



CHRIST IN CREATION – STUDY # 1

INTRODUCTION

As in most venues in life we need to determine or answer this question: What is our authority in life? In theology this is referred to as the “Formal Principle” of Theology. There are a number of options. Through the millennium people have lifted up different suggestions for their “Formal Principle.” If we are united on our “Formal Principle” we are on the road toward unity. If we are not united in our Formal Principle it is an impossible endeavor.

Perhaps looking at it in this manner is helpful: What *form* does your authority take?

Please list a examples of what people or confessions of faith have lifted up as their Formal Principle. To help prime the thinking pump allow me to give two suggestions: human reason and sociology. What additionally suggestions can you add to these two?

Human emotions, logic, grammar, self, Scripture, Pope, etc.

The Lutheran Confessions claim as their Formal Principle: Scripture ALONE

Also needed in theology is an understanding of what our “Material Principle” is. Think of it in this way. The Material Principle deals with what *matters* most in life, or, what is the *major* teaching found in the Bible.

Again, if we are united in our goal of the “Material Principle” we will be united in what we confess about Jesus Christ. However, if we have a divergent understanding of our “Material Principle” we will have divergent answers.

Please list some examples of people have lifted up as their Material Principle in the Bible down through the ages. Again, to prime the thinking pump allow me to suggest to examples: morality and sovereignty of God. What can you add to these two suggestions?

Fruits of the Spirit, end times, holiness, progressive sanctification, unity of Christendom, deification of man, etc. .

Lutherans claim as their Material Principle: justification by grace through faith. This matters to us most of all.

A question to ponder: If people who are Christian or denominations have a different Formal Principles or a different Material Principles of theology will they ever come to agreement?
Sadly no .

How might you respond to people who claim that we ought not to have names for denominations since we all are Christian?

A possible answer might be as follows: All restaurants give varying degrees of nutrition. That is why they are called restaurants. However not all restaurants give the same nutrition and people are concerned about their nutrition. So, labels, or, names of restaurants inform people as to the type of nutrition they will be receiving when they sit down to eat. Nutrition might come in the format of Hardees, McDonalds, Red Lobster (my favorite 😊), Subway, etc.

How much more ought we to be concerned regarding the spiritual nutrition we receive? Sure, all Christian denominations point people to the spiritual nutrition (life) found in Jesus Christ and that is what makes them Christian. But like with restaurants, not all Christian denominations—churches—give or offer the same spiritual nutrition. Is the nutrition from Jesus free to be received simply as a gift? Or, do we have to labor or make some contribution no matter how small to earn or receive this nutrition through our improved sanctification, good works, or the mediation of a human being? These issues and many more are what give rise to different houses of spiritual nutrition.

CHRIST IN AND AT CREATION

Please read John 1:1-3.

Who was active at creation? If there is any doubt as to the answer please read John 1:14 to seal the deal.

Jesus is the work who took on flesh.

Now, using this information let us turn to Genesis 1:1-3. As we read these verses please be alert to the Three Persons of the Trinity at Work in Creation.

Start with finding the Third Person of the Trinity. This might be the easiest. Where is the Third Person of the Trinity mentioned in Gen 1:1-3? Spirit who hovered.

The First Person of the Trinity might be a little harder to find. For help study 2 Cor 13:14 which will lead you to seeing the First Person of the Trinity in Gen 1:1-3. God = the Father.

The Second Person of the Trinity is understandably the “hardest” person to find in Gen 1:1-3. To help you “find” the Second Person of the Trinity in Gen 1:1-3 you might want to remember what you read in Jn 1:1-3, 14. “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’...” shows the WORD at work as He spoke.

Where else in Scripture do we at least see references to a plurality in the Godhead?

Some examples might be: Gen 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7
Isaiah 6:3, 8

John 3:11; 17:20-21

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS HOW MANY RELIGIONS ARE FOUND IN THE WORLD?

How many religions are found in the world? Examples might be:

Buddhism, Hindusm, Judaism, Islam, Mormonism, Daoism, Confucianism,
Native American Religion, Zoroastrianism, etc.

However, in the final analysis there are only two religions found throughout the world: one of the Law, and one of the Gospel.



In your estimation, which arrow, “A” or, “B”, would portray the religion of the Law and which arrow would convey the only other religion found in the world; the religion of the Gospel?

Please read Gen 3:7. This act portrays the religion of the law. Please explain your reasoning. Adam and Eve were laboring to hide the guilt of their sin.

Now, kindly read Gen 3:21. This act is a picture of which religion found in the world? Remember our two definitions discussed above? Gospel.

The text is obviously silent as to what type of animal was slain. But if you were to take a pious Biblical guess as to what type of animal was slain by God in Gen 3:21 what would be your guess? To help this guess be pious and Biblical see Jn 1:29, 35, or Lev 16. A lamb.

When an animal is slain there is blood all over the place. (If you need a hint see Heb 9:22). In a distant and shadowy way this pointed to what act that God did for our salvation? Mt. Calvary.

CAIN AND ABEL

Many Christians think that God rejected the sacrifice of Cain in Gen 4:2-5 because Cain offered grains from the earth for his offering. But this overlooks the fact that Yahweh himself instituted grains of the earth to be offered up in the “Grain Offering” as instituted in Lev 2. (You might want to read this as a class.)

So why then did God look with favor on Abel's sacrifice and not with favor on Cain's sacrifice? Letting Scripture interpret Scripture one may turn to Rom 14:23b, Heb 11:6. We are acceptable to God through faith in the shed blood of his Son, Jesus Christ.

In John 15:2-3 what illustration or words convey the same thing as Rom 14 and Heb 11? To remain "in the vine," or "in me," as Jesus says is to have faith in Jesus.

Looking at Gen 4:4 we read, "the LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering." Which is mentioned first in the text, the offering or, Abel? Abel.

If we are found acceptable to God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ then all we do is acceptable—except our sins of course. Why? Because all our acts, no matter how imperfect they are—and they certainly all are—are acceptable for God looks at them through the prism or lens of the blood of Christ.

Imagine you were walking along and saw a piece of paper on the floor or street with crazy squiggly lines smeared upon it. Naturally you would ignore it or if you were so minded you would pick it up and put it in a trash receptacle.

However in what way would things be different if a child or grandchild of the tender age of three came up to you with said paper in his/her pudgy fingers, beaming a smile brightly and said, "for you, Oma, Opa!"? Naturally you would hang this paper on your refrigerator with all due haste and proudly show it all who entered your home ☺ .

Because the child/grandchild is accepted her/his work of squiggles is also accepted!

Now, replace that delightful three year old with Abel and we have supplied the answer to our question.