a copy of which you could get from my assistant Mr. Werner Rode, Union Theological Seminary New York.¹

Sincerely yours
[signed] Paul

PS. I am very much interested in your subject.

TLS. MLKP-MBU: Box 117.

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1. King later wrote letters to Rode and Dillenberger. See King to Werner Rode, 1 December 1953, pp. 221–222 in this volume; and King to John Dillenberger, 1 December 1953, MLKP-MBU: Box 116.

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Qualifying Examination Answers, Theology of the Bible

[2 November 1953]
[Boston, Mass.]

Before beginning work on their dissertations, doctoral candidates in systematic theology at Boston were required to take three-hour qualifying examinations in four of the following fields: “Systematic Theology, Philosophy of Religion, Theology of the Bible, History of Doctrine, History of Philosophy, [or] the thought of one great theologian or philosopher of religion.”¹ When examined on the theology of the Bible, King answered three of the four questions, per instructions.² In his answer on Christian hope, King declares faith in immortality: “Man will live again because he is of value to God.” DeWolf, as King’s academic advisor, graded this examination, probably in consultation with other faculty members. King received an A.

[1. What is the proper form of the Christian’s hope? Relate your answer to the principal relevant New Testament teachings, taking into account interpretations by Paul S. Minear and Rudolf Bultmann.]³

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1. Boston University, Special Regulations for the Ph.D. in Theological Studies with Concentration in Systematic Theology, September 1951–November 1953, GSKC.

2. For King’s other examinations, see King, Qualifying examination answers, History of Doctrine, pp. 212–218 in this volume; Qualifying examination answers, Systematic Theology, pp. 228–233 in this volume; and Qualifying examination answers, History of Philosophy, pp. 242–247 in this volume.

3. Paul Minear’s book The Eyes of Faith (1946) appeared on the list of “minimum requirements in reading” in the special regulations for doctoral students in systematic theology cited above. Rudolf Bultmann’s Theology of the Bible (vol. 1, 1951) was not listed, but the regulations stated that “the examination covers the entire field and is not restricted to the books specified.” In his answer King mentions Millar Burrows, whose book An Outline of Biblical Theology (1946) was also on the reading list.
1. The Christian hope hinges around at least three or four concepts, viz., the Second coming of Christ, the final judgment, the Kingdom of God, and the immortality of the soul. The New Testament has something to say about each of these.

First we may turn to the teaching concerning the Second coming of Christ. There is no doubt concerning the fact that after his death and resurrection Jesus was identified with the “Son of Man” who was to return on the clouds and judge the quick and the dead. This hope of Christ' immediate return was the chief hope of the early Christians Indeed, as Rudolf Bultmann has said, the earliest church was an eschatological congregation. The whole life of the Church was guided by this expectation. And even to this day many Christians hold fast to this belief in the second coming.

Whether Jesus accepted the title of “Son of Man” or whether he ever thought that he would return to establish the kingdom is very difficult to determine. Scholars are still in debate over this question. Millar Burrows holds the opinion that Jesus did look upon himself as the “Son of Man.” Bultmann on the other hand believes that we can never know whether Jesus accepted such a view of himself. In fact Bultmann would rather think that Jesus had no messianic consciousness at all. Minear deal with the question by saying the Jesus wasn’t to concerned about titles. He was more concerned {with} response to his message.

Although this question has not been settled or, all would agree that the Biblical writer (i.e. the New Testament writers) in general looked upon Jesus as the “Son of Man.”

One New Testament writer, viz. the writer of the Fourth gospel, gave a new spiritual meaning to the traditional concept. He insisted that Christ, rather than returning at some date in the future, had already returned as an abiding inner presence.

Modern man finds it quite difficult to find any meaning in this traditional hope. Minear attributes this to a faulty orientation in interpreting specific predications.

He affirms that the Day of the Son of man is other than the day of man's calendar. This day does not dawn for all men at the same instant by the objective clocks of the world. This conception, says Minear, stemms from the assumption of the interpreter that the coming of the Son of Man is everywhere treated in the N. T. as a simple objective event like the coming of a train. With one important qualification, he says, the son of man does not come to all men and places at precisely the same instant. Jesus, for example, pictures the future judgment as coming at different times for different people, in accordance with their watchfulness. We may conclude with Minear that whenever the proclamation of calvey, with its representation of sacrificial love, is heard in its decisive form there again the Son of Man comes among man revealing the power of the new day over all darkness.

This leads us to say a few words concerning the judgment. It was believed that one of the duties of the coming “Son of Man” was to “judge
the quick and the dead.” On that final day he would separate the wheat from the tares; the righteous would be rewarded and the wicked would be punished. This belief runs the whole gamut of the New Testament. They all looked forward to this day of reckoning which would mean salvation for the righteous.

The writer of the Fourth gospel spiritualized this concept as he did to all traditional eschatology. For him the judgment was not far off future event, but it was the sentence that a man passes upon himself for refusing the “light.”

It is very difficult for us in the modern world to believe in the final judgment with all its external and symbolic features that we find in the New Testament. However there is a sense in which every Christian much look upon the judgment as final, and that is in the sense that God has planted in the fiber of the universe certain eternal laws which forever confront every man. They are absolute and not relative. There is an eternal and absolute distinction between right and wrong.

Another very important part of the Christian hope is the hope in the kingdom of God. This is probably the greatest item in the Christian hope. The belief in the kingdom of God runs throughout the New Testament. It is often debated whether the idea of the kingdom in the New Testament is spiritual or apocalyptic. Bultmann holds that it is purely apocalyptic. He says there is nothing in the New Testament that could be interpreted to mean that the Kingdom is spiritual in form and gradual in development. Minear along with other scholars would affirm that there is a spiritual view of the Kingdom that runs side by side with the apocalyptic view. The Kingdom is both present and future.

It seems clear to me that the facts are on the side of Minear. Such passage as these, “thou are not far from the Kingdom,” “the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” and such parables as the seed growing of itself and the mustard seed, all seem to point to a spiritual view of the Kingdom. So we must conclude that the Kingdom can be a future present possession according to the N. T. It might be true that in its final and universal form it will be “post historical,” but it can exist as an inner possession in history. Wherever the love of God is sovereign in a man life there is the kingdom of God.

We must also mention that there is no warrant in the N. T. for looking upon the kingdom as an “idealized social order” but we must say that whenever there are advances in that direction there is an expression of the power of the kingdom.

Like the writer of the Fourth gospel we must believe that the kingdom is already here in the ministry of Jesus and in his continual presence (realized eschatology).

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A final element in the Christian hope is the belief in immortality. It is at this point that the New Testament surpasses the Old. The doctrine of immortality was very late appearing in the O. T. The emphasis in the earlier days was on the immortality of the nation. But with the Christian the individual will live again. This view runs throughout the N. T. Jesus in his argument against the Saducees accepted the view and there can be little doubt that every N. T. writer accepted belief in some form of immortality. The dominate note in the N. T. is a bodily resurrection rather than a survival of the soul independent of the body, but there are some signs of the latter view appearing in the N. T.

In the final analysis this hope in immortality is for the Christian given by God, rather than due to some natural immortal state of the soul (the Greek view) Man will live again because he is of value to God.

2. Distinguish the principal Old Testament teachings on the problem of natural evil, relating as specifically as possible to particular times and authors. What has the New Testament to add on this subject?

2. The earliest Old Testament teaching concerning natural evil was that it was due to a punishment for evil, i.e. sin. In early period it implied punishment for disobedience of ceremonial laws. The prophets improved on this view by affirming that natural evil was due to punishment for disobedience to moral and ethical laws rather than ceremonial laws.

The Deutoromonic writers built a whole philosophy of history on this principle. They contended throughout that the wicked suffer and the righteous prosper.

It was not long before this general was questioned. Habakkuk was the first to question this principle as it related to the nation. He wondered why it was that his nation, a righteous nation, suffered at the hands of a wicked nation. The answer given Habakkuk is simply that the just shall live by faith.

Jeremiah was the first to question the old principle as it related to the individual. All around him he say the evil prospering and the righteous suffering. He knew in his own experience that he often suffered and was even scorned and ridiculed for his attempt to do right. And so there were times that he felt the God was as a deceitful watersbrook. Jeremiah's problem is never solved intellectually. However it is affirmed by Jeremiah that the richness and intimatcy of his fellowship with God caused him to transcend his suffering on many occasion.

When we come to the book of Job we find a clear and systematic attempt to refute the old view. Job wanted to make it clear that the righteous do suffer and the wicked do prosper. In this great work the author has Job in argument after argument prove against the arguments of those who held the traditional view that the wicked do prosper and many of them go to their graves prosperous. At points it seems that Job is so disturbed over the problem that his conclusion is that God is almighty, but not just.

However there is something of a solution to the problem found in the
prologue of the book of Job. Here it is affirmed that in the council of God the suffering of Job had a purpose although Job didn't know it. May it not be true that the natural evil in the world has a purpose that our finite limited minds cannot comprehend at the moment?

Another answer to the problem is set forth in the teaching of Deutero Isaiah concerning the suffering servant. This is one of the most noble teaching of all the Old Testament. Whether the servant he referred to was an individual or the nation is not easy to determine. But it is clear what the servant does. His suffering is not for due to something that he has done, but it is vicarious and redemptive. Through his suffering knowledge of God is spread to the unbelieving Gentiles and those unbelievers seeing that this suffering servant is innocent will become conscious of their sins and repent and thereby be redeemed. The nation would be healed by his [strikeout illegible] wombs.

The New Testament faces this problem and adds new light on it. First it identifies Jesus with Isaiah's suffering servant and sees in the cross a symbol of the meaning of suffering and a clue to its solution.

Also the New Testament sets forth a doctrine of immortality which is lacking in the Old Testament on the whole (The only passages in which a view of life after death is clearly stated in the O. T. is in Dan. 12:2 and Isaiah 26:19). Through this doctrine one comes to see that the injustices of this life are corrected in the life to come. This great immortal hope which runs throughout the N. T. has given consolation to many souls that have walked the paths of life.

We may say in conclusion that the Bible teaches that the ultimate solution to the problem of suffering is in faith and fellowship with God. In such a setting the individual does not necessarily have an intellectual solution, but he transcends the problem.

[3. Review, with critical evaluation, the principal works in Biblical theology by Mil- lar Burrows, A. B. Davidson and H. C. Sheldon.]
[4. Summarize the Old Testament and New Testament teachings on sin and salva-
ation, relating as specifically as possible to the literature.]

3. There are two conceptions concerning the nature of sin in the Bible. The first comes under the category of taboo or disobedience to ceremonial. This is an impersonal and objective view of sin. We find this view particularly prevalent in the early days of Hebrew history. Inner intention does not enter the picture. Uzzar is struck dead because out of good intention he was trying to save the Ark from falling.

The other conception of the nature of sin is that sin is disobedience to

6. Daniel 12:2: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Isaiah 26:19: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."
God. Here sin takes on a personal and ethical or subjective meaning. This view of sin was especially set forth by the prophets. Sin for them was not disobedience to some ceremonial law, but it was disobedience to the ethical and moral law of God.

This personal and ethical meaning of sin runs throughout the New Testament. For Jesus not only is the outward deed important, but also the inner motive. For Paul sin is clearly revolt against God, it is worshipping the creation rather than the creator.

Concerning the origin of sin the Bible teaches many things. It must be stated at the outset that the Bible teaches no doctrine of original sin. It is true that Paul comes pretty near the doctrine in Rom. 5:12 in affirming that sin came into the world through Adam, but he never states how and why. In a word, the doctrine of original sin as it was later formulated by Augustine is not found in the Bible.

Genesis teaches that the origin of sin was in pride and desire. The prophets taught that the origin of sin was in selfishness, materialism and secularism. Jeremiah taught that the origin of sin was in a stubborn heart. Jesus also taught that sin stemmed from the heart. Paul, as we have seen, conceived of sin as originating with Adam.

Concerning the extent of sin the Bible is almost unanimous in affirming its universality. There are occasional exceptions such as Noah and Enoch, but these truly exceptions and not the rule. The rule is that "all we like sheep have gone astray." "No one is good, no not one"8 The New Testament is explicit in affirming that only Jesus is sinless. So it is clear that the Bible teaches the universality of sin. This, as was stated above, does not imply that the Bible teaches a doctrine of original sin. It simply means that all men have sinned.

Because man is a sinner, i.e. in bondage to sin, he needs to be saved. So it became clear that the biblical doctrine of sin is closely tied to the doctrine of salvation. The O. T. seems to teach that man is saved by work of the law. The doctrine of atonement in most of the O. T. is built upon the legalistic system of sacrifice. It is the priest who through sacrifice atones (literally [strikeout illegible] wipes away are covers) for the sins of the people. This idea of salvation by works, devoid of its ritualistic and ceremonial forms, is also found in the N. T. in the sermon on the mount and in the epistle of James.

It is Paul who comes on the scene affirming that salvation comes through faith. The law is only set forth to show men that they can't save themselves, and must therefore depend on the grace of God in Jesus Christ. For Paul salvation has an objective as well as a subjective side. The objective side is found in the idea of justification. The subjective

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7. Romans 5:12: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

8. The quotations are from Isaiah 53:6 and Matthew 19:17.
side is found in the idea of regeneration. To be justified does not mean that one is sinless, but it means that one is accepted as sinless. In other words, God does not hold his sin against him, but imputes his righteousness to him. So Paul concludes that through faith, (by which he means a total surrender to God) one is justified, and this justification means regeneration. Through this faith the individual dies to the flesh and rises anew with Christ in the spirit, and is thereby saved.

The New Testament makes it very explicit that Jesus is savior and redeemer. It is contends that through his death and resurrection God has prepared the way to a release from the bondage of sin and thereby offering him salvation. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.”

AHDS. MLKP-MBU: Box 115.

9. The quotation is from 2 Corinthians 5:19.

J. Timothy Boddie to Martin Luther King, Sr.

3 November 1953
Baltimore, Md.

Boddie informs his old friend King, Sr., that King, Jr., will give a guest sermon at Boddie's New Shiloh Baptist Church in Baltimore. Boddie refers to King, Sr.'s absence at the annual meeting of the National Baptist Convention in Miami, where J. H. Jackson was elected president to succeed the retiring D. V. Jemison.

Dr. M. L. King
194 Boulevard N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia

My dear friend, M. L.

You were missed at Miami. But knowing you as I do you would have burned up a lot of energy stating and taking your position according to your convictions. Things worked out as we wanted them anyhow.

1. James Timothy Boddie (1900–1963) graduated from Virginia Theological Seminary and College in 1926 and received his B.D. from Colgate-Rochester Divinity School in 1929. After serving as pastor of Baptist churches in Virginia, New York, Maryland, and Pennsylvania he became pastor of New Shiloh Baptist Church in Baltimore in 1942, where he remained until his death. He was president of the Maryland Baptist Convention and vice-president of the National Baptist Convention. His wife, Emery Mae Moore, was a close childhood friend of Alberta Williams King. See J. Timothy Boddie, Jr., to King Papers Project, 9 September 1990.