the deity of Christ. To the Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus is merely the archangel Michael. To the Mormons, Jesus is a half-brother of Lucifer, the devil, born out of a casual liaison between Adam god and the Virgin Mary, and as such, is merely one of an indefinite number of gods. The Christian scientists believe that Jesus was merely another good man.

Many of the major religions also do not believe in the deity of Christ. The Jews do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah and therefore, they do not believe that He is God. In Islam, Jesus is

seen as a mere prophet, one of the minor prophets subject to Mohammed. Hinduism, again, believes in a plurality of gods and they merely see Jesus as being one of those gods. In many other religions, Jesus does not even feature at all.

THE DIVINE NATURE OF CHRIST.

In considering the divine nature of Christ, there are four things that need to be noted, namely:

- The title "Son".
- The title "Word".
- "Begotten from everlasting to everlasting."
- "He is truly and eternally God, one with the Father in being."

THE TITLE "SON."

This title is used to refer to the early life of Christ, and His sonship by the incarnation. Supporting Scriptures include the following:

Luke 1:35: "And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'"

John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Romans 1:4: "and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Hebrews 1:2-5: "has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'? And again: 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son'?"

But the title "Son" used here is not just a mere title, but it also has a divine connotation. The following Scriptures illustrate this truth:

1. John 1:18: "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."
2. John 17:5: "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."
3. 1 John 4:9: "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."

Griffiths Thomas wrote: "These and similar passages clearly imply a sonship prior to the incarnation, and they point back to eternity." So, the title "son" is in fact a title that proves that Jesus is God. Also see the following references:

1. John 8:58-9: "Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."
2. John 19:7: The text here concerns the charge that the Jewish leaders levelled at Jesus that He made Himself the Son of God.

THE TITLE "WORD".

This is found in three places in the New Testament. John uses this title to express how Jesus is the perfect revelation of God as well as one with God. Therefore, these two terms "son of God" and "the Word" are complementary. The Son, safeguard's Jesus' personality and distinctiveness where as "the Word" guards His identity and equality with the father.

BEGOTTEN FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING.

The word applied here, is the word "begotten" which signifies the fact that Jesus was not created but that His divinity is something which extends back into eternity past. Here we see that this aspect safeguards the eternal nature of Jesus.

HE IS TRULY AND ETERNALLY GOD, ONE WITH THE FATHER IN BEING.

This is now the conclusion that Jesus is very and eternally God, categorically stated. Further, He is of one substance with the Father.

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

"He took our human nature to Himself in the womb of the virgin Mary, so that two full and perfect natures, His divine and our human nature, were united in the one person of the incarnate Son, never to be divided."

Five aspects need to be considered under this head, namely:

- The human nature.
- The two natures.
- The one person.
- The one Christ.
- The virgin birth.

THE HUMAN NATURE.

Not only is Jesus fully God, but He also is fully human. The Gospels begin by stressing His genealogy. Therefore, the birth of Jesus was a fully human birth for as we read in Galatians 4:4: "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." He grew up into a teenager and a young man. He had the same physical limitations as we had. For instance, he ate and drank like human beings, and he experienced the full range of human emotions we experience. He rejoiced. He loved. He experienced anxiety and fear.

THE TWO NATURES.

"There is therefore one Christ who is truly God and truly man."

As we have already seen, Jesus was absolutely unique in the sense that He was fully God and fully man. He therefore had two whole and perfect natures.

THE ONE PERSON.

The two natures were joined together in one person, never again to be separated. This union of the two natures in one person is sometimes also referred to as the Hypostatic union. The explanation of the joining together of two natures in one person is a mystery.

THE ONE CHRIST.

Over the centuries, the doctrine of the person of Christ has been the subject of many great heresies. Some heresies involved the denial of the deity of Christ. Other heresies involved the denial of the humanity of Christ. Still other heresies deny Christ's unity with God and others till,

denied Christ's distinctiveness as a person. All in all, the person of Christ has been the subject of great debate.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH.

The article tells us that "he took our human nature to Himself in the womb of the virgin Mary." The virgin birth of Christ is vitally essential for two reasons. In the first instance, the virgin birth serves to illustrate the point that Christ is sinless. In the second instance, the virgin birth of Christ shows that man never did, nor can save himself.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

"Who truly suffered, was crucified, died and was buried." Five things concerning this matter need to be noted here.

1. The fact of Christ's death. "Who truly suffered."
2. The form of Christ's death. "Was crucified, dead and buried."
3. The purpose of Christ's death. "To reconcile His father to us and to be a sacrifice."
4. The scope of Christ's death. "Not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men."
5. How did He do it?
 - By offering Himself as a sacrifice.
 - As an offering.
 - He gave Himself as a ransom.
 - Redemption. We are now set free at a great price.
 - His death was a propitiation. Propitiation conveys the thought of removing God's wrath by the offering of a sacrifice.
 - Reconciliation. A holy God is now reconciled to us and us to Him through the sacrifice of Jesus.

APPLICATION.

We are saved through the work that Jesus did on the cross and there are a number of ways we must react to this truth. These are:

- Wonder.
- Challenge.
- Thanksgiving.
- Consecration.
- Mission.

ABSOLUTE WONDER.

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Nothing so affects the heart and the mind and moves us to wonder and love as the meditation of the cross.

CHALLENGE.

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures," We cannot continue to live in sin since Christ died for our sin.

THANKSGIVING.

When we experience salvation through the cross of Christ, we are driven to thanksgiving for what He has done for us.

CONCECRATION.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

Christ's death on the cross brings us to consecration. "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all." The cross therefore, strips us of every claim that we may have to ourselves.

MISSION.

"For the love of Christ compels us, for we judge thus: if One died for all, then all died."

"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."

A good theology always drives us to mission. To have experienced the miracle of the rebirth and to realise that Jesus is the only way back to God, is to send us into our world, passionate for the Gospel. Theology, therefore, makes us missionaries, because God is a missionary God.

ARTICLE 3

THE SUBSTANCE OF FAITH.

THE DOCTRINE OF HELL.

"As Christ died for us and was buried, so also it is to be believed that the giving up of His life was a reality"

INTRODUCTION

This particular doctrine has over many years lead to tremendous debate. In the older versions, it states that Christ went into hell after he died on the cross. However, the more modern version of the articles clarifies our teaching as follows; "As Christ died for us and was buried, so also it is to be believed that the giving up of His life was a reality."

In considering the present article, the following things need to be considered:

- The meaning of the word "hell".
- The meaning of Christ's descent into hell.
- Application

THE MEANING OF THE WORD "HELL".

In considering the meaning of the word, "hell" there are two things that need to be considered.

- The place.
- The state of existence.

THE PLACE.

There can be no doubt that the bible clearly teaches of the continued existence of the unconverted after death. The Bible speaks of the furnace of fire. The Bible describes hell as the lake of fire. Hell is also referred to as prison. Hell is also referred to as the abyss. From all of these references it is clear that hell is a place.

THE STATE OF EXISTENCE.

The following items concerning the existence of the unconverted in hell needs to be noted.

1. Total absence of the favour of God.
2. There is an endless disturbance of life which is as the result of sin.
3. Hell is a place where there will be pain and suffering.
4. There are also subjective punishments in hell e.g. the pang of conscience; anguish; despair; the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. The tragedy of this is that it will last for eternity. As we contemplate these truths, it ought to fill us with a compassion for the lost.

THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO HELL.

This is referred to on four occasions in the New Testament. There are at least four possible meanings that can be given to this statement.

HE SUFFERED THE TORMENT OF A PERSON CONDEMNED ON THE CROSS.

He suffered the things that people would experience in hell, on the cross. This view takes very seriously the fact that Jesus really suffered and that he drank the cup of God's wrath against sin right to the very dregs. Therefore, He became a perfect substitute for us.

THE DESCENT INTO HELL IS IDENTIFIED WITH BURIAL.

This view simply underlines the fact that He died and that He was buried.

INTO HELL WITH THE VIEW OF TRIUMPHING OVER SATAN.

Still others say that when Jesus died, he descended into hell with the view to triumphing over Satan. This view is backed up by what is written in Colossians 2:15.

THAT HE SATISFIED EVERY CONDITION OF MANKIND.

He experienced what all of us have experienced when He died and was buried.

By way of summary, if we were to compare Scripture with Scripture, the first interpretation 1 would be the better interpretation, i.e. that Jesus really died, and that on the cross He went through the very pains of hell for us. In every way, he identified with our sins, even tasting hell.

APPLICATION.

Our general response in considering this truth should be a response of compassion and to spread the Gospel.

SPREAD THE GOSPEL.

When we consider what we have been saved from, a logical response, which we should have, is to spread the Gospel.

COMPASSION.

It is interesting to read the biographies of great preachers in the past. We read of men like Whitfield and Wesley who would weep and cry when they were preaching on hell.

ARTICLE 4

THE SUBSTANCE OF FAITH.

DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

"Christ truly rose again from the dead. His was a bodily resurrection with flesh, bones and all things that belongs to the perfection of our human nature. His ascension was a bodily ascension into heaven, where He is now enthroned until the last day, when He will return to judge all men."

This article contains five key sections.

- The resurrection.
- The ascension.
- Session.
- The second coming.
- The day of judgement.

THE RESURRECTION.

There are two things that need to be noted here, namely, the purpose of the resurrection and the application.

PURPOSE OF THE RESURRECTION.

Four things should be noted here.

- A. The resurrection serves to prove the deity of Christ.
- B. It fulfills Christ's priestly duties. Christ's priestly mediation consisted in going to the cross in order to bear God's penal judgements for us and in order to bring us righteousness, reconciliation with God and freedom from the power of sin. In the resurrection, God the Father pronounced His divine amen on the priestly work of Jesus. Real atonement has been attained through the death and the resurrection of Christ and righteousness, reconciliation and freedom are now ours.
- C. It manifests His kingly work. On the cross, Jesus confronted the enemies of sin and Satan and death and with the resurrection, He proclaimed His victory over all three of these enemies. Therefore, the risen Jesus is the evidence of God's victory over death, sin and the devil.
- D. The resurrection of Christ embodies the promise of His future reign. Therefore, Paul links the triumph of Jesus' resurrection to the final triumph of His coming.
- E. His resurrection is the first fruits. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee of our own bodily resurrection and of a great hope in the future.

APPLICATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

There are five things that should be noted here:

- A. It brings great joy. To know that Jesus is there with us, loving us with His own love, is the joy of all joys to a Christian heart.
- B. Peace. The resurrection of Christ is His pledge to us that His sacrifice has benefited us, that our sins are forgiven and that in and through Him, we are accepted by God.
- C. Worship. The resurrection of Jesus confirms His eternal Godhead, which evokes a response of worship from us.
- D. Hope. Death is now defeated. Jesus is the first fruits of the coming harvest of the dead. Because He was raised, we also will be raised from the dead.
- E. Victory. The fact that all power has been given to Him, shows that Jesus is victorious over sin and death.

THE ASCENSION.

The Bible teaches us that Jesus ascended into heaven. There are three wonderful truths that flow from the ascension.

- The ascension finally proclaims Christ's triumph.
- The ascension establishes the conditions under which the church is called to serve.
- The ascension guarantees Christ's future final rule in glory.

THE ASCENSION FINALLY PROCLAIMS CHRIST'S TRIUMPH.

Jesus is now at the right hand of God the Father with the angels and authorities and all powers in submission to Him. Jesus is now crowned with glory and honour. The ascension of Jesus into heaven, now gives Him rule over everything.

IT ESTABLISHES THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO SERVE.

This means that we live, work, pray, and witness and we will die under the rule of the Lord who is the head of heaven and earth. Furthermore, in heaven, Jesus carries out His ministry of intercession.

THE ASCENSION GUARANTEES CHRIST'S FUTURE AND ETERNAL RULE.

God has appointed a day when Jesus will return. Therefore, Jesus will reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

THE SESSION.

In considering the session, there are two things to consider, namely, the teaching and the application.

THE TEACHING.

Having ascended into heaven, Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God. From there, he bestows the gift of the Holy Spirit. He was always with the disciples as they went out preaching. Being seated at the right hand of God, He continues to make intercession for us. He saves those who come to Him. It is therefore true to say that at the right hand of God Jesus intercedes for us, he encourages His people based on His finished work on the cross, He saves the lost and He is our advocate.

THE APPLICATION OF THE DOCTRINE.

- A. It gives us wonderful security. The world is now under the control of King Jesus. Nothing can touch us without His permission. This gives the Christian a great sense of security.
- B. Comfort. Christ has carried His humanity into the being of the Godhead, and He comforts His people because He understands them.
- C. Mission. We now go into all the world not to make Jesus king, but rather, because He is already king. We are not building His kingdom but are merely giving effect to His commandments.
- D. Resources. All the resources we need are found through the Holy Spirit.

THE SECOND COMING.

The two aspects concerning the second coming that we are concerned about here are how the second coming is to happen and why it is to happen.

HOW.

- A. The second coming will be a glorious return.
- B. The second coming will be sudden.
- C. It will be absolutely decisive. Therefore, we have the certainty that Jesus is coming back.

WHY?

- A. To complete the work of redemption.
- B. To judge all people.
- C. To raise the dead.
- D. To deliver the church. Therefore, the second coming of Jesus is a source of great hope for His people.

THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT.

The article concludes with the words "He will return to judge all men." This is a clear statement of a belief in the ultimate judgement of all men. Again, when we consider this matter, there are two things that we need to consider, namely, the teaching itself, concerning the judgement, and the application of the teaching.

THE TEACHING.

There are a number of definite matters with which the teaching concerning the judgement, deals with. These are the following:

- A. The last judgement. There will be a last judgement.
- B. The judge and His assistants. The judge will be Christ Himself and He will be assisted by the saints.
- C. The parties. Everyone will stand before the judgement seat of Christ.
- D. The time of the judgement. The judgement will take place when Christ returns.
- E. The standard of judgement. It will be the revealed will of God.

THE APPLICATION.

- A. It fills us with hope. The coming of Christ is, for the Christian, a wonderful certainty.
- B. It fills us with comfort. We will enter heaven and be with Jesus forever.
- C. Holiness. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord.
- D. It drives us to action. In the great commission, we are commanded to go and make disciples of all men. Furthermore, anyone who appreciates the significance of the final judgement and that without Christ, many will go to eternal destruction, will not sit back and do nothing.
- E. Prayer. It drives us to prayer.
- F. Watchfulness. It drives us to watchfulness.
- G. Love. It drives us to love.
- H. Praise. It drives us to overwhelming praise.

CONCLUSION.

These first four articles are absolutely critical, and they have stressed seven vitally critical truths to which Christians should hold.

- 1. Jesus is equal to the Father.
- 2. Jesus was born of a virgin and conceived by the Holy Spirit.
- 3. Christ died on the cross in order to make atonement for our sins.
- 4. When Jesus hung on the cross, He experienced what we would have experienced.
- 5. Jesus died on the cross, but after He died, He rose victorious over death, Satan and sin.
- 6. Because of His ascension, he has now become our prophet, priest and king.
- 7. It is certain that one day, He will return.

ARTICLE 5

THE SUBSTANCE OF FAITH.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"The holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son is one in being, majesty and glory with the Father and the Son and thus is truly and eternally God."

INTRODUCTION.

"What only remains now to be considered, under the article of the Trinity, are the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost; to prove that he is a Person, a distinct Person, from the Father and

Son; and a divine person, or truly and properly God.” In this lecture, attention will be given to two aspects, namely the person of the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit.

THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

With regard to the teaching of the person of the Holy Spirit, there are four things that need to be taken into account, namely:

- The Old Testament teaching concerning the Holy Spirit.
- The New Testament teaching concerning the Holy Spirit.
- The personal being of the Holy Spirit.
- The divine personality of the Holy Spirit.

THE OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

As we read through the pages of the Old Testament, we become aware of the fact that the Holy Spirit is clearly taught right throughout the Old Testament and there are three main aspects, which are emphasized, namely:

- He is the giver of life.
- He imparts knowledge.
- He is the giver of promise.

The Hebrew word which is used in the Old Testament for the Spirit, and therefore, also the Holy Spirit, is the word “ruach” which means “wind” as in storm, or “breath”. This meaning is evident from the following:

“Fire and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind, fulfilling His word;”

“Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.”

In addition, it should be noted that the phrase “the Spirit of God” also speaks of God’s activity in the world as is evident from the following:

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?”

The Old Testament also looks forward to the age of the Spirit, i.e. the time from the ascension of Jesus into heaven and onwards. This is evident from the following:

“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”

“For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring;”

The Spirit is also portrayed as the giver of life. He creates life out of nothing, and he is the one who gives life to mankind.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IMPARTS KNOWLEDGE.

The Holy Spirit illuminates the mind of man with the knowledge and truth of God. This can be seen from the following:

"Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so, the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses."
"Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness."

The primary form of the knowledge, which the Holy Spirit imparts, is the production of the Old Testament Scriptures.

"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

In the New Testament, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit is portrayed as actually carrying out the ministry of teaching.

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."

For as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

PROMISE.

In the Old Testament, there is a twofold link between the Messiah and the Holy Spirit. The first aspect of this link is found in the fact that the Holy Spirit would be the one who would anoint the Messiah. In Isaiah 42:1, for instance, we read:

"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, my Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles."

The second connection between the Messiah and the Holy Spirit is that there are a number of prophecies concerning the Messiah pouring out the Holy Spirit.

"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also, on My menservants and on My maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days."

"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will keep my judgements and do them."

It is therefore abundantly clear that throughout the Old Testament, there is teaching on the person of the Holy Spirit. We learn, for instance, that He brings life and that He is the giver of life. He brings knowledge, i.e. the knowledge of God and in some places, He actually teaches that knowledge, and He brings promise.

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING.

Concerning the New Testament teaching on the person of the Holy Spirit, there are six very important things that should be noted.

- Pneuma.
- Birth of Christ.
- Baptism.
- Mission.
- Farewell.
- New age.

PNEUMA.

The Greek word for "Spirit", referring to the Holy Spirit, is the word "pneuma" which also like the word "ruach" in the Hebrew texts of the Old Testament covers wind or breath, and indeed, as we see from the texts quoted below, have the same sense as the Old Testament usage. This is evident from the following:

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

"Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them."

The first encounter of this word as indicated in the texts above refers to the discussion that Jesus had with Nicodemus, whereas the latter instance deals with the matter of the two witnesses discussed in Revelation 11.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

The Holy Spirit was also prominent at and round about the time of the birth of Christ in a number of different situations, as can be seen from the following Scriptures.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.

For with God nothing will be impossible."

Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

"So, he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law," The person spoken of here was Simeon who was described as a devout man waiting for the coming of the Messiah.

AT JESUS' BAPTISM.

At the baptism of Jesus, it is recorded for us in Matthew 3:16 that the Holy Spirit appeared and descended on Jesus in the form of a dove.

MISSION.

The Holy Spirit was also involved with the mission of Jesus as can be seen from the following texts:

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."

"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the Kingdom of God has come upon you."

Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding regions. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

So, He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

FAREWELL.

In Jesus' farewell message to His disciples, recorded in John's Gospel, he made several references to the Holy Spirit. Here the Holy Spirit is described as the counsellor. The following are references which Jesus made to the Holy Spirit:

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--

The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

"A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day, you will know that I am in My Father and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.
And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they do not believe in Me.
Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more.
Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.
I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.
However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.
He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.
All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.
Jesus told His disciples that once He had gone to heaven, the Holy Spirit would come and would strengthen them.

THE NEW AGE.

The new age would be established after the death and resurrection of Jesus when he would have ascended into Heaven and poured out the Holy Spirit. Therefore, as we see in Acts 2:1 we read: "Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."

As Jesus also said to His disciples in Acts 1, the Holy Spirit would create the new church and then empower the disciples for worldwide mission. Once again, we see so clearly, how the entire New Testament is saturated with the Holy Spirit.

PERSONAL BEING.

Concerning the personality of the Holy Spirit, John Gill makes the following interesting and logical observations:

"That the description of a Person agrees with him; that it subsists and lives of itself, is endowed with will and understanding, or is a willing and intelligent agent. Such is the Spirit of God; as the Father has life in himself, and the Son has life in himself, so has the Holy Spirit; since he is the author of natural and spiritual life in men; which he preserves unto eternal life; and therefore called, the Spirit of life; which he could not be, unless he had life in himself; and if he has life in himself, he must subsist of himself: he has a power of willing whatever he pleases: the apostle, speaking of his influences, administrations, and operations, says, "All these worketh the one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will", and that he is an intelligent agent, is clear from his knowing the things of God which none can know but him; and from his teaching men all things, and guiding them into all truth, and giving the spirit of wisdom and knowledge to one and another; now "he that teacheth men knowledge, shall not he know?"

It should be noted that while the actions of the Holy Spirit may be that of a wind or force, He is not referred to as such in the Bible, but as has already been indicated in the quotes above, He is described as a person. As regards the personality of the Holy Spirit, the following should be noted.

1. He speaks.
2. He intercedes.
3. He testifies.
4. He leads.
5. He commands.
6. He guides.
7. He appoints.
8. He can be lied to.
9. He can be insulted.

10. He can be blasphemed against.
11. He can be grieved.

HE SPEAKS.

The following are Scriptures that clearly indicate that the Holy Spirit speaks in His own right and as a person.

"He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

HE INTERCEEDS.

In Romans 8:26 we read: "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

The commentators are agreed that the Holy Spirit helps us to pray. As we are frequently not in a fit state of mind to pray properly for the things for which we need to pray, the Spirit lays it on our hearts what and how we should pray for these things. But the prayer of the Spirit never happens unless we first make the effort to pray ourselves.

HE TESTIFIES.

There are a number of Scriptures where we are told that the Holy Spirit witnesses or testifies. John 15:26, for instance, we read: "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."

Concerning this matter of the Holy Spirit testifying, Adam Clark writes: "He shall bear his testimony in your souls, and ye shall bear this testimony to the world. And so, they did, by their miracles, their preaching, their writings, their lives, and by their deaths. Our Lord appears to reason thus: In every respect the unbelief of the Jews is inexcusable. They believe not my doctrine, notwithstanding its purity and holiness. They believe not in the Father who sent me, notwithstanding I have confirmed my mission by the most astonishing miracles. One thing only remains now to be done, i.e. to send them the Holy Spirit, to convince them of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and this he shall do, not only by his influence upon their hearts, but also by your words: and when they shall have resisted this Spirit, then the cup of their iniquity shall be filled up, and wrath shall come upon them to the uttermost."

HE LEADS.

"Then the Spirit said to Philip, "go near and overtake this chariot.""

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

HE COMMANDS.

Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

At this time, the stage was being set for Paul's journey into Macedonia. He would have a vision of a man from Macedonia asking him to come over and help them.

HE GUIDES.

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."

HE APPOINTS.

"Therefore, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

HE CAN BE LIED TO.

But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?

4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

HE CAN BE INSULTED.

"Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?"

HE CAN BE BLASPHEMED AGAINST.

"Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

"Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter.

But he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"--

Because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."

The latter passage is significant because Mark begins to describe what exactly would constitute blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

HE CAN BE GRIEVED.

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

THE DIVINE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The Bible furthermore clarifies the deity of the Holy Spirit. He is a member of the Godhead, and the ever-blessed object of our worship. He shares the same divine nature as the Father and the Son. Scriptures which show the divinity of the Holy Spirit can be seen in the following:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

The Holy Spirit is often referred to as God in His redemptive action.

I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD."

"Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart."

And so, the article is very clear: the Holy Spirit is one in being, majesty and glory with the Father and the Son and so is truly and eternally God.

CONCLUSION.

Being the third person in the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit is a person in his own right. His personhood is taught in both the old and the New Testament.

ARTICLE 6

THE SUBSTANCE OF FAITH.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (CONT.).

“The Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son is one in being, majesty and glory with the Father and the Son, and thus is truly and eternally God.”

INTRODUCTION.

In the previous study, attention was given to the question of the person of the Holy Spirit. In this lesson, the focus will be on the work of the Holy Spirit.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

When considering the matter of the work that the Holy Spirit does, there are five important things to note.

- The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ.
- The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Scriptures.
- The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the world.
- The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the church.
- The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the individual.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO CHRIST.

The following three points should be noted here.

- He glorifies Christ.
- He is the Spirit of Christ.
- His work is dependent on the ascension and the glorification of Christ.

HE GLORIFIES CHRIST.

The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ. He does not draw attention to himself, but only to Christ, as can also be seen from the following Scriptures:

"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."

And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more.

Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

HE IS THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

He lives in us and testifies to us about a number of truths concerning Christ and our relationship to God.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

And if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba Father!"

"Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow."

HIS WORK IS DEPENDENT ON THE ASCENSION AND THE GLORIFICATION OF CHRIST.

"But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

"Therefore, being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear."

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO THE SCRIPTURES.

Concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Scriptures, there are two things that should be noted.

- He is the inspirer of the Scriptures.
- He is the interpreter of the Scriptures.

HE IS THE INSPIRER OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The Holy Spirit is the person in the Godhead who inspired the writers of the Holy Scriptures to produce the Holy Scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we read that the Scriptures are inspired or breathed by God as well as the reasons for God doing so.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

"Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow."

"for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Therefore, as we have seen from the Scriptures quoted above, the work of the Holy Spirit was to inspire the authors of the Holy Scriptures so that what they wrote was the very word of God Himself.

HE IS THE INTERPRETER OF THE SCRIPTURES.

Not only is the Holy Spirit the inspirer of the Scriptures, but to the Christian, He is also the interpreter of the Scriptures. He reveals to the Christian the meaning of that which is written in the Scriptures.

"The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."

Being the Spirit of truth as He is described in this passage, He will of necessity impart His truth to those who study the word of God, when he interprets the Scriptures for them.

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

"The Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing."

Therefore, as we have seen from the previous passages, the Holy Spirit does not only interpret the Scriptures for the Christian, but He also helps the Christian to understand the Scriptures correctly.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO THE WORLD.

There are two aspects that need to be considered when we consider the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the world, namely:

- He is the creator.
- He convicts man.

HE IS THE CREATOR.

He is the creator of the world. As can be seen from the texts set out hereunder, the Holy Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, is the creator of the world.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Because the palaces will be forsaken, the bustling city will be deserted. The forts and towers will become lairs forever, a joy of wild donkeys, and a pasture of flocks--

Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted as a forest.

"The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life."

HE CONVICTS MAN OF SIN.

The Holy Spirit convicts mankind of sin. This reminds us that The Holy Spirit is responsible for witnessing of Christ to the world. No sinner will be converted unless the Spirit first convicts that sinner of sin. We can preach and witness as much as we like, but if the Spirit does not convict a person of sin, we cannot convert that person.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO THE CHURCH.

When considering the matter of the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the church, there are two aspects that should be remembered, namely:

- The constitution of the church.
- The dynamic of the church.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH.

We are concerned here with the fact that the Holy Spirit controls the giving of the different gifts in the church.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.

And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

However, the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

To another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

To another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

For by one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Here is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling:"

"For God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"

THE DYNAMIC OF THE CHURCH.

The Holy Spirit supplies the life of the church and enables her to fulfill her mission, namely, to spread the Gospel. Without the Holy Spirit, therefore, the church is dead and the message that it seeks to convey, is meaningless.

Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

"In whom you are also being built together for a dwelling place for God in the Spirit."

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO THE INDIVIDUAL.

There are a number of important things also concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual.

THE GRACE OF GOD.

As can be seen from the passages set out below, the Holy Spirit applies the grace of God to the individual sinner.

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

But the free gift is not like the offence. For if by the one man's offence many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offence resulted in condemnation, but the free gift, which came from many offences, resulted in justification.

For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

Therefore, as through one man's offence judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,
So that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ELECTION.

For those whom God the Father has elected, the Holy Spirit opens their eyes to the Gospel. It is impossible for a person to have open eyes to the Gospel, unless his eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit. This is evident from the following Scriptures.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

These things I command you, that you love one another.

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

Which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth--in Him.

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

"Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness,"

CALLING.

Once election has taken place, the Holy Spirit then calls the elect of God to place their faith in Christ, as is evident from the following passages:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace," "therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble;"

REGENERATION.

The called sinner now has the life of God put into him, enabling him to repent of his sins and to change his life.

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols."

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,"

REPENTANCE.

As a person is convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, they turn away from their sinful lives and they put behind them the things that they used to do.

FAITH.

Salvation can only come about through faith in Christ as can be seen from the following Scriptures.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:"

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

JUSTIFICATION.

This aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual is fully set out in Romans 3:21-4:25. What happens is that the sinner is declared righteous as if he had not sinned, because he has had the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to him.

ADOPTION.

The Holy Spirit now witnesses with every person who has been saved, that they are the children of God as can be seen from the following Scriptures.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

And if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all,

But is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

To redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

ASSURANCE.

Following on from what has been said previously, it also follows that the Holy Spirit gives the Christian the assurance of salvation.

"Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."

"By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."

This is He who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ, not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.

And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.

SANCTIFICATION.

Once the sinner is converted, the Holy Spirit now begins to work in that person's life, making them more and more like Jesus. Sanctification, therefore, can be said to be a process whereby we are made to be more and more like Jesus.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

PERSEVERANCE.

The Holy Spirit will not abandon the new Christian. Therefore, the new Christian ought to persevere in the faith even in the face of difficulty.

THE WORD OF GOD.

The Holy Spirit and the Word of God always work together.

THE END.

Finally, the Holy Spirit will bring us to our glorification on the day when Christ returns.

"Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

SUMMARY.

It is clear that without the help of the Holy Spirit we can do nothing.

ARTICLE 7.

THE SUBSTANCE OF FAITH. THE HOLY SPIRIT (CONT.).

"The Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son is one in being, majesty and glory with the Father and the Son, and thus is truly and eternally God."

INTRODUCTION.

We have till now, studied the work and the person of the Holy Spirit. What now remains for consideration is the matter of application.

APPLICATION.

There are essentially three areas of application that need to be considered here, namely:

- God and His service.
- The world and its responsibilities.
- Ourselves and our prospects.

GOD AND HIS SERVICE.

In applying what we have learnt to the matter of God and His service, there are three things that should be remembered, namely:

- Our experience with God.
- Our worship of God.
- Our service of God.

OUR EXPERIENCE WITH GOD.

It is not only that God works for us and upon us, but He works in us by His Spirit. God is experienced in a real way by each of His creatures.

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”

“In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

OUR WORSHIP OF GOD.

The fact that God in His infinite mercy has allowed us who are feeble sinners to be saved and to have the Holy Spirit is the supreme cause of our worship of God and thanksgiving to Him.

“And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”

“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,”

OUR SERVICE OF GOD.

The Holy Spirit equips us to be able to serve God by giving His, that is, God's gifts to us.

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,

Who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

Far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”

THE WORLD AND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES.

With regard to the world and its responsibilities, there are three things that should be noted.

- Regeneration from beyond the world.
- Relationship to the world.
- Responsibility for the world.

REGENERATION FROM BEYOND THE WORLD.

The Christian does not belong to this present age which is under the dominion of Satan, sin and darkness, but he has been born by the Holy Spirit into citizenship of a new kingdom, also referred to as a city, so that we don't look to the world or look forward to the world, but we look to, and we look forward to the kingdom of God.

“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD.

Although our deepest fulfillment lies beyond this world, it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit which works on us and our experience in the world. The Spirit equips us to bring the Gospel to the world. The reality is that we live in the world, but we are not of it. When Jesus prayed for His disciples, for instance, He said, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."

Jesus does not want His followers to be taken out of the world, but He wants them to remain in the world so that they can be a witness for Him and that they may finish the work that He had given them.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WORLD.

Every person who professes to be a Christian ought to have a passion for the salvation of lost souls.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

"Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."

OURSELVES AND OUR PROSPECTS.

In considering this particular aspect of the application of what we have learnt, the following things need to be born in mind.

- Corporateness.
- Character.
- Consummation.

CORPORATENESS.

The Holy Spirit binds all Christians together into one single family. The Holy Spirit does not know anything about one man band ministries, but only about corporate ministry.

CHARACTER.

We refer to the Spirit of God as the Holy Spirit. If He is the Holy Spirit and if we are under His control, our lives should also exemplify holiness, i.e. a separated lifestyle from the world, even though we live in the world.

CONSUMATION.

We strain forward as we look forward to the coming of Christ. In these ways we respond adequately to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION.

In the first five articles we studied the matter of the substance of our faith. We have now come to the conclusion of this section. Now we are about to embark on the section headed The Rule of Faith which comprises of articles 6, 7 and 8 of the thirty-nine articles. In this section the emphasis will now be on the authority we have for our faith.

ARTICLE 8

THE THREE CREEDS

The three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostle's Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.

INTRODUCTION

As explained in Chapter 1, the task of theology is to draw from all Scripture the teachings regarding each particular theme and reduce them to a clearly stated dogma. This is exactly what the creeds do. They deduce from Holy Scripture certain essential specific statements or doctrines. So, the Article says the Creeds are to be received and believed: "for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture". This is why Article 8 follows Articles 6 & 7 dealing with scripture. As Article 6 says, "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby is not to be required of any man."

So, the creeds are deduced from Holy Scripture, not from the traditions or opinions of the church. This is why the Apostle Creed follows the Old Testament and New Testament lessons in Morning and Evening Prayer, and the Nicene Creed follows the Epistle and Gospel readings in the Administration of the Lord's Supper.

So, the Church of England is a firmly Bible based Church. This is the real underlying difference with the Church of Rome. It is a fundamental difference.

DEVELOPMENT OF CREEDS

We can see the need for some form of creedal statement developing in Holy Scripture itself. When Philip was leading the Ethiopian Eunuch to faith in Christ the Ethiopian asked, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" To which Philip replied: - "If you believest with all thine heart thou mayest: The Ethiopian answered and said: - "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God". (Acts 8:36-37). Notice that the Ethiopian is urged to believe with all his heart not merely with all his head. Head knowledge – intellectual assent to Gospel truth is not enough. There must be heart consent as well – the emotions and will as well as the intellect must be committed to Jesus Christ as the Son of God, "my" personal Saviour and "my" personal Lord. This is the implication in Article 8 of the words "ought thoroughly to be received" as well as "believed".

The three creeds are evidently an amplification of the baptismal formula given by our Lord Jesus Christ "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Such understanding is only a beginning which should lead on to full understanding and dedication to the Lord.

The earliest use of a creed was in connection with baptism, the sacrament significant of the inward work of grace by which a person becomes a Christian. So, the creeds were drawn up to summarise the essential beliefs which are necessary for salvation and for admittance into the "company of all faithful people". Just because you accept and receive the creeds does not mean that you have arrived. You are just at the beginning of your Christian knowledge and commitment.

THE APOSTLE'S CREED

The Apostles Creed has its name not because it was drawn up by the apostles but because it is deduced from the apostolic doctrine as contained in Holy Scripture. In fact, some of the clauses can be seen in parts of the Book of Acts and of the Epistles. Seven of the clauses of our creed had been collected together by **AD 150**. It reached an approximation to its present form by **AD 341** and reached its present form in **AD 750**. In **1552** the Prayer Book directed that the creed be said standing. The reason for that is that standing was significant of readiness to defend and suffer for the faith at the hands of the Romish Church.

There is no authority for turning to the East or for bowing the head at the name of Lord Jesus Christ as is done by some imitators of Rome. The words "descended into Hell" should be understood as "descended into Hades", the place of departed spirits where Christ identified

himself to all those Old Testament saints who had faith in the coming suffering servant and Messiah, and now had the opportunity to see in Him the vindication of their faith. **(1 Peter 3:19)** The Holy Catholic Church means the Holy Universal Church. It is always best to refer to the Roman Catholic Church as the Church of Rome or the Romish Church as that Church is not part of the Holy Catholic Church because of its departure from Holy Scripture in matters of faith and worship.

THE NICENE CREED

A heresy called Arianism denied the Divinity of the Son and was condemned by the Council of Nicaea in **AD 325**. However, the Arian controversy continued for the next **40** or **50** years. In **AD 381** the Council of Constantinople drew up a creed to refute finally the heresy. It was called the Nicene Creed and with the exception of one clause (which I will deal with in a moment) is the same as we have it today. The clause "God of God" is a later addition and unnecessary because the truth is covered in the next clause but one. "Light out of Light", and "Real God out of Real God" which would be a more meaningful rendering of the creed in modern English. "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord the Life giver" would also be clearer than the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life.

The phrase "and the Son" was added in **AD 589** and has been a matter of dispute ever since. It is based on **John 15:26**, which reads "But when the Comforter is come, who I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me". Now no-one really knows what "proceeding from the Father" really means nor are there grounds for referring this action, whatever it may mean, to the Son. It would therefore be better either to leave out "and the Son" altogether or to say; "who proceedeth from the Father and is sent by the Son" using Christ's own words.

Notice we do not say I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church. To "believe in" is only properly applicable to the Three Persons of the Triune God. It would be clearer to say "I believe there in only one Church."

As a matter of interest, before the Reformation, the priests only used to say the Nicene Creed in Latin, while the congregation said the Apostle's Creed – just another trapping of priest craft, which was swept away at the Reformation.

ATHANASIAN CREED

The Creed is called that of St Athanasius (Bishop of Alexandria 326-373) because it contains the great doctrine of the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity for which he contended against the Arian heresy. The creed itself was not completed until about **AD 440** in France. It was presented to the Bishop of Rome by Charlemagne in **AD 772** and introduced into England in about AD 900 over 1000 years ago. The days chosen for the use of the Athanasian Creed in the Church of England are such that it should be used once a month. This assumes that the Church will meet on the Saints Days which fall on weekdays.

This creed really differs from both the Apostle Creed and the Nicene Creed in that it assumes a rather more precise knowledge of correct doctrine than the other two. It remains for me the most impressive and most comprehensive declaration of the Christian Faith which can be profitably used in the course of public worship. There is however doubt in many quarters whether it ought to be used at Christmas and Easter when so many ignorant people and unbelievers are likely to be present.

DANGERS

There are of course dangers to be guarded against in the use of the creeds. The first is that everyone should realise that they are by no means a complete statement of the truth. Creeds are not so much a statement of what we are to believe as what to believe on such doctrines as are included in them. To imagine that all a Christian has to know and believe for his service in

this life and for the well-being of his immortal soul is to be able to recite the creeds is a very dangerous misconception and can lead to terrible and fatal laxity in devotional life.

CONCLUSION

On the other hand, especially in these days, it is necessary to draw attention to the need for right understanding of sound doctrine. We have in the Jesus movements little more conception than that God is Love. Much of the charismatic movement is superficial and lacking in content.

The great need today is for understanding, for people to be taught from Holy Scripture what to believe, and to protect them from basing a faith for living on only man's opinion, let alone their own. Just as Jesus Himself throughout His life to the authority of Scripture, so must we. Only so can we individually, and as a society, be reformed in a righteous, just, and truly civilised way.

It is good to memorise the creeds and to stand and declare the minimum essentials of our faith. By standing it is good to remind ourselves that there are some things more important than life itself.

By standing up for the creeds in church to testify to our faith, it is good to be reminded that we are also called upon to stand up outside the church and "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3), and in so doing "to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end" (From the Baptismal service in the Book of Common Prayer).

ARTICLE 9

OF ORIGINAL OR BIRTH-SIN

Original Sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk;) but it is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is ingendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore, in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some of the affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin.

INTRODUCTION

Like the creeds many of the articles are drawn up to refute error. So, this article begins by refuting Pelagianism. First let us define what we mean by original sin.

ORIGINAL SIN

The phrase "original sin" is not scriptural. By original righteousness we mean the state of Adam before he fell. He was liable to sin and eventually he did sin, but he had in his nature no tendency to sin, no bias towards sin. He was created righteous without the tendency to sin. He was therefore innocent before the fall. But when he did disobey God, he immediately had a tendency to do so again.

For instance:

1. Having disobeyed God, he hid from God instead of owning up.
2. He was aware of his guilt.
3. He tried to put the blame on God – "the woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." **Gen 31:2**

These actions are symbolic of the change that had taken place in Adam's nature. He now had a tendency to sin, to pass the buck, and to deceive. He had lost his original righteousness. His nature had changed, it had become defiled. Then, somehow or other, this defiled nature has been passed on to all Adam's progeny like an inherited disease. So "inborn sinfulness", or as it is commonly called "original sin", "is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man that naturally is ingendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness" and is of his own nature inclined to evil. *Lines 2-3.* So, every man and woman who walks this earth has an inborn tendency to evil. Humanists talk of the inherent good of human nature. That is not true. That is a complete denial of the Word of God. In effect it is tantamount to saying the Cross was a bloody mistake. The Humanistic view of human nature is itself a form of rebellion against God. The truth is every little child is born with this spiritual disease. But when children are very young, they cannot be held responsible for their actions. "For where no law is, there is no transgression" **Rom 4:15**. So if they die before advancing further, they die without guilt and so are admitted to God's heaven, whether or not they have been baptized. When a bereaved parent asks me how God could let this happen to my baby, my reply is "perhaps he / she was born with such a fine nature that they did not have to pass through the trials and tribulations of this life". God graciously accepts little children into heaven as they are, and I quite expect to find little children who have died young as the princes and princesses of heaven. Jesus said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven", **Matt 1 & 3**.

From the very first this inborn sinfulness is evident. It shows in the tendency to squabble, to throw tantrums, and to disobey. As the children grow older, they become conscious of the law of right and wrong. They become aware of their responsibility to obey the law. They become conscious of their guilt when they break the law. "Therefore" the article goes on "in every person born into this world, it (i.e. inborn sinfulness) deserveth God's wrath and damnation". Or as **Rom 5:12** puts it, "By one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men". So, the verdict on the nature of sin (let alone sins actually committed) is death. Moreover, because everyone is infected with "inborn sinfulness" everyone commits sins. So, there are both the nature and the acts which become culpable once reason dawns and people become responsible. So, **Rom 5:12** takes us further, "By one man, sin entered into the world and death by sin, for that all have sinned".

So, we need to be clear in our minds. We have this original sin, or sinful nature or inborn sinfulness, whichever you wish to call it, which is itself an offence to God, which causes us to commit sins of omission and commission, and which is a fatal disease because it ends in death. So, Christians are described as those "who were dead (or dying) in trespasses and sins **Eph 2:1**".

PELAGIANISM

Now I must explain the first phrase of the article "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk).

As we saw in the previous chapter where we studied the creeds, during the first four centuries Church Councils were occupied in clarifying the truth concerning the nature of God and the Person of Christ. However, it was not until the 5th century that the results of the Fall and the necessity of God's grace to deal with those results were challenged. In order to emphasize man's free will Pelagius denied the ruin of the race and the consequent necessity of grace. This was not only something novel; it is utterly opposed to vital Christianity. So, the struggle against Pelagianism became in fact a struggle for the Gospel itself. In simple terms, Pelagianism developed into this hypotheses:

1. Adam was created mortal and would have died anyway even if he had not sinned.
2. The sin of Adam hurt only himself.

3. Children are therefore born just as Adam was before the Fall, i.e. born with original righteousness.
4. Therefore, man is able to keep God's commandment, if he will.
5. So, all men may be sinless if they choose, irrespective of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.
6. When they commit sin, they merely follow the bad example of Adam. Their sin stands in the following of Adam's bad example.

It is true that the Pelagians spoke of grace. But the Pelagians did not mean by it the supernatural provision in Christ which enables man to cope with original sin or inborn sinfulness because they said, "original sin standeth not in the following of Adam". The teaching of Pelagianism was convincingly refuted by St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (Tripoli) in the beginning of the fifth century. Notwithstanding Augustine's efforts Pelagianism has survived particularly as semi-Pelagianism to this day.

Semi-Pelagianism holds that when Adam sinned, he lost, or was deprived of his original righteousness, but that his nature did not become depraved. He is still able to choose to do right. So, the semi-Pelagians hold that the illegal inner desires and lusts from which we all suffer do not result from inborn sinfulness but from concupiscence. On the contrary the Scripture clearly states, "By the offence of one, judgement came upon all men to condemnation" **Rom 5:17**.

So, our article concludes: "The Apostle doth confess that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin". That is concupiscence and lust are manifestations of inborn sin. In other words, Scripture teaches us that by the Fall not only man became deprived; he also became depraved by nature. The Church of Rome accepted the false doctrine of semi-Pelagianism at the Council of Trent in **1545** and it still holds to that position today. This is why our article argues to vehemently against this error. It strikes at the heart of the Gospel as we shall see. It remains one of the many errs of Rome and of most Anglo-Catholics to this day. But let us move away from error to truth. Let us look at the results of the Fall in all of us.

RESULTS OF ORIGINAL SIN OR INBORN SINFULNESS

The First Result is deprivation – "man is very far gone from original righteousness. The Second Result is depravation – man's nature has become totally depraved". This truth is supported by numerous Scriptures; **Gen. 8:12**, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth". **Isaiah 64:6**, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." **Jer. 17:9**, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" and **Rom. 8:37**, "The carnal mind is enmity against God" for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so, then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Total depravity does not mean the absolute loss of every vestige of good, but that evil has affected every part of our nature and that nothing has remained untouched. Our nature is like a cup of water to which a few drops of poison have been added. It has become poisonous throughout but not as poisonous as it could be. So, at the least every man retains at least something of the Divine image however poisoned it may have become. Even so every man, whatever his race or creed must be treated as representative – however tarnished – of God on earth. The Third Result is permanency – Inborn sinfulness is a permanent affliction of man even when he is converted. Paul tells us this, even though it is unwelcome news; "For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate that I do", **Rom. 5:15**. "For I know that in me dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present within me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." **Rom. 5:18**.

This inner struggle must go on, "For this is the will of God even your sanctification" **1 Thes. 4:3**. So says Paul, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus". **Phil. 13:13-14**. From all this we get the devotional language of our prayer book; "There

is no health in us.” “But thou O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders.” “O God make clean our hearts within us and take not thy Holy Spirit from us.” “We sinners do beseech thee to hear us, O Lord God.”

“Though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins yet let the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose us.” “We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves.” “We can do good thing without thee” and “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us”. So says our Article; “This infection of nature doth remain yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, and some the desire, is not subject to the Law of God.”

JUSTIFICATION

But I must end on a note of good cheer. It is the great Biblical doctrine of justification. It is the great doctrine that the semi-Pelagian Church of Rome can never accept. For once it does so all the priest-craft, all the medieval superstitions, and all the unhappy uncertainties of the Church of Rome will be done away. For since the Church of Rome cannot accept the imputation of Adam’s sin to the whole human race, it will not, by the same reasoning accept the imputation of the peerless righteousness of Christ to God’s elect. For says the Word of God; “As by the offence of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous”. **Rom. 5:18-19.**

Rome has never been able to distinguish between justification and sanctification. Justification is a one-time act of grace and mercy granted to inborn sinners by which the righteousness of Christ is put to their account. As Isaiah said, they become clothed in a robe of righteousness, a garment of salvation. They are covered in the righteousness of Christ. Sanctification is the life-long process of becoming ever more holy by the power of and obedience to the indwelling Holy Spirit. So let no one imagine he is justified unless he is on the path of sanctification. You cannot leave sanctification to another day and imagine you are justified now. You cannot say I would love to wear the gorgeous uniform of the Brigade of Guards unless you are prepared to be a guardsman. You cannot say you are justified and saved unless you are striving in the power of the Holy Scripture to lead a holy life.

Because of inborn sinfulness you can never become a Christian by trying to be one. You can only become a Christian by repenting from living an unholy life, by believing on Jesus Christ and Him crucified for you, and by claiming for yourself all the provision God has made for your spiritual well-being, especially the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then having become a Christian by repentance and faith you can, and you must try to be a good one by obedience to, and by reliance on, the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

How necessary it is for each of us to see the nature we are born with as God sees it day after day; a nature which is not only deprived of innate goodness but is also depraved by God’s standards in every part. How necessary it is to see that with inborn sinfulness we cannot hope to save ourselves for we cannot even perform a good act which is altogether untarnished by sin. Of no little comfort it is to know that we are all in the same condition from the greatest saint to the meanest sinner. Yet God so loved this whole world of sin diseased men and women that He made a wonderful plan of salvation at agonising cost to Himself to save to the uttermost everyone who will truly repent and believe.

How necessary it is for each of us to have done with the last drop of pride and independence from God. How necessary it is for each one of us to be able to say from the heart, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling”. For God has promised a broken and a contrite heart He will not despise. No one ever became a Christian by trying to be one or by religious observances. You can only become a Christian by true repentance and committal of your life to Christ as your Saviour and your Lord. Then having become a Christian you must try to be a

good one as the Holy Spirit guides and enables you to conduct your life in accordance with God's written Word.

ARTICLE 10

OF FREE WILL

The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

INTRODUCTION

This article is an extension of Article 9. In that article we saw that through the fall of Adam man has inherited a spiritual disease. It is a fatal disease, called "original sin" or "inborn sinfulness". Its effect is that ever since Adam's fall every child born on this earth has a nature which is deprived of original righteousness, or innocence such as Adam had before the fall, and depraved in that it has a bias towards sin.

MAN'S NATURE

Man's nature is like a few drops of poison added to a cup of water which has become poisonous throughout though not as poisonous as it could be. We are all like that, and if we are honest and know ourselves, we know it is all too true. The effect is that even at our best we are tainted with sin. Even our most charitable and kindly acts are stained with the poison of sin in the eyes of Almighty God who is of immaculate purity and holiness. So, say the Word of God, "The carnal mind is enmity against God so they that are in the flesh cannot please God," **Rom 8:7-8**. So says the article in perfect harmony with the Word of God, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God".

MAN'S SPIRITUAL HELPLESSNESS

Notice though that the article is taking us one step further. Our deprived and depraved nature is such that in our own natural strength we cannot turn and come to faith in God. Think about this for a moment. The Bible teaches us that God made man and made us so that God would not be alone any more in the universe. So, He made man in His own image and after His own likeness so that there could mutual love and fellowship between God and man. This is the supreme purpose for which you and I are on this earth. God intended that this relationship between Him and you and me should be the chief, foremost, and most treasured relationship in our lives. Do you think I am overstating the case? Then listen to what Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me". **Matt 10:37**.

Jesus could hardly have made the point more forcefully. How many of us can truly say we love God more than our wife, more than our husband, more than our children, more than our parents, more than ourselves?

Then can we possibly deny that we are man-centred rather than God-centred? You see, Adam was created God-centred and God walked with him in the cool of the evening. Do you see what the fall has done to us? Do you see how original sin or inborn sinfulness has given us a nature which has no inclination to put God first? We have to admit that what the Bible says is true. We have to admit that we have not the strength of will to abandon man-centredness in order to become God-centred. Our will simply serve our fallen natures which are man-centred. Our wills cannot change our basic nature.

THE DESPERATE NEED TO CALL FOR MERCY

Such being the case, it is impossible that our efforts or religious observances can be the means of our salvation. So, I repeat what the article says, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling on God". I say to you it is essential for you to see your true condition before God. Because it is only when you truly realise your own hopelessness and helplessness that you will truly fall to your knees and plead to God for mercy. For without his mercy, you will remain out of fellowship with God, and you will have failed to fulfill the purpose for which you were created. So, if you remain in that state, you remain useless to God. You have only judgement and eternal torment in hell to look forward to. But "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God". **John 3:16-18**

THE GRACE OF GOD

By nature, we are condemned. But if we throw ourselves at the foot of the cross, and beg for mercy, not only will there be no more condemnation, but there will be eternal life, and given this life by the Holy Spirit we find we can know God, and knowing Him, love Him. We love Him even more when we realise it is He who brings us to this point. For the Bible tells the Christian: "Despisest though the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" **Rom. 2:4**. It is when the overwhelming grace of God finally overcomes the rebellion in our hearts that we turn to Him in repentance and find faith in Jesus Christ crucified for our sins.

It is then that we humbly and in faith ask God to give to us God the Holy Spirit to indwell our hearts. It is the Holy Spirit who opens the eyes of our understanding as we feed daily on the Word of God. It is He who leads us into truth and into daily obedience to that truth. I will go further and say that there is no way we can do this without the help of the Holy Spirit. We need to come together weekly for Bible study in order to be helped to benefit from our daily readings. We also need some such commentary as Daily Notes or Daily Bread to help us in our daily Bible reading.

If anyone tells me that they are too busy to read the Scriptures daily and to pray daily, then I have to say that they are still man-centred and under condemnation. We simply must get our priorities right and realise that so far as God is concerned the first call on our time is communion with Him. It is the Holy Spirit who then enables us to grow in grace. It is He who prompts us to read and understand the Scriptures, and it is He who gives us a good will towards God and who works within us, when we have that goodwill. Or as the Bible says of the born-again Christian; "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure", **Phil 2:13**.

CONCLUSION

The only therefore way to maintain this contact with God is through daily devotional reading of the Bible, daily heart-felt prayer, and daily obedience to what we find written in the Word of God, and all this by the enabling of God the Holy Spirit. If you have not already come to this point, I beg you to surrender your life now to the Lord Jesus Christ and to ask Him for the Holy Spirit to enable you to begin to lead the Christian life.

ARTICLE 11

OF THE JUSTIFICATION OF MAN

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings: Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.

INTRODUCTION

In preceding Chapters, we have seen the result of the fall of Adam; man deprived of original righteousness, an inherited depraved nature with inborn bias towards sin, and incapable of redeeming himself or even of exercising faith in God. Man has become utterly hopeless and helpless – in fact lost, and Jesus is come “to seek and to save that which was lost”, **Luke 19:10**. We may well thank God that Jesus is come both to seek, or seek out, and save those that were lost. So, after two Chapters of bad news, we come today to good news, to the very heart of true Biblical Christianity.

I once heard an excellent sermon in which the preacher asked what one single word expresses the need of man right through the Bible from beginning to end. That word is **RIGHTEOUSNESS**, summed up by the rhetorical question of Job, “How should a man be just with God” or “How should a man be righteous before God”.

JUSTIFICATION

Well, our article supplies the answer. “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” After preaching at length on the subject of justification one of my congregation asked, “Do you think our congregation now understands the meaning of justification?” My reply was “Well if they don’t understand now they never will”.

But briefly, in case there are still some who do not understand after reading so far, Almighty God justifies the repentant sinner by putting the righteousness established by the Lord Jesus Christ in His 33 years on earth to the sinner’s account. But justified sinners are known by their sanctified lives. As Jesus said, “By their fruits ye shall know them”. **Matt 7:20**. Justification is a one-time act of God. Sanctification is the ensuing life-long process of living up to the status God has given to believers. Justification means to treat as just or righteous, or to account righteous, or to regard as righteous. So, justification is concerned with our relationship to God – not so much with our actual state – but with the judicial position God has granted to us through the merit of Jesus Christ.

Accounted righteous by Almighty God! Do you know yourself as I know myself? How can we ever love Jesus enough for this privilege of being accounted righteous despite our past?

Forgiveness is an act and a succession of acts. Justification is a single act issuing in an attitude. Forgiveness is repeated throughout life; justification is complete and never repeated.

Forgiveness is only negative, the removal of condemnation.

Justification is also positive, the removal of guilt and the bestowal of a perfect standing before God.

Forgiveness is being stripped. Justification is being clothed.

Day by day we approach God in repentance and beg for forgiveness, but we do it on the basis of the standing He has given us. So, justification is the ground of our assurance because it depends not on what we have done but on “the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” alone. God looks at us in Christ, not only as forgiven but also as righteous. “For He (God) hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (Christ).” **2 Cor. 5:21**). Oh, how wonderful and glorious is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ!

THE MEANS OF JUSTIFICATION

How does this justification become ours? “By faith and not for our own works or deservings.” That answer is based on **Acts 13:39**, “By Him all that believe are justified”. Faith is not the

ground of justification, Christ is. Faith is the means or channel by which justification is imputed to us (put to our account). Saving faith therefore includes both the acknowledgement of our own inability and our need of another's ability. Saving faith links us to Christ and is the means of appropriating for ourselves His merit.

So, saving faith really means trust in Christ and in His merit, and it governs our attitude to Him. As between man and man the absence of mutual trust is a barrier to intimate friendship. So, it is in things spiritual. Faith in man responds to the grace of God and claims the promises of His Word. In fact, trust responds to truth. Christ is the truth. Saving faith renounces self and grasps God's free gift of justification. There is no merit in faith; it is merely a channel. We are not justified by faith in Christ. We are justified by the Christ in whom we trust. Faith is therefore nothing apart from its object. It would be as useless as an anchor cable without an anchor.

POSITION WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION

Let us see what happens to the Christian religion if the gift of justification is not understood. How will a man then know he is right with God? He will for ever be in doubt. He will always be looking inward. Am I truly a Christian? How do I know I am good enough? He will become the victim of subjectivism. All the world religions except biblical Christianity are subjective. The victim of subjectivism, because he is in a state of doubt, will eventually start looking for a deeper experience. He will say, I know the gospel is about what Christ did for me in dying for my sins, but how do I know I have got it? I need to feel God working in me so that my doubts can be removed.

This eventually gives rise to what is called the "Full Gospel". The "Full Gospel" is the news of what God does in me. Instead of leading men and women to bask in the light of the Gospel, this so-called Full Gospel leads multitudes to wallow and drown in a sea of subjectivism. Jesus said "When He the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you". **John 16:13-14**. All attempts whether by individual Christians or by a church or by a denomination to put the Holy Spirit at the centre of attention is a denial of these words of Jesus and is therefore under the Divine censure. Christianity first and foremost is Christ rather than the Holy Spirit.

Can you imagine Peter standing up on the day of Pentecost and saying: "men and brethren, I have just received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and I want to tell you how wonderful it is. When it came upon me, it was like being thrilled with a vital electric current. I felt such a beautiful love and peace thrill through my whole body, right down to the balls of my feet". On the contrary, Peter made no reference whatsoever to himself or his feelings. He said "- Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God". **Acts 2:22**.

The apostles did not turn the world upside down by telling people about their own exciting experiences in the Spirit. (Pride is never so high as when it has a startling experience to relate, especially a religious experience.) No, we read, "With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all".

Acts 4:33.

Time and time again, and especially in the last 200 years, whenever the great doctrine of justification is forgotten people start to look for a second blessing as a ground for their assurance. This is the error of the modern charismatic movement. There is such a majoring on feelings and experience and presumed extraordinary workings of the Holy Spirit in men as manifested by presumed speaking in tongues, presumed faith healings, presumed slayings in the Spirit, and so on, that testimonies of men become valued as much more than Holy Scripture itself. People in the end attempt to walk by feelings instead of by faith. Since feelings cannot triumph over trials, tribulations, danger and tragedy, eventually this false teaching makes ship-

wreck of men's souls. It is a very dangerous movement, and as dangerous and damaging as a veld fire out of control. Assurance then is not to be found in feelings but "only for the merit of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and faith in that.

THE VALUE OF JUSTIFICATION

So, the article goes on to say: "Wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort".

Wholesome and very full of comfort. Let us consider these two things. Justification in Christ through faith is a necessity for spiritual health – it is wholesome. It is wholesome because it is the foundation of spiritual peace. The soul looks backward over life, outward toward life's trials, onward to the future and even inward and is able to say with the Apostle, "justified from all things" and as a result of being justified by faith we have peace with God".

Rom. 5:1.

Once we know that God's relationship with us is healthy, sound, and that we are abiding in Christ, we know that He will never leave nor forsake us. When we truly realise this, all doubts arising from our feeling that we are not good enough to claim to be a Christian disappear and "We have peace with God". **Rom. 5:1.**

CONCLUSION

Justification is the only possible answer to the problem of original sin or inborn sinfulness. How could God be just and yet justify sinners apart from Jesus Christ? The cross is as much a manifestation of God's righteousness and justice as it is of His mercy and love. Appropriation of the truth of justification is the secret of spiritual liberty. Its neglect is at the root of all priest craft. It frees the believer from dependence on earthly priests and misplaced trust, false tradition, and ritual. It introduces the believer to direct access to God without the intervention of a human priest. Acceptance of this truth is as Luther said, the Article of a standing or falling church. As someone else has said, its acceptance or otherwise is the Article of a standing or a falling soul. To know one is justified by faith is the secret of spiritual power for it is "very full of comfort". It is indeed the foundation of holiness. By the free gift of justification, the hitherto lost soul is introduced into the very presence of God, is given the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father, realises the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ, and in these assurances finds both the inspiration and the will to purity of heart and life.

Justification brings the soul into relation with God so that from imputed righteousness flows imparted righteousness by the inward working of the Holy Spirit. To know, rather than to hope, that God thinks well of us in Christ, and loves us, arouses in us our love for Him and hence our loyalty and dedication to Him through Christ.

It follows from all this that the knowledge of justification is the secret of true Christian service. The soul released from anxiety about itself is free to exercise concern for others. A Christian worker, knowing that God is at peace with him, and having peace within his own soul, is the means of bringing peace and blessing to hearts in spiritual darkness and fear. It is this precious possession which explains the joy under all circumstances which is so characteristic of the Christians of the New Testament. But in all this, it must be remembered that faith, or trust, in Christ alone and His finished work is the only means of appropriating justification for yourself. Your enjoyment and assurance of it depends on the strength or weakness of your trust in Christ. Do not, I beg you, neglect coming to Christ and loving Him as He loved you, and always begin and end the day with Him through Bible reading and prayer.

A criminal is forgiven but is not regarded as righteous. A Christian is not merely a pardoned criminal, but one regarded as righteous by Almighty God. Justification therefore means much

more than forgiveness, and the two are clearly distinguished by Paul, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by Him all that believe are justified from all things". **Acts 13:38-39.**

ARTICLE 12

GOOD WORKS

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith and follow after our justification, cannot put away our sins, and are subject to the severity of God's judgment, yet, inasmuch as they are done in Christ and for His sake, they are pleasing and acceptable to God; for they spring necessarily from a true and vital faith, and are indeed the evidence of a vital faith, just as a tree is recognised by its fruit.

ARTICLE 13

WORKS BEFORE JUSTIFICATION

Works that are done before receiving the grace of Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit are not pleasing to God, because they do not spring faith in Jesus Christ; nor is it true (as some say) that they render us fit to receive grace or are deserving of grace. On the contrary, the fact that such works are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done can only mean that they have the nature of sin.

ARTICLE 14

WORKS OF SUPEREROGATION

Works which are supposedly done voluntarily beyond and in excess of what is required by God's commandments (known as works of supererogation) cannot be taught without self-centred arrogance and irreverence; for it is claimed that persons who perform such works render to God not only as much as it is their duty to render, but actually do for God more than is of bounden duty required; whereas Christ plainly stated, "When you have done all that is commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants." (Luke 17.10).

ARTICLE 15

THE LIFE OF FAITH – ITS COURSE

CHRIST ALONE WITHOUT SIN

As our true fellow-man, Christ us like us in all respects, with the exception only of sin, from which He was completely free, both in His flesh and in His spirit. He came into the world to be the Lamb without spot or blemish, and by His once-for-all sacrifice of Himself to take away the sins of the world as the One whom, as St John says, there was no sin (Jn 1:29 – "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"; 1 Jn 3:5 – You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.). But all the rest of us, even though we have been baptized and born again in Christ, continue to offend in many things; and "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn 1:8)

Introduction

These articles of religion enable us to be strongly grounded in doctrine. In article 9 and 10, we saw our sinfulness.

In article 11, 12, & 13 we saw how we are justified.

Article 14 reminded us that we are never able to exceed what God requires of us. We can't go more ...

Now in article 15 we are brought to Jesus, who alone saves us.

I) The Teaching of the Article

1) The true humanity of Christ

"As our true fellow-man, Christ was like us in all respects..."

His birth was normal, like us;

Luke 2:7 - And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

His early years as a young boy were the same as ours;

Luke 2:52 - And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

He had the same physical limitations;

John 4:6 - ...so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well...

And He had the full range of human emotions;

E.g., Mark 3:5 - ...And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart...

He therefore was our true fellow-man.

2) The sinlessness of Jesus

"With the exception only of sin from which He was completely free. Both in His flesh, and in His Spirit"

The sinlessness of Jesus is another clear teaching in the Bible;

John 8:46 - Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

John 14:30 - I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me.

3) The Sacrifice of Christ

"He came into the world to be the Lamb without spot or blemish, and by His once-for-all sacrifice of Himself to take away the sins of the world."

He went to the cross as the perfect man who had never sinned, and He offered the perfect sacrifice for our sin.

This sacrifice was offered once and for all, never ever to be repeated again.

And now through faith in this sacrifice we are justified.

4) The sinfulness of all besides.

"But, all the rest of us, even though we have been baptized and born again, we continue to offend in many things."

This is a reminder that even though we are saved we still continue to fall. Only Christ was perfect.

II) The Purpose of this Article

The purpose of this article is to remind us that we are saved not by anything we do, but only through Christ who was without sin and who offered the perfect sacrifice.

ARTICLE 16

SIN AFTER BAPTISM

Not every serious sin committed after our baptism is an unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit. Therefore, persons who fall into sin after baptism should be encouraged to repent. After we have received the Holy Spirit, it is possible for us to turn away from the grace we have experienced and to fall into sin, and it is possible for us who have fallen, to rise again and amend our lives by the grace of God. Therefore, persons who say that they cannot sin any more as long as they continue in this life (claiming to have attained sinless perfection), or who deny any opportunity of forgiveness to those who truly repent, are to be condemned.

Introduction

During the Reformation, at the time when these articles were put together, there were two false teachings which this article seeks to put right.

- a. Those serious sins after your baptism were not forgiven.
- b. It is impossible for those who are truly saved to sin. (This is a form of perfectionism.)

These two errors were very rife at this time (common).

I) The Problems of Sin and Pardon

“Not every serious sin committed after our baptism is an unpardonable sin”

We must remember article 11. That says, “when we turn to Christ we are justified, imputed with Christ’s righteousness, and declared to be perfect”.

II) The Problems of Falling and Restoration

“Therefore, persons who fall into sin after baptism should be encouraged to repent.

1) Intellectual

It means a change in view. Repentance means I recognize my sin.

2) There is an **emotional element which is a change in feeling.**

We are very sorry for what we’ve done.

3) Volitional

A change in purpose. If we repent, we stop what we are doing. Therefore, when a Christian falls into serious sin, they must be encouraged to repent.

III) The Problems of Sinlessness & Repentance

“It is possible for us to turn away from the grace we have experienced and fall into sin.”

1) We may backslide

It is very sad, but it can happen.

2) We may arise and amend

A believer who falls into sin can come back, rise again.

3) A word to those who deny the above

“Therefore, those who deny any opportunity of forgiveness, to those who truly repent, are to be condemned.”

We are reminded yet again that even if we sin, after our conversion there is forgiveness. Hallelujah

IV) The Unforgivable Sin Against the Holy Spirit

There is however only one sin that is unforgivable. We can be forgiven for murder, or for adultery, theft, if we repent, we will be forgiven.

But there is one sin that is unforgivable, and that is to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit.

- 1) **Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit** is when a man of malice and stubbornness of mind doth rail upon the truth of God's Word manifestly perceived and being enemy thereunto, persecuteth the same. And because such be guilty of God's curse, they entangle themselves with a most grievous and heinous crime, whereupon this kind of sin is called and affirmed of the Lord, unpardonable.

Conclusion

This article is very helpful when we counsel Christians who fall into sin. We must urge them to repent, and they will be forgiven. But we must not forget that once we have been justified, the Lord Jesus will never let us go.

ARTICLE 17

PREDESTINATION & ELECTION

"Predestination to life belongs to God's everlasting purpose. By this is meant that before the foundation of the world, it is His unchangeable decree, in accordance with His secret counsel to deliver from the curse and damnation those whom He has chosen in Christ, and to bring them to everlasting salvation, as vessels of His mercy (Rom 9:21).

Therefore, those on whom such an excellent blessing of God is bestowed, are called according to God's purpose by the Holy Spirit working in God's good time; through grace they obey this calling and are freely justified by God; they become the sons of God by adoption (Rom 3:24; 8:15); they are conformed to the image of His only Son Jesus Christ; they lead holy lives that are given to good works to the glory of God; and at last, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting bliss (Rom 8:29; Eph 2:8-10)

The reverent consideration of our predestination and election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable strength and comfort to godly persons, who feel the working in themselves of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly passions and drawing their thoughts upward to high and heavenly realities. This teaching is welcome to us both because it strongly establishes and confirms our assurance of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ and also because it kindles in us a fervent love to God.

For unregenerate persons, however, who are moved by idle curiosity and who do not have the Spirit of Christ, to be constantly confronted with the doctrine of God's predestination is dangerous and disastrous, since the devil uses it to drive them either to despair or to abandon themselves to immoral and ungodly living, which is no less perilous than despair.

Furthermore, we must accept God's promises in the way in which they are ordinarily presented to us in Holy Scriptures, and in all that we do the will of God is to be followed precisely as it is revealed to us in the Word of God.

Introduction

We are now coming to the end of section 3, which has dealt with the life of faith. It began with article 9, and the doctrine of original sin. We are born sinners, and we are sinners by habit.

Therefore, we are spiritually dead, unable to turn to God by ourselves. This doctrine of predestination, number 17, will take us behind the scenes and explain how we were saved.

I) Teaching of the Article

1) Nature of it – what it is

i) The fact

Two words are used in this article: Election & Predestination. They are very similar. Election focuses on the **choice** of people, while predestination focuses on our **destination** where we are going.

ii) The limit

This article gives us a lovely summary of how we are saved, and it highlights **9 steps**.

- (a)** He called you
- (b)** He convicted you of sin
- (c)** He led you to Christ
- (d)** He enabled you to repent
- (e)** You were converted
- (f)** You were regenerated
- (g)** He then sanctifies you
- (h)** He will keep you from falling
- (i)** And bring you into glory

iii) The foundation

“It is the unchangeable decree in accordance with His secret council”

iv) The object

The object is to bring those whom God has elected to everlasting salvation.

The Lord Jesus taught election:

Mat 24:22 - And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Mark 13:22 - For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.

Mat 24:31 - And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Luke 18:7 - And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?

Paul the apostle taught election:

Rom 8:29 - For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Rom 8:33 - Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Eph 1:4 - even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

2 Tim 1:9 - who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

2 Thes. 2:13 - But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

Also, Peter:

1 Peter 1:2 - according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

2 Peter 1:10 - Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall.

2) The proof of it – what it involves

i) The Description

“Therefore, those on whom such an excellent blessing is bestowed”

It is the most humbling doctrine in the Bible.

ii) The Stages

The article takes us step by step:

(a) There is election by God.

(b) Then He calls.

(c) Brings us to Christ.

(d) Justifies us:

(e) Keeps us.

(f) And will glorify us.

iii) The two sides

We can see how the article reminds us of what God does, and then what we do for our conversion.

(a) God calls you.

(b) He works in you by His Spirit

(c) Justifies you

(d) Adopts you

(e) Brings you to glory.

Therefore, good works are not the cause of my salvation, but the result.
From the human side:

(a) We repent

(b) We are made into the image of Christ

(c) We perform good works.

3) The effect

i) Godly

“It is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable strength and comfort to godly people”

It brings us assurance, and a deep love for the Lord, and a desire to bear fruit.

ii) Ungodly

“For the unregenerate persons however, it is dangerous and disastrous”

4) Safeguard – What it demands

To understand what God has done for us, “it kindles in us a fervent love to God”. Our greatest longing in life is to know Jesus and to make Him known.

And also, it brings us to obedience, absolute obedience. We want to obey the will of God in our lives.

i) The History of the Article

We have seen the teaching of Jesus and the apostles.

In the early church, it was taught by Augustine.

In the Middle Ages, by Thomas Aquinas.

In the Reformation, by all the reformers.

Later with the missionary movement, Hudson Taylor, William Carey, Henry Martyn... all believed it and the Evangelists, George Whitfield, John Knox

ii) The Safeguards

Once we teach this article there are four safeguards.

iii) It was not meant to destroy man’s responsibility.

iv) It was not meant to prevent the free offer of the gospel.

v) It can only be known by its fruit.

How do we know we are elect? Fruit.

vi) Be diligent in the means of grace.

We depend on the Bible and prayer.

Conclusion

This article draws now to a close the doctrine of Salvation from Article 9-17. It is a reminder that we are saved by the grace of God alone. Salvation is of the Lord.

ARTICLE 18

SALVATION IN CHRIST ALONE

They are to be condemned as false teachers who assert that persons will be saved no matter what beliefs they hold or what sect they belong to, provided they sincerely lead their lives according to those beliefs and to the light of nature; for Holy Scripture insists that it is only by the name of Jesus Christ that we may be saved (Acts 4:12)

Introduction

We now come to the end of Section 3.

Section 1 dealt with the Substance of faith (article 1-5).

Section 2 covered the Rule of Faith) (article 6-8).

And the Life of Faith (9-18)

We have covered all the major doctrines, starting with Original Sin, and going step by step to Predestination.

Now in Article 18 we will see how there is salvation in no one else, but in Jesus. This is a critical doctrine for today, because so many believe that you can get into heaven by going to Mohammed, or to the Jewish faith, or through his ancestors, there are many, many roads to heaven they teach us.

But this article makes clear that there is salvation only in Jesus.

I) The Error Condemned

1) Every man shall be saved (universalism)

Universalism teaches that everyone is going to heaven.

2) So long as he is sincere

"Who assert that persons will be saved no matter what beliefs they hold to, or what sect they belong to, provided they sincerely lead their lives according to those beliefs?"

II) The Truth Emphasized

"Holy Scripture insists that it is only by the Name of Jesus Christ that we may be saved"

Acts 4:12 - And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Mark 16:15 - And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

John 3:36 - Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

John 14:6 - Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

1 Cor. 3:11 - For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Gal 1:8, 9 - but even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

III) Scriptural Teaching

These verses make it crystal clear that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that no one can come to the Father except through Him. Only Jesus can take away the guilt of sin; only Jesus can remove the wrath of God; only Jesus can bring us into fellowship with God. The Bible is very clear – Only through Christ.

Conclusion

We have now covered the life of faith.

The Doctrine of Justification has been covered in article 9-14.

Furthermore, the doctrine of Sanctification has been covered in article 15-18.

The final section of these articles (19-39) will be covered under the household of faith.

ARTICLE 19

THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH

The Church

The visible Church of Christ is a gathering of believing people in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments are ministered with due order and discipline, as ordained by Christ. Together with other churches, the Church of Rome has erred, not only in matters of conduct and ceremonial, but also in matters of doctrine.

Introduction

We now come to the fourth and final section of the 39 articles, and they will deal with the household of faith (Article 19-39).

Section A is The Church – 19-22

1. The Foundation of the church

a. When did the church begin?

Strictly speaking, the church began when Jesus called two of the disciples of John the Baptist.

John 1:37 - The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

But for practical purposes, the day of Pentecost is regarded as the birthday of the church.

Acts 2:1 - When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

2. How did the church begin?

It began with the preaching of Christ. Peter anointed by the Spirit, preached a powerful message where 1000s were converted.

After his message, many surrendered their lives to Christ and were added to the church.

I. The Purpose of the church

I.Fellowship

The church is a gathering of believing people, and therefore is a family of saved sinners. The church has been described as a society of sinners saved by Christ; therefore, we enjoy fellowship together.

2.Service

True fellowship expresses itself in service. The true church brings the gospel to the world.

a)The progress of the church

b)Threefold use of the term ‘church’

In the N.T., the church can be seen in three ways:

c)Local church

A gathering of believer at one time in one place.
E.g. the church in Antioch, PMB, etc.

d)General

This is the gathering of believer anywhere at one time.
e.g. 1 Cor. 12:28 - And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

e)Universal

This refers to believers past, present, and future.
Eph 1:22 - And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,
Col 1:18 - And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

II.The characteristics of the church

a)The church as visible

It has four characteristics:

I.Community

The article makes it clear for us that the church is not a building – it is people.

II.Life

“It’s a gathering of believing people, a gathering of saved sinners.”

III.Standard

“In which the pure Word of God is preached”
Therefore, in a Biblical sense, we look for a church that teaches the Bible.
“This means that the buildings, and the music, and the numbers are not important. What is important is the preaching of the Bible

IV.Observance

“And the sacraments are ministered” These are Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper

2.The church as visible is not infallible

Sadly, over the centuries, many churches have made mistakes with regards to:

a)Ceremonies

“Not only in matters of conduct and ceremonial”

b)Matters of faith

Sometimes churches have told doctrines that are not in the Bible.

3.The church invisible

There are four things:

a)Unity

We are all one (even though we are of many different denominations).

b)Sanctity

The church is set-apart.

c)Universal

It is all over the world.

d)Apostolicity

Eph 2:20 - built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

Mat 16:18 - And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Rev 21:14 - And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

III.The importance of the church

The local church is very important in the life of a Christian.

1.Worship

Heb 13:15 - Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

2.Fellowship

Acts 2:42 - And they devoted themselves to the apostles ' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

3.Ministry

Eph 4:12 - to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

4.Witness

Acts 1:8 - 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

We all need the local church.

IV.The Growth of the church

As the pure Word of God is preached, by God's grace the church is going to grow.

ARTICLE 20

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

The church has power to prescribe rites and ceremonies and has authority in theological controversies; but it is not lawful for the church to prescribe anything that is contrary to God's written Word, or to expound one passage of Scripture in such a way that it disagrees with another. Therefore, although the church is a witness and a guardian of Holy Scripture, yet it is not open to it to prescribe anything contrary to Scripture, or to enforce anything not found in Scripture to be believed as necessary to salvation.

Introduction

Having given us a wonderful picture of what the true church is (article 19); article 20 will cover the authority of the local church.

"The church has power to prescribe rites and ceremonies, and has authority in theological controversies"

Every local church has the authority to decide how it wants to function.

I) The Nature of the Church Authority

1) Ceremonial – legal right

Each local church prescribes its own ceremonies.

2) Faith – moral authority

Again, the local church will prescribe its doctrine.

II) The Limitation of Church Authority

“But it is not lawful for the church to prescribe anything that is contrary to God’s written Word.”

1) Ceremonial – ordained contrary to Scripture

Ordained contrary to Scripture, nothing can happen in the church, which does not have Scripture to support.

2) Faith – not contrary to Scripture

No doctrine is to be taught against the Scriptures.

III) The Relation of the Church

1) Position of the church in relation to Scripture

“Or to expound one passage of Scripture in such a way that it disagrees with another”

2) Subordination of church to Scripture

The church in every way is to come under the authority of the Bible.

IV) The Relation of the church to the individual

Within the local church, every member ought to be careful not to teach anything against the Bible, or to teach anything, which would break the unity of the local church.

ARTICLE 21

THE AUTHORITY OF GENERAL COUNCILS

Even general councils may err when they meet, and sometimes have erred, even in issues of theological importance – for such councils are composed of men, not all of whom may be governed by the Spirit and the Word of God. Therefore, nothing declared by such councils as necessary for salvation has binding power or authority unless it is plainly taught in Holy Scripture.

Introduction

This article was written at the time of the Reformation, and it reminded the church of something important – that over the centuries, church councils have met, but they also must come under the authority of the Bible.

“Even general councils may err when they meet, and sometimes have erred, even in issues of theological importance.”

I) The Facts

1) Nicaea I

2) Constantinople I

3) Ephesus

4) Chalcedon

5) Constantinople II

6) Constantinople III

7) Nicaea II

II) The summoning of general councils

These councils were called because the church was under attack from false teaching. E.g. Nicaea; Arius denying the deity of Christ.

III) The fallibility of these councils

They have erred in the past, because they were mere men, not always governed by the Bible.

IV) The sanction of general councils

“Nothing declared by such councils as necessary for salvation has binding power or authority, unless it is plainly taught in Holy Scripture.”

Conclusion

Articles 19-21 are important. They have reminded us that the church consists of a fellowship of saved sinners, and is to be always governed by the Bible. The section will now close in article 22 by reminding us of the Roman Catholic teaching on Purgatory is wrong and cannot be found in the Bible.

ARTICLE 22

Purgatory

The Romish teaching about purgatory, pardons, the worship and adoration of images and relics, and also the practice of praying to saints, is a futile deception, which, far from being grounded in Scripture, is repugnant to the Word of God.

ARTICLE 23-28

SECTION B – THE MINISTRY

Introduction

Having given us a wonderful summary of what the true church is, the articles will now show us how to carry out ministry in the church.

Article 23 – Ministering in the Congregation

Article 23 reminds us that no one is to take upon himself the office of a pastor, to carry out public preaching, and there administering of the sacraments, unless there has been a clear call. The call will come not only to the man, but also to the church. The local church sees his gifting and his godliness, and once he has been adequately trained, he will then be able to carry out ministry in the church.

Article 24 – Preaching to of the Congregation

When we preach in the local church, we ought to preach in the language of the people. The people must understand what is being taught and what is being said. The background to this article was the Roman Catholic Church, they used to preach and conduct their services in Latin – which is obviously wrong. Therefore, the lesson is important, when we preach and lead the

services, it must be in the language of the people, and taught in such a way that people will understand. Keep it simple, so that the people can understand.

SECTION C – THE SACRAMENTS

Article 25 – The Sacraments

The easiest definition of what a sacrament is the following: “A sacrament is an outward and a visible sign, of an inward spiritual grace.”

The Bible teaches that there are two sacraments; and there is Baptism, and a Holy Communion.

Article 26 – The Unworthiness of the Ministers which Hinders Not the Effect of the Sacraments

Here we are reminded of two important things;

1. Sadly, there remained be an ungodly pastor; but when he conducts the sacraments, he does not detract from the effects of the sacraments.
2. Every local church order to work and pray for godly ministers.

Article 27 – Baptism

The sign of being a Christian is baptism. It is the sign whereby people are brought into the church. There is the promise of forgiveness and of our adoption as God’s children. Baptism therefore is;

1. A sign of Christian profession,
2. And a sign of regeneration,
3. And the sign of introduction into the church.

Some denominations only baptise adults. Other denominations will baptise children and adults. Like the Apostle Paul we says that Jesus Christ that not send us to baptise, but to preach the gospel.

Article 28 – The Lord’s Supper

The Lord Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper (also called Holy Communion), which we are able to celebrate regularly. It is a time of remembrance; the bread reminds us of the body of Jesus, which was broken for us, and the wine reminds us about the blood of Jesus shed for us on the cross – therefore we remember Jesus and His work on the cross. But it is also a time of fellowship; we share as a family; and also, it is a time to remember in heaven.

Jesus told us to do it until He comes, and therefore, Communion is a wonderful time for believers.

Article 29 - The Wicked which eat not the body of Christ in the use of the Lord’s Supper

This article reminds us that the sacraments are not for everybody.

E.g., Holy Communion is reserved only for believers, we eat the bread, and we drink from the cup in remembrance of what Jesus has done for us. As pastors, we must make sure that unbelievers do not partake of Holy Communion. If they do, article 29 says, it will be to their condemnation.

Article 30 - Both Kinds

This article reminds us that we ought to have the bread & the wine, which represent the body and blood of Jesus that was given for atonement. But at the Reformation, the RC church taught that you can only have the bread – not the wine, because you may spill it.

Article 31 - The one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross

This is a wonderful article, reminding us of all that Christ did on the cross for us.

i) Perfect redemption

The death of Jesus paid the price for our redemption.

ii) Propitiation

He took away the wrath of God. On the cross, the Lord Jesus was our propitiation.

1 John 2: 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

iii) Therefore, we have forgiveness & reconciliation with God.

Holy Communion enables us to remember what Jesus did.

SECTION D – CHURCH DISCIPLINE (ARTICLE 32 – 36)

Article 32 - The marriage of priests

This short article reminds us that pastors are not required to take a vow of celibacy (to remain unmarried). This is the teaching of the RC church who teaches that the priest is not to marry – a priest is encouraged to marry.

Article 33 - Excommunicated persons; how they are to be avoided.

This article is a reminder that whenever there is sin, it ought to be disciplined.

Mat 18: 17 - If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

And sometimes excommunicated, put out of the church in order that the person may be brought to repentance and restored.

Article 34 - The traditions of the church - Every church has its own traditions (how they conduct their affairs), but you cannot have a tradition that goes against the Bible.

Article 35 - The Homilies

Homily is simply a word for “sermon”. And sometimes the minister would print out his sermon and hand it out to the outlined areas to be read on Sunday.

Article 36 - Consecration of Bishops and Ministers

As a fellowship grows, it will come to the stage where they want to have a pastor. That man would be ordained. Later as many churches grow, one of the pastors will have extra

responsibility, to look after all the churches, and to be a bishop. He carries responsibility for the area.

SECTION E – CHURCH AND STATE

Introduction

The 39 Articles were put together the time of the Reformation. They underline the great Evangelical and Reformed teaching. They have covered every major doctrine, and now it will close by reminding us of the relationship that we have to the country.

Article 37 - The Civil Magistrates

This article is based on Romans 13 where we are called to submit to those in authority, but the state is not given authority to minister the sacraments or to teach the Bible. Rather they are to govern the state as those who have been appointed by the Lord. Because we live in a fallen world, there are two illustrations as to what the state is permitted to do:

1) Capital punishment

This is a serious issue, and where there has been serious sin, the state can carry out the death penalty.

2) The Lawfulness of Military service

Because of our fallen world and very tragically there are times when it may be necessary to go to war. E.g., 1939-45 the world combined to fight against Hitler. He put 6 million Jews to death.

Article 38 - Christian men's goods, which are not common

This little article reminds us that there is nothing wrong for a Christian to be wealthy, nor to possess private property and possessions. But it does lay down, "nevertheless, every person ought to give liberally according to his ability to the poor".

We therefore are able to have possessions, but we must always be generous in giving to the poor.

Article 39 - A Christian man's oath

Sometimes when we go to court and stand before a judge or a magistrate, we may be required to take an oath. But the greater truth is that as Christians we should not have to do that because we always tell the truth. Christians must always tell the truth.