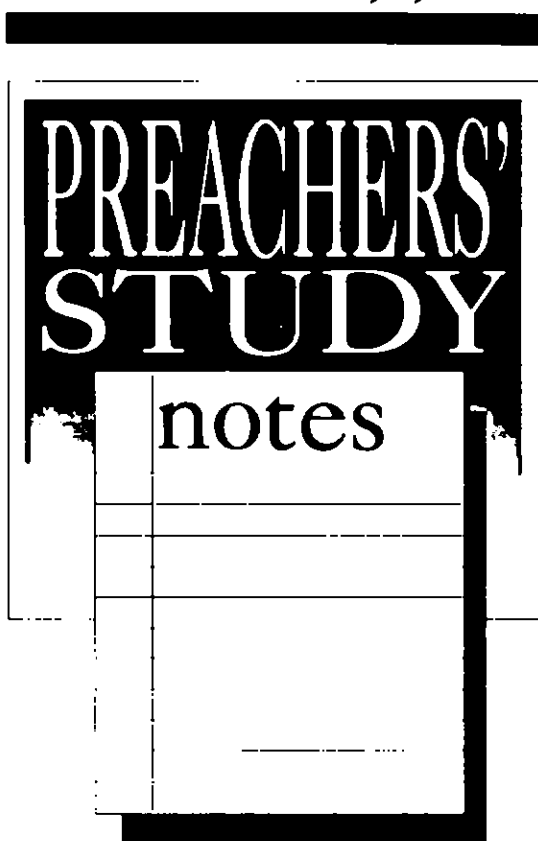


1992

PREACHERS' STUDY

notes

1992



The following articles were submitted for publication by participants in the 1992 Preachers' Study held at the Twenty-first Street congregation, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The 1992 Study dates were December 21-24. Moderators for the sessions were Cliff Arney and Allen Bailey

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The views expressed in the **Preachers' Study Notes** are the views of a particular author, and are not necessarily the views of the editors, moderators, host congregation, other participants in the Study, or other authors in this volume. Each article has the address of the author appended if you desire to respond. The editors of the Notes encourage every reader to test all things by the Word of God (1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11). Examine all that this volume contains in that unerring Light and you cannot go wrong.

— *The editors of the Preachers' Study Notes*

The Twenty-first Street congregation was the host for the 1992 Preachers' Study. There are things that were taught at the Study that are not necessarily the belief of the leadership of the congregation. Therefore we urge you to read and study these Notes carefully and prayerfully and search the Scriptures to determine the truth on all topics (Acts 17:11).

—*Cliff Arney and Duane Cutter
for the Twenty-first St. congregation*

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The Twenty-first Street congregation hosted the 1992 Study. As usual, these brethren were hospitable hosts. Cliff Arney and Duane Cutter, leaders in the congregation, planned the subjects and selected the speakers. Allen Bailey assisted Cliff Arney in moderating the sessions. We appreciate these brethren for their labors.

The men who participated in the study and submitted their notes for publication are also appreciated for the many hours of study they put into their subjects and their cooperation with the editors of the **Preachers' Study Notes**. Their names are attached to their articles.

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A special thank you is due to L. Melvin Crouch, whose financial assistance has made the publication of the **Preachers' Study Notes** possible since the 1988 volume.

Thanks to all of you .

Foreword

The 1992 volume of the **Preachers' Study Notes** marks the eleventh year that the Notes have been published. Lonnie York began publishing the Notes in 1982. He continued to publish the Notes through the 1987 volume. The 1987 volume was published by Mike Heavin and Lonnie York. The **Christian's Expositor** took over the publication of the Notes with the 1988 volume. This volume is the fifth that the **Christian's Expositor** has published.

The published Notes of the last ten years contain a wealth of information on a wide range of timely issues and subjects. I believe that the 1992 Notes continue that tradition. The **Preachers' Study** is a valuable means of studying the Scriptures, and the written Notes, by preserving the fruit of brethren's research and knowledge, is a valuable tool for Bible study. Like any Bible study tool, the timeless admonition of 1 Thessalonians 5:21 always applies: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

It is not the purpose of the Study to be the arbiter of brotherhood issues: to be a sort of "council" to make decisions about what the church should believe and practice in our public work and worship and in our personal discipleship. It does not exist for the purpose of approving or disapproving any practice for the church. In truth, the Study is nothing more nor less than a gospel meeting in which subjects of wide interest are assigned beforehand for presentation and consideration. The presentations at the Study are the work of Bible-loving, God-fearing individuals who, I am convinced, only want to do what is right in God's sight. Their presentations are their best efforts to understand and apply the teaching of God's Word.

Like myself over the years, you may not agree with everything you read or hear coming out of the Study. But it should challenge us to study God's Word and come to informed convictions of our own. It is a great mistake to believe something because "Brother A believes it," or disbelieve something "Because Brother B doesn't believe it." Our personal faith must stand in God and His Word. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to find out whether those things that we hear are so by searching the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). When we do so, the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened to truth we had not known before. I have been blessed by such discovery. On the other hand, we may find a particular presentation to conflict with the teach-

ing of God. I have also come to this conclusion before. Our obligation in the former case is to accept the truth; in the latter, not just to reject error, but to correct as well.

The editors send forth this 1992 volume of the Notes in the hopes that it will be a tool in the hands of brethren and Bible-loving people everywhere, to better understand and apply God's Word in life. If it only helps one soul in this direction, then it will be worth all the hard work that has gone into the publication of these Notes.

Smith Bibens

Widows

by Allen Bailey

Outline of study:

- (1) Introduction
- (2) Examples of Widows
- (3) Old Testament References
- (4) Widows in the Old Testament
- (5) New Testament References
- (6) Widows in the New Testament
- (7) Overall Teaching of Passages
- (8) Practical Advice for Widows
- (9) Conclusion

Introduction

The second recorded problem to face the New Testament church is the fact that the widows were neglected in the daily ministration (Acts 6). The Scriptures have much to say regarding widows. Which ones can be supported by the church and which cannot? What is the difference between a widow and a widow "indeed"? What lessons can be learned from the poor widow who contributed into the treasury? May a widow marry? If so, whom? By carefully noticing the Old Testament and New Testament teaching concerning widows, we can gain an insight into how God views widows.

A widow is "a woman who has outlived the man to whom she was married at the time of his death" (*New World Dictionary*, p. 1625). A widower is "a man who has outlived the woman to whom he was married at the time of her death" (*ibid.*, p. 1625).

My objective in this manuscript is to heighten our awareness regarding our responsibilities toward the Christian widow. We also want to better understand God's divine instructions for the widows. Everyone of us should be equipped with Bible teaching to properly advise those who are widows or widowers, and everyone who could

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possibly be in the same shoes some future day. Every person who is presently married stands a great possibility of one day falling in the category of a widow.

Frequently, there are reported cases of widows or widowers who have violated New Testament principles. Some may have made unwise decisions due to ignorance while others did so out of rebellion.

Most people think of a widow as an older person. While most widows are older there are a number of young widows. The Apostle Paul addressed young widows just as he did older ones.

Examples of Widows

One brother in Christ in Missouri died when he was twenty-nine years old leaving his wife, a widow of twenty-seven with two small children. This young couple attended services one night during a revival meeting, and on the way home the husband was killed in a car accident leaving his wife a widow. One moment she was married the next moment she was a widow.

One brother in Christ became a widower one evening when his wife became ill and was rushed to the hospital. Within seventy-two hours she was dead. A young man with children, a young widower.

There are a number of widows who were the wives of faithful gospel preachers, elders, deacons, etc.

Next to a child's untimely death, conducting the funeral of a young man or woman who dies leaving his or her family, is probably one of the most difficult funerals to conduct.

Old Testament Teaching

This following list of verses will supply a general overview of the Old Testament references to widows. Please read and consider the verses and then take time to study the contexts carefully, especially the verses of a special interest to you. I have only listed the actual passage that includes the word "widow" you will need to take your Bible to read the complete context.

Genesis 38:11 Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

Genesis 38:14 And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife.

Exodus 22:22 Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

Exodus 22:24 And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

Leviticus 21:14 A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.

Leviticus 22:13 But if the priest's daughter be a widow, or divorced, and have no child, and is returned unto her father's house, as in her youth, she shall eat of her father's meat: but there shall no stranger eat thereof.

Numbers 30:9 But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their souls, shall stand against her.

Deuteronomy 10:18 He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

Deuteronomy 14:29 And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

Deuteronomy 16:11 And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there.

Deuteronomy 16:14 And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates.

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Deuteronomy 24:17 Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge.

Deuteronomy 24:19 When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

Deuteronomy 24:20 When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

Deuteronomy 24:21 When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

Deuteronomy 26:12 When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled.

Deuteronomy 26:13 Then thou shalt say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them.

Deuteronomy 27:19 Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.

2 Samuel 14:5 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I am indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead.

1 Kings 7:14 He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work.

1 Kings 11:26 And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up his hand against the king.

1 Kings 17:9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

1 Kings 17:10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

1 Kings 17:20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?

Job 22:9 Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken.

Job 24:3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge.

Job 24:21 He evil entreateth the barren that beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow.

Job 27:15 Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep.

Job 29:13 The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

Job 31:16 If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail.

Psalms 68:5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.

Psalms 78:64 Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation.

Psalms 94:6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

Psalms 109:9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.

Psalms 146:9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

Proverbs 15:25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

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Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Isaiah 1:23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Isaiah 9:17 Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one is an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Isaiah 10:2 To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!

Isaiah 47:8 Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children.

Jeremiah 7:6 If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt.

Jeremiah 15:8 Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them against the mother of the young men a spoiler at noonday: I have caused him to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors upon the city.

Jeremiah 18:21 Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle.

Jeremiah 22:3 Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.

Jeremiah 49:11 Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.

Lamentations 1:1 How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!

Lamentations 5:3 We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows.

Ezekiel 22:7 In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow.

Ezekiel 22:25 There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

Ezekiel 44:22 Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before.

Zechariah 7:10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

Malachi 3:5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Widows in the Old Testament

Hebrew legislation has always been solicitous for widows and, together with the fatherless and strangers, made special provision for them.

Deuteronomy 14:29 And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

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Deuteronomy 16:11 And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there.

Deuteronomy 16:14 And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates.

Deuteronomy 24:17 Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge.

Jeremiah 7:6 If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt.

Even in pre-Mosaic times there was recognition of the predicament of the childless widow and arrangements made for her marriage (Genesis 38) and these were formally enjoined under Moses.

Deuteronomy 25:5ff If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

The bearing of children was accounted a great honor, and one accounted even more when the nation looked for Messiah:

Isaiah 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

Widowhood in those who were not past the age of childbearing, as well as barrenness, was reckoned a shame and a reproach:

Isaiah 4:1 And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

Isaiah 54:4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

The widows of kings, however, continued in their widowhood, and were the property, though not always the wives, of the new king. To ask any of them in marriage was tantamount to a claim to the kingdom:

1 Kings 2:13ff And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably.

As widows are often overlooked by men, God has a peculiar concern for them:

Psalms 68:5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.

Psalms 146:9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

Proverbs 15:25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

Kindness to widows was commended as one of the marks of true religion.

Job 29:13 The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

The oppression and injury of widows, on the other hand, would incur dire punishment.

Psalms 94:6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

Malachi 3:5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress

Widows

the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Jerusalem and Babylon are likened in their desolation to widow:

Lamentations 1:1 How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!

Isaiah 47:8 Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:

The effect of violent death compared to that of wives becoming widows.

Lamentations 5:3 We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows.

Ezekiel 22:25 There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

Among the Hebrews, even before the law, a widow who had no children by her husband was allowed to marry the brother of her deceased husband, in order to raise up children who might enjoy his inheritance, and perpetuate his name and family.

Genesis 38:6 And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar.

Genesis 38:8 And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.

Genesis 38:9 And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

Genesis 38:11 Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

The law that appoints these marriages is delivered in:

Deuteronomy 25:5 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

Deuteronomy 25:6 And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

It was looked upon as a great unhappiness for a man to die without an heir, and to see his inheritance pass into another family. This law was not confined to brothers in law only, but was extended to more distant relatives of the same line, as may be seen in the example of Ruth, who married Boaz, after she had been refused by a nearer kinsman. Widowhood, as well as barrenness, was a kind of shame and reproach in Israel:

Isaiah 54:4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

It was presumed that a woman of merit and reputation might have found a husband, either in the family of her deceased husband, if he died without children, or in some other family, if he had left children.

God frequently recommends to His people to be very careful in affording relief to the widow and orphan:

Exodus 22:22 Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

Deuteronomy 10:18 He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

New Testament References

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Mark 12:40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Luke 20:47 Which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

Mark 12:42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

Mark 12:43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.

Luke 4:25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land.

Luke 2:37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

Luke 7:12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

Luke 18:3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

Luke 18:5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

Luke 21:3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.

Acts 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

Acts 9:39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

Acts 9:41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

1 Corinthians 7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

1 Timothy 5:3 Honor widows that are widows indeed.

1 Timothy 5:4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.

1 Timothy 5:5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

1 Timothy 5:9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man.

1 Timothy 5:11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry.

1 Timothy 5:16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

A city stripped of its inhabitants is represented under the figure of a widow.

Revelation 18:7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

New Testament Teaching Concerning Widows

Devouring Widows' Houses

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Mark 12:40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Luke 20:47 Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

Some manuscripts do not include this verse in the Matthew's account, but do include it in Mark's and Luke's accounts.

In KJV, in Matthew 23, we find listed eight different woes, (NIV only lists seven woes, omitting the passage referring to widows), one of which refers to devouring the widows's houses and the punishment thereof, which would be that they shall receive greater damnation. Jesus addressed His remarks to "scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites."

Mark 12:38-39 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation. (cf. Lk. 20:45-47)

Warnings of Jesus

- (1) Beware of the scribes; that is, the teachers of the law
- (2) They love to wear long clothing; that is, they like to walk around in flowing robes.
- (3) They love salutations in the marketplace; that is, they love to be greeted in the marketplaces.
- (4) They love the chief seats in the synagogues; that is, they love to have the most important seats in the synagogues.
- (5) They love the uppermost rooms at the feasts; that is, they love the places of honor at banquets.

(6) They devour widows' houses. This word "devour" simply means "forcibly appropriate" widows' property (Thayer, p. 339, #2719)

(7) For a pretence they make long prayers; that is, for a show they make lengthy prayers.

Jesus declared that "these shall receive the greater damnation." The NIV says, "such men will be punished most severely" (v. 40).

3. The Poor Widow

Mark 12:42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

Mark 12:43 And he called him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

These verses have been preached on for years. This widow lady gave more than all the rich people did. She gave of her need where the others gave of their abundance. This is a very important message for us to learn. The Lord does not only look at the amount given. He looks at the purpose and intent of the heart along with the matter of sacrifice.

Widows Indeed

Paul would have us honor widows that are widows indeed, and desolate, that is, destitute of such as ought to help and relieve them, such as their husbands and children.

1 Timothy 5:3 Honor widows that are widows indeed.

1 Timothy 5:4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.

1 Timothy 5:5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

There were widows in the church, who, because of their poverty, were maintained at the charge of the faithful, and who were to attend the poor and sick.

Further Points About Widows from the New Testament

1. "Widow" (Greek, *chera*)

1 Timothy 5:9 refers to elderly widows recognized, for relief or maintenance by the church (compare 3:16) as those who had fulfilled the conditions mentioned; where relief could be ministered by those who had relatives that were widows (a likely circumstance in large families), the church was not to be responsible; there is an intimation of the tendency to shelve individual responsibility at the expense of church funds. In Rev.18:7 it is used figuratively of a city forsaken." (W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary)

2. Widows and remarriage.

The Sadducees were questioning Jesus concerning the resurrection by imaging a scenario of a widow who outlived seven husbands. This case shows they knew the Old Testament teaching concerning a widow who had no children could marry her husband's brother to bear her a son to continue the family name.

Matthew 22:23-33 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, ²⁴ Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. ²⁵ Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: ²⁶ Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. ²⁷ And last of all the woman died also. ²⁸ Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. ²⁹ Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. ³¹ But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, ³² I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. ³³ And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine (cf. Mark 12:24-27).

Paul used an analogy from marriage to illustrate the point of the Old Testament having died and the New Testament brought into existence:

Romans 7:1-3 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? ² For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. ³ So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

Paul teaches widows or widowers that their responsibility is to marry only in the Lord:

1 Corinthians 7:39-40 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.⁴⁰ But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

Practical lessons to be learned from these verses are:

- (1) Marriage is for life. Everyone should remember that fact
- (2) As a widow, marriage is allowable as long as married in the Lord. This sets a strong precedent that if those who have been married before must marry only in the Lord, then those who marry the first time should equally marry only in the Lord.
- (3) Marriage is not required for anyone, it is simply suggested. Paul states repeatedly within this chapter that it may be better not to marry. He said this to various groups of people who could have entertained the idea of marriage.

Widows in the New Testament

The church of Christ inherited from Judaism the duty of providing for the widow. The Jewish-Christian author of James states categorically that to give assistance to widows in their distress is a mark of the kind of religion with which God can find no fault:

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Widows

Even if widows were left comparatively well-off, they needed to be protected from the unscrupulous. One of the things that Jesus condemned in some Pharisees was that they "devour widows' houses"

Jesus was probably drawing an illustration from contemporary life when he told the story of the widow who by her persistence in demanding justice was wearing out the judge.

Luke 18:1-5 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; ² Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: ³ And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. ⁴ And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; [5] Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

Widows were often left in destitution. One of the earliest good works that engaged the attention of the church at Jerusalem was an organized daily distribution of alms to widows in need; and seven men were appointed to see that the Greek speaking widows were not overlooked in favor of those who spoke Aramaic.

Acts 6:1-4 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. ² Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. ³ Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. ⁴ But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Acts also gives a striking illustration of charity shown by one individual when, after the death of Tabitha, it records that "all the widows" at Joppa assembled to testify before Peter to the kindness she had shown to them:

Acts 9:39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

Paul told the Corinthians that he thought it good that widows should not marry again, but he was far from making this a rule. Remarriage, however, should be within the Christian fellowship.

1 Corinthians 7:8-9 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. ⁹ But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

1 Corinthians 7:39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

On the other hand, in writing to Timothy, he expresses his desire that young widows should marry again; and urges that widows in the full sense; that is, those who have no relatives to support them, and who are regular in their religious duties, should be given a special status and be a charge upon the church. A roll should be kept of these, and only those should be placed upon it who are over sixty years of age and who have given evidence of their good works, by caring for children, by hospitality, or by rendering service to those of God's people who were in distress.

1 Timothy 5:9-10 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, ¹⁰ Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

In Revelation, the word "widow" is used metaphorically of a city bereaved of its inhabitants and stricken by plague and famine.

Revelation 18:7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

Conclusions

- (1) Neglected widows should be taken care of without delay.
- (2) Young widows are instructed to marry and raise a family.
- (3) Widows indeed are those who have lived faithful lives and are sixty years old, abandoned by their relatives.
- (4) Widows are to marry only in the Lord.

Widows

- (5) Widows are easy prey and we need to take care of them.
- (6) Widows in the Scriptures (Those with Dorcas and the eighty-four year old lady) illustrate many Christian virtues that should be displayed in our lives. 1633 *Trinity View St., Irving TX 75060*

1 Corinthians 11: The Covering

The Covering of 1 Corinthians 11

by Mark Bailey

The subject matter that Paul deals with in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 concerns headship or authority between men and women; however, usually, when we deal with this passage we do so, as we will be doing today, not to study authority or headship, but with the determination to figure out what the sign of authority is. In other words, we are generally looking for what constitutes the "power" that Paul mentions in verse 10 when he says, "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels."

Basically, the teaching found in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is in an outline form. In verse 3, Paul gives the ladder of authority: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." This ladder of authority places God as supreme, followed by Christ, then man and finally woman. The contention within the Corinthian church was not concerning whether Christ was over man or whether God was over Christ—they understood these facts. The contention was concerning whether man is, in fact, over woman in the church. Therefore, after clearly stating the correct authoritative positions concerning man and woman, Paul deals only with this part and explains in verses 4-6 what men and women are to do to show others that they recognize and are practicing God's teaching concerning this ladder of authority. Not only does Paul state (as in verse 3) that man is over woman, but in verses 7-10 he continues by explaining why man has authority over the woman. Next, in verses 11-12 Paul, parenthetically, gives words of caution by stating that even though man is over woman, as far as authority is concerned, that he does not have absolute control because the Lord is supreme over both man and woman. Finally, in verses 13-16 Paul concludes by comparing the authoritative position of men and women to the sign representing this authority and by noticing, even in the midst of contentious brethren, that the law of nature teaches that this "covering" is suitable for being the "sign of authority." The purpose of giving this outline is that we might understand that this passage is teaching one subject and that is *headship*. The correct understanding of this passage depends entirely upon keeping the teachings in context regardless of preconceived ideas.

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We will begin our study in search of identifying the covering by noticing verse 4: "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head." In verse 3, Paul clearly states that "the head of every man is Christ." Christ, therefore, is man's supreme which man dishonors by having his physical head covered when "praying or prophesying."

We should also notice that there is absolutely nothing here to indicate that the terms "praying or prophesying" are restricted only to the worship services; therefore, we must understand that Paul is instructing that man is to be uncovered any time that he is praying or prophesying. Obviously, if Paul had wanted his readers to understand that he was speaking of actions only in the church he could have easily done so. For example, he could have restricted his teaching to the church only by saying, as he did in verse 18, "... when ye come together in the church" or, as found in 1 Corinthians 14:34 "Let your women keep silence in the churches." In other words, Paul could have said, "Every man praying or prophesying in the church dishonors his head," but he did not. However, I think that we should notice that Paul is, in fact, speaking of these authoritative positions in this chapter in relation to the assembly. He does this due to the abuse of these things in the assembly, but still, the same teaching would apply out of the assembly as well. As an everyday example, a child may be disrespectful to a teacher; therefore, the parents may tell the child: "Act like a Christian while at school." Would this statement indicate that he does not have to act like a Christian if he is not at school? Of course not! However, school is mentioned simply because school is the place where the violation took place. Likewise, "the assembly" is the place under consideration where women were dishonoring their heads that the Corinthians had written Paul about. Regardless, if this has reference to "worship only," or all times while praying or prophesying, we still must be conscious of the fact that a specific time is referred to. In short, if man is "praying or prophesying" he cannot be covered. To violate this would be an act of dishonoring Christ. However, if he is not "praying or prophesying" he can be covered, since he would be able to "uncover" himself before he enters into the specific acts of "praying or prophesying" again.

What does Paul mean by the words "having his head covered"? The term "having" (*echo*), according to Thayer (266) is used in the sense of "wearing." Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich (332) says that "having his head covered" indicates "while he wears (a covering) on his head." The word "head" as used here refers to man's physical

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head; therefore, Paul has reference to man's having his physical head "covered" with anything. Vincent says these words literally mean "having something hanging down from his head." In his *Critical Lexicon and Concordance*, Bullinger says: "having [anything] depending from the head." Therefore, in reference to man, Paul is not speaking of a specific covering; instead, he is teaching that if man has "anything," that is, any type of covering or any type of ornament on his head while "praying or prophesying" he dishonors Christ. Since the word "covered" in this verse indicates "anything" on the head, it would include any type of ornament regardless if it is a man-made artificial covering (hat, shawl etc.) or if it is a God-given covering (long hair). In 1 Corinthians 11:15 Paul said, "... hair is given her for a covering." Thayer (354) says that long hair is "as an ornament." Therefore, man's covering is not limited to, nor does it exclude something artificial. On the other hand, there is nothing to indicate that man would sin, if he wears some type of ornament on his head if he is not praying or prophesying. For example, some jobs or sport activities may necessitate some fashion of a head covering (for example, a hat) and nothing is wrong with such since they are not praying or prophesying. Since long hair is mentioned as a covering in verse 15, does this mean that man may have long hair if he is not praying or prophesying? NO! Such an act would be a violation of 1 Corinthians 11:14 "... if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" Meyer (193) says that "Long hair on the head is a disgrace to a man ... because it is regarded as a sign of human subjection."

Now, concerning man's covering, which is anything on the head, Paul says that if he wears this covering while praying or prophesying that he "dishonors his head." The term "dishonoureth" (*kataischuno*) is defined by Strong's Dictionary as "to shame." In other words, if man wears "anything" on his head when praying or prophesying he shames his authoritative head which is Jesus Christ. Likewise, we find in verse 5 that if woman fails to wear her covering that she shames her head which is man. Now, the question of concern is: What constitutes the covering that Paul speaks of that brings forth "shame"? The answer is found in the context of 1 Corinthians 11.

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Chart 1.

WHAT CONSTITUTES THE "SHAME" FOR MAN?

1 Corinthians 11:4 "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth (shames) his head."

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE COVERING THAT BRINGS FORTH "SHAME" AS MENTIONED IN VERSE 4?

PAUL'S ANSWER

1 Corinthians 11:14 "... if a man have *long hair*, it is a shame unto him?"

WHAT CONSTITUTES THE "SHAME" FOR WOMAN?

1 Corinthians 11:5 "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth (shames) her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven."

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE COVERING THAT BRINGS FORTH "SHAME" AS MENTIONED IN VERSE 5?

PAUL'S ANSWER

1 Corinthians 11:6 "... if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven (referring to hair), let her be covered."

1 Corinthians 11:15 "But if a woman have *long hair*, it is a glory (opposite of "shame") to her: for her hair is given her for a covering."

Now let us consider the covering of woman. In verses 5 and 13 we find the term "uncovered" (*akatakaluptos*) which is defined by Thayer (21) as being "not covered, unveiled." Arndt and Gingrich (29) says that an uncovered woman is simply "a woman without (a) head-covering."

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Notice that the idea of "anything on the head" is not found here, as it is concerning the man in verse 4; therefore, a particular thing is under consideration and not just "anything." In other words, as Humphry says, "The Greek (for uncovered or covered concerning woman) is not the same as (man) at verse 4, which is literally, 'having (anything) on the head.'" Since it is not the same as the word "covered" in verse 4, what is the covering referred to here that, if not worn, dishonors man? Again, some believe that Paul has reference to an artificial veil, while others believe that he is speaking of long hair. However, it seems more correct, due to the context of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 to understand that Paul has reference to long (uncut) hair. Notice, in the context, that every statement having reference to women and their being "covered" or "uncovered" implies "long hair" within the same statement.

Chart 2.

WHAT DOES THE CONTEXT TEACH?

- 1 Corinthians 11:5** "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven."

WHAT IS SHAVEN?—HAIR

- 1 Corinthians 11:6a** "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn . . ."

WHAT IS SHORN?—HAIR

- 1 Corinthians 11:6b** " . . . but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered."

WHAT IS SHORN OR SHAVEN?—HAIR

- 1 Corinthians 11:13-15** "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering."

WHAT IS LONG HAIR?—UNCUT HAIR

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Many errors are made, in trying to understand God's instructions as found here, by not keeping the teachings in the proper context. If we keep the thoughts in context, how can Paul mean anything besides hair? Verse 15 clearly states that long hair is given for a covering. This verse not only implies what the covering is, but it also strengthens and defines the covering as "long" hair. Thayer (354) states that "hair," in this verse, is "as an ornament."

In the last phrase of verse 5, Paul tells us that the "head uncovered" is "even all one" or "the same as" or "equal to" the head being shaven. The Greek term *xurao* translated "if she were shaven" is defined "to shear, shave" (Thayer 432). When woman is "uncovered," that is, when her hair is not left as nature gives it (uncut), she shames man by the act, and here Paul says that such an act is the same as having the hair shaved. As noticed in verse 3, the subject under consideration is "headship." Verse 5 is simply teaching that if a woman prays or prophesies "with her head uncovered," that is, without a complete covering of long hair, she dishonors man, and subsequently disobeys God.

The question that we are confronted with is: Why is the uncovered head the same as being shaved? How is the head uncovered? In the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), the "head uncovered" always refers to removing the hair. A study of the word "uncovered," as found in verse 5 of the Greek Old Testament, proves that it refers to cut hair or hair that has been shortened and not to an artificial veil. (See chart 3.)

Consequently, the uncut hair is a glory to woman (v. 15). It is a gift (or ornament) to woman from God. I suppose this could be the reason that Thayer (354) states "hair" in verses 14-15: "differs from *thrix* (the anatomical or physical term) by designating the hair as an ornament." In other words, the long hair referred to in 1 Corinthians 11:14-15 has reference to an "ornament" and not simply to hair. Again, Thayer (292) defines *thrix* as: "the hair of the head." While praying or prophesying women must have this "ornament," that is, long hair as a sign of authority (v. 10). In order for woman not to dishonor man, she must preserve this God-given ornament (long hair) by never removing any part of it. Concerning the woman's head being uncovered, Charles Hodge states:

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She puts herself in the same class with women whose hair has been cut off. Cutting off the hair, which is the principal natural ornament of women, was either a sign of grief, Deuteronomy 21:12, or a disgraceful punishment. The literal translation of this clause is: she is one and the same thing with one who is shaven. She assumes the characteristic mark of a disreputable woman.

Chart 3.

HOW IS THE HEAD UNCOVERED?

Leviticus 10:6

"And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes"

Leviticus 21:10

"And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes"

Definition of "uncover the head" Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon (690)

"to make naked . . . specially by shaving,
Leviticus 10:6; 21:10"

Englishman's Hebrew—English Old Testament (makes reference to hair by saying:)

Leviticus 10:6

"Your beards, you shall not let go loose,
(footnote says "Or grow long") . . ."

American Standard Version

Leviticus 10:6

"Let not the hair of your head go loose . . ."

New International Version

Leviticus 10:6

"Do not let your hair become unkempt"

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As stated earlier, the reason that the "head uncovered" is one and the same as being shaven is simply that they both refer to hair that has been cut. The Greek word *katakalupto* ("covered," 1 Corinthians 11:6) is a compound word made up of *kata* and *kalupto*. The prefix *kata* primarily means "down"; however (according to a study made at the University of South Africa Bible School): "When prefixed to a verb, its most usual meaning is 'completely.'" Also, in his *Lexicon of New Testament words*, W. J. Hickie says that *katakalupto* (covered) means: "to completely cover." Therefore, we should understand that God's desire for woman is that she honors man by wearing her sign of authority, that is uncut hair. When the hair is shortened even in the least measure the head is no longer "completely" covered. For example: If I were to cover my house with roofing and then remove or cut away a small amount of the covering—during the first rain, I would quickly understand that my house is not properly or "completely covered." Likewise, when women remove or cut away part of their covering (long hair) they are not properly or completely covered; therefore, they are considered "uncovered" regardless of how much hair they may have left.

I am aware of the contention of some people who try to defend their practice of cutting their hair by saying, "I only trim my hair, it's not shorn, that is, it's not cut close to the scalp; therefore, I still have long hair." The point being misunderstood here is that the covering of hair has no reference to the length (in inches) of the hair, but to the uncut hair as an ornament. Concerning this ornament, Thayer (354) informs us: "The notion of length being only secondary and suggested." Consider it this way, if a woman can cut her hair and still have long hair and therefore still be covered, then man will have long hair and therefore be covered when he cuts his hair. The consequence of this argument would require every man to be completely shaved. In order for woman to obey the apostle's teaching and not dishonor man, she must keep this "ornament," this "sign of authority" which nature teaches is a "glory" to her, that is, long hair.

Often, instead of cut hair, people understand the words "head uncovered" to be referring to some foreign object (cap, hat, or some type of artificial veil) being taken off the head. However, it is necessary for a proper understanding of this subject to realize that every time the expression "uncover the head" occurs in the Greek Old Testament, it means to remove the hair. For an example notice Numbers

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5:18 where the same Hebrew word **para** is used of a woman accused of adultery: "And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and uncover the woman's head . . ."

The Septuagint translates Numbers 5:18 with the Greek word **apo-kalupto**, the same root form (**kalupto**) we have in 1 Corinthians 11 for "uncover." Wycliffe, in his Commentary, tells us that in Numbers 5:18 the phrase "uncover the woman's head" is from the Hebrew word **para** meaning: "to unbind the hair, not uncover the head. As one under suspicion, she was deprived of this sign of dignity; her hair was unbound." Also, the truth is clearly stated in the definition as given by Gesenius (690) when he says that the Greek **apo-kalupto** means "to make naked, especially by shaving." It is also of interest and important to notice that the noun form of **para** (**pehra**) is simply defined as "hair." Gesenius states that it is "from the idea of shaving. Lev. 10:6; 21:10; Num. 5:18." Notice from the following translations that the uncovered (**apo-kalupto**) head has reference to the hair.

Chart 4.

"UNCOVER (GREEK, APO-KALUPTO; HEBREW, PARA) THE HEAD"

Numbers 5:18

KJV "Uncover the woman's head"

ASV "let the hair of the woman's head go loose"

NASV "let the hair of the woman's head go loose"

NIV "he shall loosen her hair"

Furthermore, it cannot be denied that the phrase "uncover the head" from the Hebrew verb **para** and the noun **pehra** refers to the hair when we realize that it is the same word used for uncovering the head in grief. The Old Testament makes clear that the "hair" itself was removed in times of grief. In Deuteronomy 21:12 an Israelite is forbidden to take a captive woman for his wife until she has first shaven her head and mourned for her father and mother a full month. In Job 1:20, Job shaves his head upon hearing that his children are all dead. Concerning this term, Strong's Lexicon says, **Para** "a primary root; to loosen; by implication to expose, dismiss;" "pera from para;

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the hair (as dishevelled): locks." Speaking of *pera*, Young's Concordance says, "Locks or other part of the hair of the head, Num. 6:5; Ezekiel. 44:20"; "Para—To free, keep or make bare."

Notice also that the grammatical forms of *katakalupto* (covered) as found in 1 Corinthians 11:5, 6, 13 can and do refer to hair. Notice Ezekiel 44:20—the Septuagint translates: "And they shall not shave their heads, nor shall they pluck off their hair; they shall carefully cover their heads." Special attention should be given to the word "cover" which comes from a form of the Greek term *katakalupto*. Also, notice from the following translations (in chart 5) that the word "cover" has reference to hair.

Chart 5.

"COVER THEIR HEADS" EZEKIEL 44:20

<i>Septuagint</i>	"kaluptontes kalupsousi tas kephalas auton."
<i>K.J.V.</i>	"poll their heads."
<i>R.S.V.</i>	"trim the hair of their heads"
<i>A.S.V.</i>	"cut off the hair of their heads."
<i>Goodspeed</i>	"clip their hair."

The word **KALUPTONTES** translated "POLL," "COVER," "TRIM," "CUT" and "CLIP" is defined by Strong (p. 56) as "a primary root (indicating) to shear." Gesenius (p. 408) defines these terms as "to shave, to shear (the head); found once, Ezekiel 44:20."

As can be seen simply from the spelling, *kaluptontes* and *kalupsousi* are grammatical forms of *kalupto* and *katakalupto* ("covered") as found in 1 Corinthians 11:5,6,13, and are translated as having reference to the hair even though it is translated by the Septuagint as "cover." The point is, when we read the word "cover" or "covered" it does not necessarily refer to something artificial. The context must make the distinction. Notice the following comments from scholars:

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Keil & Delitzsch (vol. 9, 315), concerning the word "cover": "... meaning to cut the hair, is obvious from the context."

Adam Clarke (vol. 4, 544): "To let the hair grow long would have been improper; therefore the Lord commands them to poll - cut the hair short, but not to shave."

The word "poll," "cover," or *kaluptontes* is defined by Strong (56) as "a primary root (indicating) to shear." Gesenius (408) defines these terms as "to shave, to shear (the head); found once, Ezekiel 44:20." Without a doubt the meaning is simply that they shall "poll" or "cover" with reference to "hair."

Next, let's notice verse 6 where Paul says, "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered."

Notice, first of all, the condition of the woman referred to in this verse. She no longer has her "ornament" (long hair). Her hair is no longer as "nature" would have it. She is "not covered," that is, she is not "completely covered" (as is defined by W. J. Hickie) due to having removed a portion of her hair. She did not cut her hair enough to be shorn, she merely trimmed it, but Paul continues to show the sinfulness of this act of trimming by saying, in order to be consistent, "let her also be shorn."

The word "also" (*kai*) is defined by Thayer (316) as "likewise" and he says that this term "marks something added to what has already been said, or that of which something already said holds good; . . . In this use it generally throws an emphasis upon the word which immediately follows it." Notice that the following emphasized word is *keiro* ("be shorn") having reference to "sheared" hair (Strong) or "hair cut close" (Vincent). In other words, Paul is saying that if she is going to remove a small portion of her hair, for example, if she is going to trim her hair, she may as well go further and be shorn, or even a step further than that and be shaved. Vincent tells us that shorn or shaven means: "To have the hair cut close, or to be entirely shaved as with a razor."

Paul concludes verse 6 by relating to the known knowledge of the Corinthians concerning the fact that it is "a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven." The word "shame" (*aischron*) means "dishonorable" or sin (Thayer 17). Both the Jews and Gentiles knew that it was sinful for women to be "shorn or shaven"; therefore, Paul

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says, since this is the case "let her be covered"—let her be completely covered. In the first part of this verse Paul is simply teaching that if they consider it permissible to cut their hair a small amount they may as well shave their heads. Just as a man today is to keep his hair cut, he may also shave his head, if he desires. This is only consistency! However, in the last part of this verse Paul is saying, "if" or since you consider it a "shame" for a woman to be "shorn or shaven" (as they all did), let her be covered—let her retain her natural hair, that is, hair as nature gave it—uncut.

Now, we will notice verse 7 where Paul says, "a man indeed ought not to cover his head . . ." The term "ought not" (*opheilo*) means "one must not" (Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich). In other words, man "must not" "cover his head" with "anything." In verse 4 Paul's message to man was that he could not have "anything" on his head while praying or prophesying. It seems now that he wants to make it clear that man cannot have "anything" covering his head, no, not even "long hair." Paul continues to give reasons why man must not wear a "sign of subjection" on his physical head. It is important to understand that the reasons given for man to not be covered are also the reasons that woman must be completely covered.

Chart 6.

WHY???

MAN MUST NOT BE COVERED

(NOT HAVE LONG HAIR)

WOMEN MUST BE COVERED

(HAVE LONG HAIR)

- 1) Man is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of man (v. 7).
- 2) The man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man (v. 8)
- 3) The man was not created for the woman; but the woman for the man (v. 9).

It is essential that we consider the reasons given by Paul as to why long hair is to be worn by women and not by men. Many today, mistakenly, believe that the long hair is no longer an issue simply because, they claim, "it was a custom of the day." And now that it

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is not a recognized custom, they feel that it is no longer necessary. However, notice that the reasons given for the covering had nothing to do with "custom."

Man being created as the origin of the human race stands in the position of leadership, only under God and Christ. He is not to cover his head with "anything" because the covered head is "a sign of subjection." Woman, being created for the man, while man, not being created for anyone (earthly) shows that man is supreme in authority; therefore, he is not to wear the sign of submission, that is, long hair or any type of covering while praying or prophesying.

Now, let's notice verse 10 where Paul says, "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." We have just noticed in chart 6 that three reasons are given, by Paul, as to why a woman must be covered. Paul ties these three reasons together in verse 10 by saying: "For this cause" ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Question? For what cause? Because of the order in which woman was created, because she was created both "of" and "for" the man and due to being created for the glory of man. Notice, she is to have "power on her head" because of creation and not because of custom. Customs may have changed over the years but creation did not.

Verse 10 is often overlooked and omitted because of the difficulties surrounding it. However, it is one of the most important verses within this context and one which needs to be thought through carefully. Let's notice some of the key words of this verse. The term "ought" (*opheilo*) used here in reference to women, as in verse 7 in reference to man, means "must." In other words, Paul is saying that woman "must" have "power" on her head. Thayer (469) says that women are "under obligation, bound by duty or necessity, to do something." Notice that the instruction given is not followed simply because the woman may desire to do so, nor because of custom; instead, it is to be followed because of a sense of duty or necessity in obeying the inspired Scriptures.

Now, we must ask, what is the instruction given for Christian women that she "must" do? Paul said that the instruction is "to have power on her head . . .", that is, the "sign" of subjection which is long hair. The term "power" as used by the apostle in this verse is a metonymy (a figure of speech where the name of one thing is used to suggest another). Thayer defines "power" as: "a sign of the husband's authority over his wife." Notice now, the woman's "head-

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cover" in this verse is called "power" (*exousia*). The American Standard Version renders: "a sign of authority." Paul's instructions for the woman is that she must wear a "sign" as a sign of her subordination to man.

We should also understand that for a woman to submit herself to her husband is not a sign of spiritual weakness, it is recognizing the fact that has existed since the creation. Also, remember, as we have just noticed, that this is not done by compulsion but obligation. Vincent says that the term power is: "used here of the symbol of power, i.e., the covering upon the head as a sign of her husband's authority." Therefore, the Christian woman is under obligation to the Scriptures "to have power, that is, the sign of authority on her head because of the angels." The question that concerns us at this time is: "What is this power or sign?"

John records in Revelation 9:8: "They had hair as the hair of woman . . ." This passage, first of all, indicate that the woman's hair is different from the man's hair. W.E. Vine says:

The long hair of the spirit-beings described as locusts in Revelation 9:8 is perhaps indicative of their subjection to their Satanic master (compare 1 Corinthians 11:10, R.V.).

Here Vine is plainly telling us that this "power" the "sign of subjection" in 1 Corinthians 11:10 has reference to "the hair as the hair of woman," that is, "long hair" as referred to in Revelation 9:8. Concerning this word "power" (*exousia*) Farrar (*The Pulpit Commentary* 362) refers to a statement of "Callistratus (who) twice uses *exousia* of 'abundance of hair' . . . resembling the Irish expression 'a power of hair.' " Bloomfield quotes commentators who "regard the ("power") *exousia* as the name of a female ornament for the head, formed of braids of hair set with jewels." The word "power" indicating authority refers to the long hair. The opposite of long hair (or power) is cut hair which is a sign of destruction. Vincent says that "The cutting off of the hair is used by Isaiah as a figure of the entire destruction of a people by divine retribution." Here he has reference to Isaiah 7:20 where it says, "In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard." Long hair has always been a sign of another's authority and cut hair on women has always been a sign of weakness (destruction—Isaiah 7:20, mourning—Deuteronomy 21:12, harlotry, etc).

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At this time we also need to consider the fact that many scholars state that the word "power" refers to a veil. However, it is important to understand that the words "hair" and "veil" are used at times interchangeably; therefore, the distinction between the two words is not always clear. For example, the Hebrew word *tsammah*, which is the Greek word *katakalumma* (this is a Greek noun form of the verb *katakalupto* in 1 Corinthians 11) is translated as "hair" and "veil" by different translators. Examples can be found in Isaiah 47:2 where the King James Version translates "uncover thy locks"; and the American Standard Version translates "remove thy veil." However, this does not mean to remove an artificial veil because it is defined (Gesenius 170) as: "to make naked; hence, to disclose, reveal, to uncover; to make bare, to uncover any one's ear by taking away the hair." This same word is also used in other passages where some translators render "locks" and others "veil."

Chart 7.

"HAIR" AND "VEIL" USED INTERCHANGEABLY

Song of Solomon 4:1

"Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks;" (KJV)

"Thine eyes are as doves behind thy veil."

(Footnote beside "veil" says "or locks") (ASV)

Song of Solomon 4:3

"Thy temples are like a piece of a
pomegranate within thy locks" (KJV).

"Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate behind thy veil"

(Footnote #3 beside "veil" says "or locks") (ASV).

Song of Solomon 6:7

"As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks" (KJV)

"Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate behind thy veil." (ASV)

As we can easily see in this chart, in every case, the King James Version translates "locks," the American Standard Version, "veil." Has either mistranslated the word? No, it simply appears that the

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two words were used interchangeably since the hair was considered to be a veil. "Locks" (KJV) is defined by Gesenius (712) as: "tsammah fem. a woman's veil." Sometimes tsammah is called a veil and other times it is called locks (hair). Young's Analytical Concordance says, tsammah is "a lock of hair, veil," Sol. 4:1,3; 6:7; Isa. 47:2."

There are some that will argue that in today's society the "sign" of authority is not the same thing as it was in the days of Paul. Some believe the wedding ring on their finger is the "sign" today and therefore conclude that the covering on the head, that is, the ornamental hair, is not necessary. However, we must realize that just because the world or even the members of the church do not believe or recognize what God has commanded does not do away with the command. For example, just because some people do not recognize immersion as a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, does not do away with the commandment to be immersed in baptism. Likewise, just because people may not recognize long hair as a "sign of subjection" does not do away with the command (1 Cor. 11:6, RSV).

We also need to consider the word "because of the angels." The word "angels" (*aggelos*) according to Thayer (5) refers to a "messenger," that is, "one who is sent." It is difficult to know the exact purpose of the angels. There are many mysteries concerning what part they may have in our lives; however, it appears, according to Paul's teachings, that angels are in some way associated with Christians, while in the acts of praying or prophesying, as mentioned in verses 4 and 5. McGarvey indicates that Paul has reference to angels "who, though unseen, are always present with you in your places of worship." Psalms 138:1 proves that angels were present during worship: "I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods (angels) will I sing praise unto thee." However, worship is not the only place where angels are found, for Paul speaks of them as being a witness of the sufferings that both he and other apostles had faced (1 Cor. 4:9). Jesus warns us to be careful how we deal with others due to the fact that "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Paul charged Timothy, in 1 Timothy 5:21, not only before God and Jesus Christ, but also before "the *elect* angels to observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality."

There are different views held as to who these angels are. Some understand that Paul had reference to evil angels, that is, to devils which are called angels as found in 1 Corinthians 6:3: "Know ye not

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that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" This view contends that the evil angels will lust after women when they do not have their God given covering—in other words, when they are disobedient. A second view is that the angels refer to ministers. This view is often taken by those believing that the terms "praying or prophesying" in verses 4 and 5 refer only to worship. The contention is that women are to be covered in front of ministers, that they may know that the woman considers herself under subjection to man. A third view is that angels refer to good angels. This view seems more correct because, it seems, every time the Scriptures refer to angels without specifying "good" or "bad" it refers to good angels. However, there is still much confusion concerning why Paul would make reference to the angels. In his comments, Thayer (5) supposes that Paul has reference to good angels "invisibly present in the religious assemblies of Christians," and therefore, women are to be covered where they will "not displease them." Another possibility is that Paul made reference to "because of the angels" because the angels were known to have been an example of covering their faces when they were before God. Notice Isaiah 6:1-2: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." Sometimes this view is rejected because Paul only stated it in reference to women and not to men. However, this objection is not valid because the teachings found in this passage are basically for improprieties of Christian women and not of men.

The words found in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 are said in order to correct any misunderstanding of Paul's words. Man is indeed the "head," (in an authoritative position), of the woman; however, this does not give man the right to despise nor to treat the woman as a slave. While man is superior to woman in the line of headship, they are also equal in many ways. In Galatians 3:28 Paul said, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Here, we see that man is cautioned to understand that he is incomplete without the woman, just as the woman is incomplete without the man. In verse 12 Paul gives an example of this concerning reproduction. In the beginning woman was made from man (Gen. 2:21-23); however, now man is taken from woman—through birth. They are both dependent

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upon each other because, as Paul concludes, "all things (are) of God;" that is, as Vine says, "all is by His counsels." God, through His mighty wisdom, created the human race in such a way that both man and woman are dependent upon the other. Proper respect is essential between men and women, as Paul taught in Ephesians 5:22-33.

We should now notice the question posed by Paul in verse 13: "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?" Paul has already given his reasons based upon creation as to why women should wear a sign of subjection. Now he tells the Corinthians to judge or "consider" for yourselves concerning the appropriateness of woman praying uncovered. In other words, he is simply asking for their opinion. The word "comely" (*prepo*) as used in this verse has nothing to do with the idea of custom. He is not asking for their opinion of customs, but their opinions concerning the sign of authority in relation to creation. Paul is merely asking them to consider the matter based upon creation, and then give their honest opinion whether or not it is, as Thayer (535) says, "becoming, seemly, (or) fit" for women to be "uncovered." Their honesty would cause them to realize that by being uncovered, that is, having their hair cut, women would be putting themselves on the same level of authority as men.

Again, we must ask: What are women to be "covered" with—what is this "sign of authority?" In this verse Paul asks: "Is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?" It seems that even before they had a chance to answer the question that Paul stated the answer in verses 14 and 15. (See chart 8.)

Obviously, Paul explains that the answer must be "NO." No, it is not fitting for a woman to be without her covering. Why is it not fitting? Paul says that the reason is because her "long hair" (uncut hair) is "a glory" and a "covering" to her.

In verses 14 and 15 Paul plainly declares that man was intended to be uncovered and woman covered. As indicated here, woman is covered by having "long hair," and man is uncovered by having cut hair. Dean Alford explains this same truth by saying: "the mere fact of one sex being by nature unveiled, that is, having short hair—the other, veiled, that is, having long hair."

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Chart 8.

PAUL'S QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION

1 Corinthians 11:13

"Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?"

ANSWER

1 Corinthians 11:14-15

"Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering."

NOTE:

CONTEXTUALLY, PAUL IS DEFINING THE COVERING MENTIONED IN VERSE 13 AS "LONG HAIR."

The question that is asked by some is "How long is long?" The answer to this question is important, because man must not have this covering of long hair or else he "dishonors" Christ. On the other hand, woman must have this covering or else she "dishonors" man. How long is long? The answer is simply that long hair is hair that is not shortened. The term "long hair" is translated from the Greek word *komao* which Thayer (354) defines as "to let the hair grow." When men or women do not let their hair grow, but instead shorten it by cutting, trimming, breaking, burning, or giving perms, or any other method—it is not long. I realize some women will say "When I trim the 'dead ends' my hair will grow longer." The truth of this statement is immaterial. It does not matter if it will grow longer once it is shortened. Thayer states that "the notion of length (is) only secondary and suggested." The proper question to be asked is: "When the hair is cut has it been shortened?" Obviously, the answer is "Yes," therefore, it is not long and she loses her "glory." The contention of some is that long hair is simply hair that is not cut very short. However, let's go to the Scriptures to see if this is correct. (See chart 9.)

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Chart 9.

HOW LONG IS LONG HAIR?

Ezekiel 44:20

"Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads."

THREE LENGTHS OF HAIR

- 1) SHAVE THEIR HEADS
- 2) POLL THEIR HEADS
- 3) LOCKS GROW LONG

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "POLL THEIR HEADS"

"Trim the hair of their heads" (RSV)

"Clip their hair" (GOODSPEED)

CONCLUSION:

Long locks (hair) is not shaved hair and long hair is not polled, trimmed, nor clipped hair.

Another point of interest is that in this context, the term "glory" is found three times. Notice chart 10.

Chart 10.

1. GOD'S GLORY IS MAN (v. 7)
2. MAN'S GLORY IS WOMAN (v. 7)
3. WOMAN'S GLORY IS LONG HAIR (v. 15)

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Today, we should consider the fact that if woman has the right to do away with her "glory," which verse 15 tells us is "long hair"; then man would be just as right to do away with his "glory," which is "woman," and, therefore, God will do away with His "glory," which is "man."

Next, notice the last phrase of verse 15: "for her hair is given her for a covering." The word "hair" as found here is translated from the Greek word *kome* and Thayer (354) defines this term as "hair, head of hair: 1 Corinthians 11:15 it differs from *thrix* (the anatomical or physical term) by designating the hair as an ornament." The hair as used here has reference to the "ornamental hair." This hair, as an ornament, is given for (instead of or answering to) a "covering" (*peribolaion*). The term "hair" has reference to the "sign of subjection" in verses 1-10, as is explained by W. E. Vine (189). He says:

The word (*kome*, hair) is found in 1 Corinthians 11:15, where the context shows that the 'covering' provided in the long hair of the woman is as a veil, a sign of subjection to authority, as indicated in the headship spoken of in verses 1-10.

Chart 11.

GREEK SCHOLARS ON VERBS AND NOUNS

LEON CROUCH (LUBBOCK CHRISTIAN COLLEGE)

"THEY ARE CERTAINLY NEVER USED TOGETHER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. HOWEVER, A STUDY OF THE USE OF THE WORDS IN THOSE SOURCES INDICATES THAT THEY COULD POSSIBLY BE USED TOGETHER."

MEYER (p. 256)

"PERIBOLAION, SOMETHING THROWN ROUND ONE, A COVERING IN GENERAL, HAS HERE A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE VEIL (KALUPTRA, KALUMMA) SPOKEN OF IN THE CONTEXT." THEREFORE, AS MEYER ALSO STATES: "GROUND FOR LONG HAIR BEING AN ORNAMENT TO A WOMAN: BECAUSE IT IS GIVEN HER INSTEAD OF A VEIL, TO TAKE ITS PLACE, TO BE, AS IT WERE, A NATURAL VEIL."

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Objections are sometimes made to the idea that the "covering" of verse 15 is speaking of the same covering referred to in verses 5, 6, and 13. This objection is based upon the fact that different Greek words are used and the contention is that the verbs *katakalupto* and *akatakalupto* ("covered" and "uncovered" in verses 5, 6, 7, 13) cannot be correctly used with the noun *peribolaion* ("covering" in verse 15.) However, this objection is based upon theory. (Notice chart 11.)

While it may be correct to say the verbs and the noun cannot specifically be found being used together in the New Testament, it is of interest to notice that in the Greek Old Testament that forms of the two verbs (*katakalupto* & *periballo*) are used interchangeably. Notice chart 12.

Chart 12.

GREEK OLD TESTAMENT ON VERBS AND NOUNS

Genesis 38:14 & 15

- v. 14 Tamar "covered (*periebale*) her with a vail . . ."
- v. 15 Judah thought she was a harlot because "she had covered (*katakalupsato*) her face."

Psalms 104:6 & 9

- v. 6 "Thou coveredst (*peribolaion*) it with the deep as with a garment . . ."
- v. 9 "Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover (*kalupsai*) the earth."

For Christian women today to violate the instructions of the Apostle Paul by refusing to wear long (uncut) hair is of serious consequence. The Apostle has taken the time to give several reasons for the necessity of the long hair. As a very brief review, the reasons given are given in chart 13:

Chart 13.

BIBLICAL REASONS FOR LONG HAIR

1. CUT HAIR (ANY LENGTH) IS THE SAME AS BEING "SHORN OR SHAVEN" WHICH IS SIN. (v. 6)
2. LONG HAIR IS A "SIGN" OF SUBJECTION (v. 10).
3. LONG HAIR IS A GLORY TO WOMEN (v. 15).
4. LONG HAIR (ORNAMENTAL HAIR) IS GIVEN FOR A PERIBOLAION ("COVERING," v. 15).

Many people attempt to erase all of Paul's teachings found in verses 2-15 by quoting verse 16 which reads: "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." However, such efforts are vain because, as we have already noticed, Paul was not speaking about the "custom" of the day concerning the "sign of authority." Furthermore, he is certainly not teaching that if they are having contention over his teaching to forget that he wrote the words. Instead his message is that his spoken words are truth and cannot be altered. He later wrote, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you . . ."

Well, what does Paul mean by saying "we have no such custom?" First of all, the pronoun "we," according to Bloomfield, refers to "(Paul) and the other Apostles." The term "such" (*toioutos*) is defined by Thayer (627) as "such as this, of this kind or sort." In other words, Paul is saying none of the apostles share in this sort of custom as the Corinthians practiced.

There are three views concerning what sort of "custom" Paul had in mind. First, some say that Paul was referring to women being not covered when praying or prophesying. The problem with this view is that the pronoun "we" does not include women, but refers only to the apostles. Second, others say that Paul had reference to the custom of being contentious. In other words none of the apostle maintained a contentious spirit. This view is very likely and should not be ruled out. A third view, that I also cannot completely rule out is that verse 16 applies to the subject which follows and not to verses 2-16.

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The long (uncut) hair on women is the covering referred to in 1 Corinthians 11:2-15. It is a "sign of subjection," and is essential today and must be accepted and worn with pride for "her hair is given her for a covering" (v. 15). 1001 Westwood Dr., Piedmont, SC 29673

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Forsaking the Assembly

by George Battey

The assembly of God's people was very important during the Old Testament dispensation. Gathering all the people together was important for several reasons. First, in Leviticus 8, Aaron and his sons were *ordained* as priests before all the assembly to publicly acknowledge that: "These are God's official priests and we will follow no others." In the New Testament, elders were ordained in the assembly to demonstrate that they were the official leaders of the congregation (Acts 14:23). Second, in Numbers 15, all the people were gathered to witness *discipline*—an execution—so that everyone would learn to respect God's law. In the New Testament church discipline is to be administered before all the assembly so that everyone would learn a lesson (1 Cor. 5:4). Third, in Deuteronomy 31:12, all the people were to be gathered for the *reading of the law*. Not everyone could read, but all could hear and understand the reading. Likewise, in the New Testament we are to gather together for public reading and teaching of God's law. Everyone might not have their own copy of God's law, or be able to read, but all could hear and understand (1 Cor. 14:23-25).

Holy Convocations

The Israelites were at liberty to have as many assemblies as they wanted as often as they wanted; but there were certain assemblies which God chose, and attendance at these meetings was obligatory. These divinely appointed assemblies were called: "holy convocations" (*miqra'*), or "sacred assemblies" (NIV). "And in the first day there shall be an *holy convocation*, and in the seventh day there shall be an *holy convocation* to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you" (Exod. 12:16).

A "holy" convocation was very special, and there were no excuses accepted for not appearing. One might be excused for not coming to a common town meeting, but there were no excuses accepted for missing a "holy convocation"!

Numbers 9:10,13

¹⁰ Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD.

Hebrews 10:25

¹³ But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.

This indicates the seriousness of "sacred assemblies" and the requirement to be present at them.

Leviticus 23 lists all the "holy convocations" which Israel was to observe—there were seven in all:

1. Weekly Sabbath—according to verse 3 there was to be an assembly in each town; an assembly for weekly worship.
2. Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (vv. 7-8)
3. Feast of Firstfruits (vv. 4,11-12)
4. Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) (v. 21)
5. Feast of Trumpets (v. 24)
6. Day of Atonement (v. 27)
7. Feast of Tabernacles (vv. 35-36)

Some of these "holy convocations" required that all the nation gather together in Jerusalem, and others allowed the people to gather in the nearest village.

The New Testament Assembly

In the New Testament there is only one "holy convocation" required—a regular assembly of the Lord's people for worship and it is this assembly to which we turn our attention.

Hebrews 10:25

²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Here we have a familiar passage and one that is greatly abused and misused. What we wish to do with this passage is: (1) examine what the passage meant to the Hebrew brethren, and (2) draw out of the passage the principles which apply to those of us who are not Hebrews.

Written to the Hebrews

First, let us emphasize that this epistle was written to Hebrews—Jews! It was not written to Gentiles. This is not to say that Gentiles could not learn from it, but it was written specifically to Jews who were facing special problems. Keep this in mind for it will soon become very important.

Jews Were Quitting the Church

Another important ingredient to understanding this passage is to understand that these Jewish Christians: (1) were being persecuted and (2) were tempted to quit the church. The fact that they were *being persecuted* is evident from the following passage:

Hebrews 10:32-33

³² But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; ³³ Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

The fact that they were *tempted to leave* the church and quit is evident from: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Heb. 10:35). Over and over in this epistle the Lord is exhorting the Jewish brethren: "Don't 'cast away' your faith; don't quit the church; don't abandon the Christian faith." "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). Again, in a rather lengthy section, the writer warns:

Hebrews 6:4-6

⁴ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, ⁵ And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, ⁶ If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance . . .

Hebrews 10:25

In the very chapter where these people were instructed not to forsake the assembly the writer says, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; "for he is faithful that promised" (Heb. 10:23). There is it again: "Don't give up! Don't quit the church and revert to Judaism!"

A Warning Sign

Here in the midst of these warnings not to quit the church, the Lord exhorts: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

Contextually, the Lord is pointing out that one of the first signs a Christian is getting weak and is about to quit the church when he begins to forsake the assembly! This is not always the case. Sometimes we see Christians who quit suddenly without warning signs. But this is relatively rare. Most often, people begin to slack off in attendance, and it means they are losing interest, growing weak, becoming worldly, and are in danger of eventually quitting altogether.

Attendance at the weekly assembly is a good indicator of how things are going in the rest of a person's life. If a brother isn't attending regularly, he probably is not reading the written Word, praying, or witnessing to others regularly.

Start listening to the excuses people offer for not being present at the assembly, and these excuses reveal even more. Some of the more common ones include: "I was tired." "I just don't get anything out of the services." "It's just too far to drive all the time." The revealing thing about all this is that people would never use these excuses if summoned to appear in court! Imagine someone excusing themselves for not responding to a court summons by saying, "I would have come to court, but I was tired. Besides, I'm just not getting anything out of my trial lately, and it's just too far to drive all the time, so I didn't come." Talking to the judge like this will land you in jail, but for the church these excuses seem to be adequate for some folks.

Hebrews 10:25 is exhorting the Jewish people not to slack off on attendance because forsaking the assembly is the first step toward quitting the church altogether!

Defining Some Terms

At this point it is necessary to define some key terms. First, the word "forsaking" comes from the Greek verb *egkataleipo*, and its form in Hebrews 10:25 is a present, active participle. There are several bonafide ways of translating this participle: "forsake," "abandon," "neglect." But which one of these three valid options most correctly expresses the author's intended meaning? Because *egkataleipo* is a present tense participle, continuous action is being described—that is, action that is being performed over and over again. Had the Lord wanted to indicate a "one time" abandonment, He would have used the aorist participle. Again, had He wanted to indicate a "one time" abandonment, with emphasis on the resulting state of being, He would have used a perfect participle. But because He used a present participle, He was, without doubt, describing continuous, or repetitious action.¹ Of the three possible selections, the word "neglect" carries over the idea of continuous action better than the words "forsake" or "abandon."

The next critical word we must define is "manner"—"as the manner of some is." This comes from the Greek word *ethos* which means "a usage (prescribed by habit or law); custom, manner, be wont" (Strong's, # 1485).² In other words, the kind of "forsaking" which the Lord is describing has become a habit with some. Had we chosen "abandon" to translate *egkataleipo*, it would lead some to think of a "once and for all" abandonment rather than something done habitually. "Neglect," by contrast, carries across the idea of habit quite well and fits the context better than "abandon."

Next, notice the words "the assembling." This translates the Greek noun *episunagoga* which literally means "the assembly." This again validates our contention that the Lord is describing a habitual, continuous "neglecting" of the "assembly" rather than a "one time" abandonment of the church. Had the Lord been discussing total abandonment of the "church," He would have used the word *ekklesia* rather than *episunagoga*.³

To clarify, there are two separate issues at stake in our study which we might label as (1) the *disease* and (2) the *symptoms* of the disease. These two items must not be confused. The Lord is concerned about the Hebrews *abandoning* the church—that's the disease. One of the symptoms that the Hebrews were about to come down with the disease was their *neglecting* of the assembly. Hebrews 10:25 then is for-

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bidding men to neglect the worship assembly, for this will only make them weak and lead to their actual abandonment of the church altogether. Hebrews 10:25 is not directly addressing the issue of their total abandonment of the faith, but rather is focusing in on one of the symptoms that leads to total abandonment.

Finally, notice two things about the Greek noun *episunagoga*: (1) the definite article is used, and (2) it is singular in number. The definite article means a specific assembly is envisioned; not "*an assembly*," but "*the assembly*"; a special assembly convened and conducted by the church. The singular number means that one particular assembly is envisioned; not the *assemblies*, but the *assembly*. There is one and only one assembly that is peculiar to the Lord's church—the Lord's day assembly when the brethren come together to "break the bread." "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them" (Acts 20:7). This is the only assembly that is divinely chosen! "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation" (1 Cor. 11:33-34). This passage teaches that the church must "come together" to eat the Lord's supper and according to verse 26 it was done "often." Every first day of each week the church would do this (Acts 20:7).

Other Assemblies

The church has been granted the liberty to have as many assemblies as she wants and as often as she wants. For example, in Acts 15:6 the church in Jerusalem convened to discuss some church problems. In verse 30 of the same chapter the church in Antioch convened to hear an epistle read to them. There is no indication in either of these passages that this was a Lord's day assembly. Instead, the brethren themselves decided to conduct an assembly, and they chose the day and time that was convenient for all concerned.

These passages demonstrate that it is scriptural for brethren to assemble on other occasions besides the first day of the week. But there is a certain assembly which God chose, and attendance at this meeting is obligatory. A congregation does not sin by not having a mid-week service, or a Sunday evening service, but it does sin when it doesn't come together on the first day of the week for communion.

Summary

In summary, Hebrews 10:25 is commanding the Jewish brethren not to neglect the weekly assembly when the church comes together to "break bread." Some people were in a *habit* of neglecting this assembly, but this must stop! When people *do* neglect this assembly, it is an indication that they are growing weak and on the verge of apostasy! Irregular attendance doesn't mean they have totally abandoned the church, but it does mean they're headed that way!

Exhorting One Another

There is now a contrast made in the passage we're studying: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

In contrast to neglecting the assembly, we must "exhort one another." The question we must now answer is: Did the Lord mean we should (1) exhort brethren to assemble? or (2) should we assemble so as to exhort one another? Look carefully at these two questions and you will see that they are saying quite different things.

The context is in favor of the second choice. We assemble in order that we might exhort one another. In fact, look at the preceding verse: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:24). We must "provoke one another to love and good works." How can we do this? By our assembly! The Lord's day assembly of the church was designed by the Lord to exhort all who attend. "Let all things be done unto edifying," wrote the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 14:26). In the assembly we sing, and by singing we teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). When we pray we edify (1 Cor. 14:15-17). By teaching we edify (1 Cor. 14:4-5). By giving liberally we edify (2 Cor. 9:2). By communing we edify (1 Cor. 11:26).

This is why it was so critical for these Jewish brethren to make sure they were present at the assembly. At that time they were tempted to give up and to quit the church. By neglecting the assembly they were getting weaker and weaker, so the Lord was here commanding them to be present at the assembly where exhortation takes place.

"The Day Approaching"

The exhortation offered in the assembly is always needful, but it becomes even more so when a crisis arises: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and *so much the more, as ye see the day approaching*" (Heb. 10:25). As these Jews saw "the day approaching," it was even more critical that they be present in the assembly and receive exhortation from their brethren!

What is this "day" that is "approaching"? There are three popular interpretations: (1) The first day of the week theory, (2) the Judgment Day theory, and (3) the destruction of Jerusalem theory. Let us examine each briefly.

The First Day of the Week Theory

Brethren who hold to the first day of the week theory believe the passage teaches that Christians should "exhort to assemble" rather than "assemble to exhort." For them the passage means: On Monday I come to exhort you to attend church next Sunday. On Wednesday I come by and exhort you more fervently to be present in the assembly next Lord's day. On Saturday I become almost frantic exhorting you to be present at the Lord's day assembly.

The problem with this is that those who believe it don't believe it! None of them practice it! None of them go around during the week becoming more and more earnest in their exhortations as the first day of the week draws nearer and nearer. Furthermore, there is no logical reason why exhortation to assemble should be more intense on Saturday than on Friday or Thursday.

The End of the World Theory

This theory states that as we see the end of the world getting nearer and nearer, it is even more critical that we "assemble to exhort" or "exhort to assemble."

The problem with this interpretation is that the Lord was speaking of a certain day that these Jewish Christians in the first century could see coming, and they couldn't see the end of the world coming! Of this point we can be most confident because: (1) Christians of the first century were taught that the Judgment Day would not come before a great apostasy occurred first, and this did not happen until

hundreds of years later (2 Thess. 2:3); (2) Jesus taught over and over that His second coming would be like a thief in the night. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2). "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night . . ." (2 Pet. 3:10). "But know this, that if the good-man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Mt. 24:43-44). "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mk. 13:32).

Over and over we are taught that the coming of the Lord will be like a thief who gives no sign or warning that He is coming. Therefore, because there are no signs given to indicate the end of the world is approaching, Hebrews 10:25 is not speaking of the end of the world.

The Destruction of Jerusalem Theory

This theory holds that "the day approaching" refers to the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies.⁴ In the year A.D. 70 God allowed the Roman army to absolutely destroy the city of Jerusalem, burning and leveling both the temple and the royal palaces. It is estimated that in the siege 1,100,000 Jews were massacred.⁵ Never was there such an intense, overwhelming bloodbath as this upon the Jewish nation. Jesus forewarned of this very thing: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mt. 24:21). The first thirty-four verses of Matthew 24 give the great prophecy that Jesus made concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. He gave the people signs to watch for that would indicate the day of Jerusalem's destruction was approaching.

This is undoubtedly what the Lord was referring to in Hebrews 10:25.⁶ Remember, the book of Hebrews was written to Jews! They more than any on earth would be affected by Jerusalem's destruction. These Jewish Christians were being persecuted and harassed by unbelieving Jews. As Jerusalem's destruction drew nearer and nearer the persecution intensified. "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another" (Mt. 24:9-10). This increase in persecution would cause many to question their allegiance to Christ. Many would be tempted to abandon the church and revert to

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Judaism. But the Lord is trying to tell the Hebrew Christians, "If you'll stay faithful and remain in the church, this persecution and harassment from the Jews is going to end when Jerusalem is destroyed and your enemies are killed. But, if you defect and return to the Jewish religion, you will find yourself destroyed along with those unbelieving Jews!" As these Hebrew Christians saw Jerusalem's destruction drawing nearer and nearer and their persecution growing worse and worse, it was all the more needful that they should attend the assembly of the church where they could be exhorted to stay faithful!

Application for Today

Now, if the "day approaching" refers to Jerusalem's destruction, does that mean the passage is worthless to us today? Not at all! This passage is setting a precedent for us. When a great crisis arises in our lives, it becomes even more important for us to be present at the assembly!

The destruction of Jerusalem was a major crisis in the lives of the Jews, and they were tempted to give up on God and quit the church; but the Lord is saying, "This is the time when you need the church most of all!"

Many times today, when people go through a crisis they are tempted to give up on God and quit the church! The loss of a child, the loss of a parent, financial problems, marital problems, health problems—all of these are disasters that drive a lot of people to give up and quit the church. They throw up their hands and quit, thinking, "If God cares for me why does He allow these disasters to come upon me?" Times of crisis are the times when it is especially important to be present at the assembly where exhortation takes place!

In summary, Hebrews 10:25 is just as relevant to us today during crises which we face, as it was to those Jews who were facing the crisis of Jerusalem's destruction.

Some Troublesome Verses

Now let's look at the next few verses which have tended to be rather troublesome:

Hebrews 10:26-31

²⁶ For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ But a certain fearful looking for

of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. ²⁸ He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: ²⁹ Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

If we fail to see the overall message of the book of Hebrews, we will fail to see the point of this passage. Many read verse 25 in connection with these verses and immediately they draw some very serious conclusions:

- (1) Forsaking the assembly is willful sin.
- (2) There "remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" because you missed church.
- (3) You deserve "fiery indignation" for missing church.
- (4) You deserve to die without mercy under two or three witnesses.
- (5) You trample the Son of God under your feet when you miss church.
- (6) You count the blood of Jesus as an unholy thing by missing church.
- (7) You insult the Holy Spirit by missing church.
- (8) God will take vengeance on you for missing church.
- (9) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God after you have missed church.

To hear some tell it, you would think that missing church is blaspheming the Holy Spirit—an unforgivable sin. To make matters worse these people declare: "Well, it's in the same context! Verse 26

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comes immediately after verse 25 and the willful sin being discussed is missing church!" Admittedly, on the surface, this does seem to be the contextual setting.

However, what we're failing to do is to back up enough to see the larger context. The Lord is warning about leaving the Christian faith and returning to Judaism. Forsaking the assembly is merely a symptom that some are about to do this—they're starting to "not care" about things God commanded!

If these Jewish Christians quit the church and abandon the Christian faith, then: they are willfully sinning; there is no more sacrifice outside of the Lord's body that will atone for their sins; they deserve fiery indignation for turning their backs on the Lord who purchased their salvation. When men rejected the Mosaic covenant and left for false religion they died without mercy under two or three witnesses (Deut. 13:6-9).

If "death without mercy" was inflicted upon men who left the Mosaic covenant, how much worse should one be punished who leaves behind the new covenant? Again, by leaving Christ and returning to Judaism, these Hebrews would be "trampling under foot" the Son of God; they would be counting His blood which sanctified them as something unholy; they would be insulting the Holy Spirit! Anyone guilty of such atrocities will surely have vengeance taken upon them by God. No wonder a person is worse off if they fall away after obeying the gospel (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Again, for emphasis' sake, Hebrews 10:25 is warning the Jewish Christians not to "neglect" the weekly assembly because that is the first step toward weakness that will lead to quitting altogether.

What Constitutes "Forsaking the Assembly"?

Now it's time to apply what we have learned—the hardest part of any Bible study. How much do you have to ignore something before you're guilty of "forsaking" it?

First, many insist that "forsake" means to "totally abandon" the church once and for all time. They make the passage read something like this: "Do not totally abandon the assembling of yourselves together as some have done."

There are two problems with this: (1) the passage does not have the word "totally" in it—that's been added by wishful thinking; (2) This interpretation ignores the force of the word *ethos*, "habit." Some Christians were in a regular habit of doing something! Were they in the habit of "totally abandoning" the church once and for all about twice a month? That's like saying, "You can't count on John Doe because he totally abandons the church once and for all every month."

Second, when forced to admit "forsake" is not total abandonment, some argue that "forsake" does not mean missing church just once. They illustrate it by asking this: "If a preacher leaves his wife behind to hold a meeting for a week, has he 'forsaken' her?" Most would answer "No." Their conclusion is: If a preacher doesn't "forsake" his wife by being gone just one week, neither does a Christian "forsake" the assembly by missing just one Sunday.

While this sounds reasonable, let's imagine this: Suppose the husband left his wife at home sick with no one to care for her? Or suppose he left her penniless with no food to eat? Or again, suppose he spends his week with another woman? Did he "forsake" his wife in any sense?

There's no doubt that "forsake" can mean "total abandonment," but the question is: Is that *all* it can mean? Can a man "forsake," "neglect," or "abandon" his wife, or the assembly, in any sense short of total apostasy?

Degrees of "Forsaking"

The Scriptures clearly indicate there are degrees of conduct. Consider the following:

1 Samuel 15:3,9

³ Now go and smite Amalek, and *utterly destroy* all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

⁹ But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not *utterly destroy* them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they *destroyed utterly*.

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Here the Bible distinguishes between destroying and "utterly" destroying; they are not the same thing. Saul "destroyed" some of the Amalekites, but he did not "utterly" destroy them. Again, "And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not *utterly drive them out*" (Jgs. 1:28). Israel drove out the Canaanites, but they did not "utterly" drive them out.

There is apparently a difference between:

refusing	and	utterly refusing	Ex. 22:17
making desolate	and	making utterly desolate	Isa. 6:11
rejecting	and	utterly rejecting	Jer. 14:19
forgetting	and	utterly forgetting	Jer. 23:39
going bald	and	going utterly bald	Ezek. 27:31
cutting off	and	utterly cut off	Hos. 10:15
being at fault	and	being utterly at fault	1 Cor. 6:7

Likewise, the Bible distinguishes between "forsaking" and "utterly forsaking." "O forsake me not utterly," the prophet said (Psa. 119:8). In contrast, God said, "*For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment*" (Isa. 54:7-8). Interestingly, the Septuagint (LXX) uses *egkataleipo*, the same Greek word used in Hebrews 10:25, in both of these Old Testament passages!

In the New Testament there are some familiar passages: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying . . . My God, my God, why hast thou *forsaken* me?" (Mt. 27:46). Take note that this is the *first* time God ever forsook Jesus. It was the *only* time He ever did it. And, He never intended to permanently forsake Him. The Father forsook Jesus for "a small moment," but He did not "utterly" forsake Him.

Again, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). Even if Demas had returned the very next day, it would not remove the fact that he had "forsaken" Paul.

The point is, we can be guilty of "forsaking the assembly," or "neglecting" the assembly when we miss only one time! To say that "forsaking" in Hebrews 10:25 is "total abandonment" of the church is to confuse the disease with its symptoms.

What About Jobs?

Now, "What about my job? I have to make a living and they require me to work sometimes on Sundays!"

I believe the Lord knew this would be a problem. He knew that His disciples would sometimes have to make a choice between their jobs and their obligations to God and that is why He taught:

Matthew 6:25-33

²⁵ Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? ²⁶ Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? ²⁷ Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? ²⁸ And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: ²⁹ And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? ³¹ There-

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fore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

There is not a better answer than that! There's nothing more to say. Jesus said if we put the kingdom of God first in our lives God will provide for all our physical needs. The real question today is not, "What about my job?" but, "Are we believers, or unbelievers"? Do we believe what Jesus said, or not? I do note this particular point: In Matthew 22:3-5, when the king's wedding invitation was rejected in favor of business and job related matters, the king was wroth and declared the guests to be "unworthy." If a job was an inexcusable reason for missing a king's wedding invitation, I question that it would be an excusable reason for missing the "holy convocation" called by the living God!

Summary

When we "neglect" the assembly for vacation, for business, or any other excuse, we have violated the command of Hebrews 10:25 and we are guilty of sin. And unless we repent we will only grow weaker and end up quitting altogether.

As a side note, why some churches use men in leading roles in the services of the church who can't even be faithful in attendance is beyond my ability to reason!

Conclusion

In conclusion, what have we seen? Hebrews 10:25 is teaching this: *First*, the command is given: Don't neglect the assembly. Remember, this is a command! *Second*, the rationale is given: To prevent apostasy. The assembly is where men receive the exhortation that will prevent apostasy. *Third*, an extra reason is given—Crisis. As we see times of crisis approaching, the assembly becomes all the more important.

Don't think you can out-guess the Lord—thinking that you can "neglect" the services just once in a while without growing weak. The Lord said it will make you weak and He knows—He made you!

Questions and Answers

Following are some commonly asked questions with replies for your consideration.

Q. Can a Christian miss worship because of sickness or car breakdown?

A. The Lord said, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some . . ." The Greek word *kathos* ("as the manner of some") is an adverb of manner and describes in this passage the kind of forsaking under consideration. Hebrews 10:25 is discussing men and women who could attend the services, but chose of their own volition not to do so. To miss because of persecution or lesser reasons is to miss "as the manner of some." However, missing for sickness or car breakdown is not within one's control—not "as the manner of some."

Equating missing for sickness with missing for work is making the error the Pharisees were guilty of. They could not distinguish between working on the Sabbath and being sick on the Sabbath (cf. Mt. 12:9-14). Shame on anyone equating sickness and car breakdowns with working.

Q. Isn't there such a thing as an "ox in the ditch" that justifies missing services?

A. First, notice the ox in the ditch was not harnessed up plowing in a field (Lk. 14:5). In other words, the farmer did not work on the Sabbath and this cannot justify a man's working during the Lord's day assembly. Second, Lynwood Smith put it best when he said, "If I had an ox that kept getting in the ditch, I'd either sell the ox or fill in the ditch." Third, the kind of "forsaking" the Lord had in mind was "as (*kathos*) the manner of some." Missing for an ox in the ditch is not "as" some in Hebrews 10:25 were doing. They were missing by choice; they were not "providentially hindered."

Q. In Numbers 9:9-13, men who were traveling were excused from observing the passover. They were allowed to make it up later. Why can't we today miss worship for traveling purposes?

A. Carefully consider the passage cited in this question:

Numbers 9:9-13

⁹ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ¹⁰ Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a

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dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD. ¹¹ The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ¹² They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it. ¹³ But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and *forbeareth to keep the passover*, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.

First, the unclean and travelers still kept the passover (v. 10)! They did not miss the passover for traveling! Men traveling on Lord's day miss the assembly! Second, special revelation from God was required to authorize this second opportunity for observing the passover. Where is such revelation given for those who miss the weekly assembly to "make it up?" Third, the man that could attend, but simply chose not to, sinned! Many times, when people say they "couldn't" go, the truth is they "wouldn't" go!

Q. Is attendance at Sunday night and Wednesday night services mandatory?

A. I believe we should "be ready to every good work" (Tit. 3:1), and men should try their best to attend these services, but I am not ready to put these services on an equal level with the "holy convocation" which God chose. To illustrate, suppose all the men of a congregation worked third shift and decided to have Wednesday services at 10 a.m. When a brother moved in with a daytime job, would he be sinning if he did not take off to attend the 10 a.m. service? I think not. Or suppose a congregation decided to have services every evening at 7 p.m. Would a brother be sinning if he decided to stay home one night during the year to rest? Again, I think not. Several things need to be considered before condemning one who misses one of these services. Why are they missing? How regularly are they missing? How mature are they in the faith? Are they just babes in Christ or have they been "raised up" in the church? Furthermore, we should consider what position they hold in the church. Is the person an elder? A preacher? A deacon? An "ordinary" member? It is scriptural to expect more out of church leaders than from others (cf. Jas. 3:1; Lk. 12:48b). We must be careful and not make a law where God made

none (cf. Mt. 23:4). Before we can make a man quit his job so he can attend a 7 p.m. Wednesday night service, ask yourself if you would quit your job to attend a 10 a.m. Wednesday morning service.

Q. Should churches change the time of their weekly assembly to accommodate brethren who work, as practiced by the churches in the Philippines?

A. This is a judgment call which requires consideration of several things. Will changing the services hinder the effort to get unbelievers to attend the assembly? Has every effort been made to resolve this problem some other way? If every effort has been tried and the overall work of the church is not harmed, there is no Scripture that would forbid the congregation from using this option.

Q. If a man misses the weekly assembly to work, is he covetous and should we discipline him as per 1 Corinthians 5:11?

A. A man might miss services to work because of covetousness, and that would be grounds for discipline, but not necessarily. We should not make a blanket rule that covers all cases. We need to consider each case. How mature is this Christian?—Is he a “babe” or a mature member? What was the man’s reason for missing the assembly to work? Was it really covetousness or merely weakness in faith?

Q. What about being a doctor and having an emergency call on the Lord’s day?

A. First, it is not wrong to be a doctor. Luke was a physician (Col. 4:14). Second, I think it wise for men to seek branches of medicine that would not be likely to interfere with their religion. For example, there would be less problems for an “ear, nose and throat” specialist than for a heart surgeon. Third, what might be an emergency to an ordinary person might not be an emergency to a doctor. He should think through situations that are likely to occur and be prepared for them, e.g., have someone fill in for him while he’s gone. Fourth, I believe it is possible that life-threatening emergencies can arise that are out of the ordinary, that would justify a doctor missing services, e.g., a plane crash with all available doctors called in, or a massive pile-up on the freeway. In such cases, the doctor would not be guilty of forsaking “as” the manner of those of Hebrews 10:25, who were

Hebrews 10:25

voluntarily choosing to miss. Jesus said, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless" (Mt. 12:7).

Q. Is Hebrews 10:25 really a command? Isn't the subjunctive mood used rather than the imperative mood?

A. Owen L. Crouch correctly comments upon this: "Subjunctive at this point is kin to the imperative mode in that it offers an exhortation or entreaty."⁷

Q. What about worshipping God in a motel room when on vacation? Isn't Jesus "in the midst" when just two or three gather?

A. First, Matthew 18:20 is discussing church discipline, not worship. Second, even if this passage were discussing a worship service, the phrase, "in my name" means "by my authority." Where did Jesus ever authorize the practice of missing the Lord's day assembly and worshipping in a motel room? Third, the apostle never offered this as a solution to the Hebrews! *They* were being persecuted! Paul never advised them that it would be better for husbands and wives to have communion on the roadside to avoid persecution. How can we do so simply to have a vacation? Fourth, the weekly assembly requires brethren to "come together" (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:33). There is no "coming together" when a husband and a wife wake up in a motel room and "play" church. Fifth, if a man and wife may commune on the side of the road once without coming together with other brethren, they could do so every Lord's day. This reasoning destroys the need for congregations! "What proves too much, proves nothing at all."

Q. Wasn't Paul saying that we can miss so long as we don't make a "habit" like some—"as the manner (habit) of some"?

A. The Lord was using the bad habit of some to illustrate what Christians should not do even once! To illustrate, in Romans 6:1-2, Paul wrote, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" When Paul condemned continuance in sin, did he thereby condone occasional sinning so long as men don't make a habit of it? Obviously not. Likewise, in Hebrews 10:25, by condemning the excessive habit of some, the Lord thereby was not condoning neglect of a "holy convocation" on an occasional basis.

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End Notes

1. Summers, p. 90
2. Consult also Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 217, where *ethos* in Hebrews 10:25 is translated "habit."
3. For the definitive articles proving that *episunagoga* should be translated "assembly," while *ekklesia* is reserved for "church" or "congregation," see: Barnes, p. 1308; Lindsay, 2:121-122; Delitzsch, 2:182-183.
4. Shaw, p. 56-58
5. Shaw, p. 10
6. Some object by arguing, "How can Jerusalem's destruction be called 'the day' (singular) when it actually took many days (plural) for the Romans to actually destroy it?" This objection is unfounded. The word "day" (singular) is a biblical expression for distress, calamity, or judgment of some kind. It envisions the "day," or the final completed state of such calamity, without considering the time involved in reaching that state. For example, Isaiah 2:12 mentions "the day of the Lord" when referring to Jerusalem's fall to Babylon. If Jerusalem's fall to Babylonian armies could properly be called "the day" in Isaiah, then Hebrews 10:25 could likewise call Jerusalem's fall to Roman armies "the day." Again, Jeremiah 30:7 refers to Jerusalem's fall to Babylon as "the day" (singular), although the actual siege required many "days" (plural). Ezekiel 21:25 likewise uses the singular word "day" to describe Jerusalem's fall to Babylon.
7. Crouch, p. 298

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Creation vs. Evolution

by Smith Bibens

The creation-evolution controversy is one of the most critical issues of our day. It has profound implications for the future of our society. It is significant on several levels of human experience, not the least of which is the religious realm. When properly understood, it is clear that the controversy is really about God's Word vs. Satan's—a controversy as old as time.

In Eden, Eve was faced with the choice of believing the serpent or believing God. God said of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Satan said, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). Eve made the wrong choice and humanity has suffered the consequences ever since. Satan is still at work in this world with his lies and "doctrines of devils" (Jn. 8:44; 1 Tim. 4:1). The children of Eve are still faced with choices to make about whom to believe.

As Christians and as parents, we realize we have a duty to bring our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). To accomplish this we must fortify them with a means of defense against false doctrines, ungodly dogmas, and materialistic philosophies of all kinds. We must instill in our children a lively respect for the Bible as God's inspired Word. We must also expose to their view the fallacies and follies of man's philosophies. It is with that in mind that I propose to share with you, as assigned by the organizers of this study, some information that I hope will be helpful.

I have been assigned the task of presenting information in answer to two questions:

1. What will our children face tomorrow that we need to prepare them for today?
2. How can the Scriptures be harmonized with science?

What's It All About: A Comparison of Creation and Evolution

As explanations for the origin of life and man, the theory of evolution and the biblical doctrine of special creation are mutually exclusive. Evolutionists understand this. Julian Huxley, a renowned evolutionist, spoke of the implications of evolution for religion:

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Darwinism removed the whole idea of "God" as the creator of organisms from the sphere of rational discussion. Darwin pointed out that no supernatural was needed; since natural selection could account for every known form of life (Tax 111).

Listen to what the champions of evolution are saying! It is clear that evolution is a worldly philosophy that attempts to write God out of the picture. If evolution be true there is no need for a personal Creator. This is the conclusion that most evolutionists have drawn and are urging on their students.

The irreconcilable difference between creation and evolution can be seen in their respective answers to life's three most important questions.

Where did we come from? Evolution teaches that man is the result of chance and accident—a marvelously complex accident of nature. The Bible teaches that man is the result of supernatural intelligence. Man is the result of contemplation and design by his Maker (Gen. 1:26; 2:7).

Why are we here? Evolution asserts that man's being is ultimately purposeless. The best one can hope for is as little pain as possible, and all the fun that is possible. In the philosophy of evolution, there is no hope for the future. The Bible reveals that God created man for a purpose. Man was made to exercise dominion over God's creation (Gen. 1:29-30). Although man has marred his life through sin, and forfeited the great designs of God for his existence, God still has a purpose for man's life (Mic. 6:8; Mt. 22:38-40).

Where are we going? Evolution describes man as a "naked ape," with no future after death but oblivion. Man is not accountable to any higher power, for there is none. The Bible, on the other hand, assures us that there is a Moral Governor of the universe, and that we have an appointment with Him (Acts 17:31). Our destiny is judgment and eternity. We will give account for how we have fulfilled God's purpose for our lives. This will be followed by a conscious eternity in heaven or hell (Mt. 25:46).

Do not be deceived into thinking there can be any accommodation between evolution and biblical faith. Evolution totally undermines biblical faith and the revelation of the Creator.

Creation vs. Evolution

Chart 1.

Creation	Evolution
Complete	Continuing
Supernatural	Naturalistic
Catastrophism	Uniformitarianism
Intelligent design	Chance & accident
"Life begets life"	Spontaneous generation
Order decreasing	Order increasing

Let us consider what the terms in chart 1 signify.

Complete or Continuing? The Bible reveals that when God finished creation it was complete and perfect. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (Gen. 2:1). Evolution teaches that the processes that resulted in molecule to man evolution are still at work in our world, though moving too slow to be observable. The implication, of course, is that upward evolution of existing life forms is a real possibility.

Supernatural or Naturalistic? The Bible teaches that supernatural power was employed to bring this world into existence. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3). Paul preached that "... the living God ... made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein" (Acts 14:15). The Bible teaches that God transcends His creation. He is superior to it and the natural laws that He has placed within it are for the orderly government of the universe. He is superior to these laws and sometimes has superseded them for His glory (viz., miracles). Evolution teaches that natural laws, observable within our universe, are the only things that operated to bring the universe and all it contains into existence. Evolution denies the possibility of miracles, including the resurrection of Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 15:19, 32).

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Evolutionary philosophy is built upon the foundations of "Naturalism" and "Rationalism." Naturalism is a philosophy that seeks to explain all phenomena and values through purely natural means, as opposed to supernatural. Rationalism is "any philosophical theory that assigns first place to reason in the attainment of knowledge . . . the term is most often applied to eighteenth century philosophers who attacked religion by rejecting all claims based on faith or revelation" (Random House College Dictionary).

Catastrophism or Uniformitarianism? One of the critical areas of debate in the Creation-Evolution controversy is the field of geology. Catastrophism is the belief that earth's geology is accounted for by great cataclysmic events, such as the Flood of Noah's time. Catastrophism posits that a very short amount of time would be required to form the features of earth geology, insofar as they have changed since creation. Catastrophism is in harmony with the biblical revelation of special creation, which reveals that the earth is fairly young—on the order of a few thousand years. Uniformitarianism is the belief that all the presently observable forces of nature, viz. wind, rain, cold and heat, are what have formed the earth's geology. This theory postulates a great expanse of time for the formation of earth geology, and therefore goes hand in hand with evolutionary philosophy. It is upon uniformitarian geology that evolutionary theory postulates the millions and billions of years for the earth's arrival at this point in time.

Intelligent design or chance and accident? Is the wonderful complexity of life, and even non-living matter like atoms, molecules, the solar system, etc., the design of an Intelligent Architect or mindless accident? Creation affirms the former, evolution the latter. The theories of natural selection and beneficial mutations are the means whereby evolution is alleged to proceed. These are the means for the fortuitous accidents that have resulted in life and man, according to evolution.

"Life begets life" or spontaneous generation? Biblical creationism insists that only life can give rise to new life. The complexity and beauty of terrestrial life, with man at its pinnacle, is the product of a Life that is clearly superior and supernatural. On the other hand, the evolutionist has to contend that at some time in the remote past, dead, non-living matter gave rise to life as we can now observe it on earth.

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Order decreasing or order increasing? The Bible reveals that the creation is devolving—as a result of the Fall and the bondage of corruption that has passed upon the universe by the edict of God. The earth had a beginning and it shall have an end. Evolution theorizes that the various systems that compose the material universe can and do increase in order and complexity. In terms of biological life, simpler organisms can evolve into more complex ones. The evolutionist believes that the organism that is now man, began, like all other life forms on earth, as a single, simple cell of life in some primordial ocean.

As our study progresses, we shall consider and refute the suppositions of evolutionary philosophy that we have just briefly stated. Before we do that, let us turn our attention to what has been going on, and is continuing to go on, in American classrooms in relation to the teaching of the theory of evolution.

The Encroachment of Evolutionary Philosophy into the American Classroom

In 1925, a Tennessee judge convicted John T. Scopes of teaching evolution to a high school class. Scopes was convicted under a law that forbade the teaching of evolution in the schools of the State of Tennessee. It was not until the 1960s or early 1970s that many states dropped laws against the teaching of evolution from their codes. For example, until 1968 it was illegal to teach evolution in a high school in Arkansas. That law was overturned by a Supreme Court decision (*Epperson vs. Arkansas*) in 1968.

In California, the teaching of evolution at the high school level began in 1956 with the adoption of the **Biological Sciences Curriculum**, which presented a pro-evolution view of origins and wrote creation out of the picture altogether. Other states soon followed. Now, evolution, with varying degrees of emphasis, is taught in every public high school in America. (Evolution has been taught at the college level for decades in America.) The introduction of evolutionary philosophy into the compulsory education of every American boy and girl has had profound effects on the moral, ethical, and spiritual life of the nation.

It is this writer's belief that the degradation of American family values and moral values be explained, at least in part, by the general and widespread teaching of evolutionary dogma in the nation's

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schools. Look at the observable and verifiable facts. Look at the changes in societal morals since the late 1950s. Since then we have seen the rise of the drug culture, the decline of family values, the rise of divorce, the rise of the "New Morality," the rise of modern hedonism, and much more. As the truth of the Creator God who is Moral Governor of the universe has been undermined, infidelity and immorality have increased.

Evolutionary dogma is making inroads into more and more of the public school classrooms. Allow me to relate a personal experience from the fall of 1992.

My daughter had just started fourth grade and her school was having an open house. While visiting her classroom, I took the opportunity to peruse her textbooks. To my amazement, I found that three different textbooks she would be using taught evolution in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. First, there was her science book. In a section on the earth, the rudiments of uniformitarian geology are taught. In chapter 16, "Survival and Change," the rudiments of the natural selection and beneficial mutation theories are laid down. Now, I expected that from a science book. What surprised me were a language arts (reading) book and the Missouri history book!

The reading book was called "Dinosauring," and evidently plays on the childhood interest in dinosaurs to get kids to read. Naturally, the book includes both fiction and "non-fiction." Interesting section that—it is the section about dinosaurs! You see, of course, the subtle way that children are being brainwashed to believe that evolution is a fact of science—it's labeled "non-fiction." At the tender age of nine years, they do not have the mind or the means to criticize or analyze that claim. Only if they have Bible-believing parents who will actively teach them the truth, will they ever know any different!

My greatest surprise came when I looked over the book entitled **Show Me Missouri: A History of Missouri and the World Around It**. This book offered the boldest presentation of evolution, and it is not presented as a *theory* but as *historical fact*! Chapter 3 is entitled, "Going Back in Time," and presents every major tenet of evolutionary dogma in language that a fourth grader can get his or her little mind around. For example, there is this bold statement:

Billions of years ago, the earth was so hot nothing could live on it. The seas boiled, and dark clouds of steam hid the sun. Never-ending rain fell. Thunder

shook the sky, and lightening shot down to earth in blinding white flashes. Earthquakes tore the ground apart. Volcanoes spit fire and hot melted rock (14).

Reads like an eyewitness account, doesn't it? Read on!

When the land pushed up out of the sea, some of the plants and animals died. They could not live on dry land. They could not adapt, or change, to a new way of life Other animals and plants did adapt to their new environment. These animals learned to live part of their lives on land. Some water plants adapted to life on land, too (14).

Here we have the natural selection theory reported like it was a certain fact. And what is the evidence that proves the "fact?" It is presented in a scant twenty-six words:

How do we know that there were plants and animals in these seas millions of years ago? Their fossils in the land tell us much about them (14).

Thus is presented the clincher of the evolutionists' sales pitch—the vaunted evidence of the fossil record! From hence, the book goes on to tell its story of Missouri history: of Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet, the first two white men to explore Missouri; of Auguste Choteau, the first settler at St. Louis; of Daniel Boone, and his exploits in Missouri; and much more. Now, you see what is being done here, don't you? By presenting evolutionary doctrine with history—real history—evolution is given the appearance of "real" history. By the time the little fourth grader is done with this book, he would as soon question the historical reality of Daniel Boone or George Washington as the theory of evolution!

The most shocking feature of this "history" book is its veiled attack on creation "myths" (using the author's word). In a two page spread entitled "How It Was In The Beginning," the author relates the "creation myth" of the Fon People of Africa. (The Fon account is not inspired Scripture. However, it has several features in common with Genesis. The origin of the world and its life is the result of the creative activity of Deity. Man is given dominion over the earth, but becomes disobedient to God. God destroys the earth as punishment, and gives to the human race a new beginning.) It is prefaced with these words:

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Many ancient peoples of the world tried to explain how the world began. The following myth comes from the Fon People of Africa. (A myth is a story made up by early man to explain things in nature he did not understand) (38).

Just as the author has tried to credit evolution by associating it with "real history," an attempt is made to discredit creation by calling it "myth." Obviously, the author could not engage in a frontal assault on Genesis in a text-book for nine-year-olds. (That will come; possibly in high school, certainly in college.) But the tie-in, the implications, are definitely there. At the close of the story, it appears that readers are even baited into making the association with the biblical account:

Can you make up a story about the beginning of the world? Or can you tell a story about why man is different from all other animals on earth? (38)

What I have just recounted from personal experience is not unique. It is pervading the educational literature of American schools right down to the elementary level. If you doubt that is the case, ask to see the textbooks that your children are being taught from. Peruse them carefully. I believe it will open your eyes. You may have attended school in a time when evolution was rarely or never brought into the public school curricula, but all that has changed. Your children and grandchildren are being thoroughly exposed to evolutionary philosophy. Perhaps you think it will not affect them. Perhaps you think it is nothing to get up in arms about. What if you found out that witchcraft was being taught in the school your child attended? (Don't think that is far-fetched. I speak from personal observation. In California, while in high school, an elective course was offered in the English department on witchcraft and the occult. Readings were entirely from sources sympathetic to, or involved in, such evils. I wonder if any reference was made to Bible passages like Exodus 22:18, Leviticus 20:27, Galatians 5:20, or Revelation 21:8? I doubt it.) What if someone who was a teacher overtly attacked the Bible and held it up to scorn? What if your child's school had a curriculum that incorporated Eastern metaphysics or "New Age" paganism? (It is going on!) Would you become concerned in any of these cases? If you were a responsible parent, you would. Likewise, the evolutionary philosophy is destructive of faith in God and His revelation, the Bible.

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The encroachment of the godless philosophy of evolution is seeping into every aspect of our children's education. Realizing what evolution signifies, what it stands for, and the persistent efforts to proselytize new converts from among the children of American public schools, we should prepare ourselves as parents to deal with this menace.

Biblical Creation: What the Bible Teaches

The doctrine of Creation begins in Genesis, but it is not confined to the first two chapters of this book of beginnings. The doctrine of Creation pervades Scripture. (Chart 2 contains a partial listing of passages.)

Chart 2. The Doctrine of Creation in Scripture

Genesis 1:1-2:25	136:5-9	17:24
Exodus 20:11	Proverbs 3:19	Romans 4:17
1 Samuel 2:8	8:26-29	11:36
Nehemiah 9:6	Ecclesiastes 3:11	1 Corinthians 8:6
Job 12:8-9	Isaiah 40:12, 26, 28	2 Corinthians 4:6
26:7, 13	45:7-12, 18	Ephesians 3:9
28:24-26	51:13	Colossians 1:16-17
38:4, 7-10	Jeremiah 5:22	1 Timothy 6:13
Psalms 8:3	10:12	Hebrews 1:2, 10
19:1-2	Amos 4:13	2:10
33:6-9	Jonah 1:9	3:4
74:16-17	Zechariah 12:1	11:3
89:11	Malachi 2:10	Revelation 4:11
102:25	John 1:3, 10	10:6
104:2-6	Acts 14:15	14:7

The simplest and most natural way to read Genesis 1 is as narrative history. Some have tried to press the idea that Genesis 1 is to be understood as highly figurative or poetic, and not at all true to the facts. However, this idea robs the Bible revelation of all seriousness at the very outset of the Book.

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According to the Bible, space, matter, energy, and time all had a beginning. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). This is a statement that summarizes what follows in chapter 1 and 2. This simple statement tells us what God did. Genesis 1:2 through 2:25 tells us how He did it, insofar as He has revealed that to us.

Genesis 1:1 is also a statement that refutes many false philosophies that have ensnared the unbelieving.

Chart 3.

Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"

<u>Philosophy Refuted</u>	<u>How Refuted</u>
Atheism	There is a God
Polytheism	There is but one God
Evolution	He created all things
Pantheism	He is apart from His creation
Materialism	There was a beginning to creation
Fatalism	There was a purpose to creation

Implicit in the Bible's revelation of the beginning of the world and the human race, is the idea that *they shall have an end*. As a result of the Fall (Gen. 3), the world now is under the "bondage of corruption." It is devolving—not evolving. It is falling apart like an old garment that will one day be laid aside.

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment,

and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished (Isa. 51:6).

This world will come to an end in fire and dissolution.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10).

The Bible reveals that when that day comes, humanity will stand before its Creator and give account (John 1:1-3; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10). This, I believe, is the very thing that the materialist and infidel wants most to escape—to deny—hence, such godless rationale as the theory of evolution.

However, while this earth will pass away, we must remember that there are some things that will endure. (See chart 4 on next page.)

Having considered the basics of the doctrine of Creation, let us turn our attention to some of the things that our children are facing in their schools.

Is Evolution a Fact of Science?

The word "science" comes from the Latin, *scientia*, "knowledge." In 1 Timothy 6:20, Paul warns, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." Paul was warning Timothy against the errors of Gnosticism—a heretical religious group that pretended to possess knowledge that was superior to the biblical revelation. However, there is an idea that is applicable here to the creation-evolution debate. Like the Gnostics, modern evolutionists claim to possess "knowledge" that surpasses the information found in the Bible. But like the Gnostics, they have made the error of substituting the errant cogitations of mere mortals for the eternal verities of the Living God. The simple truth is that proof of the "fact" of the theory of evolution is totally impossible, and therefore, evolution is not science at all.

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Chart 4.
The Bondage of Corruption

Dying Things	Scripture	Undying Things
Heaven and earth	Ps. 102:25-27	God
Man	Ps. 103:14-17	God's mercy and righteousness
Young men	Is. 40:28-31	Those who wait on God
Earth and its inhabitants	Is. 51:6	God's salvation
Earth and Heaven	Heb. 12:26-28	God's Kingdom
Heaven and Earth	Mt. 24:35	Christ's words
World and its lusts	1 Jn. 2:17	Those who do God's will
Wicked men	Ps. 37:35-37	Upright men
All flesh	1 Pet. 1:24-25	Word of God
Whole world	Rom. 8:21-22	Children of God

How do we learn knowledge? There are three ways: (1) instruction, (2) experience (experimentation), (3) observation. Let me illustrate. I have two children, Natalie and Nathaniel. One day we are in a home where they have a wood-burning stove. I tell my children, "Don't get near the stove because you might get burned." There's the instruction. But let's say that Natalie is not careful to heed my warning. She gets too close and is burned. She has learned, from experience,

that you don't get near the stove for you might get burned. Let's say Nathaniel saw her get burned and sees the tears and expressions of pain from his sister. He has also learned, by observation, don't get near the stove, you might get burned.

Well, that may sound simple, but that is how we arrive at facts, the truth, knowledge, *science*. In order for something to be established as a fact it must be experimentally verifiable and capable of duplication and even the possibility of falsification (if the alleged fact is not actually true). However none of this applies to the theory of evolution! How do we know? Well, the whole theory is impossible to verify by observation or by experimental verification. To save a lot of time in making this point, I'll simply introduce the statement of one of the leading evolutionary scientists of recent times:

These evolutionary happenings are unique, unrepeatable, and irreversible. It is as impossible to turn a land vertebrate into a fish as it is to effect the reverse transformation. The applicability of the experimental method to the study of such unique historical processes is severely restricted before all else by the time intervals involved, which far exceed the lifetime of any human experimenter. And yet it is just such *impossibility* [emphasis mine-shb] that is demanded by anti-evolutionists when they ask for "proofs" of evolution which they would magnanimously accept as satisfactory (Theodosius Dobzhansky, *American Scientist*, v. 45 (1957), 388).

In view of all this, evolution can *never* be considered a fact of science. It will always remain an unproven, unverified hypothesis, impossible of proof. And yet we are often told that it is proven! We hear and see statements made that take it for granted that it is a proven fact of science—as proven as the law of gravity or the rotundity of the earth! Nothing could be further from the truth. The truth is, the theory is in a constant state of flux and has been revised by many since Darwin's day.

Since observation and experimentation are out of the question, that leaves us only with "instruction" as a means of learning the "facts" about the beginning of the world. And here is the choice: God or man. Who is more reliable? We can check the veracity of God's Word in many ways: its scientific accuracy, its historical accuracy, its record

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of fulfilled prophecy, and via other avenues of inquiry. What about man's knowledge? Peruse a good history of science, and you will discover a multitude of ideas and notions that were once held to be inviolable "facts," but are now discarded as nonsense. Who are you going to believe on the question of origins? Just remember, God was there, modern scientists were not!

Let us now examine some of the particulars of the theory of evolution that our children are being taught are absolute fact.

The Theory of Beneficial Mutations

The mechanisms by which evolution is said to proceed are beneficial mutations and natural selection (Dodson 364). These are the "two legs" upon which the theory of evolution travels. The theory of natural selection, or "survival of the fittest," was the brainchild of Charles Darwin, and the beginning place of modern evolutionary thought. In 1901, to explain how new material was provided for selection by the process of natural selection, Hugo DeVries proposed the theory of beneficial mutations.

A *mutation* is "an inheritable change in the chromosomes; usually a change from one allelic form to another" (Huse 145). (The term "allelic" refers to a change in a gene that leads to variation in an organism's inheritable characteristics.) A *beneficial mutation* improves on the genetic traits of a species, making the members of the species that possess it more likely to succeed in the struggle for life.

Natural selection is "the process by which those individuals with characteristics that help them become adapted to their environment tend to survive (survival of the fittest) and transmit their characteristics" (Huse 145).

The dogma of evolution asserts that organisms can experience beneficial mutations that produce changes in a part of a species' population. These changes or variations enable that part of the population to have an edge in the struggle for survival. The individuals of the species that possess the advantageous trait survive and pass on their genetic improvement, while those less fit to survive die out. If you listen to evolutionists, you would get the impression that beneficial mutations are common enough. However, just the opposite is true.

By the admission of evolutionists, beneficial mutations are extremely rare.

Professor Dobzhansky, one of the outstanding geneticists of our country and a strong evolutionist, admits that favorable mutations amount to less than one percent of the mutations that occur. Julian Huxley put the figure at one tenth of one percent, for he says, "A proportion of favorable mutations of one in a thousand does not sound like much, but it is probably generous, since so many mutations are lethal, preventing the organism living at all, and the great majority of the rest throw the machinery of the organism slightly out of gear" (Davidheiser 209).

However, all the talk of "rare" beneficial mutations is really just so much hopeful optimism. The fact is that no beneficial mutations have ever been documented by scientific observation. For decades, scientists have tried to produce beneficial mutations in organisms. One such organism is the common fruit fly (*Drosophila*). Because they reproduce rapidly, and a great number of successive generations can be observed by a human experimenter, it is reasoned that it would more probable that a beneficial mutation could be observed. Well, scientists have bombarded *Drosophila* with x-rays, alpha-rays, beta-rays, gamma-rays, and much more besides, in an effort to observe a beneficial mutation. They have observed *Drosophila* for over 250,000 generations. What do they have to show for their effort? They have produced fruit flies with no eyes, no wings, stubby wings, malformed appendages, etc. They have come up with all kinds of mutations, but all are adverse or lethal.

What geneticists have proven is that mutations produce offspring that are weaker than their parents, and they die out due to lethal characteristics or the inability to reproduce. Now that is a fact—established by experimentation and observation! So this "leg" of the theory of evolution is crippled.

The Theory of Natural Selection

There are several problems with the concept of natural selection that are fatal to the theory of evolution.

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First, useful characteristics would be liabilities instead of assets while still in an uncompleted state of development. Over the long time it took for an evolutionary change to take place, at what point would the trait be useful? How would the creature be able to exercise it in the interim? For example, bats and flying squirrels are alleged to have evolved from ground dwelling mammals. How many early bat-like creatures bit the dust trying to fly with undeveloped and unoperational wings? That would simply prove to be an evolutionary dead-end. No survival advantage there! (Davidheiser 193).

Consider the bombardier beetle. This amazing little creature has one of the most amazing defenses in nature. When a bird or other predator sneaks up on the bombardier beetle, the beetle creates a chemical explosion that propels a mixture of hot (212° F), toxic liquid into the face of the predator. The bombardier beetle has two glands with two compartments each. The large inner compartment stores two chemicals: hydroquinone and hydrogen peroxide. The outer compartment is the reaction chamber where enzymes are mixed with the hydroquinone-hydrogen peroxide mixture, creating the explosion. The bombardier beetle can produce multiple reactions over a short period of time. Now, how long did it take the interminably slow process of evolution to get all this chemistry right? How many early bombardier beetles blew themselves to bits before perfecting the technique? (Kofahl 2).

These are just two of numerous examples that could be cited. Obviously, natural selection cannot account for what in fact are marvelous examples of engineering by the Architect of creation.

A second problem of natural selection theory is found in the fact that so-called "higher" forms of life are not any better adapted to the environment than their "ancestors." Man is alleged to be ultimately descended from apes, monkeys, small mammals, amphibians, right back to early single celled life-forms. As an evolutionary zoologist admits, "Worms survive well, and sponges survive superlatively. Survival of the fittest does not seem to explain the progression from microbe to man" (Davidheiser 194). If man is the pinnacle of natural selection to date, then why haven't all of his alleged evolutionary precursors (apes, monkeys, lemurs, etc.) disappeared?

A third insurmountable problem for natural selection is the abundant evidence of design in nature, proving the existence of a Supreme Architect of the universe. Numerous examples of *teleology* in nature

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could be cited. Teleology is "purposiveness or design in nature as an explanation of natural phenomena" (Huse 148). The Argument from Teleology is one of the most decisive arguments against materialistic atheism. The sum of this classic argument for God's creative activity is found in Hebrews 3:4—"For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God". Houses don't just get built by accident. Suppose I claimed that I hauled a bunch of lumber, wiring, plumbing fixtures, and other material onto a vacant lot, and a tornado came along and rearranged the materials into a comfortable three-bedroom, one bath, ranch style house. You would have me committed. In the Arkansas Creation Law Trial in 1982, a witness for Creationism said that it would be more likely that a tornado could go through a junkyard and assemble a Boeing 747, fully operational, than for the marvelous complexity of terrestrial life to be due to the chance and accident of evolutionary theory. Consider chart 5.

Chart 5.

Consider the following examples of design:

House	demands	A competent cause— an intelligent designer
Computer	demands	A competent cause— an intelligent designer
Nuclear Submarine	demands	A competent cause— an intelligent designer
The eye	demands	A competent cause— a supremely intelligent Designer
The solar system	demands	A competent cause— a supremely intelligent Designer
Life	demands	A competent cause— a supremely intelligent Designer

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Darwin struggled with, and rejected, the obvious evidence of design in nature:

Darwin wrote to Asa Gray, "I remember well when the thought of the eye made me cold all over . . . " It made him cold all over because he had committed himself to explain the evolution of life from simple forms by a process of natural selection, and he could not account for the evolution of the eye. This sentence in his letter to Gray continues, " . . . but I have got over this stage of the complaint, and now small trifling particulars of structure often make me very uncomfortable. The sight of a peacock's tail, whenever I gaze at it, makes me sick!" It made him sick because he could not explain it by his natural selection theory . . .

After reading what he said about the eye, it is understandable why he was able to say this. As he himself said, he "got over it." He did not solve the problem. He just hardened himself so that the fact that he could not solve the problem did not bother him any more (Davidheiser 201-2).

A fourth problem for natural selection is the presence of beauty in nature. "Beauty in nature has always been an embarrassment to evolutionists for whom the only ultimate reason for being is some slight edge a trait may confer in the endless cycle of death and accident that is supposed to be the pathway to progress" (Parker 39). Genesis 2:9 says, "And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is *pleasant to the sight*, and good for food . . . " There is so much of our world and the life in our world that is purely aesthetic in nature. It is for the enjoyment and appreciation of man. As Dr. Parker goes on to say, "He enveloped us in a gallery of glorious masterworks that could only be appreciated by those created and redeemed in His image."

In American public schools, children are being taught that the theories of beneficial mutation and natural selection are unassailable facts. The opposite is obvious, when the truth is known.

The Alleged Evidence for Evolution

In the past, "evidences" for evolution were presented to the public that are now totally discredited. Arguments from vestigial organs, embryonic recapitulation, and comparative studies have been used, but have been discredited, often by the efforts of evolutionary scientists. The reader is directed to works by Scott Huse and Bolton Davidheiser (listed under "Recommended Reading") for more information about these old arguments.

We will confine ourselves in this study to the alleged evidence afforded by paleontology, that is, of the fossil record. There is a general agreement among evolutionists that the only possible historical evidence for evolution is from the fossil record. In a very real sense, the fossil record constitutes the final refuge of the evolutionist. Carl Dunbar, in his work *Historical Geology* says, "... fossils provide the only historical documentary evidence that life has evolved from simpler to more complex forms" (Anderson 12). This statement is both an admission and an unsupported boast. Evolutionists often portray the fossil record as supportive of their theory, despite the fact that the fossil record shows no evidence of transitional species, or "missing links," as they are popularly called. The simple fact is that the search for transitional forms has not been successful. Each major group of organisms appears abruptly in the fossil record without any transitions. As George Gaylord Simpson, a leading evolutionist of recent times admits,

It is a feature of the known fossil record that most taxa appear abruptly. They are not, as a rule, led up to by a sequence of imperceptibly changing forerunners such as Darwin believed should be usual in evolution.

Despite the promise that paleontology provides a means of "seeing" evolution, it has presented some nasty difficulties for evolutionists, the most notorious of which is the presence of "gaps" in the fossil record. Evolution requires intermediate forms between species and paleontology does not provide them (Anderson 16).

I could go on for a long time with compelling evidence that the fossil record is absolutely bereft of proof for the theory of evolution. But the admission of Simpson is as decisive against the contention

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that evolution is "proven" by the fossil record as anything can be. Why then are our children being taught the "fact" of evolution, proven by the "evidence" of the fossil record? It can only be accounted for by the fact that there are those who have "rejected the knowledge of God" and have "turned aside unto fables" (Rom. 1:28; 2 Tim. 4:4).

The complete failure of the fossil record to be supportive of evolution (when the truth is known), has led to formulation of strange theories to explain the failure of the fossil record. One of these is the "hopeful monster" theory. Anderson and Coffin, in their excellent work exposing the failure of the fossil record *Fossils in Focus*, write:

The failure of the Neo-Darwinian model to adequately explain the persistent absence of transitional forms has stimulated other evolutionists to propose alternative theories of evolution. One serious attempt was made by Richard Goldschmidt and Otto Schindewolf. They suggested that evolution took place through massive evolutionary changes. These sudden jumps (saltation) were a result of a series of mutations These sudden jumps in evolution would produce an entirely new creature, the so-called "hopeful monster." In other words, this model envisions a reptile would lay an egg that would hatch a bird (Anderson 17).

The convenient thing about Goldschmidt's and Schindewolf's theory is that we are told that we look for evidence in vain. No traces of these "jumps" are left in the fossil record! So now the evolutionists are absolving themselves of the need to produce proof!

Think about this for a moment. Evolution is alleged to be a fact. The proof? The fossil record! At least that's what the textbooks say. But the truth is that the fossil record lends no comfort to evolutionists who know the facts! They are scrambling around looking for an explanation that will not require evidence. Somebody needs to shout the news that the emperor has no clothes on!

In noticing the foregoing features of the theory of evolution, which are being taught as facts in public schools of America, we have only availed ourselves of a thousandth part of the evidence that is avail-

able to refute this fable called evolution. Those who wish to read further are encouraged to consult the "Recommended Reading" list at the end of this article.

The Bible and Science

There are two common misconceptions about the Bible and science. The first, common among atheists and unbelievers, is that the Bible is riddled with scientific fallacies. They believe the Bible is filled with mistakes reflecting the superstitions and ignorance of ancient people of the Bible world. The second, held by many people who profess to be Christians, is that the Bible is solely a book of spiritual truth. Where it touches upon science or history, the Bible is to be interpreted allegorically or spiritualized. The statement is commonly made by these people that "The Bible is not a book of science, but religion." These people are quite willing to accept that there can be factual and scientific errors in the Bible, and they maintain that such errors do not affect the Bible's religious message. Both of these views of the Bible are in error, and the latter position, which has been adopted in many liberal denominations, undermines the Bible as the authoritative Word of God. So much so, that many people eventually drift from the second view into the first one.

Jesus said, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (Jn. 3:12). It takes a strange kind of faith to say that the Bible contains factual errors when it comes to practical science or objective history, but is truthful and trustworthy when it deals with salvation, eternal life, heaven, and other spiritual subjects. As Jesus indicated, however, if the Bible cannot be trusted on matters pertaining to nature, matters which can be verified by empirical investigation, how can it be trusted in matters pertaining to spiritual things? The Bible is a book of truth. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). Either the Bible is wholly reliable on every subject it touches upon, or it is not the Word of God.

If the Bible is a mixture of truth and error, who can tell the difference. Who is the man qualified to winnow the wheat from the chaff of Scripture? If a man presumes to decide for himself what parts are true and what are false, he becomes his own authority in religion. He might as well rewrite the Bible to suit himself. The truth is that the Bible is a book of science. Obviously, the Bible is not a scientific textbook with tables, formulas, and equations. Nevertheless, the Bible

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is a book of knowledge—true and factual information upon whatever it touches upon. Science is knowledge. Therefore, the Bible is a book of science. As one anonymous sage said, “The facts of the Bible and theories of science may conflict. The facts of science and theories about the Bible may conflict. But the facts of science and the truth of the Bible never conflict.” While the Bible is at variance with such theories as evolution, it is in complete harmony with the *laws* of science—those facts of science that have stood the test of time, repeated experience, and universal observation.

The Laws of Thermodynamics

The First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics are fundamental scientific laws from the field of physics. When understood and appreciated, they are irrefutable evidence against the possibility of cosmic or organic evolution.

The First Law of Thermodynamics is also known as the Law of Energy Conservation. We might state the law this way: “The sum total of energy in the universe, including that in the form of matter, can neither be created or destroyed.” It may be changed into one form or another, but the total amount remains unchanged. Scientists have no way of explaining why this is so, but the Bible offers the explanation:

God alone can truly *create*. Man can only re-fashion pre-existing materials. Since God has ceased from His creative works (Gen. 2:2), energy can no longer be created. The reason energy cannot be destroyed is because God is “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3). He preserves and keeps His creation in store (Neh. 9:6; 2 Pet. 3:7) (Huse 60).

The First Law of Thermodynamics is in perfect harmony with what the Bible reveals:

And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made (Gen. 2:2-3).

As Huse states:

This law teaches conclusively that the universe did not create itself! There is absolutely nothing in the present economy of natural law that could possibly account for its own origin. This scientific fact is in direct contradiction with the basic concept of naturalistic, innovative evolution. The present structure of the universe is one of conservation, not innovation as required by the theory of evolution (59).

Building on the foundation of the First Law, the Second Law of Thermodynamics sounds the death-knell for evolution. The Second Law is also known as the Law of Energy Decay or the Law of Increasing Entropy. Entropy is defined as: "A measure of the quantity of energy not capable of conversion into work" (Huse 141). In other words, this law states that more and more of the total energy in the universe is converting into a form that is unusable. The universe is like a giant clock that has been wound up. The question to materialists is: "Who wound it up?"

It [the Second Law—shb] states that every system left to its own devices tends to move from order to disorder. In other words, the universe is proceeding in a downward, degenerating direction of decreasing organization. Material possessions degenerate and all living organisms eventually return to dust, a state of complete disorder. Given enough time, all the energy of the universe will become random low-level heat energy and the universe will have died what is commonly referred to as a *heat-death* (Huse 61).

This law of science is an insurmountable problem for evolution. In the words of the British astronomer Arthur Eddington: "... if your theory is against the second law of thermodynamics I can give you no hope; there is nothing for it but to collapse in deepest humiliation" (Eddington 74).

The evolutionists' expectation that the universe is progressing ever upwards is dashed to pieces by the Laws of Thermodynamics. As Dr. Henry Morris points out,

The Second Law proves, as certainly as science can prove anything whatsoever, that the universe had a beginning. Similarly, the First Law shows that the

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universe could not have begun itself. The total quantity of energy in the universe is a constant, but the quantity of available energy is decreasing (Huse 64).

Man may utilize his creative abilities and mind to build structures out of pre-existing materials, organize raw materials into useful products, and so forth, but eventually the Second Law conquers all. This observation proves that it takes *intelligent mind* to combat the Law of Increasing Entropy for even a brief while and in a very limited way. Again, "Who wound up the universe's clock?" Obviously, it must be infinitely vast and eternal Mind—God! It must be an Intelligence that is supernatural—outside the confines of the material universe, superior to it, and sovereign over it. That, according to Bible, is God. Since energy cannot create itself, the most logical conclusion is "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

The Law of Increasing Entropy is evidently a result of the curse placed on creation due to the Fall of man (Gen. 3:17-19). (See the earlier chart on "The Bondage of Corruption"). In the new heavens and new earth prepared for the redeemed, there will be no Second Law, no entropy (Rom. 8:18-23).

The Laws of Thermodynamics prove that the universe had a beginning. The Bible teaches that the universe had a beginning (Gen. 1:1 and many other passages). These Laws prove that the universe must come to an end sometime. The Bible teaches that the universe will come to an end (Isa. 51:6; 2 Pet. 3:9-10). Therefore, the Bible and science are in harmony on these fundamental facts.

The Law of Biogenesis

Turning to the field of biology, we encounter a law of science that completely confirms what the Bible says about the origin of life. This is the Law of Biogenesis. It is commonly stated in this form: "Life begets life." This is a demonstrable, universally observable, and experimentally verifiable fact of science. In the 1800s, scientists like Redi, Pasteur and Virchow proved that only a pre-existing life can give life. They disproved the erroneous notion of *spontaneous generation*. Spontaneous generation is the belief that life can arise from dead, inert, non-living matter. No false concept of antiquity has been more thoroughly disproven than spontaneous generation.

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Louis Pasteur presented the Law of Biogenesis in the Latin saying *omni vivum e vivo*; that is, "Every living thing arises from a previously existing living thing." Rudolf Virchow stated, *omnis cellula e cellula*; that is, "Every cell arises from a pre-existing cell."

The evolutionary theory, however, denies these foundation facts of biological science. Ultimately, the evolutionist must believe in spontaneous generation, for he must believe that at some remote time in the past, dead matter became living flesh by pure chance with no directing intelligence. Who can believe it?

Here is an interesting dilemma for evolution. Some evolutionary scientists are trying to prove evolution by *creating* life in the lab. Of course, that kind of talk is misleading, for what they are trying to create are simple amino acids in a test tube. Amino acids are to a living cell what a grain of sand is to the earth; what a spark is to the sun. To date they have failed to create the proper amino acid "soup" that they postulate could be a precursor to a living cell. But, what if they did succeed? What if, over many decades of hard work, scientists were able to even create a living cell? What if they used their incredibly sophisticated scientific machinery and computers, working in their technologically ingenious labs (all the products of man's hard-won creative know-how), to produce some life-form? What would that prove? Would that prove the chance and accident scheme of evolution? Or would it prove that incredible intelligence and skill was necessary to create and sustain life? Why, it would absolutely prove *creation*! Not evolution!

The Law of Biogenesis demands creation. God, who alone possesses Eternal Life, who alone is the Eternal Self-existent One, is the only way to account for life in this world. This is in complete harmony with the Bible. Genesis 1 records the creation of all life on earth. As Isaiah says, God is "... he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein" (Isa. 42:5). Paul says, "... he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25). One day, the faithful will be redeemed eternally from the curse of sin and be given eternal life. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16).

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Many other arguments could be presented in addition to what is here. Again, the reader is referred to the "Recommended Reading" list for more information.

The Scientific Accuracy of the Bible

The reliability of the Bible has been impugned for years by malicious slanders emanating from a number of infidels. One of these blasphemous statements is "Science has proven the Bible false." Nothing is further from the truth. As already noted, the Bible, since it is a book of truth, is in complete harmony with scientific truth. The truth is that the Bible revealed many scientific truths centuries before scientists recognized them. So the scientific accuracy of the Bible is both negative and positive in nature. Negative, because the inspired Bible writers did not incorporate the superstitions of early cosmogonies in Scripture. Positive, because the Bible contains amazing revelations about things that humans could not have known about the natural universe until modern times. Both lines of scientific accuracy prove the Bible to be a book more than human in its authorship.

First, consider the negative accuracy of the Bible. Moses, as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, was educated in the highest institutions of learning of his day. "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22). If Moses wrote Genesis as a mere uninspired man, we would expect that to be reflected in what he wrote in Genesis 1. We would expect to find the strange and involved cosmogony of the ancient people by whom he was educated. The reader can satisfy himself as to the fabulous nature of the cosmogonies of ancient peoples, including the Egyptians, by referring to any good encyclopedia. (Cf. "Creation myths" in *Baker's Encyclopedia of the Bible* for instance). In contrast, Genesis 1-2 is a straightforward account, written as historical narrative, and elegant in its simplicity. No one has ever been successful who tried to prove that Moses, or any other Bible writer, wrote down scientific fallacies and the superstitions of their day. Many have tried, but their efforts all end in defeat when the facts are known. If a person ever says, "The Bible has been proven false," challenge their statement—ask them to give you a specific example. Usually they cannot, for they are only parroting something they have heard; something they want to believe.

Next, consider the positive scientific accuracy of Scripture. The Bible reveals facts about the natural world that would be impossible for men to know just a few centuries ago, and in some cases a few years ago. This amazing scientific foreknowledge of the Bible proves it is no work of mere men, but is indeed the product of the inspiration of God.

1. The sphericity of the earth. In Isaiah 40:22, it says of God, "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth." The Hebrew word *khug* connotes "sphericity" or "roundness." Not until modern times did man possess proof that the earth was like a ball. Ancient peoples did not believe this, as evidenced by their beliefs about the world they lived in. But God revealed it in His Word centuries before it could be understood by man (Schnabel 1).

2. The earth is not supported. "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). Very simple statement this, though it was not believed for a moment by ancient peoples, who believed the earth was somehow supported. Today, our ability to go into space has confirmed this statement in Job beyond all doubt (Schnabel 6).

3. Paths in the sea. Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873) is credited with being one of the founders of the modern science of oceanography. He is the man who discovered ocean currents. His inspiration, according to a statue erected in his memory in his native Richmond, Virginia, was Scripture. Once when he was bed-fast with illness, his son was reading to him from Psalm 8. In verse 8 there is the statement, "The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." Maury asked his son to stop and read it again. After the boy did so, Maury said, "If God said there are paths in the sea, I am going to find them when I get out of this bed." Other passages that arrested his attention were Psalm 107:23-24 and Ecclesiastes 1:7 (Norton 121).

4. Springs in the sea. When God was challenging Job to consider how little he was before the great Sovereign of the universe, God asked Job, "Have you entered into the springs of the sea?" (Job 38:16, NASV). As little as five decades ago almost nothing was known about the floor of the ocean. More recently, special submarines have been built to explore deep under the ocean's surface. Undersea hot-water springs have been discovered in some of the deepest parts of the

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ocean (Austin). How could men living 100 or 1000 years ago have known anything about them? Yet God revealed their existence to Job centuries before the time of Christ.

One scientist estimates that 40 cubic miles of water come out of oceanic springs each year! Mounds of important minerals around the vents contain copper, zinc and sulfur with lesser amounts of cobalt, lead, silver, and cadmium. Unusual animals exist in total darkness around the springs, apparently not dependent on plants by way of photosynthesis but upon a sulfur-converting bacteria food chain (Austin).

5. Health and sanitation laws in the Law of Moses. When God brought the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, He made the following promise to them: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee" (Exod. 15:26). It was not until the late 1800s that the existence of microbes was established. Yet in the Law of Moses, Israel was given a health and sanitation code that did not have an equal until modern times. (Cf. Leviticus 11:32-40; chaps. 13-15; 17:13; Numbers 19; Deuteronomy 23:12-13). How did Moses know about the microscopic creatures that spread death and disease. He could not, without being told by the Creator who made them and knew of their existence.

It would be impossible to notice each example of the scientific foreknowledge of the Scriptures that could be considered. The reader is referred to the work of Schnabel in the "Recommended Reading" list for more.

Conclusion

No informed Christian, young or old, need feel intimidated by the slanders and falsehoods spread by infidels. If there is one thing I would like to impress upon you, as I bring this study to a close, is the fact that you can arm yourself to defend the truth against the fables that pass for facts in modern education. It takes time and work

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to do so, but important issues hang in the balance, like whether or not your children grow up to be believers or not. P.O. Box 725, Buffalo, MO 65622

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What Is Pharisaic Legalism?

by Alan Bonifay

The Pharisees as a group constitute an intriguing paradox. What shall we think of them? Much is said in the New Testament against them, yet a careful reading of the New Testament will verify that there were many great and noble Pharisees in those days. Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1) was a Pharisee and though he was hesitant for a time, in the end he stepped forth and made a glorious confession of Christ (Jn. 19:38-42). Paul also was a Pharisee and even in the declining years of his ministry the great apostle boldly and unashamedly declared to the Sanhedrin, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (Acts 23:8). William Coleman noted:

Far from embarrassed by his membership in the group, he appreciated the tough fiber and strict training that he had collected from his years in this fraternity.

The Pharisees had given Paul a rock-hard dedication to the laws of God; they had given him a relentless zeal and they taught him the discipline of discipleship. The Apostle carried much of this training into his Christian mission (Coleman, William L., *The Pharisees' Guide to Total Holiness*, p. 6).

Nevertheless, it remains unquestionably true that Jesus reserved for the Pharisees His most scathing rebukes. He said they were "blind leaders of the blind" (Mt. 5:14). He epitomized them as the example of self-righteous bigotry (Lk. 18:10-14). In the sermon on the mount He said that except their righteousness be exceeded one had no hope of entering into the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:20). He warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and by that He meant their doctrine (Mt. 16:6-12), which Luke explains was hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1). Finally, in Matthew 23 in His most stinging rebuke, Jesus delivered an absolutely blistering castigation of their hypocrisy and cant.

In turn, they as a group despised Jesus. They sought not to understand, but to undermine the teaching and authority of Jesus. They did not (could not) question His miraculous power; so, they attributed it to the working of Satan (Mt. 9:34). Early in His ministry they decided that they did not wish to be confused with the facts and they purposefully closed their eyes and their ears to the truth

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(Jn. 12:37-43). Consequently they watched Jesus not to discover the truth, but rather to find some colorable pretext to kill him (Lk. 6:7; Jn. 11:47-53, 57). While they were waiting for an opportunity to pounce, they murmured against His teaching (Lk. 5:30; 15:2) and derided him (Lk. 16:14).

Who were these people? Where did they come from? And how had they developed into a sect by the time of Jesus?

The progenitors of the Pharisees in Jesus' day were most likely the Chasidim. These people developed as a group during the era of Judah's captivity in Babylon. Emmanuel Deutsch describes this period as "one of the most mysterious and momentous periods in the history of humanity" (*Master Bible*, p. 1181). What influences were brought to bear upon the captives we know not. However, we do know that from a reckless, lawless, godless populace they returned to Judah in the days of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah a transformed band of puritans. One result of their revival of the Israelite faith was the firm and organized stand henceforth made against the efforts of their successive heathen rulers to denationalize and paganize the nation. It is true that some in high places were unable to resist the seduction. Thus, under the influences of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria (175-164 B.C.), the very high priest, Jason, introduced pagan rites into Jerusalem and sent offerings to Hercules, the god of Tyre. This disgraceful period was afterward known appropriately as the time of "the mingling." But the heart of the nation was true, and the noble struggle of the Maccabees against the tyrant are familiar to all readers of Jewish history.

In connection with that prolonged contest we meet with a fraternity under the name of Assidaeans, described as "mighty men of Israel, voluntarily devoted to the law" (1 Mac. 2:42; 7:13; 2 Mac. 14:6). Evidently, this appellation is a Graecized form of the Hebrew Chasidim, which means "the pious ones," or in modern parlance, "pietists." From this fraternity, whose common bond of union was a resolution to devote their lives to the upholding of the Law in its integrity, appear to have sprung, directly or indirectly, the three great sects of New Testament times—the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes.

As widely as these eventually diverged from one another and as bitter as were their mutual controversies, they all started from the same point—a firm adherence to the national faith. The Pharisees,

laying their chief stress upon exact obedience, were led to formalism and an exaggerated estimate of the authority of the Fathers. At the same time the Sadducees, taking morality as their watchword, lost all sense of the supernatural. The Essenes, on the other hand, whose great principle was self-control, were led into a mystical and unprofitable asceticism. This last sect does not find mention in the New Testament although there are clear traces of its existence.

Consider, for a moment, the emergence of the Pharisees. In opposition to the "mingling" in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes there arose a brotherhood of the "Distinct" or "Separatists." When or how the fraternity assumed its shape is difficult to assess with accuracy. The word Pharisee is not found in either the Old Testament or the Apocrypha. The earliest mention of the word is discovered in Josephus in the annals of Jonathon, the high priest (144 B.C.) and of John Hyrcanus (109 B.C.) when the body was already powerful and of great repute (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XIII:5, secs. 9 and 10, 5; see also XVIII:1, 3 and *Wars of the Jews*, II. 8,14).

When the Pharisees are first encountered they are founded on two points of highest importance, and on each of these a pledge was exacted as a condition of entrance into the community. One was the obligation to pay all tithes before the use or sale of any commodity. Nothing was to be consumed about which there was the slightest doubt as to whether or not the tithe on it had been paid. The other cardinal point related to the absolute avoidance of all uncleanness. In definition of this doctrine multitudes of rules were adopted, many of which were minute and puerile. Jesus alludes to these two characteristics (Mt. 23:23, 25). However, the chief point of distinction of the Pharisees lay in the regard they paid to what they called the oral law. The oral law was a series of unwritten interpretations of the divine oracles handed down from doctor to doctor through the generations. These traditions of the fathers formed an elaborate system extending to every detail of worship and life. In effect these traditions of the elders spun around God's Word a web of intricate refinement. While purporting to "fence the law," or to lessen the risk of breaking it, these oral laws became, in the multiplicity of subtle distinctions and vexatious rules, an oppression to the conscience and a substitute for God's Word. Formalism was substituted for spiritual religion. The separateness of this fraternity was evidenced outwardly by their long robes with fringe and tassels, their broad phylacteries, their long prayers publicly recited by the highways at the customary

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hours, as well as the casuistry of their teachings and the inconsistency of their lives. All of this proved their piety to be in great measure an affectation.

As we have mentioned, the Lord's indictment of the Pharisees reported in Matthew 23 was very terrible. They were, in fact, the principal obstacle to the reception of Christ and His gospel. They could neither accept the spirituality of His doctrines nor descend to the humility of those who would follow him. As an order, their spirit was that of self-sufficiency and pride. When John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance, the Pharisees for the most part (Lk. 7:30) but not entirely (Mt. 3:7), remained aloof. They thanked God they were not "as other men" (Lk. 18:10). Yet while exalting themselves to heaven in their own esteem, they verily became the "children of hell" (Mt. 23:15).

Undoubtedly, as we established, in the beginning there was another side to these people—one less dark and foreboding. They held certain great doctrines, as that of a resurrection and future life, with a tenacity unknown to the people at large. And, their strictness on points of religious observance serve as an antidote to the prevailing and sickening laxity. The Apostle Paul considered it a point of distinction among the professors of Judaism to be a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6; Phil. 3:50). The truth is that both the best and the worst of people were Pharisees.

The Talmud, parodying the manifold divisions and subdivisions made by Pharisaic teachers, distinguishes seven classes of Pharisees, one of whom only is worthy of that name. These are: 1) those who do the will of God from earthly motives; 2) they who make small steps or say, "Just wait awhile for me; I have just one more good work to perform;" 3) they who knock their heads against the walls in avoiding the sight of a woman; 4) saints in office; 5) they who implore you to mention some more duties which they might perform; 6) they who are pious because they fear God; 7) the true and only Pharisee is he "who does the will of his Father which is in heaven because he loves Him (Deutsch, Talmud).

Politically, the Pharisees were the national party steadfastly maintaining the separateness and independence of the Jewish people against all efforts to reduce them to Roman allegiance. They considered themselves the guardians of the Divine law and the ancestral customs, trusting implicitly that He who selected them to be his peculiar people would protect and shield them and theirs from all outward dangers which threatened the state. In this respect, they contrasted favorably with the time-serving Sadducees and were diametrically opposed to the Romanizing Herodians.

Incredibly (in the light of their influence), they were a very small party during the days of Jesus. If Josephus can be believed, there were only about 6,000 actual members of the fraternity. After the destruction of Jerusalem they disappeared as a distinct sect, but their teachings and spirit have given the tone to modern Judaism.

Today, however, men are charged with Pharisaism when they are perceived to be acting in the same vein as Jesus' antagonists. By the same token, the charge of legalism is often levelled at men who are perceived to be espousing a doctrine of salvation based upon perfect obedience to a legal code. Usually the two charges are different facets of the same objection. However, these charges are very ugly and should not be made lightly. Obviously, anyone who acts like the Pharisees that Jesus condemned is grievously in error. Equally, anyone who would deny the necessity and efficacy of Jesus' sacrifice and espouse a doctrine based solely upon the keeping of a code of meritorious law has denied the faith of Jesus Christ. Rightly assessed these sins should be exposed. The problem is that not everything labelled as Pharisaic or legalistic is actually so. In fact, sometimes even an inverted Pharisaism is detected when the real Pharisees are those levelling the false charges of Pharisaism and legalism against others. Therefore we need to be more precise when we speak. Let us consider for the remainder of our time four points:

1. What Pharisaism is not.
2. What Pharisaism is.
3. What is meant by "the letter" and "the spirit" of 2 Corinthians 3?
4. What does it mean to be spiritually minded?

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I. What Pharisaism Is Not

- A. It is not Pharisaical to teach that God's Word is the absolute standard of truth in all matters of religion and that any other standard is false.
 1. In John 17:17 Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
 2. Jesus characterized himself as the truth. He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn. 14:6).
 3. In John 8:31-32 the record says, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believe on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."
 4. In John 18:37 Jesus answered Pilate's query about his kingship in these words: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice."
5. Finally, Paul declares that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God" in order "that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
6. When one insists that our thoughts, our words and/or our deeds be measured by the absolute standard of God's Word which is *the truth* he is not playing the part of the Pharisee.
7. Whatever actions are labelled as Pharisaical, they must not impinge upon the truth which is God's Word.
- B. Neither is it Pharisaical for one to be firm in his convictions.
 1. It is true that an individual can be very dogmatic in his error and extremely positive in his self-righteousness.
 2. However, it does not follow therefrom that weakness of faith or hesitancy in conviction are to be equated with piety.
 3. Paul was not being Pharisaical when he firmly stated his conviction to Timothy: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

4. James Bales said:

"There are those who seem to think that a person is a proud Pharisee if he confirms with convictions his faith in Christ and claims to have seen at least certain truths taught in Christ's word. Conviction to them is equated with self-righteousness. They seem to think it is a mark of humility to be uncertain about everything" (*Faith Under Fire*, p. 101).

5. The Bible says we are to "prove all things; and hold fast that which is good" (2 Thess. 5:21).
6. It simply is not Pharisaism to build our house upon the rock of God's Word (Mt. 7:24-28).
7. It is not Pharisaism to have the certainty that comes from studying the word of God. Luke wrote that Theophilus might know the certainty of the things wherein he had been instructed.

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Lk. 1:1-4).

8. Nor is it Pharisaism to have the understanding that comes through reading the Scriptures. Speaking of revelation Paul said, "Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4).

C. Pharisaism is not encountered when the necessity to obey God's Word is insisted upon.

1. In Hebrews 5:9, Jesus is reckoned "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
2. "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name" (Rom. 1:5).

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed

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from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:14-18).

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:25-26).

3. In 2 Corinthians 5:10 Paul said we are to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."
 4. By contrast consider what the New Testament says about disobedience:
 - a. "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath" (Rom. 2:6-8).
 - b. In Galatians Paul asks them who had bewitched them, that they "should not obey the truth" when Jesus Christ crucified had been evidently set before their very eyes.
 - c. Finally, in 2 Thessalonians 1:8, we learn that Jesus is coming with his mighty angels, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."
 5. Pharisaism is not teaching that God expects men to obey his word.
- D. It does not constitute Pharisaism to teach that there are laws in the Christian system.
1. In Romans 8:2 it is "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" which "hath made me free from the law of sin and death."
 2. In Romans 3:27 boasting is excluded not by the law of Moses but "by the law of faith."
 3. In James 1:25 the Christian system is styled "the perfect law of liberty."

4. It is true that our justification comes as a result of our faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ, but this truth does not militate against the fact that the laws of the New Testament are given to regulate the lives of Christians saved by grace.
 5. As Foy Wallace said, the laws of the New Testament "do not vitiate the grace of God" (**Bulwarks of the Faith**, Vol. 2, p. 3)
 6. The grace of God offered in the gospel must not ever be construed as ignoring sin. God does not ignore sin and sin is a transgression of law (1 Jn. 3:4).
 7. The idea that as long as Christians don't sin too badly or too often the blood of Christ will automatically cleanse them of their sin is not Biblical (1 Jn. 1:7-10).
 8. The truth is that God's grace made a way for sinners as well as for Christians to have their sins forgiven and in order to receive His forgiveness we must follow the way He gave us in His word which is the law of faith.
- E. Pharisaism is not found in the teaching that there are works necessary in the living of the Christian life.
1. James said, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (2:24).
 2. And Paul said that what availed something in Christ was "faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6).
 3. Finally, Jesus said that the work of God was to believe on him whom he hath sent (Jn. 6:29).
 4. To be sure the works legislated in God's Word for Christians to perform are not works of merit—i.e. works whereby salvation is earned.
 5. They are, as James explains, the works which faith produces (Jas. 2:14-26).
 6. When one insists that it is the responsibility of both himself and his brethren to perform these works of faith, he is not playing the Pharisee.
- F. Pharisaism is not discovered in teaching that there are commands to be obeyed in order for the Christian to live right before God.
1. "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (2 Peter 3:1-2).

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2. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 Jn. 2:1-6).

3. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15).

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (Jn. 14:23-24).

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (Jn. 15:3).

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (Jn. 15:10).

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (Jn. 15:14).

4. Jesus said that the mark of one who loved Him was his obedience to the commandments of God's Word.

G. Finally, it is not Pharisaism to teach that the Christian who would please God must submit to God's will in true humility.

1. Jesus must become Lord of our lives (Acts 2:36).

2. We must recognize him as our owner, our rule and our master.

3. Humility is not walking around with your head down mumbling so that no one can understand you.

4. Neither is it being uncertain about everything.
5. Humility is a willingness to serve: first, God and then your brethren.
6. It is evidenced by submission to God's will as it is revealed in God's Word.

II. What, then, is Pharisaism?

In our attempts to focus this discussion as it should be focused, we must not overlook the fact that Pharisaism is a very real sin and a grievous one at that.

A. Pharisaism is hypocrisy.

1. One of Christ's more stinging rebukes to the Pharisees was his oft repeated reference to them as hypocrites.
2. William Coleman noted that "thousands of years of linguistics have never construed an uglier word for a religious person than the word hypocrite. It had no less acid to it then than it contains today" (p. 95).
3. He went on to say: "The word hypocrite carried two meanings in the time of Christ and he possibly intended them both. The Hebrew concept was "godless," "lawless," or impious. The Greek word carried that same tone, but added the meaning of "actor" (p. 95).
4. Luke 20:20 gives us an example of this behavior.
 - a. It says the chief priests kept a close watch on Jesus and "sent spies who pretended to be honest" (NIV).
 - b. When Jesus used the Greek word he probably meant to convey both concepts—a godless actor.
 - c. This is the meaning that has filtered down to our day and it remains accurate.
5. Not wanting His charge of hypocrisy to be misunderstood Jesus defined it precisely by quoting Isaiah 29:13.
 - a. "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mt. 15:7-9).

- b. Like many modern Christians, Pharisees were shackled to a routine of religious conformity, but their faith and sincerity were an empty hull.
- 6. In Matthew Jesus outlined the basic credentials of the hypocrite.
 - a. He emphasizes appearance. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Mt. 23:25-28).
 - b. He emphasizes formalism. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Mt. 23:23).
 - c. He emphasizes deceit. "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mt. 22:15-19ff).
- 7. However, we must guard against being over-judgmental here:
 - a. A man is not a Pharisee because he has some time or another done something hypocritical.
 - b. He is a Pharisee when hypocrisy is so common and so deeply rooted in his life that he has suppressed his recognition of his own hypocrisy.
 - c. Bales says, "He is the hypocrite who over a period of time has not only persisted in his hypocrisy, but has so rationalized that he has convinced himself he is sincere" (p. 111) (see Mt. 23:29-34 for example).

8. How can we guard ourselves against becoming hypocritical Pharisees? Bales answers accurately. "It is only through integrity, study of the word and study of our own lives in the light of the word, that we can learn our true condition" (p. 111).
- B. Pharisaism is found in making void God's Word.
1. By the time Jesus arrived on the scene, the Pharisees had come to regard their oral traditions of the Fathers as equal to and, in fact, above the authority of God's Word.
 2. "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mt. 15:1-9).
 3. Jesus taught that they were using their traditions to circumvent and set aside God's will.
 4. Amazingly today, we have often come full circle. There are some who accuse one of Pharisaism because he holds to God's Word and dares to insist that in order to be saved they, too, must adhere to the truth.
 5. We see in this an inverted Pharisaism.
 6. The real Pharisees in such a scenario are those who are pointing the finger of Pharisaism at those who stand for the truth.
- C. Pharisaism is evidenced by their own particular brand of partial obedience.
1. The best of God's children are only obedient part of the time.
 2. That is why we cannot be justified by a code of law based upon meritorious works.

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3. However, the partial obedience of the Pharisees was evidenced by their substitution of partial obedience in some small matters for a life of obedience.
4. They did not have an attitude of obedience to God in matters both small and great (Mt. 23:23-24).
5. It is impossible for men to offset their habitual disobedience to the weightier matters by being minutely scrupulous in smaller matters which although they might cost us something, by no means do they cost us the abandonment of our lives to God and His will.
6. Bales points out that "one cannot substitute arguments that faith must work for a faith which actually works" (p. 112).
7. "One cannot make up," he said, "for a failure to walk with God during the week by being extra careful never to miss a service on Sunday" (p. 112).
8. Correctness of understanding on how to do something is no substitute for doing it.

D. Pharisaism is also seen in formalism—i.e. outward compliance without the cooperation of the heart.

1. Although in many matters the Pharisees were not even yielding outer compliance on others they had substituted outward compliance for obedience from the heart.
2. In many cases their compliance was limited merely to intonations as to duty.
3. In Matthew 23:4 the record says: "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.
4. When we declare our faith in Christ our words must be true indications of the condition of our hearts.
5. The point is: We really have not obeyed a commandment of the Lord if we have not obeyed it from the heart.
6. Outward compliance and compliance in word should be inseparably connected with the sincere heart and should be expressions of our faithful submission to God.
7. The condition of the Pharisee's hearts was quite different from their external show (Mt. 23:25-28).

E. Pharisaism is characterized by works done to be seen of men.

1. According to Matthew 5:16 it is right for men to see our good works.
 2. However, our intent must be that they will glorify God and not ourselves.
 3. The Pharisee does his work so that men will glorify him (Mt. 6:1-3, 5, 16; 23:5-12).
 4. When they have received their after reward of glory from their fellows they have received all they are going to get.
 5. God will not reward such behavior.
- F. The heart of Pharisaism is discovered in self-righteousness.
1. "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Lk. 18:9-14).
 2. The Pharisees believed that they were righteous on the basis of or on the ground of works they had done.
 3. They believed that they could earn salvation on the basis of their deeds.
 4. How is such an attitude manifested today?
 - a. When one believes he can be saved without obedience to Christ on the basis of his good moral character he is guilty of self-righteousness.
 - b. Equally, if a Christian believes that the deeds he has done in faith earn or merit his salvation he, too, is self-righteous.
 5. While it is abundantly evident that we cannot earn our salvation we must be careful not to assume the opposite extreme.
 - a. It is a sure thing that one does not earn his salvation by disobedience.
 - b. We are saved in spite of our sins by the grace of God, and that realization must elicit our submission to and compliance with His will.

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6. Make no mistake, the ground of our salvation is the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross when he paid the penalty for our sins.
7. We must manifest our humility by recognizing our need and placing all of our confidence and trust in Christ and submitting our will to his control

G. A summation of Pharisaism

1. Pharisaism does exist and there are Pharisees.
2. But they may be more difficult to ferret out than we have thought.
3. The examination of our lives in the light of God's Word can reveal to us whether or not we have become a Pharisee.
4. However, we must remember that pride is subtle, and we must be on guard lest we fall into its snare.
5. Pharisaism is pride that has matured and has become a way of life.
 - a. Although it may acknowledge God, it ultimately makes self the supreme object of trust and service.
 - b. It is a declaration of independence from God as the ground of our salvation and as the supreme object of our trust and service.
6. The best safeguards against Pharisaism and the fundamental cures of it rest in these crucial steps:
 - a. The recognition of our dependence on God.
 - b. The glorification and exaltation of Christ in our lives.
 - c. The humble dedication required to store God's Word in our hearts and manifest it in our lives.
7. The first beatitude in the sermon on the mount provides the key. We must become "poor in spirit" (Mt. 5:3).

III. What is the meaning of "Letter" and "Spirit" in 2 Corinthians?

- A. "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficiency of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was

glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?" (2 Cor. 3:3-8).

1. This passage is sometimes appealed to in discussions concerning legalism.
2. The idea that is usually being defended is the notion that a command of God is composed of two parts—the letter or what is actually written and the spirit or what is intended.
3. Usually such a construction is proffered by men trying to prove that it is acceptable to disobey the outward letter as long as one obeys the spirit of the passage.
4. First, such a notion is impossible to defend.
 - a. If God's Word is obeyed outwardly or perfunctorily but one does not do it from the heart, he has not obeyed God at all.
 - b. On the other hand, neither is it acceptable to disobey outwardly but maintain the proper spirit.
 - c. If a command is not obeyed from the heart, it has not been obeyed at all.
 - d. Obedience includes both the proper attitude as well as the proper outward action.
 - e. One simply cannot uphold the spirit of the law while bending the letter of the law.
 - f. Such a concept is not a Bible concept.
5. Second, even if such a concept could be sustained biblically (which it cannot), this passage has not the remotest connection to such an idea.
 - a. Clearly in verse 6 "the New Testament" is placed in opposition to "the letter."
 - b. In verses 7, 8, the Old Testament decalogue is placed in opposition to "the spirit."
 - c. "The letter" is that which is written and engraven in stones—the ten commandments.
 - d. "The spirit" is the New Testament.
 - e. The letter killed because men could not obtain salvation on the basis of merit.
 - f. The spirit gives life because in the New Testament our righteousness is declared by God on the basis of Jesus' death and our faith in Jesus.

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- g. The reason that the Old Testament is styled the letter is because God wrote the ten commandments with his own finger on the stone tablets.
- h. The reason that the New Testament is called the spirit is because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- i. In John 6:63, Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life."
- j. "But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:15-18).

- (1) The reading of Moses refers to the law of Moses.
- (2) The vail is that which keeps men from seeing the glory of the Lord.
- (3) The liberty that is gained when one turns to the Lord is freedom from the law of Moses and from sin.
- (4) We are changed into the same image as Christ when we are led by the Holy Spirit in receiving the New Testament into our hearts and minds.

IV. What, then, is a spiritually-minded man?

- A. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:12-16).

- 1. The natural man is the uninspired man.
- 2. The spiritual man is the inspired man.
- 3. The apostles and prophets were spiritual in the sense that the revelation was directly given to them by the Holy Spirit.

- B. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strive, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Cor. 3:1-3).
1. The Corinthians could have been spiritual men if they had received and obeyed the revelations Paul gave to them.
 2. However, the revelation he had imparted to them was not being evidenced in their lives.
 3. They were not being controlled by the spirit.
 4. Instead they were allowing the desires of the flesh to control their lives.
- C. Therefore to be spiritually minded means to allow the revelation of the spirit to enter and control one's mind.
1. To be spiritually minded then, is to recognize one's need for revelation.
 2. To allow the Holy Spirit's revelation—that is, God's Word to be stored in our mind and evidenced in our daily lives.
 3. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb. 8:10).
 4. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).
 5. In order to be spiritually minded we must allow God's Word to be the supreme focus of our lives.

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Justification by Faith

by Melvin Blalock

Introduction

Many have found in these verses the doctrine of "faith only." If indeed your bifocals are tinted or should we say tainted with Calvinism, you are sure to find Romans 4 your proof text. It is touted as the chapter that clearly excludes any works on the part of believers whatsoever. We are told that there is nothing that the sinner can do to effect his salvation, but that righteousness is imputed to him on the basis of faith alone. To arrive at this conclusion is to miss the author's point and to deny other plain Bible passages that require obedient faith which leads to salvation.

I am honored to stand before you today in an attempt to correctly set forth the teaching of the Holy Spirit on this very vital subject. It is a subject that is challenging, but one that can be understood. We will find with close scrutiny of these verses that there is no contradictions between Paul's writings in Romans and that of James or any other New Testament passage. It will be necessary also to look back into Romans 3 to obtain the proper context of these words of inspiration.

Let us begin with the first two verses of Romans 4.

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God (vv. 1-2).

Robertson L. Whiteside, in his commentary on Romans, offers the following comments:

To see clearly the meaning of an author it is necessary that we get his background, and be able to grasp the purpose of his writing. Why did Paul labor so earnestly to set forth the distinction between the law and the gospel and to prove that men are justified by faith, and not by works of law? In much of what he said in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, he set forth plainly that the gospel was a thing apart from the law of Moses, that the law ended at the cross, and that the gospel is God's perfected plan for man's redemption. But what was back of all this effort?

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What special need was there for so much teaching along this line? The reader will also find some very pointed teaching along the same line in Second Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians. Why was it so necessary that all the churches be informed along these lines?

The first converts to Christ were Jews. They were so wedded to the law of Moses that they broke away from it slowly. At first they thought the gospel was for Jews only. The conversion of Cornelius convinced them that God had also granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life (Acts 11:8). But they still thought and contended that those Gentile Christians had to keep the law of Moses. After the church was planted in Antioch, "certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, [and said], Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). When the appeal was made to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit through them decreed that the Gentiles should not be required to keep the law. But this decree did not stop the mouths of some of these extreme Judaizing Christians. These went about among the churches, making much trouble in the churches where there were Gentile members. They sought to make the church a mere sect of the Jews and the gospel a sort of adjunct to the law of Moses (87-8).

Let us look more closely at verses 1 and 2. The better translation of verse 1 is probably provided by the RSV: "What shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh." This simply introduces the case of Abraham who was without the law and without circumcision. This is a strong argument against the Judaizing teachers. As we investigate these verses in chapter 4, as well as those in the preceding chapter, it becomes obvious that this was the matter that Paul was dealing with. At issue in these verses is the Jew and Gentile, the law of Moses, circumcision, justification by faith, and God's righteousness in calling the Gentiles.

In verse 2 Paul wrote, "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God."

"By works . . ." is an unfortunate rendition, because the expression seems to be taking sides in an old controversy, appearing to be antithetical to salvation "by faith only" as advocated by the commentators; and the implicit denial of it here is construed as support for their theory. Nothing like that is here. "Works" simply means the law of Moses, "works of law," the alternate reading (R.V. margin), having no other possible meaning here. James, of course, said that Abraham was justified by works; but he did not say that he was justified by the works of the law of Moses. James, in making Abraham's justification "by works" (James 2:21), clearly excluded the works of the law of Moses and identified the class of works he had in mind by naming the offering up of Isaac, which was anterior to the law of Moses. Paul was here emphasizing the fact that Abraham was not justified by the law of Moses, a truth that should have been obvious, because the law had not even been given at that time (Coffman, *Romans*, 143).

Whiteside further observes,

These Judaizers put stress on their fleshly relation to Abraham and on their fleshly mark of circumcision. In effect, Paul said to them: "You put so much stress on the flesh, now tell us what Abraham obtained according to the flesh. He came out of heathenism, and therefore had no fleshly connections of which he could boast, and he was also justified before he was circumcised. He was not justified by works, and therefore could not boast toward God." Then he quotes the scriptures to remind them that Abraham was justified on a plan contrary to their contention (88).

It is obvious that Abraham was not justified by the law of Moses, for he lived and died hundreds of years before that law came into being. He was justified without the deeds of the law. With that in mind, let us look at verses 27 and 28 of Romans 3. Romans 4 is merely a continuation of the thought that has already been introduced. Paul wrote, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." If an in-

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dividual had been able to keep the deeds of the law (the law of Moses) perfectly, then he could have boasted of having obtained his righteousness through the keeping of the law.

The question whether man is saved by the law of faith or the law of works is kept up. The conditions of salvation given through Jesus Christ our Lord, constitute the law of faith. The law of Moses, with its ceremonies and observances, constitutes the law of works With these laws, what did Abraham after the flesh find, and with which law—that of works of faith or of law? The context requires this (*Gospel Advocate Commentary on Romans*, 80).

Burton Coffman states,

In this chapter Paul was not discussing the question of how either Jews or Gentiles are justified; and there-in is the explanation of why James in his epistle is thought by some to have contradicted Paul. Their arguments touched each other but were concerned with different objectives. James was dealing with justification and Paul with the righteousness of God. Abraham, the example Paul cited to show God's justice in calling the Gentiles, was the possessor of Gentile status himself at the time God called him, in the sense of his having been called prior to the giving of the covenant of circumcision and prior to the giving of the law of Moses. What a beautiful argument. In effect, Abraham, the father of all the Jews (specifically pointed out in the first verse), was himself without those very things (the law, circumcision, etc.) which the Christians of Jewish background were attempting to bind upon Gentile converts to Christianity; that is, Abraham was without all those things when he was called. The word "when" in verse 10 is the pivot upon which the whole argument is based (*Coffman, Romans*, 141).

Notice verse 10: "How was it then reckoned? *when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?* Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision." "One of the tragic mistakes men have made in the interpretation of this chapter is that of making Abraham to be a type

of the alien sinner's conversion. He is no such thing" (Coffman, *Romans*, 141). With that thought in mind let us proceed to verse 3.

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness (v. 3).

Where is the Scripture that the apostle alluded to? It is that found in Genesis 15:5-6:

And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

It should be observed that Abraham was certainly not an alien sinner at this time. He had a special relationship with the Lord a long while before this occurred.

For many years previous to God's reckoning righteousness to Abraham and entering into a covenant that in Abraham all the families of the earth should be blessed, Abraham had exhibited an obedient faith in all that God said. (1) God called Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 12:1-3); Abram believed and obeyed, not even knowing whither he went (Heb. 11:8). (2) When Abram reached Shechem in the land of Canaan, he built an altar and worshipped God (Gen. 12:6-7). (3) Abraham built an altar unto Jehovah and called upon God's name on a mountain between Bethel and Ai (Gen. 12:18); (4) After his journey into Egypt, he returned to that same altar and worshipped God (Gen. 13:3-4). (5) In an encounter with Melchisedec, Abraham appears as a devout and faithful worshiper of God (Gen. 14:14-24). All of these events, and others, show that Abraham's faith was an obedient faith, which is the only kind of faith that can lead to any kind of justification (Coffman, *Romans*, 146).

The following observation is made by R. L. Whiteside:

One of the strangest things in all the fields of Bible exegesis is the contention so generally made that this language (v. 3) refers to the justification of Abraham

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as an alien sinner. It seems to be taken for granted that up to the time spoken of in this verse, Abraham was an unforgiven, condemned sinner . . . The facts are all against such a supposition. But what are the facts? For a number of years previous to the promise of Abraham of a son and a numerous posterity, Abraham had been a faithful servant of God (89).

It is noteworthy that preceding this great promise made to Abraham, God said to him, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1). Would God have made that pronouncement to an alien sinner? Abraham was not an alien sinner at this time, but was already an obedient believer.

In verse 3 we are told by the apostle's illustration that justification is conditional. It was necessary that Abraham believe God. It was reckoned unto him for righteousness. He demonstrated his belief in God over and over again by his obedient faith.

Abraham believed God, and his belief was reckoned to him, or put down to his account, or considered. The record does not say that faith was counted, or reckoned, as if it were righteousness, nor was it counted as a substitute for righteousness. But the record does say that Abraham's faith was reckoned, or counted, to him for (eis, "into" or "in order to," or "unto") righteousness. On the ground of his faith God forgave him of whatever sins he might have been guilty, and so declared him to be righteous. If no guilt attaches to a man, if there is no sin charged against him, he is a righteous man. If a man never sinned he would be righteous by works. If he sins and God forgives him, removes his sin entirely from him, he is then righteous by grace or favor. But the man who attains righteousness through forgiveness has no room for boasting. For that reason Abraham had no grounds for boasting; for the same reason none now have grounds for boasting (Whiteside, 91-92).

It bears emphasizing that this is said of one who was already a devoted servant of God. We are not dealing with the justification of an alien sinner in this passage. Meritorious works, particularly the

deeds of the law are ruled out as a means of Abraham's justification. His faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness.

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt (v. 4).

Paul is simply pointing out that if our justification could be earned then it would not be a matter of God's grace. God would be indebted to us as a boss is to his employee who has performed a service for wages. It would be a matter of God paying us earned wages.

This verse is a simple statement of the truth that if one's hope of salvation is based upon his having kept the law of Moses perfectly, then such a person could claim that God owed him salvation; and it would not be by virtue of God's grace at all in such an event. To be sure, no person could possibly achieve such a thing as perfect fulfillment of the law. No objection can be raised to what Paul here stated. It is what men declare that Paul meant that outrages every careful student of God's Word. Some of the false deductions that men have thought they derived from this verse are:

That salvation does not depend upon any human effort.

There is nothing anyone can do to be saved.

That faith and works are opposites.

That obeying the gospel makes man his own Saviour.

We shall note each of these:

That salvation does not depend on any human effort. If this were true, all men would be saved; and, if human effort as a precondition is not involved, why did Jesus teach that many men would be lost (Mt. 7:13,14)? It is a fact that no amount of human effort can earn salvation; but no person with even a casual knowledge of the Bible could possibly have the impression that salvation is unconditionally bestowed upon the entire human race. If so bestowed it would be universal; but Christ spoke of the narrow gate [sic] [wide gate—MB] and the broad way leading to the destruction of many.

That there is nothing anyone can do to be saved. If this is true, what did Peter mean by "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40)? A multitude of people heard Peter preach the first sermon of the gospel age; and, at the end of it, having believed all that Peter preached, and thus having believed in Christ, they cried out, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Wouldn't it have been a wonderful opportunity for Peter to have said, "There is nothing you can do to be saved"? But he said no such thing, but this: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you" (Acts 2:38).

That faith and works are opposites On the other hand, they are intimates; and James declared that faith cannot even exist apart from works, except in a barren and dead condition, insufficient to save (James 2:14-26). Faith without works is dead, useless for anything, much less for salvation.

That obeying the gospel makes man his own Saviour. This confuses two truths, (1) that when one has done everything that he can, it does not merit salvation, and he is still an unprofitable servant (Lk. 17:10)—"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." (2) That obeying the gospel is a condition divinely imposed and made prerequisite to salvation; all who do not fulfill this condition will be lost (2 Thess. 1:8-9)—"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Therefore, in a sense, but only in a sense, men will save themselves when they obey the gospel. It is scriptural to speak thus, for Peter did it on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:40). In the more exalted sense of actually procuring the discharge of man's sins, Christ alone saves (Coffman, *Romans*, 147-8).

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (v. 5).

It was a mistake for the Jewish Christian to count on the works of the law to save him. Paul wrote, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). Righteousness could not be obtained by the law unless one could keep the law flawlessly. Paul made this abundantly clear to the Galatians who had experienced the corrupting influence of the Judaizers. Consider the following in Galatians:

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified (Gal. 2:16).

Is that not the very thing that Paul is explaining to the Romans? Dr. James MacKnight wrote concerning this verse, "So I translate [works of law—M.B.] without the article because the proposition is true of every law whatever. Yet I acknowledge, that there are examples where the word ["law"—M.B.] without the article signifies the law of Moses" (288).

W. E. Vine writes,

In regard to the statement in Gal. 2:16, that "a man is not justified by the works of the law," the absence of the article before *nomos* indicates the assertion of a principle, "by obedience to law," but evidently the Mosaic law is in view. Here the Apostle is maintaining that submission entails the obligation to do the whole law. Circumcision belongs to the ceremonial part of the Law, but, while Mosaic Law is actually divisible into the ceremonial and the moral, no such distinction is made or even assumed in Scripture. The statement maintains freedom of the believer from the law of Moses in its totality as a means of justification.

Also, consider Galatians 2:21 and 3:21-23:

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain (Gal. 2:21).

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Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed (Gal. 3:21-23).

The "faith" that was to be revealed would come when the law had ended and it would be exclusive of circumcision, but would require a working faith. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; *but faith which worketh by love*" (Gal. 5:6). When Christ died on the cross that was the end of the law. The law of faith is the source of our justification today. Our faith, like Abraham's, is reckoned unto us for (eis, "with a view to") righteousness (Rom. 4:5). Do we have a faith like Abraham's? Abraham was not justified by the works of the law which came at Sinai, but he did have a working faith as is recorded in the book of James. The works of faith are obviously not parallel with the works contained in the law. There is no contradiction between James and Paul, for both wrote by inspiration. Paul wrote concerning the works of the law and James wrote concerning the works of faith. In the book of James is the only place where one can read of "faith only" and there the doctrine is refuted. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, *and not by faith only* (Jas. 2:24). In this text James has just referred to faithful Abraham and to the very promise we are studying. Abraham's faith regarding this promise was tested many years later and perfected by obedience.

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God (Jas. 2:21-23).

His faith was made perfect (complete) in obedience, as is ours, and it had nothing to do with the law.

Guy N. Woods, in the Gospel Advocate commentary on James, wrote:

It is a violent perversion of this passage and historic incident from it to assume that because Abraham's faith was accepted as an act of righteousness when there was *nothing else required of him at the time*, that in our case, faith will suffice *without the performance of those conditions which are required of us now*. Even in Abraham's case, as James so clearly shows, the patriarch's faith did not reach its consummation, its fulfillment, until it had transplanted itself into action in the offering of Isaac (146).

The conditions of salvation may be properly classed as the works of God, but they are not works of merit. Even faith is a class of works according to the words of Jesus. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (Jn. 6:28-29). In this verse Jesus tells us that belief is a work. Did Abraham believe God? If so, he was justified by works.

Coffman offers the following:

"Worketh not . . ." is a reference to one who rests from any thought that he could merit salvation by keeping the law of Moses. It is not a reference to one who will not obey the gospel of Christ.

"Believeth on him that justifieth . . ." is a reference to obedient faith, the kind exemplified by Abraham and discussed at length under verse 3; the act of obedience not being mentioned is not significant, "believeth" being another example of synecdoche, in which one of a related group of actions stands for all of them. What is significant is the omission of the "only" or "alone" as a qualifier. Nowhere in the fourth chapter of Romans or any other New Testament writing is it said that we are saved by faith alone.

After introducing the case of Abraham, one highly esteemed among the Jews, he moves on to another Old Testament great. He used the case of Abraham to show that he had his justification before

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he was circumcised, and previous to the law. Now he considers the case of David who was both circumcised and lived under the law.

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin (vv. 6-8).

This is taken from what David wrote in Psalm 32:1-2. How is it that righteousness is imputed to man? In verse 7, we are told that their iniquities are forgiven and their sins covered. How could one ever boast of that? Forgiveness of sins is what results in righteousness. Forgiveness is not something that is earned. Forgiveness is granted through God's grace. God will not reckon sins to those who are forgiven.

In reference to baptism as a condition of salvation, David Lipscomb wrote,

Baptism is sometimes called a work of the person being baptized, and it is sometimes claimed that if a man is pardoned in baptism it would be salvation through works, but baptism has fewer of the qualities of works of the person baptized than either faith or repentance. Faith is an act of the heart, the soul, the inner man—something the man does. It is a work; man does the work but it is God's work. It is ordained of God and terminates in and honours God. Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (Jn. 6:29). So of repentance. "Believe" and "repent" are both active—both done by the subject. The person baptized gives himself up into the hands of the administrator, and is buried out of self, to be raised up in Christ, and as a servant of God, to "walk in the light" (Jn. 1:7). When a man dies and his friends take his body and bury it, no one could call it a work of the man buried. This is the true type of him that is baptized (*Gospel Advocate Commentary on Romans*, 82).

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision (vv. 9-10).

"Is this blessing pronounced upon the circumcision?" Yes, the Jew, for argument's sake might concede, but you notice that both Abraham and David are circumcised men. There is still the frantic juggling to retain the position of exclusive blessedness. Their inference would be, since both these men are illustrations of justified circumcised men, all justified men must be circumcised.

"How was it reckoned? When he was in circumcision?" They hadn't a grasp of the facts so he presses the opponent. Was Abraham reckoned righteous only after he was circumcised? The facts of the case were well known but the sectarian heart didn't grasp their significance. (The same spirit will blind a person today.) Abraham was justified years before he was circumcised. So Circumcision wasn't essential to one's justification (Jim McGuigan, *Romans*).

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised (vv. 11,12).

"Circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith . . ." "Well, then why was he circumcised?" the opponent would ask. It was a sign of righteousness he had before his circumcision. Now this is true only of Abraham. Abraham was righteous by faith before he was circumcised but none of his descendants were. All who followed Abraham, and were justified, were justified after their circumcision. *To him alone it was a seal of his previous righteousness.*

Romans 4

"That he might be the father of all . . ." And here we are explicitly told why Abraham (and only Abraham) was justified prior to circumcision. "That" (eis, expressing purpose, aim) he might be the father of all believers. This could not be said of Jacob (Israel). He was not chosen in uncircumcision; he was declared righteous after circumcision. To call him the father of all believers is to empty Paul's argument of all cogency. He's making an argument here which, if it's only used at all, can only be made of Abraham. To say that all believers are Abraham's seed is absolutely correct. To claim that Israel (Jacob) is the father of all believers is to empty this argument of all worth. It would be true of a circumcised man as well as an uncircumcised man (McGuigan).

All who would become the children of Abraham by faith must walk in the same steps which faith led Abraham to take. His faith led him to so trust in God as to deny himself all that was dear to him and go forth not knowing whither he went, and to dwell as a pilgrim and a sojourner in a strange land before it was reckoned to him for righteousness. When men perfect their faith by walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham, then God will reckon that faith for righteousness (Lipscomb).

In Romans 4 we have the word "imputed" used several times—eleven to be exact. The word in the KJV is sometimes translated "counted," "reckoned," or "imputed." It never means "transfer" as Calvinists suggest. In the ASV it is always translated "reckoned," which is correct. Some contend that the personal righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers. The idea is that it is "transferred" to the believer. As Brother Johnny Elmore pointed out at the Preachers' Study in 1990,

The Bible does teach that Jesus was sinless, that he rendered perfect obedience; if this were not true, Jesus would have died as the thieves died. His perfect life and atoning death paid the penalty for sins, but I do not read that moral excellence of Christ enabled us to don a robe of Christ's righteousness which covers our sins. When we respond to that sacrifice in

the obedience of faith, God forgives those sins which had been put to our account. Since sins are forgiven, they are no longer imputed (Rom. 4:8), and God accounts men righteous on that basis.

Conclusion

Man is not justified by the deeds of the law of Moses or any other meritorious works. Circumcision, as a religious rite, will not justify. If one is to be justified he must have a faith like Abraham's. It must be a faith accompanied by obedience (Jas. 2:14-26). He promises to save those who obey. "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9). "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16). 214 Pearl St., Cleburne, TX 76031

How To Train Young Men to be Evangelists

by Richard Bunner

At sundry times and in divers manners men have set forth to proclaim the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And while the situations that have prompted them to such an undertaking have all been similar (the great need for the lost to hear the gospel), the preparation has been as varied as the times in which they went forth. Some, it may seem, have had little preparation at all while others seem to have been fitted for the task at hand. Because of this I think it better not to examine the history of each one of us here today but rather to observe some Biblical principles and their applications.

I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. (2 Tim. 1:5).

It is hard to estimate the value of godly parents in training young men to be evangelists. Certainly this is a good place to start. Neither Lois nor Eunice had any idea that they were preparing Timothy to be a herald of the glad tidings in the kingdom of God. They were simply bringing him up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," training him while he was young so that when he became old he would not depart from his Creator. Likewise it is doubtful that men like John Scott, Thomas Campbell, Granville Lipscomb, or John Jefferson Goodpasture anticipated the fruit that would spring forth from their family altars. Each of these men and their wives were instrumental in shaping and molding the lives of young men who would become successful evangelists.

Granville Lipscomb not merely read the Bible himself "morning, noon, and night" but insisted upon reading it to his family, and to anyone else who would listen. Every evening before the children went to bed they were called to the family circle and a portion of the Scripture was read. On Sunday morning before they went out to play or to leave for the church services some of the Bible was read to them. If a boy was hired to help with the plowing, that boy had to read the Bible with the rest of the family. The slaves were treated as a part of the family in this respect.

In the year 1844 Granville Lipscomb sent his two sons David and William to their grandfather so that they might attend school that year. Granville's father proved to be an ardently religious man also.

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During that year David memorized the Four Gospels and the Book of Acts.

It has been said that Thomas Campbell made it a rule to see that every member of his family was constantly and regularly employed in something useful. Daily family worship was as much a part of the Campbell family life as eating and sleeping. Richardson makes numerous references to this in his *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*. On one such occasion (it was the day following Alexander's marriage to Miss Brown), "the day having been thus agreeably spent, all the members of the family assembled at the usual hour, according to their invariable custom, for worship. Each one had, as usual, a Scripture recitation to offer, and Alexander's sister Jane, now about eleven years old, who had been greatly troubled in the morning as to what portion of Scripture she should memorize for so important an occasion, and who had at last settled upon the description of the model wife contained in the last twenty-two verses of the concluding chapter of Proverbs, gave her recitation very correctly After worship, the bride, coming to Jane, kissed her affectionately, and thanked her warmly for the beautiful passage of Scripture she had so well recited, expressing the hope that she might herself be enabled, in some measure, to practice its teachings."

Walter Scott, amid all his cares and labors, was not unmindful of the spiritual needs of his own little flock, five in number—four sons and one daughter—knowing that they would be saved or condemned as they obeyed or disobeyed the truth.

With the feeling and providence of a wise man and kind father, he was careful to have them instructed in the truth, knowing that a human being is incapable of either obeying, believing, or understanding the Scriptures unless pains be taken for that purpose. The course pursued in his family may be gathered from a single morning scene, which was not unusual, but a customary one. While breakfast was in preparation, all the family, except those who attended to the vic-tuals, including some guests that were present, were intensely busy in committing to memory the Holy Scriptures. After breakfast, the first to quit the table, and run from the breakfast-room to the parlor, was a child two years of age. The rest followed until the entire family were seated in the same apartment and

here was displayed a scene as primitive, lovely, pure, and holy, as ever opened on mortal eyes. The family being thus assembled for religious instruction, at a look from his father, the eldest son, ten years of age, with a steady, unfaltering voice, began the song which the children of Israel sung upon the shores of deliverance, when they had by the mercy of God passed the perils of the Red Sea; "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and the rider hath he thrown into the sea; the Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him; the Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name." Every heart was touched when the father gave his son William, then six years old, a significant look, and the child, not the least abashed in consequence of frequent practice, began as follows: "And Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse to it; and the women, her neighbors, gave it a name, saying, a child is born to Naomi, and they called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." His daughter Emily, then eight years old, whose fancy was caught by what her brother had said, asked her father where she would find the story of little Obed. He answered, that the story was recorded in the book of Ruth, and added a very pretty one it is, and turning to the rest, said, "In the book of Ruth the simplicity of the early ages is very strikingly exhibited, and it seems to have been collected with other parts of the sacred canon of Scripture in order to supply the origin and pedigree of the royal family of David, of which it was promised that the Messiah, according to the flesh, should be born." Emily then repeated, with the utmost accuracy, the whole of the Messiah's lineage from Adam to Abraham, and thence to David, and thence again to Jesus, ending with the latter part of the first chapter of Matthew, whose gospel she and her brothers were then in daily lessons committing to memory.

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These families were not thinking of making their sons preachers, but rather raising their children to love God and to keep His commandments. It will only be when parents take this responsibility seriously that we will begin to see evangelists of the magnitude of Campbell, Scott, or Lipscomb.

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today—Paul, (Acts 22:3).

He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. (Acts 19:9b-10)

Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, David Lipscomb, J. W. McGarvey, B. C. Goodpasture, T. B. Larimore, Tolbert Fanning, Moses Lard. Besides the fact that these men are all well known gospel preachers, what two things do they share in common? They all attended a religious college or university. Later in their lives they became teachers at such institutions.

There are abuses and misuses of some of these institutions. The restorers did not think that schools should be used to create preachers. They felt that all young people should have a higher education, and that this education should involve Biblical studies. Brotherhood schools, however, became quite controversial. Articles appeared in many leading brotherhood periodicals critical of the schools. But the criticisms by and large boiled down to one charge: the Bible Schools were producing a "hireling clergy." It was a common objection that no Bible School had a right to exist if its purpose was to educate and train preachers. Behind this was the belief that the duty of educating preachers belonged to the church; that when schools did this they were taking over the work of the church. In accordance with this view Lipscomb had written,

We have always doubted whether a Bible college, as we use the term—that is, a school to especially train young men for preachers, is the best way to develop true, earnest preachers faithful to God. We believe in the Bible being taught in all schools and in all colleges, to all who attend regardless of whether they are Christians or not. It seems every Christian who

teaches ought to be careful to do this. Then in after life, those who in the services of the church, find an inclination and taste for teaching our holy religion, and who by piety and zeal for the truth of God, show a fitness for the work, should be encouraged by the churches to devote their time and talent to the work of teaching the world the way of righteousness. With this order, it seems to me these would never find themselves in the position or calling of a preacher, without a real taste for the work. The number at least would be comparatively small. Young men having spent means and time preparing for it, and having been put into the calling without growing through labor and real love for the work, into it, are liable to find themselves in the calling without real taste for the work. Then there is a temptation to use it merely as a means of livelihood. Any man preaching simply as a means of making a living, will injure and demoralize the Church of God, and will corrupt the Truth of God, because his leading purpose is not to maintain the truth in purity as the only good of human souls, but to make a living. There will be a constant temptation to such, to adopt the methods and preach the things, and in the matter that will gain the greatest amount of money. Where there is a constant temptation many will yield. Recognizing the advantages that come to a young man from study with those who have made the teaching of the Scripture his life-work, it seems to me that all the advantages might be gained, without the evils incurred by a different course. I am not meaning to intimate that the great majority of those who attend the Bible colleges are not true to the truth. Many of the best and truest, and most independent thinkers, and men most faithful to God we have, are those who have attended Bible colleges. Some who never attended are as mercenary in their course as any we know. We apprehend that there is more in the true faith in God and in the moral stamina of the man himself than in the school he attends as to his being firm in fidelity to the principles of the Bible.

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Because they had pursued an education, both Campbell and Scott were prepared when the opportunity presented itself to begin the Restoration. Walter Scott daily committed Scripture to memory and taught his students to do likewise in his academy in Pittsburgh. An interesting note is that those who graduated from Scott's academy could recite the Four Gospels and the Book of Acts in Greek. Some of these same students became Christians when Scott began preaching, and some of them became preachers.

He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him (Acts 16:1-2).

There is no doubt but what the church at Lystra had encouraged Timothy and guided him along in becoming a faithful teacher within the assembly. Many times he had probably heard the older brothers lead the assembly in prayer, "asking the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field." The church had an evangelistic spirit, and Timothy had the enthusiasm and desire to carry this message beyond the borders of Lystra.

Who knows better the ability, the integrity, the devotion, and the desire of a brother wanting to preach than the local congregation with which he is associated? Within the local church young men have the opportunity to mature; the inexperienced may develop their abilities; the unlearned may become educated, and the "taste" which Brother Lipscomb spoke of may be acquired to go forth preaching the Word. If the local congregation cannot speak well of the brother, why would anyone else try to make a preacher out of such an individual?

Paul wanted to take him along on the journey (Acts 16:3a).

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus—Paul, (2 Tim. 1:13).

The influence of an older brother in the faith who is a gospel preacher is inestimable to a young man who wants to proclaim the glad tidings. While there can be abuses and misuses of this arrangement, we would like to focus on examples that have proven successful.

Abraham Altars desiring to become an able minister of the Word, spent the year 1810 with Thomas and Alexander Campbell. The following is an excerpt from Alexander's diary:

Arrangement for studies for winter of 1810.

One hour to read Greek—from 8 to 9 in the morning.

One hour to read Latin—from 11 to 12 in the morning.

One half-hour to Hebrew—between 12 and 1 P.M.

Commit ten verses of the Scriptures to memory each day, and read the same in the original languages, with Henry and Scott's notes and practical observations. For this exercise we shall allow two hours. These exercises, being intended for every day, will not be dispensed with. Other reading and studies as occasion may serve. These studies in all require four and a half hours. Church history, and divers other studies, are intended to constitute the principle part of my other literary pursuits.

"Regulations for Abraham Altars"—

1st. Read to me in the morning, from 7 to 8, in Scott's Family Bible. Say one lesson every day in Greek Grammar. One lesson also in Latin, and one in Rhetoric. Two days of the week to recite in English Grammar and parse. To prepare a theme each week, which is to be corrected and to be written clear and fair in a book.

Abraham and the children, from ten to eleven, will read a Scripture lesson.

These attentions will occupy three hours of my time every day.

Dorry, Nancy, and Jane say English Grammar and parse with Abraham Altars—the Mondays appointed for this purpose. Thomas is to prepare a lesson every day in Latin Grammar. One hour for writing, and half an hour to hear any particular lessons from D., N., and J.

The whole time spent thus will be nine hours."

Being a Timothy to Alexander Campbell was not a vacation, but rather the testing of a vocation in life. However, Campbell was fair.

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He gave of himself—his time and abilities, and he exacted no more than he himself was willing to do.

Brother Walter Scott endeared himself to many a young man who wanted to improve himself as a laborer in the Master's vineyard. B. U. Watkins wrote this letter years later reminiscing his days with Scott.

It was in the spring of 1833 that I began to study the Bible with Walter Scott. His residence, at that time, was about a quarter of a mile east of the village. Neither the house nor its surroundings were at all romantic; but yet we found it pleasant—very pleasant to study the Holy Scriptures. It was our habit to commit to memory a chapter from the New Testament before breakfast, each selecting different portions of the Scripture, which we recited at family worship, which came directly after eating. In this exercise every member of the family was expected to take part. His amiable wife and the children, who were then but small, seldom recited a whole chapter. There was something in this profound attention to the Bible that pleased me more than I can well describe. We soon began to commit the Scriptures systematically, paying special attention to the larger epistles—Romans and Hebrews. After morning worship, it was our custom to walk out together, and during the walk refresh our memories with what we had learned in the last week or month. This was done by reciting from memory, and prompting each other without the use of any book. Sometimes we repeated verse about, sometimes one recited until his memory failed, then the other began where he left off, and, thus the exercise was continued indefinitely, and on our return to the house, we again referred to the book if we were conscious of any defect of memory. In this way large portions of the New Testament were committed to memory, and made very effectually and, permanently our own. Over and above this memorizing, we studied together exegesis and criticism. But not one word, as now remembered, was said about what is popularly known as Theology—about the

philosophy of religion or the analogy of faith. The reason for this apparent oversight was very obvious to my mind. Both A. Campbell and Walter Scott had abjured all religious philosophy, and went directly to the Word of God, to hear what it would say, and to let simply faith supplant all human philosophy; and it was his custom then to submit, with the docility of a child, to a positive declaration of Scripture.

These were pioneer days—days of great trials and great triumphs. Bro. Scott enjoyed the triumphs with a keen relish, and felt the crushing weight of pioneer privations and trials as only such natures as his could feel. He had embarked his all in his plea for the primitive gospel, and at that time there was no earthly compensation for such labor. He was poor, very poor; while I lived in his family it was not at all uncommon for them to be almost destitute of the common necessities of life. He was a great believer in prayer, and just at the point of greatest need help always came.

The success of these restoration preachers and their traveling companions was that they made the most of every opportunity. When they were not preaching they were studying, and when they were not studying they were preaching. It was not unusual for Walter Scott when he held a gospel meeting to preach three times a day for the entire meeting. Paul's statement to the Corinthians, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" begins to take on a loftier meaning to us when we see the application.

I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel—Paul, (2 Cor. 8:16-18)

The men of the Bible who became great were servants. Preachers who become great are those who learn best to serve. Exposure to the brotherhood is not always good. Recognition as a faithful servant is. We need to learn not to rush things. Young men need time to mature in thought and actions before a congregation sends them to some

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troubled spot to work or some remote area to establish a congregation. News has a way of getting around, and as young men develop into mature preachers they will be recognized for their work's sake.
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The Canon of Scripture

by John M. Criswell

The greatest anchor of all the Christian faith and the church of Jesus Christ is the Bible. It is to this magnificent book we turn for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that we may be perfect in the day of God's righteous judgment (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible is the authority for all we do in our religious lives. It must be! It is the book that produces faith (Rom. 10:17). It is the book that records the dawn of mankind, the downfall of the human race, sin, and the world's dire need of a saviour. It is the book by whose words we will be judged at the end of time (Jn. 12:48). Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift which reveals redemption's thread stained crimson with the blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Not long after most Bible students begin to study the Scriptures they begin to realize that the Bible is not simply a single book, but is quite literally a book of books. The word "bible" (Greek, *biblia*) really means "scrolls" or "books." It is a compilation of sixty-six separate documents written by about forty authors over the space of some 1600 years. Divided into two great sections, the Old Testament is made up of thirty-nine books while the New Testament is composed of the remaining twenty-seven. The Old is for our learning (Rom. 15:4), bringing us to Christ (Gal. 3:24), while the New provides us with the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25). But how did these sixty-six books, and only these, come to be considered authoritative Scripture? What determined the canon of the Bible? Why were certain books accepted in the canon while others were rejected? These are the questions we now wish to consider.

What is Canonization?

To understand these questions we must first define the terms "canon" and "canonization process." The word "canon" comes from the Greek *kanon* and has at least three meanings. First, it can literally mean "a rod or ruler as used by a builder to keep his work straight." Second, "canon" can refer metaphorically to that which serves as a measure, a rule, a norm, or standard. Aristotle, for example, identified five canons of rhetoric used in analyzing and setting the standard for rhetorical discourse.¹ Paul uses the concept in Galatians 6:16 in reference to the "standard" by which Christians should walk.² Origen

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used the word to denote the rule of faith by which we measure and evaluate our religious selves.³ Third, it can refer to that which has already been measured and accepted. This is the definition on which we will primarily focus. Thus, the "canon of Scripture" refers to those books regarded as having divine authority—which set the standard for Christian life and worship.⁴ The "canonization process" is that whereby a particular writing or group of writings are found to be, and then humanly declared, authoritative. When we ask what process determined the canon of the Bible we are really making inquiry into those events which produced our list of sixty-six "inspired" books.

Canonization and Authority

In definition of terms, distinction must be made between canonicity and authority. A book's canonicity depends upon its authority! Never is it the other way around. When Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, for example, it possessed authority long before it was declared canonical. Being from the hand of an apostle, it had divine authority from the moment it was written—yet it could not be referred to as canonical until it was received in a list of humanly accepted writings formed sometime later.⁵

The above point is pivotal. No book should ever be considered "canonical" if it does not first have within itself obvious and inherent divine authority emanating from inspiration. No church council by its decree has the ability to make any book authoritative or inspired. That decision is in reality predetermined by the Holy Spirit at the moment of writing. To illustrate from secular literature, let us take *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain as a case in point. This classic, though a masterpiece in its own right, would never be suitable for the Biblical canon for it is, without doubt, secular to its core. No decree's strength could ever change its nature. At its pen date it was profane literature and will always remain such. The authority of a writing stands or falls on its own internal merit regardless of any so-called "ecclesiastical dictate." Profane literature may never be outfitted with Biblical authority. Conversely, the Bible would continue to remain authoritative and inspired even if every council in the world pronounced it profane.

Books of the Bible possess their own authority and need no formal stamp of approval by any church, synod, or institution. Church councils of the past in no way created or conferred inspirational status upon our sixty-six books. Generally speaking, most of the books now

included in sacred canon were commonly accepted as divinely inspired within the consciousness of God's people long before councils were officially convened to ratify a canonical list.⁶ As one scholar has noted, "The church no more gave us the New Testament canon, than Sir Isaac Newton gave us gravity . . ."⁷ The noted scholar F.F. Bruce has emphatically stated in his book, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (p. 27), that books did not become authoritative for the church because they were formally included in a canonical list—but on the contrary, the church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired. This point is vital for even today we see various religious bodies constraining their members to accept non-canonical writings per man-made decree (i.e., *The Book of Mormon*). The attempt to coronate profane literature with a halo of divinity will end in failure. Authority, if not inherent within a book, cannot be glued on like so much cheap veneer. The Vatican, among others, has failed to recognize this truth.⁸ In short, canonization is the product of man while inspiration is a product of God. We must never confuse the two!

Multiplicity of Books

In discussing the canonization process we must first understand the fact that far more than sixty-six religious writings existed in Biblical times. Our Bible, comprising the books Genesis through Revelation, contains but a fragment of the religious writings that circulated in, for instance, the first, second, and third centuries of the common era. Many were the books, some even bearing the names of apostles, that found their way into Christian communities. The Gospel of Thomas, attributed by the early Syriac church to the apostle and supposed brother of Jesus, is but one example of the many writings that existed.⁹ Other examples include *The Apocryphon of James*, *The Secret Gospel of Mark*, *The Gospel of Peter*, *The Gospel of the Hebrews*, and many, many more.

The Need for a Canon

By the early part of the second century it became obvious that some uniformity of Scripture was imperative if there was to be uniformity of doctrine among believers. After all, the Apostle Paul had commanded that believers speak the same thing (1 Cor. 1:10) and that they give themselves to no other gospel (Gal. 1:9) than that which he had preached. He had also warned of false doctrines that would

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eventually creep into the body of Christ (Acts 20:30; 1 Tim. 4:1). Paul was not alone in his fear, for other writers of inspiration echoed the same warning (cf. Jude 3-4). Therefore, as time progressed and counterfeit writings began to compete for Scriptural status the need for a "set canon of Scripture" was painfully and acutely felt.¹⁰ Several other factors also spurred this process as we shall discuss in a later part of our study.

We have intimated that canonization was a process—a gradual process. In looking at this truth, however, we must understand that both the Old and New Testaments progressed gradually toward their final form. R.L. Harris says: "Old Testament books were written over a period of a thousand years and the New Testament written over a space of half a century, so it is obvious that the canon was a growth."¹¹

Far too often we think only of the New Testament when canonization is mentioned. The Old Testament, however, underwent a very interesting development period as well. It is with this process that we embark upon our journey into the canonization of Scripture.

I. The Old Testament Canon of Scripture

The development of the Old Testament canon did not occur over night. Many years passed between Moses' writing of Genesis and Malachi's prophetic message. As these years passed, three major genres of Scripture emerged: The Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. All were to become part of the same Old Testament, but each section apparently had, to some degree, its own chronicle of development, acceptance, collection, and canonization. At the outset, we must admit in all honesty that the exact nature of this interrelated process remains a mystery. With no real certainty can we ascertain how each section came into being and at what point in history each division of Hebrew Scripture ended up with its particular number of books. Liberal scholars have speculated much in this regard and have produced many dangerous and unfounded theories. These we disregard not only because they are unsubstantiated, but because many are a direct attack on inspiration.

As we begin to piece together the information present, there will emerge what we believe to be a logical and scriptural progression of events. We will try to discuss in as coherent a manner as possible the various links in the puzzle and will endeavor to let the Bible speak

for itself. We dare not go far afield with speculation, but approach the formation of the Old Testament as we would any subject: with faith in God's Word.

Old Testament Collection and Canonization

The first item of consideration in our Old Testament study is the "collection" process. By this we mean those events which led to certain writings, upon their completion, being collected and compiled together so as to safeguard them for future generations. These were the "special" writings—viewed as sacred—and those which were to become the Old Testament canon.

By virtue of the fact that the Hebrew nation was literate, we may logically assume that more than just thirty-nine books were written during the course of Israel's history. The Bible itself makes frequent references to other literature such as the Book of Jasher, the Chronicle of the Kings, etc. These are books we are not privy to today. Harris points out that the probable reason that these documents did not survive was due to the fact that the Hebrews wrote most of their longer works on Egyptian papyrus rather than on clay as did the Assyrians. Palestinian climate is not conducive to the preservation of these writing materials except in the hot, dry Jordan valley—the precise fortune that has preserved the Qumran Scrolls.¹²

Because we have only thirty-nine Hebrew works preserved and because they were not all written at the same time by the same person, we must logically assume that over time a collection process occurred. This collection process included those events which weeded out the insignificant literature, leaving behind only those writings regarded as inherently valuable. Because Israel was a theocracy we find it logical that the final collection was almost entirely religious in nature.

It is this collection process that many liberal scholars turn to in order to propagate their theories of independent three-part development (all in an attempt to remove inspiration's touch and replace it with the human hand). We shall discuss this in more detail in the next section.

The Three Part Theory

The "Three Part Theory" states that each section of Old Testament Scripture was collected and canonized as a unit separate, distinct, and independent from the other sections of Scripture. For example, the Torah developed first. It was collected and formally canonized

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before the Prophets. Next the Prophets were collected and declared canonical. And finally the Writings, supposedly written much later in Israel's history than were the Prophets, were collected and canonized. In other words, the Three Part Theory basically recognizes three independent periods of collection and three independent pronouncements of canonization (two of which are relatively late in history), none of which overlap.

Harris notes the following:

Liberal scholars for many years have held a development view of the Old Testament canon. They base much on the threefold division as reported in the Talmud of the fourth century A.D. Their claim is that the Pentateuch was canonized in Ezra's time, about 400 B.C., the Prophets soon after at about 200 and the Writings—eleven books in the Hebrew Bible—were not canonized until the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90.¹³

While even liberal scholars disagree on the exact dates for each section's canonization, the point remains that an attempt has been made to separate the Old Testament into three distinct parts with each having their own independent saga of canonization.

As we shall see, this theory on the surface seems to hold merit. After all, there are (at least in today's Hebrew listing) three sections of Scripture in which the Law comes first and the Writings last. On closer observation, however, it will be discovered that no real proof exists for such a theory, and in reality the Prophets and the Writings were produced and canonized simultaneously. In addition, the rigid Three Part Division that we have come to accept today was not known in ancient times. There is internal scriptural evidence that such did not exist during biblical Israel's history. More than likely, such a strict division process did not occur until sometime between 400 B.C. and A.D. 90 (perhaps much later). It is also logical to believe that such a division process was an accommodation tool developed by human hand to classify the different genres of Scripture. The three divisions probably developed out of this need rather than the need to place various books in a specific "time frame." Each division had very little to do with the book's date of writing.

F.F. Bruce says:

The third division, the 'Writings,' belongs as a completed corpus to a date somewhat later in the post-exilic age than the 'Prophets.' But this does not necessarily mean that the individual books in the 'Writings' are all later in date or lower in authority than the component parts of the 'Prophets'. Many of the Psalms and Proverbs, for example, are no doubt earlier than anything in the 'Latter Prophets.'¹⁴

In addition, there is evidence to suggest that the Old Testament Jews were rather fluid in their classification of the books. Even in the New Testament we find the Old Testament being referred to sometimes as the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms (Lk. 24:44—These three divisions being used to denote the entire group of Scriptures). At other times, however, we find the Law and the Prophets being used to denote the entire corpus of Scripture. Here the Prophets include not only books like Isaiah but also books commonly called the Writings. We encourage the reader to keep these facts in mind for they become vital in our discussion of the canon of the Old Testament.

The Three Part Theory is basically a naturalistic attempt to account for the threefold division of the Hebrew Scriptures, and fails in its interpretation of a divine inspiration process. If scholars can push the dates of Jewish acceptance for the Old Testament books back to or near the first century A.D., it leaves room for the idea that the books were not inspired nor viewed as such from the beginning, but were rather the product of man's invention. This is the real crux of the matter—an attack on inspiration!

This Three Part Theory is also an attack by those who hold Old Testament prophecy to be "after the fact" forgeries "pre-set" in an historical framework to give them credence. In other words Daniel, for example, was really written long after the Babylonian exile but was set back in the exile era to make the reader think that the events therein were true "prophecy."

Because canonization and collection are not one and the same process, we understand that Old Testament books did not become canonical because they were collected. On the contrary, books were collected because they were canonical—i.e., had inherent authority, were already accepted and viewed as God's Word. Hence, we must not overemphasize, as some modern scholars have done, the supposed

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importance of each Old Testament section's development. In the sense of literary criticism, the canon did not develop, nor did Israel decide upon or ratify a canon. Rather, God inspired the message, and as soon as it was uttered or written it was canonical because it then constituted a standard of faith and action. It seems evident that the Jews had a canon of Scripture long before their holy writings were formally arranged in a threefold division. But even if this is not the case, we cannot say with certainty that each division became canonized independently in time from the others. There simply is no proof.¹⁵

For all the attractiveness of this theory, the reality remains that each book of the Old Testament had inherent authority when it was penned and God's faithful accepted it unequivocally with no deliberation of formal lists or formal canonization. As to the Three Part Theory, each reader must weigh the evidence and decide for himself. It is the opinion of this writer, however, that the theory must be rejected for it crumbles beneath "Truth's" hammer blow.

The Torah

While the three-fold theory places one (from a scholarly standpoint) on fractured bedrock, it does seem logical to believe that the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament containing law, emerged first. Immediately after being written these books were apparently grouped together as a single unit and provided Israel with continuous guidance. Penned by Moses during Israel's infancy, these writings held unquestioned and immediate authority. Interesting to note is the fact that this section of Scripture was what God commanded Joshua, Moses' successor, to observe (Josh. 1:8). In giving this command God referred to these writings as the "book of the law."¹⁶ It seems likely that this law book was roughly equivalent to the first five books of our Old Testament.¹⁷ It seems safe to say that by this early date the Pentateuch was already being regarded as a unit to which nothing could be added or taken away. In essence, the first five books of the Old Testament were regarded as canonical from the day they were written.

It was this same group of law writings that Israel continued to cherish throughout her history. Even after the Babylonian exile was over and Israel was allowed by the Persians to return to their homeland (c. 450 B.C.), Ezra the priest reestablished order with the "book of the law" (Neh. 8). This portion of Scripture has remained the very heart of Jewish liturgy and is still recognized today as its own mini-canon.

Our discussion of the Torah must begin by asking why it was so important and why it held such immediate authority. The answer lies in the fact that these books were the words of Moses received from God Himself. Moses had spoken to God "face to face." The Pentateuch rings with the claim that Moses wrote according to all God spoke. Exodus 17:14 tells us that God commanded Moses to write on a scroll, and Exodus 34:27 tells us that Moses was in the mount forty days and nights writing the words of the covenant (Ten Commandments) on the tablets. Numbers 33:2 reveals that Moses recorded, at the Lord's command, the stages in the journey of the Israelites. This seems to be a daily journal that Moses kept. Deuteronomy is even more clear on the point of Moses' inspiration: "So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel" (31:9, NIV). We also find the same being recorded in Deuteronomy 31:22-24 enjoining that the "book," the "song," and the "law" be read, rehearsed, and preserved.

Many other Old Testament books give testimony to the fact that the Pentateuch was written by Moses and was received as God's authoritative revelation, because of Moses' special relation to God as the prophet of Israel par excellence. Joshua speaks of Moses as God's "servant," "the man of God" to whom God gave commandments. In addition Joshua mentions the Law of Moses (1:7; 8:32) and the book of the Law of Moses (8:31; 23:6).

The books of the history of Israel's kings also abound in references to Moses' authority. David commanded Solomon to keep the Word of God "as it is written in the law of Moses" (1 Kgs. 2:3). Amaziah acted "according unto that which is written in the book of the law of Moses" (2 Kgs. 14:6). Hezekiah kept the commands found in the Law of Moses (2 Kgs. 18:6), but Hezekiah's son Manasseh did wickedly, not according to all the law Moses had commanded (2 Kgs. 21:8). Josiah is known to have instituted a reform following Hilkiah the priest's discovery of the Law of Moses in the Temple. Critics have tried to pass off Hilkiah's discovery as a hoax by saying that it was not really the complete Law of Moses, but a portion of the D Document, consisting largely of Deuteronomy. They contend that it was palmed off on Josiah as the work of Moses. This in an attempt to discredit the entire Law as being authoritative and intact from the very beginning. The truth remains that Moses' words were authoritative from the outset.¹⁸

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Time would fail us to mention all the other references in the Old Testament to the authority of Moses. The books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah all attest to this fact. Psalms declares that God "made known his ways unto Moses" (Psa. 103:7) and follows with a quotation from Exodus. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, and others accuse Israel of rejecting the words of God as delivered to Moses.

In the final analysis, it is clear that whatever liberal scholars say about the Pentateuch, ancient Israel viewed it as the Word of God from the very beginning. Israel also viewed Moses as the servant of God in every era of their development. The Law was the foundation of their very theocracy. The Law was canonical as soon as it was delivered at Sinai. Harris says:

It was not canonized because of its antiquity, linguistic phenomena, beautiful style, royal imposition, or ecclesiastical decision. The principle for canonizing the Pentateuch which guided ancient Israel, as far as we have any evidence at all, is, Was it from God's great spokesman, Moses? The human author, admitted by all to be a spokesman for the divine Author, guaranteed the writing.¹⁹

The Prophets

Although the Law was undoubtedly written by Moses and viewed as God's revelation, it is also clear that other revelation from God would be given. The Law was not God's mind to Israel *in toto*. As Israel found herself in trouble, sin, or in need of exhortation, God would raise up prophets to forth-tell His will. Moses anticipated this as he gives the tests for a true prophet in Deuteronomy 18:20-22:

But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the Word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

It is clear from this passage that revelation was, in the days of early Israel, to be a continuous and on-going process. However, along with revelation came a God-given two-part test for proving authenticity. If one spoke and his words came to pass, or if his words were in accord with that found in the Law of Moses regarding other gods . . . he was to be believed. [Here v. 20 alludes to the first command of the Decalog, thus showing that Moses' words were to be the initial test and basis for all future revelation—jmc]. If, however, the revelation of the prophet did not come to pass or was in disagreement with Moses' Law, then the prophet was to be held as "false" and put to death.

A note must be made about an interesting passage found in Deuteronomy 13:1-5. Here God allows that false prophets would come and even correctly foretell the future at times. How then do we harmonize this with Deuteronomy 18? The answer lies in the fact that God allowed false prophets to sometimes "predict the future correctly"—whether by chance or by divine leniency we cannot say. In either case, however, the situation was a test of Israel's faithfulness to the true God. The point of the matter is that Israel was to appeal to law not miracle. Even if a miracle was performed it was to be given no credence if the prophet's words contradicted Moses' Law. As an aside, there is a vital lesson for us today. Law must be the basis for our religious lives. Miracle or strange phenomenon must never sway us from that which is written.

The point we are making is that God not only sent Moses whose words were held canonical (authoritative), but that after Moses other prophets arose whose words received the same immediate acceptance—a process already at work in Moses' day (Num. 11:29). In other words, the canon of the Old Testament did not take hundreds of years to be found to have authority. God implemented "tests" whereby the people could hear a prophecy and almost immediately know if it were true. Again, we point out that the first big test was its agreement with the Law of Moses, the clear starting point of God's divine revelation.

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Israel's Institution of Prophecy

A secondary point we will now begin to consider is the fact that there was a recognized group or institution of prophecy during Israel's development. It is difficult, if not impossible, to say just how institutionalized this group was, but there was a recognized group. This point is pivotal in understanding just how a prophet's words or books became "canonical" or authoritative (like Moses' words were) without a long lapse of time. We will discuss the rationale behind our assertions in the following paragraphs.

Far too often we are left with the impression that there were no connecting links between the individual prophets and that it was next to impossible to tell who was to be recognized. Many would have us believe that prophecy occurred in a loose milieu of confusion. The truth, however, seems to be that while the prophets were not a structured group *per se*, as we might think of when we think of the priests, they were a recognized institution. There is even evidence that some of the prophets, themselves, recognized other prophet's works as being inspired. Before considering this, however, let us make a few remarks about prophecy in general.

Not only were there true prophets but there were, indeed, false prophets as well. The very tests we have mentioned point to the fact that false prophets would arise. A classic example of the distinction is found in 1 Kings 22:13-37 where Micaiah is pitted against the false prophets who stood before Ahab and Jehoshaphat in their inquiry about taking Ramoth-gilead.

Ahab, king of Israel, had some four hundred false prophets on his staff from whom he was comfortable in taking advice (it is clear that false prophets were in large numbers from time to time in Israel's history). Again we point out, however, that Ahab had obviously overlooked the criteria for determining a true prophet; for in verse 6 his false prophets prophesied in the name of the "lord." The word here in the Hebrew is "Adonai," a term that in this context seems to refer to "general recognition of authority." Thus, in using an ambiguous term rather than prophesying in the specific name of the true God of heaven they indicated their own invalidity. Even though Ahab found this acceptable, Jehoshaphat did not, for he requested a prophet of "Jehovah," a term which specifically referred to the true God. Only after Jehoshaphat's request was Micaiah called. From this episode we can see that Ahab had overlooked one of the tests of a

true prophet: the fact that a true prophet would only prophesy in the name of God. Again Jeremiah's view of a true prophet rings out—"What the Lord saith unto me, *that* will I speak."

It is necessary to also understand the mission and work of a prophet. One of his jobs was to repeat that which the Lord delivered. This might be accomplished by an oral message or by a written one, and might include foretelling the future or merely preaching about the present. Harris explains:

It is frequently stated that a prophet's work was not so much foretelling as forthtelling. That is, prediction was not so much his work as was preaching. There is real truth in this assertion. The books of the prophets, as we have them, consist mainly of sermons and histories rather than predictions. yet we should never forget that there are predictions in abundance. God revealed the future to Abraham (Gen. 15:3), Moses (Num. 14:33), Samuel (1 Sam. 15:28), David (2 Sam. 7:12ff) . . . and many of the Minor Prophets. These are but a few of the hundreds of predictions—some short range, some long range—dot the pages of the Old Testament.²⁰

Prophecy was of paramount importance in Israel's history. This was the medium by which God imparted, after Moses' death, new revelation of His Word. In fact, it seems that this was the only institution in Israel for doing such. The priests could, from time to time, ascertain God's will in limited circumstances (Num. 27:21, Ezra 2:63), but generally the job of prophesying was left to the prophets. The exact nature of the Urim and Thummim is unclear in these verses—various theories have been proposed—but apparently the priest used them in obtaining God's will.

Occasionally, God would use a priest for the role of a prophet. Such was the case with Ezekiel as found in 1:3 and 2:2-5. He was a priest but was called to be a prophet. In fact, any man could be called to be a prophet, even a king like Saul. But as a whole the division of labor between prophet and priest remained intact. Jeremiah 18:18 records this distinction as he tells of the wicked plot against him. They said, "Come let's make plans against Jeremiah; for the *teaching* of the law by the priest will not be lost, nor will *counsel* from the wise, nor *word* from the prophets."

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Again Harris says:

Revelations from God were recognized to be the function and prerogative of prophets in Israel. When the prophets prophesied, they were to be believed—if the standard tests did not show them to be false prophets—as speaking God's revelation. Kings were humbled by the prophet's messages. Battles were won or lost at their word. The Temple was not built by David, was built by Solomon, and rebuilt by Zerubbabel, all at the Word of the Lord through the prophets. And through them the people were rebuked, encouraged, and directed in the way of the Lord.²¹

Not only did the prophets speak but they also wrote. This, without doubt, is how we have the Old Testament record today. In Jeremiah 36:1, God specifically commanded Jeremiah to take a scroll and write on it all the words concerning Israel. In addition to Jeremiah's words, we have the case of Ezekiel who was also commanded by God to write (43:11). And finally Isaiah (8:1), Samuel (1 Sam. 10:25), and others wrote. It would have been strange indeed if prophets who ministered in Israel from Moses to Ezra had not committed many of their messages to writing.

We have discussed the general nature of prophecy specifically to bring us to the issue of why prophets were held as authoritative. What made Israel immediately recognize a prophet's words? What made his words "canonical" from the moment he spoke them? This we now wish to consider in more detail.

We have intimated that the true test of a prophet was basically two fold. First, the prophet's words must come to pass in order for him to be regarded as authoritative. And second, his words must be in accord with the great prophet and law giver, Moses. With this in mind, however, there seems to have been another element at work among the prophets, this being the element of succession. We believe there was an institution of prophecy in Israel that was commonly recognized among the people. Therefore, appeal to or acceptance of a prophet's words were not by mere chance.

First, prophets recognized the words of other prophets. Daniel 9:2 records that Daniel understood by books the number of the years whereof the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he

would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem (KJV). In this reference it is clear that Jeremiah was recognized and accepted by Daniel.

In addition, Isaiah quotes his contemporary Micah verbatim—or vice versa—in Micah 4:1-4 and Isaiah 2:2-4. One might account for this repetition by saying that the Holy Spirit dictated the exact same words to both Micah and Isaiah. This is a possibility, but it seems more logical that while the Holy Spirit did inspire both men He also allowed both to use available sources in ascertaining the truth. We have already noted that Daniel “read” of Jeremiah’s words. While God could have revealed them to him directly, He did not. God allowed Daniel to research it himself. Be this as it may, the point we are making is that various prophets recognized each other as being among or part of the institution of prophecy.

Secondly, we have the case of Saul in 1 Samuel 10:1-13. In this instance, Saul, after being anointed by Samuel, is given a sign that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him and that he would prophesy. This happened as he went to Gibeah and encountered a procession of prophets coming down from the high place. Upon hearing Saul prophesy the people asked each other, “What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?” The thrust of such language is felt when one considers the fact that such a statement could not have been made had there not been a recognizable group of prophets already in existence. We think it not begging the issue to say that Israel recognized this institution and when Saul joined this group the question was raised because he obviously was a bit out of place. Keil and Delitzsch provide some interesting insight into this situation in their commentary on 1 Samuel.

Before progressing on to our next line of reason in ascertaining a succession of prophecy in Israel, we must look briefly at the words of Amos. In Amos 7:14 we have Amos’ reply after Amaziah, priest of Bethel, seeks to discredit him with the accusation of prophesying for his own motives. Amos speaks of his former life and how his calling was a special one from the Lord (15). His reply in verse 14 is enlightening. Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor a prophets’ son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees.” In this statement Amos is showing Amaziah that he was not a prophet by profession, but a shepherd. Within this statement we have the fact encapsulated that there was indeed an institution of prophecy within Is-

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rael, but God, at this point, had chosen to hand-pick another, an outsider, to fulfill His will. The term "son of a prophet" is a Hebrew idiom referring to those who were schooled in the institution.

Coffman says the following of Amos' statement:

This was leveled squarely at Amaziah's unjust charge, by implication, that Amos was a cheap "seer" picking up a little money where he might for prophesying against Israel, there being also some implications in Amos' reply, namely, that the regular line of prophets, i.e., those attending the prophetic schools and following the traditions that many of them followed, were indeed the same type of "seer" with whom Amaziah sneeringly sought to identify Amos (Coffman, *Amos*, p. 203).

We see this institution of prophecy in 1 Samuel 19:20. Here Saul sends men to capture David in Ramah. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing there as their leader, the Spirit of God came upon Saul's men and they also prophesied. By virtue of the fact that Samuel was leading a group of prophets, we must assume that such was an institution recognized by others. Indeed, there are other references to such "schools of prophets" within the Kingdom of Israel. Keil and Delitzsch speak of these "schools" in their commentary on 1 Samuel and state that these prophets lived together in common dwellings. Note their reflection on this institution of prophecy:

The prophets' unions had indeed so far a certain resemblance to the monastic orders of the early church, that the members lived together in the same buildings, and performed certain sacred duties in common; but if we look into the aim and purpose of monasticism, they were the very opposite of those of the prophetic life. The prophets did not wish to withdraw from the tumult of the world into solitude, for the purpose of carrying on a contemplative life of holiness in this retirement from the earthly life and its affairs; but their unions were associations formed for the purpose of mental and spiritual training, that they might exert a more powerful influence upon their contemporaries. They were called into existence

by chosen instruments of the Lord, such as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, whom the Lord had called to be His prophets, and endowed with a peculiar measure of His Spirit for this particular calling, that they might check the decline of religious life in the nation, and bring back the rebellious "To the law and the testimony."²²

Note their words in regard to the nature of these "schools":

The name "schools of the prophets" is the one which expresses most fully the character of these associations; only we must not think of them as merely educational institutions, in which the pupils of the prophets received instruction in prophesying or in theological studies. We are not in possession indeed of any minute information concerning their constitution. Prophesying could neither be taught nor communicated by instruction, but was a gift of God which He communicated according to His free will to whomsoever He would. But the communication of this divine gift was by no means an arbitrary thing, but presupposed such a mental and spiritual disposition on the part of the recipient as fitted him to receive it; whilst the exercise of the gift required a thorough acquaintance with the law and the earlier revelations of God, which the schools of the prophets were well adapted to promote. It is therefore justly and generally assumed, that the study of the law and of the history of the divine guidance of Israel formed a leading feature in the occupations of the pupils of the prophets, which also included the cultivation of sacred poetry and music, and united exercises for the promotion of the prophetic inspiration.²³

In regard to the above comments, we note that the institution of prophecy not only provided suitable men from which God could pick "seers," but also provided suitable men who could preach that which had already been revealed. We might just as accurately say that the institution of prophecy was as much a "preacher-training school" as it was a "school of prophecy." Indeed, encapsulated in the very meaning of the term "prophecy" is the idea of forth-telling God's revealed

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will. Today we have clouded the term "prophecy" by assuming that it always refers to "miraculous fore-telling of the future." Indeed such is not the case. Both "fore-telling" and "forth-telling" are integral.

As we conclude this section of our study on the institution of prophecy and the line of succession, we must also notice a few final Scriptures which shed additional light on the issue. In Chronicles we have a chain of verses which gives us the tradition of the writing prophets in Israel.

1 Chronicles 29:29 says David's history was written in the books of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad. 2 Chronicles 9:29 tells us that Solomon's history is written by the prophets Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo. 2 Chronicles 12:15 speaks of the works of Rehoboam as written by the prophets Shemaiah and Iddo. In addition, Ahijah's history was added by Iddo (2 Chron. 13:22); Jehoshaphat's by Jehu the prophet (2 Chron. 20:34); Hezekiah's by Isaiah (2 Chron. 32:32); Manasseh's by unnamed "seers" (2 Chron. 33:19); and the other kings are said to have their deeds recorded in the "book of the kings of Israel and Judah" (2 Chron. 35:27). And so we here have listed a chain of prophets who wrote from before the days of David to virtually the end of the kingdom of Judah. This fact accords very nicely with the words of Josephus when he says that the prophets wrote from the days of Moses to Artaxerxes. Josephus also states:

It is true our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time.²⁴

This succession is also seen by Harris to solve the old problem of who wrote the Pentateuch. The death of Moses is recorded in the last verses of Deuteronomy. Unless one is willing to admit that God revealed to Moses the events of his own death prior to his completion of the Pentateuch, then we are faced with the fact that either another wrote the books now ascribed to him, or that another fastened a footnote to Moses' authentic writings to give them historical continuity with other books in the canon. Since Jesus Himself ascribed the Torah to Moses, we must assume that another did indeed add the final words. We believe this is a most plausible explanation. Indeed in looking at other books

such as Joshua, Samuel & Kings, Jeremiah, etc., we have the same basic issue at work. Harris treats this in his book so we decline to repeat his logic, but he sums up the solution by saying:

It thus appears that in every case from the Pentateuchal history to the post Exilic writings a historical book is given a colophon or footnote that unites it in continuous narrative fashion to the succeeding book . . . the chain of prophets evidently wrote a chain of histories from Genesis to Nehemiah, and the writings of these prophets were accepted, one by one, through the centuries until, when the the spirit departed from Israel, the canon was complete.²⁵

In other words the books of our Old Testament canon were not by mistake. As one inspired prophet died, his writings would be given a footnote to bring them into historical continuity with the writings following. In this way the entire history of God's people was recorded with an unmistakable flow. This indeed explains the harmony of our Old Testament Scriptures to some degree and gives insight into the continuity that many casual readers today fail to recognize. We note the following in regards to the prophetic order for informational sake.

In the Hebrew Bible prophetic literature is divided into two sections: the Former Prophets and the Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets include Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. These books are placed in the prophetic collection because they reflect the ideas of the prophets and because prophets play a significant role within them.²⁶ The Latter Prophets include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi).

The Writings

The final group of books found within the Old Testament are "The Writings" (Kethubim). This group includes Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles. Again the exact process of this section's "classification" is unknown, but some liberal scholars believe that around the turn of the first century A.D. it had become a closed section to which nothing would be allowed to be added.²⁷ It is our belief, however, that all the Writings were completed before 400 B.C. even if they did not find their hard-fast classification until

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sometime later. We must remember that regardless of the date that scholars ascribe to the completion of any particular section the fact remains that as soon as the books were written they had immediate authority.

In all there were three sections of Scripture that became canonized. But this triad-classification was certainly the invention of man, and that for clarity's sake, not the work of God *per se*. Such classification was apparently not even strictly considered in Old Testament times.

In the most correct sense the Writings were not at all a separate group unto themselves but were written by and included in the Prophets. Jesus and the New Testament writers group Ezra, Samuel, Job, Isaiah, and Daniel into the same classification as Prophets. David is called a prophet (Acts 2), and thus we may accurately classify the Psalms as prophecy. Samuel was called in youth by God, putting him on equal footing with the prophets. Solomon's communication with God grants him prophetic status. His writings must also be grouped, technically, among the Prophets. And so we can see that the supposed Three Part Division begins to disintegrate when put to the most rigorous test. Indeed there are three sections today, and that for easy classification, but we cannot say with any certainty that such was the case or that such was even considered by God's people prior to 400 B.C.

Harris says:

All this evidence shows that in the two pre-Christian centuries in which our evidence begins, and also throughout the writings of the New Testament, all of the books outside of the Law are called collectively "the Prophets," with no attempt to elevate some over others in canonicity.²⁸

The point remains that the institution of prophecy produced the books of the Writings as well as the Prophets. One cannot accept the Prophets and deny the Writings, for they were written by prophets during a time period overlapping the Prophets. Scholars, in trying to push the dates of the Writings to the post-inspiration era of Israel's history, have advocated a naturalistic explanation of the text—a text whose inspiration they deny. This we unequivocally reject.

Jesus and the Old Testament Canon

Although there is no way to know exactly when the Old Testament books found their tri-part classification, we do know with certainty that in Jesus' day the canon of the Old Covenant had long been closed. The evidence for this comes from a most unlikely place: the New Testament.²⁹

Jesus and His apostles might have differed from the religious leaders of Israel about the meaning of Scripture, but there is no doubt that they agreed on the limits of Scripture.³⁰ When Jesus quoted the "Bible," all knew the group of writings to which he referred. All agreed that what He quoted was authoritative. The canon and what could or could not be quoted as sacred was intact during Jesus' ministry.

Two of the most powerful evidences of the canon's having been fixed in Jesus' day, come to us from statements made by Christ Himself. Luke 24:44 records Jesus saying, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." The canonical writings according to Jesus were comprised of the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. This threefold division is obviously equivalent to the three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, Psalms being named for the whole of the Writings.³¹ But what books were included within this threefold division? What did Jesus have in mind when He spoke? What books did Jesus quote when He referred to Scripture? A clue to this may be found in the words of Christ as He rebuked the Pharisees in Luke 11:51—

That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

The importance of this statement is found in the phrase "from Abel to Zacharias." It will be readily recognized that Abel, the first martyr of the Old Testament, died as recorded in the book of Genesis. From this it is clear that the first book of the accepted canon in Jesus' day was Genesis. Zacharias, the last recorded martyr of the Old Testament, however, died as recorded in 2 Chronicles. 24:20, clearly not the last book of our current Old Testament order. Yet Christ seems to indicate that Chronicles was the last book of the accepted canon

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during His lifetime. How can we be sure that any book in our canon after 2 Chronicles is a valid book? How does this statement help us in determining what books were part of the canon of Jesus' day?

The answer to this question may be found in the fact that the Hebrew Bible has traditionally listed the Old Testament books differently than our modern Bibles. The first book in the Hebrew Bible that Jesus knew, like ours today, was the book of Genesis, being the first book in the Torah. The last book, however, was not the book of Malachi but the book of Chronicles, it being the last sequential book in the third and last classification called Writings.³² When Jesus listed the martyrs in Luke 11:51, He was, therefore, giving the recognized limits of the Hebrew Scriptures—not chronologically but canonically. While not being the last prophet to die chronologically, (cf. Uriah) Zechariah was the last prophet to die canonically. His death is recorded in Chronicles, the last book in the Hebrew list of accepted Scripture.³³ It is obvious then that the limits of the Old Testament were set by the time of Christ. All this material from Genesis through Chronicles was canonical. This corresponds exactly, albeit in different order, to our Genesis through Malachi. (See chart on next page.)

Remember that the Hebrew order is different than today's Christian order and in the Hebrew Scriptures there were a total of twenty-four books as diagrammed above. Keep in mind that in the strictest sense the three part division did not occur until near the time of Christ and possibly after. From internal evidence we have seen that it was not part of Old Testament Israel's historical classification, if indeed, they had one.

In speaking of the Hebrew canon, William R. Kimball says,

The closest thing to an official Jewish endorsement of the Old Testament canon can be found in the Babylonian Talmud which confirms the fact that with the completion of the Book of Malachi around the year 425 B.C. the canon was closed on the Old Testament.

He quotes the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin, V2-V21,24 as saying, "After the latter prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel."³⁴ By the Holy Spirit departing Israel it is signified that the means of holy revelation had also departed thus making further inspiration impossible. One might recall Peter's words regarding Old Testament inspiration in 2 Peter 1:21.

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The Law (Torah)	The Prophets (Nebiim)	The Writings (Kethubim)
Genesis	<i>Former:</i>	Psalms
Exodus	Joshua	Proverbs
Leviticus	Judges	Job
Numbers	Samuel	Song of Solomon
Deuteronomy	Kings	Ruth
		Lamentations
	<i>Latter:</i>	Ecclesiastes
	Isaiah	Esther
	Jeremiah	Daniel
	Ezekiel	Ezra-Nehemiah
	Book of Twelve	Chronicles

Josephus

Another individual who should be considered when discussing the Hebrew canon is Josephus, the Jewish historian. In the first volume of his treatise *Against Apion* which was written about A.D. 90 Josephus contrasts the reliable sources for early Jewish history with the many conflicting accounts of origins given by Greek historians. F.F. Bruce quotes Josephus' *Against Apion* (1.38-41) as saying:

We have not myriads of books, disagreeing and conflicting with one another, but only twenty-two, containing the record of all time, and justly accredited. Of these, five books of Moses, containing the laws and the history handed down from the creation of the human race right to his own death. This period

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falls a little short of three thousand years. From the death of Moses to the time of Artaxerxes, who was king of Persia after Xerxes, the prophets who followed Moses have written down in thirteen books the things that were done in their days. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and principles of life for human beings. From Artaxerxes to our own time a detailed record has been made, but this has not been thought worthy of equal credit with the earlier records because there has not been since then the exact succession of prophets.³⁵

One will readily notice that Josephus speaks of twenty-two books. This might seem a contradiction to the twenty-four books we have asserted were in the Hebrew canon. Bruce again says, however, that this difficulty ceases to exist when one considers that Josephus probably refers to exactly the same documents as the twenty-four of the traditional Jewish reckoning—Ruth being counted as an appendix to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah. Bruce goes on to point out that Josephus' first division comprises the same five books as the first division in the traditional arrangement. But his second division has thirteen books, not eight, the additional five being perhaps Job, Esther, Daniel, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah. Finally, the four books of the third division would then be Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs.³⁶

Milligan suggests that the reason Josephus enumerates twenty-two books is because the custom of many Jewish Rabbis was to assign a particular book or "book collection" to each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, there being twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet.³⁷

The Council of Jamnia

It seems highly appropriate at this point in our study to pause and consider the council that convened at Jamnia in western Judea from A.D. 90 to 100. Many will point to this date as supposed proof that a certain council decided the fate of the Hebrew canon and then forced it on others. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Besides the fact that long before A.D. 90 the canon was already fixed, we must also remember that no council can confer authority upon any book of the Bible. If the book does not have inherent inspiration then it can never be humanly affixed. A council can at best only confirm what is already there.

The Council of Jamnia was convened about the same time Josephus wrote his work *Against Apion*, because various subjects were being debated by the rabbis who had headquarters there. Among the subjects of debate was the continuation of Jewish religious life after the collapse of the Jewish state in A.D. 70. Judaism had to be adapted to new circumstances due to the destruction of the temple and its cultus. Along with such discussion came the discussion of which books "defiled the hands"—an awkward but technical expression denoting those books which after touching one had to wash his hands. The point of the phrase being that if people had to wash their hands every time they touched a sacred book they would be deterred from handling it casually.³⁸

Josh McDowell quotes F.F. Bruce in the following:

Some of the discussions which went on at Jamnia were handed down by oral transmission and ultimately recorded in the Rabbinical writings. Among their debates they considered whether canonical recognition should be accorded to the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and Esther. Objections had been raised against these books on various grounds; Esther, for example, did not contain the name of God, and Ecclesiastes was none too easy to square with contemporary orthodoxy. But the upshot of the Jamnia debates was the firm acknowledgement of all these books as Holy Scripture.³⁹

Again H. H. Rowley is quoted as saying:

It is, indeed, doubtful how far it is correct to speak of the Council of Jamnia. We know of discussions that took place there amongst the Rabbis, but we know of no formal or binding decisions that were made, and it is probable that the discussions were informal, though none the less helping to crystallize and to fix more firmly the Jewish tradition.⁴⁰

Henry Flanders says:

The decisions of the Council were at best semi-official and were not universally accepted and our information about their deliberations is inadequate. Evidently, however, the final setting of the canon occurred

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for Palestinian Judaism about this time as the result of a definite narrowing of the range of books included in synagogue collections.⁴¹

In passing, we also note that Jack P. Lewis of Harding College has even attacked the significance and historicity of the Council of Jamnia (cf. *Journal of Bible and Religion*. Vol. 32, 1964, pp. 125-132). Additional reading in this area may be of interest.

In reality, the Council at Jamnia did little for or against the canon of Hebrew Scripture. As noted, the council was semi-official at best with its conclusions being rejected by many. Keep in mind that even before Jamnia the canon had already been fixed.

The Old Testament Apocrypha

Before closing our discussion of the Hebrew canon, we must address those writings which have come to be called "The Apocrypha." Much debate has raged from the earliest of Christendom regarding these writings and even today Catholicism and Protestantism disagree regarding their place in Scripture.

The term "Apocrypha" literally means "hidden" or "concealed" (Greek, *apokruphos*). As such, it refers to those books or writings not traditionally accorded with canonical status—those books oft withheld from the public because of their strange character and unusual content. Both the Old and the New Testaments have apocryphal literature, but at this point in our study we refer to only the Old Testament Apocrypha. These books are those which the Hebrew Old Testament excluded but which were later added to the Greek Septuagint (LXX) and Latin Vulgate translations of the Old Testament.

The Septuagint (LXX)

From the time that Alexander the Great founded Alexandria in Egypt in 331 B.C., there was a Jewish element in its Greek-speaking population. In reality, there were Jewish settlements in almost all of cities that Alexander conquered but none were so important as that in Alexandria. It wasn't long, however, before the Jews of Alexandria began giving up their Palestinian ancestral tongue and began speaking only Greek.⁴² This chain of events would have led to their being entirely cut off from the Hebrew Bible had the Old Testament Scriptures not been translated into Greek sometime around the third and second centuries B.C.

This Greek translation, known as the Septuagint (LXX) for the seventy (or rather, seventy-two) elders of Israel who supposedly were brought to Egypt for the purpose of accomplishing this task, was to become the mainstay of Greek Jews everywhere. In the course of time the stories of its development became embellished to the point that it was said that seventy elders completed the entire work in seventy two days achieving identical versions while even in isolation from one another. Philo and Josephus, however, confirm that in reality it was only the books of the Law that were translated by the elders—not the entire Old Testament text. It was Christian writers who extended their work to the rest of the Old Testament, including the books that never formed part of the Hebrew Bible (i.e., Apocrypha).⁴³

Scholars disagree as to whether the canon accepted by Palestinian Jews differed from the canon of those Jews in Alexandria. Some have maintained that Alexandrian Jews recognized a wider canon than those in Palestine, and this wider canon accounted for the addition within the Septuagint of the Apocrypha. Bruce holds that there is no evidence for an extended Alexandrian canon which included more books than did a Palestinian canon for "there is in fact no evidence that Alexandrian Jews ever promulgated a canon of Scripture."⁴⁴ Bruce again points out, that for the most part, the Septuagint was produced, not by Jews, but by Christians. C.F. Keil says:

But it is impossible to speak of a "double canon," or of a second canon, the Hellenistic, different from the Hebrew one; as is seen at once in what Josephus and Philo say. Although Josephus makes manifold use of the Septuagint, and does homage to the Jewish Alexandrian spirit in many respects, yet he expressly declares all the writings that are not found in the Hebrew canon less worthy of belief, and not inspired. And it also comes out clearly from Philo and other witnesses, that the Egyptian and all the Hellenistic Jews well knew the Palestinian canon in its three divisions. Only it had not the same importance for them as for the Hebrew scribes. For the Jewish Alexandrian spirit did not acknowledge the assumption on which the demarcation of the limits of the Hebrew canon rests, that the spirit of prophecy had departed from Israel ever since the year B.C. 400 . . . and thus it entirely obliterated the distinction between an older prophetic

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literature and a more recent literature which was not inspired, yet without wishing by this means to set forth a new enlarged canon.⁴⁵

Harris quotes Floyd Filson in saying that it is not careful scholarship to assume that the original LXX canon differed from the Hebrew canon merely because of LXX copies of the fourth century include extra books. The whole concept of a differing Alexandrian canon is being called in question.⁴⁶

In any case, the Septuagint came to include a number of books which were not included in the sacred Hebrew canon. It is difficult to say exactly how this came to be. And since the early Church relied heavily on the Septuagint, these disputed books became an issue for many of the early "Church Fathers."

In discussing this point we find it interesting to note Harris' theory on how the Apocrypha came to be included in the LXX since he maintains, as does Bruce and others, that the original LXX did not include a wider canon.

Harris says that when Christians took over the Septuagint (due to the break after A.D. 70 between Christians and Jews) they did not retain the meticulous stance in defending it as the Jews had. As long as the Jewish economy remained intact, so did the common knowledge of the fixed canon, due to pilgrims coming from all over the world to Jerusalem. After the collapse of the Jewish economy in A.D. 70, however, other books, regarded as worthy but not fully canonical, found their way into the early Christian LXX. Harris notes, however, that even the early copies of the LXX do not show uniformity, a point which leads us to conclude that the Apocrypha held a different status than did the inspired books.⁴⁷

In addition, about this time the codex (bound volume), was invented. Since scrolls could not be made large enough to hold the entire Old Testament, the codex was a wonderful invention. But with no printing presses to gauge the size of a particular document, the leather page volumes would be bound first and then filled with writing later. Naturally leather was an expensive commodity. Harris believes that as books were bound and afterward filled occasionally precious blank leather pages would be "left over." He says:

Naturally, he (the scribe) would fill it with helpful devotional material. Thus the tendency would be to associate other good books with the sacred books until eventually some of the good books attained a deuterocanonical status, that is, were received in a second rank.⁴⁸

He goes on to cite for proof the fact that considerable testimony of the first four centuries does not accept the Apocryphal books into the canon. "As soon as the gospel was carried to the Greek-speaking world, the Septuagint came into its own as the sacred text to which the preachers appealed."⁴⁹ It was used in the Greek-speaking synagogues throughout the Roman Empire and was even the basis for the apostles' sermons. When Paul, for example, at Thessalonica visited the synagogue on three successive Sabbaths and argued with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead (Acts 17:2), it was the Septuagint upon which his arguments were based; likewise in Acts 14:8-18 and Acts 17:16-32. It has been said that Greek Judaism, with the Septuagint, ploughed the furrows for the gospel seed in the Western world. Without the Septuagint, those Jews of the diaspora would never have known about the prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament. Remember that most had lost their knowledge of native Hebrew and could not read the Old Testament.

One should not assume, however, that during the lifetime of the apostles this additional literature proposed a problem. Even if early Christians used the LXX, since the apostles were Jews, they knew the true extent of the canon. We believe that an extended Old Testament canon did not find its way into the church of Christ until well after the first century. Again we note Harris' view that the Apocrypha, while written sometime between 400 B.C. and A.D. 1, was not added to the LXX until well after A.D. 70, and that by Christian copyists who actually lived well beyond the apostolic era.

The Apocrypha and the Early Church

But what role did the Apocrypha play in the establishment of doctrine and teaching in the New Testament church and even beyond? If we can discover this, perhaps it will help us in determining the role of the Apocrypha in our Old Testament canon today. Perhaps it will give us a clue as to whether or not it should be that from which we study and preach.

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In answering these questions let us first remember that by the time of Jesus the Hebrew canon had undoubtedly been fixed. And without question the Apocrypha was not part of sacred Scripture. Jesus, Josephus, Jamnia, and Jerome attest to this truth. Jesus never once quoted the Apocrypha although he made many references to the Old Testament Scriptures. And while the New Testament writers all used the Septuagint, more or less, quoting almost all of the canonical books of the Old Testament, they never once quote the Apocrypha. Their silence regarding these books is deafening!

In addition, it has been said that no canon or council of the Christian church for the first four centuries recognized the Apocrypha as inspired. Many of the great Fathers spoke out against the Apocrypha, for example, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Athanasius.⁵⁰ It was not until A.D. 1546, in a polemical action at the Counter Reformation Council of Trent, that the Apocryphal books received full canonical status by the Roman Catholic Church.

From the above comments one should not think, however, that the Apocrypha played no role or had no weight. Even some of the most influential leaders in the succeeding generations that followed the apostles accepted it to some degree and some branches of Christendom saw it as authoritative. Augustine, for example, is at best ambiguous as to his view, for he includes in his list of canonical Scriptures the Apocrypha without any clear mark of distinction.⁵¹ The Council of Carthage, with the approval of Augustine, ratified a decree which, in effect, placed the canonical and Apocryphal books on the same level with the Palestinian canon. In addition, certain other early Christian writers, while not conferring upon the Apocrypha canonical status, believed it to be suitable for learning and reading even within the church—but rejected it as a source of ecclesiastical doctrine. We take Jerome as a case in point. Jerome (A.D. 346) accepted only the Hebrew canon but reluctantly allowed additional writings to have a place within ecclesiastical settings. As author of the Vulgate Latin translation of the Bible, which became the authorized version in the Western Church, he enumerated the books recognized by the Jews in the Old Testament and decreed that any books outside this list must be reckoned "Apocryphal." But while admitting that the Hebrew Scriptures alone were authoritative, he accepted that uncanonical books such as Ecclesiasticus could be used for edifying the people as long as they were not used for the corroboration of ecclesiastical doctrines.⁵² He even went so far as to say that they retained great ethical value which made them suitable for

reading in the course of Christian worship. He was quite happy to quote from them with the same introductory formulae as he used when quoting from the Hebrew books or the New Testament books.⁵³

The reader may at this point of our study wonder why early Christian writers and scholars came to accept the Apocrypha so readily. After all, the Jews had long recognized the canon closed at twenty-four books. Part of the reason is given by M. F. Unger when he says:

In proportion as the Fathers were more or less absolutely dependent on the Septuagint for their knowledge of Old Testament Scriptures, they gradually lost in common practice the sense of the difference between the books of the Hebrew canon and the Apocrypha.⁵⁴

In other words, the knowledge that most of the early church leaders (i.e., late second century and beyond) had of the Hebrew Scriptures came directly from the Septuagint. This was due to the fact that Christianity had spread away from Palestine and its Old Testament Hebrew roots, leaving succeeding generations of Christians speaking only Greek: relegating them totally to the Greek Septuagint. During the early Christian centuries some Greek and Latin Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria quoted passages from the Apocrypha as "Scripture," "inspired," and the like. But it must be remembered that none of these knew Hebrew. Not until the fourth century did many Greek Fathers, including Eusebius, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, and others really, come to recognize a distinction between the books in the Hebrew canon and the Apocrypha.⁵⁵

F.F. Bruce also points out that until Jerome produced a new translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew text at the end of the fourth century, even the Latin Old Testament was a rendering of the Septuagint, including the "Septuagintal plus" (i.e., Apocrypha). He also states that there was little, if anything, to indicate to readers that the Apocrypha stood on a different footing from the rest of the Old Testament.⁵⁶ The problem that arose was that most Greek- or Latin-speaking people, having no exposure to Hebrew or the Hebrew canon, could not distinguish between the "twenty-four books" and the "Septuagintal plus." As one read the Bible versions of that day, there was usually no indication to the reader whether he were reading a book which had been part of the sacred Hebrew canon or whether he was reading a book from the Apocrypha. They were all blended together.

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As years passed, even those who came to know the truth about the Hebrew canon were reluctant to give them up. Tradition had taken its toll. So the Apocrypha has passed through the centuries alongside sacred Scripture. Interesting to note is the fact that the original King James Version of the Bible included the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha only came to be dropped from many translations after much debate.

If we consider the above in conjunction with the previous theory by Harris, an interesting picture emerges. First, post-apostolic Christians who spoke and read only Greek were not able to go back to the Hebrew mother tongue or text. This then forced them to read the LXX in Greek. This being the case they would naturally read those "Bibles" that had been hand copied onto leather-page volumes, volumes which included, in some cases, additional literature of interest but not inspired. As the first four centuries wore on, and because of the lack of understanding and exposure to Hebrew, certain apocryphal books became widely used. This continued until church leaders began to again associate themselves with the original Hebrew tongue.

While this may seem like a wild theory, it does use for its basis several known truths. We leave the reader to determine his or her view of the issue. In the opinion of this writer, however, no theory has yet been brought to my attention that provides a more plausible explanation.

Is the Apocrypha Valid?

As we continue to consider the question of why the Apocrypha was sometimes included in the Old Testament canon, we would do well to address the issue of inspiration once again. We have alluded to the fact that only those books of the Hebrew canon were inspired. Naturally this relegates the Apocrypha to the class of uninspired literature. But what is meant by inspiration? How do we know only the Hebrew canon is inspired?

There are at least five points that must be included in the definition of inspiration. We summarize F. Furman Kearley on these points:

1. Since God is perfect and infallible, an inspired book is absolutely infallible and errorless in its facts and doctrines as presented in the original manuscript.
2. Since God is perfectly holy and pure, an inspired book must present only holy and pure doctrines.

3. Since God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent, then an inspired book should reflect these characteristics in such ways as prophecy which is fulfilled, accurate statements with regard to geography, astronomy, science, math, psychology and all areas of knowledge to the extent that it makes reference to these. If God is the Creator of the world and man, He could not make an inaccurate statement about them. A book that does is not inspired.
4. Since God is absolute truth, one inspired book cannot contradict another.
5. Since God is absolutely just and fair, an inspired book must be impartial, without prejudice toward anyone.⁵⁷

If these are the minimum criteria for an inspired book, how does the Apocrypha stand up to these criteria? Can the Apocrypha be found on the same level as sacred Scripture?

Time does not allow us in this short study to give an in depth assessment of every book of the Apocrypha, but suffice it to say a close examination of each book reveals that they are far inferior to Scripture. Thus they should play no role in the church of Jesus Christ today. To demonstrate our point we turn to the words of Merrill F. Unger as he gives us the character of the Apocrypha:

The Old Testament Apocrypha have an unquestioned historical and literary value but have been rejected as inspired for the following reasons: 1. They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms. 2. They teach doctrines which are false and foster practices which are at variance with inspired Scripture. 3. They resort to literary types and display an artificiality of subject matter and styling out of keeping with inspired Scripture. 4. They lack the distinctive elements which give genuine Scripture their divine character, such as prophetic power and poetic and religious feeling.⁵⁸

Milligan gives the following reasons against the Apocrypha:

1. Because they are not found in the Hebrew Bible; or the canon composed by Ezra and other inspired members of the Great Synagogue.

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2. Because they were never received as canonical by the Jews.
3. Because they were never quoted, nor in any way endorsed by Christ and His Apostles.
4. Because they were rejected by the most eminent of the Christian Fathers; such as Origen, Athanasius, and Jerome. Augustine was the first that was in favor of canonizing them.
5. Because they contain many false and contradictory statements.⁵⁹

The Date of the Apocryphal Literature

In concluding our remarks on the Old Testament canon, it must also be said that the Apocrypha was written long after the Old Testament canon was completed in about 400 B.C. The Apocrypha is a product of the inter-testamental years between 400 B.C. and A.D. 100. In addition, none of the apocryphal writers claim divine inspiration, and some openly disclaim it (2 Mac. 15:38). The Old Testament Apocrypha is composed of the following books: The Additions to Esther; Baruch; Bel and the Dragon; 1 and 2 Esdras; Judith; The Letter of Jeremiah; 1,2,3,4 Maccabees; The Prayer of Manasseh; Psalms 151; Ecclesiasticus; The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of Three Young Men; Susanna; Tobit; The Wisdom of Solomon.

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II. The New Testament Canon

As we now cross the threshold of time into those years denoted as "the year of our Lord" (*Anno Domini*), the following observation is in order: We must remember that like the Old Testament canon, the New Testament did not develop overnight. Although the process took but a fraction of the time the Old Testament took, several years passed and many processes were at work in the formation of what we now call the twenty-seven books of our New Testament. Before a canon could be formed there first had to be writings produced by apostles and eyewitnesses of the events of Christ. Because these writings arose so quickly to acceptance following Christ's resurrection we deem it important to discuss the rather complex process involved.

The First Bible of the Early Church

One of the most interesting and important things to understand when discussing the New Testament's development is the fact that for several years after Pentecost the only set of written Scriptures the church possessed was the Old Testament. Immediately after the church's establishment there did not miraculously appear our current twenty-seven books. The Old Testament was truly the first "Bible." It was from this the apostles preached. We can see this clearly in Peter's sermon on Pentecost and Stephen's sermon in Acts 7. It was from the Old Testament that the early Christians read and studied. Acts 17:11 tells of the noble Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily to see if those things were so. The "Scriptures" here mentioned are the Hebrew Scriptures and the purpose for searching them was to see if Christ was indeed the fulfillment of the prophet's longing.

We cannot underestimate the importance of the Old Testament in the development of the early church. While it was the document that gave rise to faith in Jesus, it was also the document early Judaizers used in luring believers from "The Way." Use of the Old Testament in the church was a two-edged sword. Used lawfully it was effective in converting souls. But in the hands of Jewish persecutors it became the instrument of spiritual death to those who followed their man-made doctrines. One of the major themes of many of the apostles' writings was a warning against Judaizing teachers (cf. Hebrews, Galatians, etc.).

Naturally, the Old Testament Scriptures would have played a role in the early church. Not only did they prophesy of Christ but they were also those Scriptures many in the early church had been raised

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with. Paul reminded Timothy that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. These he had learned from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). It is obvious that Paul here spoke of the Old Testament Scriptures, for at this point the New Testament had not yet been completed.

Although the Old Testament was the first "Bible" of the church it was natural that documents would eventually arise from those within the church. Paul foresaw this process for he told the Galatians that the Old Testament Law was their school-master to bring them to Christ, but that after that faith was come the school-master would be no longer be directly needed (Gal. 3:25). Intimated in this statement is the idea that the Scriptures of the Law would eventually lose their force.

Remember also that Jesus had promised in John 14:26 to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth and to help them call to remembrance all that He had said. This would not have been necessary had the Old Testament been intended as the sole source of authority for all subsequent generations. The reason for Christ's promise was two-fold: first, so that the apostles could remember the words of Christ as they delivered the oral message to believers; and second, so they could remember His words in delivering the written message—the message now contained in the New Testament.

Writings within the church, first by the apostles and then by other eyewitness and those close to the events of the Saviour, were sure to come.¹ It must be remembered, however, that some twenty years passed between the ascension of Christ and the first New Testament document. About sixty-five years elapsed before the last book was written.² James is probably the earliest book of the New Testament (c. A.D. 45) and the Apocalypse is certainly the latest book (c. A.D. 96). In between A.D. 45 and A.D. 96, a space of some forty-five to fifty years, the other writings were produced while the church was spreading, encountering growth pains, and developing in maturity. The books we have in our New Testament are, in their immediate context, a response to this process.

As various communities responded to the gospel, it became necessary for apostles and evangelists to provide a record of the doctrine and the life of Christ. Much of the New Testament is a product of

Paul's correspondence to the congregations he established in an attempt to instruct them. Paul's writings are often an explanation and defense against false teachers—as are the other apostles' words.

Oral Tradition

We have stated that the Gospel was first preached orally. Word of mouth was the process Philip used (Acts 8), as did Peter, Paul, and the other apostles. Philip did not have the New Testament to preach from as he taught the Eunuch, so he utilized the Old Testament (Isa. 53) and an oral presentation to proclaim Jesus Christ.

As the apostles and other eyewitnesses preached the gospel message of the life and death of Christ there eventually arose an "oral tradition." Since repetition of a culture's heritage leads to memorization of those events (an oral tradition), we see no reason to assume that such was any different in the church. It seems more than logical that as the precious story was told and retold, Christians, who had given their lives to this "new" faith, naturally wanted to preserve the words of the apostles to pass on to subsequent generations. This was accomplished first by word of mouth in oral teaching which preceded the actual writing of our New Testament.

Much has been speculated regarding this interim oral period between Christ's ascension and the actual writing of our New Testament epistles and gospels. Scholars have developed various theories as to how each gospel came about, how the oral tradition developed, who used what tradition in writing his gospel, whose gospel is the most accurate, who copied from whom, and on and on it goes. Without going into an entire discussion of the so-called "Synoptic Problem" and its fallacies, let us say that God's hand had a role in taking the gospel from the period of oral transmission to the period of the written corpus. Jesus had promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide men into *all* truth and this He had fulfilled. God had set in the church prophets who accurately proclaimed His message (Eph. 4:11). He had given the church "spiritual gifts" which included the ability to discern between right and error (1 Cor. 12:10). And as if this were not enough, there were eye witnesses of the events still living who could verify the truth of the gospel message. In 1 Corinthians 15:5-7 Paul identifies over 512 eye witnesses who could vouch for his testimony of Christ. Because the things of Jesus' ministry were not done in a corner (Acts 26:26) the twenty year span that passed between Jesus' ascension and

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the writing of the gospels is virtually insignificant. We need not worry about modern scholarship casting long sable shadows of doubt on this period as if it were a chaotic mess.

Written Transmission

After the period of "oral tradition" came a period of written transmission. As the church grew, inspired men put into writing divine regulations to direct congregations and individuals.³

There were various types of writings that emerged from first century Christianity. As noted, many of the writings, especially Paul's, were designed to correct various problems in the churches that had been established throughout the Mediterranean world. With the exception of James, Paul's writings were no doubt the first to be written and collected. During this process of collection, however, there arose a need for the church to know more about the ministry of Christ. The Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John were written to supply this need. These books were biographical in nature.

The book of Acts was written by Luke in response to the need for an authentic history of the apostolic period. Acts was not written until after many of the other New Testament books, for in Acts we find the record of the very establishment of those congregations to whom Paul wrote.

Finally the Apocalypse was written to set forth God's revelation of the consummation of all things. Revelation is the only book of prophecy in the New Testament.

Thus, while not developing entirely independently from one another, there are four sections of New Testament Scripture: Biography, History, Epistles, Prophecy. We remind the reader that the gospels were not the first books to be written. Because they come first in our New Testament list, and because they tell of the birth of Christ, we sometimes tend toward false assumptions about their date of writing. Actually, the gospels were not written until perhaps thirty or forty years after Christ's resurrection.

Scholars are often in disagreement as to when and where New Testament books were written. The chart following, while helpful to the Bible student, should in no way be viewed as final authority for such information. (A question mark indicates disagreement and the possibility of widely varying dates.) Most of the New Testament let-

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ters do not give enough internal clues to make exact dating possible. In reality, the intent of the inspired writer and his book is in no way dependent on such secular information. While some passages obviously will be illuminated by knowing the date and circumstances surrounding the writing, the writings themselves are timeless and require no knowledge of dates to be meaningful to the twentieth century Christian. Context, however, will often help the student determine the setting for a particular passage and should be used to its fullness. Note that this chart is based on the idea that not all the books were completed until after A.D. 90, but some hold that our entire New Testament collection was complete before A.D. 70.

Order and Date of New Testament Books

Book	Approx. Date (A.D.)	Place of writing
James	45-49	Jerusalem
1 Thessalonians	51	Corinth
2 Thessalonians	52	Corinth
Romans	55	Corinth
Galatians	55-56	Greece
1 Corinthians	57	Ephesus
2 Corinthians	57	Macedonia
Mark	55-65	Rome (?)
Luke	58-60	Ceasarea
Matthew	62-69	Judea
Ephesians	62	Rome
Colossians	62	Rome
Philemon	61-62	Rome
Philippians	60-64	Rome
Acts	64	Rome
1 Peter	64-65	Babylon (Rome?)
Jude	66-80 (?)	Jerusalem (?)

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Book	Approx. Date (A.D.)	Place of writing
1 Timothy	65-66	Macedonia
Titus	65-66	Ephesus
2 Timothy	67	Rome
2 Peter	67 (?)	(?)
Hebrews	67 (?)	(?)
John	90 (?)	Ephesus
1,2,3 John	95 (?)	Ephesus
Revelation	96 (?)	Patmos

The Collection of the New Testament Documents

Let us consider the factors that played a role in bringing our current twenty-seven books to full acceptance. What gave our New Testament its stamp of approval? How did the primitive church know if a book had merit for their spiritual lives?

At the outset, we must understand that the tests we have applied to the Old Testament Scriptures fall short when discussing the New. Among the most obvious differences is the fact that the New Testament took, by comparison, but a few years in its development. Not more than perhaps seventy to one hundred years passed after Christ's ascension before all our New Testament books were written, collected, and canonized. No great delay seems to have been needed; no imposing ecclesiastical council seems to have acted; yet the books, as soon as evidence was available, were accepted as divine.⁴

Another departure from the Old Testament process is the fact that unlike Moses, Christ wrote no books, nor did He leave an imprimatur on any particular book after its completion. In addition, none of the apostles, not even John, the last to die, left us with a list of the twenty-seven titles to be accepted by believers.

Antiquity did not decide the matter either. 1 Clement, for example, was written within the lifetime of the Apostle John yet was never received as canonical. Likewise for the books written by Ignatius and Polycarp.

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So what factors played a role in the canon's development? What gave the sacred Old Testament literature its matched counterpart so quickly? What happened after a book was written to make it part of an accepted collection?

After a gospel or epistle had been written it would remain for some time the treasured property of those who had received it. In some cases the original copies passed from church to church. Paul even commanded this in Colossians 4:16. But by and by the originals were copied and gradually churches all over the world obtained their own copies.⁵ The circulation of Paul's writings undoubtedly hastened their collection. Evidence of this is seen in 2 Peter 3:16 where Peter speaks of a recognized corpus of Paul's writings even in his own day.⁶

As we now turn to the factors that led to the acceptance of these collected books, we note the words of L. Harris.

Whatever the principle was that led to the selection of the books now in our canon, it operated rather well. All of the divisions of Christianity—Roman, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox—agree on the New Testament canon, and although occasionally individuals may have expressed some doubts as to certain books, there has not been serious debate since the days of Athanasius, who prepared a list of the books accepted in his day.⁷

We maintain that the foremost process at work was "inspiration" as designed by God and administered by the Holy Spirit. While physical factors did come into play, as we shall later discuss, the initial impetus which gave rise to the New Testament was Almighty God.

The Inspiration Process

Robert Milligan has correctly observed that the canon of the New Testament, consisting of twenty-seven books, rests on the authority of the apostles and other inspired members of the primitive church.⁸ It is with this fact that we begin our study. Although there were certain books whose authority was debated (and this primarily in the last half of the second century and beyond), generally we see such a great uniformity of opinion that it leads us to the conclusion that all in the primitive church knew the authority base against which any particular document was measured. This authority was beyond dispute.

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The above statement is strengthened when we consider the highly diverse backgrounds of those within the first century church. In Acts 2, upon the day of Pentecost, there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven who heard the gospel and obeyed. And while these were with one accord, it is obvious that differences, tensions, and disagreements arose. A classic case is found in Acts 6 where the Grecians were at odds with the Hebrews over the care of their widows. Division over ethnic issues, backgrounds, philosophy, etc., also had the potential of spreading as the gospel spread into the entire world and as people from very diverse cultures were converted. Paul would often preach to multi-ethnic and multi-philosophic groups. Because we see such uniformity, however, we must conclude that a very strong cohesion factor existed—a factor called “the apostle’s inspiration.”

Even within the church division arose in various congregations to threaten unity. Corinth is a prime example of such division. First Corinthians is written in part to correct problems regarding splinter groups professing to be of Paul or Cephas, as well as the division that occurred in the Lord’s Supper between the poor and rich. Many division possibilities existed. Milligan has observed,

They (Christians—jmc) had been collected into the Christian Church from all the religious and philosophical parties of the then known world, and, as a matter of course, they brought into their new relations many of their old habits and modes of thought. Some of them were inclined to Platonism, some to Aristotelianism, some Epicureanism, some to Stoicism, some to Pharisaism, and some to Sadduceism. This old leaven soon began to work throughout the entire body.⁹

And so we are faced with the question as to how such a diverse group, and yes, even at times a feuding group, could come to such a great consensus regarding the canon of inspired Scriptures?

The Apostle’s Authority

We need go no farther than Acts 2:42 to discover the very base for all that the primitive church believed, taught, and accepted. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Here we have the key to unlocking the first door of the inspiration process. The apostles were

the group recognized to have been "endued with power from on high." It was to this group that the primitive church turned for answers to doctrine. Naturally, as the apostles wrote, their writings were as authoritative as their speech (2 Thess. 2:15). Only apostolic authority could have prevented a division of the primitive church into a great number and variety of contending sects and parties.¹⁰

It is natural in examining the apostles' authority that we should now turn to the very Scriptures we seek to authenticate. Although this may seem logically unsound, we believe that such is not necessarily the case. Regardless of one's view of the spiritual contents of the New Testament, all fairly agree that the documents themselves provide valid historical information. If, therefore, we can believe the sequence of events in the documents, then we can also believe the testimony of the writers at least insofar as they viewed themselves to be a part of the inspiration process. We will be able to determine their view of their own role in the process and how they came to understand that they, as human instruments, fulfilled a plan from God.

It seems only fair in a study of the canon, which is no doubt in reality a study of one's faith or lack thereof, that we turn to the document in question to seek the answers to our quest. This indeed may be circular but such we affirm is valid. Faith emanates from those documents we seek to validate (Rom. 10:17) and the believer should feel no embarrassment in accepting the Scriptures even though there may be no readily available external, empirical proof. One of the mysteries and beauties of "faith" is the fact that one does not have to demand empirical proof for everything believed. Such would negate the very nature of faith to begin with. Were we to maintain that empirical proof must be produced for every jot or tittle of the Scriptures, then we would be saying that the Scriptures were not a valid base for our belief.

It is the opinion of this writer that for too many years believers have cowered and bowed to the so called "empirical, scientific, logical community" (a number of other self-descriptive phrases are given by those in this group), as if the man of faith had nothing on which to stand. Such is simply not the case. First, we must remember that while we cannot empirically prove everything in the Scriptures, and we need not waste time trying, neither can the scientific community empirically prove everything it believes and holds dear. We might cite many cases where science, so-called, espouses unproven, untested, unscientific theories—the theory of Evolution not the least of

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these. So science often deals in the realm of philosophy just as those of faith do. We hence see no reason for the believer to apologize for his faith any more than the scientist. At least the believer, in espousing faith in the canon, is dealing within his rightful field of philosophy from the very beginning; whereas the scientist often begins his field with empirical proof, but when such fails him he slips, ever so easily, into the philosophic realm, in order to maintain what is in essence unproven. True science and true research have not been found to contradict the Scriptures. Indeed they have been found over and over again to substantiate them. The believer can have full assurance that his faith rests not only on the most valid of philosophical ideals but also on the bedrock of true scientific fact. We must not let the "scientist" off so easily when he says, "but that is your belief—you have no proof."

The Apostles' View of Themselves

Before the various apostolic documents of the canon could be written there first had to be a belief by the apostles that what they wrote was inspired. We have already mentioned that those on the day of Pentecost held the apostles as inspired, but what made the apostles, themselves, hold such a view?

The key to this important question lies in the ministry of Jesus Christ. At the outset of His ministry Jesus hand picked twelve men to be His constant companions. To this group He revealed the innermost secrets of the kingdom of heaven (Mk. 4:11). They became eyewitnesses of His miracles and power. And it was to this group that Jesus promised power as well (Lk. 24:49; Mk. 16; Acts 1:5). It was also to this group that Christ had promised the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Counselor, to guide them into all truth, teach them all things, and bring all things to their memory (Jn. 14:26; 15:26).

Without doubt there was the belief in the apostles' minds that they had a mission to fulfill and the power to fulfill it. This was confirmed on the day of Pentecost when the twelve were filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). It's confirmation was continued as the apostles worked miracles and wonders among the people.

This understood power that the apostles had can be seen in many of the apostolic writings. They wrote with full authority and conviction. The Apostle Paul not only viewed himself as authoritative but it is clear that the primitive church did as well. Note his words in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 :

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing,
because, when ye received the Word of God which
ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men,
but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually
worketh also in you that believe.

This authority is found recorded over and over in the Scriptures. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:37 that if any thought himself to be a prophet, let him acknowledge that the things Paul wrote were the commands of the Lord. Paul appeals to Jesus' authority to back his own. In 2 Corinthians 10:10 he speaks of the power of his written word as he quotes his critics. If his critics viewed his writings, which undoubtedly are part of the canon today, as authoritative, then how much more did the sincere believer in the primitive church? He goes on to say in verse 8 that the Lord had distributed this power to him. In the next chapter he shows that he was equal to the other apostles and thus implies that they had this power, too (11:5).

Over and over the Apostle Paul warns believers from slipping from the power of his words. Galatians 1 and 2 are perhaps the most abrupt reminder of this fact. His direct statement in Galatians 2:11-12 stands as a monument. "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received of man neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Here Paul directly identifies his source of power. He uses this context to show that he had not received his power from men, not even the other apostles—a remark in keeping with 2 Corinthians 11:5. Paul viewed his apostleship as a mission from God. This is illustrated by the fact that nine of Paul's thirteen epistles begin with, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ." Only 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon are excepted.

One of the most powerful statements of the revelation process can be found in 1 Corinthians 2. Here, after correcting the division of chapter 1, the apostle reminds the Corinthians that the very mind of God had been revealed to him. And this by the Spirit of God who alone knows the mind of God (2:10-12). Verse 13, although variously interpreted, also seems to tell us that the very words of the apostles

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were inspired. Paul uses the term "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (KJV). This phrase seems to indicate that the Holy Spirit not only inspired the apostolic message but also superintended the very words that were spoken or, in this case, written. Other translations render this "expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (NIV). We believe that the correct thought is here borne out.

So we see a progression in Paul's logic. God's mind can only be known by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit revealed God's mind to the apostles, the apostles revealed God's mind through the words they wrote, the words they wrote were superintended by the Holy Spirit. There is therefore no mistake or error in the doctrine taught.

In this same context, Paul also contrasts the inspired man (i.e., the apostles) to the natural man (uninspired men) who did not receive God's mind and neither could receive it. In other words, the revelation process, while being that which all could understand and believe, was not a process that directly involved every man. Only a select few had such power. This, then, made their words authoritative.

Many other examples could be cited, but we believe these suffice in proving that the apostles viewed themselves as authoritative. Paul was not the exception. Peter and others held the same view of their authority and Peter also viewed Paul as inspired (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

In returning to the canon, we note that not all of the New Testament was written by apostles of Jesus Christ. Although most of the canon can be traced to apostolic authority (including Mark who was apparently a student of Peter; and Luke, a traveler with Paul who wrote Luke and Acts) we must still consider the fact that some of our books do not bear apostles' names. Indeed some do not bear any name at all (cf. Hebrews). How then do we account for their validity? And perhaps even more important is the question of how the early church knew that certain writings should be accepted and others rejected, especially in light of the fact that the apostles could not be at every congregation at every moment. We must also consider the fact that as time went on certain apostles began to die. What criteria did the early church have in determining if a subsequent writing that came their way was truth?

To answer this vital question we must again turn to the Scriptures. While the apostles did many mighty miracles and confirmed their own words, there were other processes of inspiration going on in the first century as well. Not only did the apostles possess special power

from on high, but so did others in the primitive church. We believe these spiritual gifts became the link between the apostles and the formation of the New Testament canon.

We learn from Acts 8:18 that only through the laying on of an apostle's hands the Holy Spirit (i.e., ability to perform miracles) could be given. This fact is substantiated by Philip who was not an apostle but a preacher of the gospel. While having the ability to perform miracles himself, for he had apostolic hands laid on him in Acts 6, he could not impart such power to others. This ability was held only by an apostle (cf. Rom. 1:11; Acts 19:6; 2 Tim. 1:6). It is clear, however, that the apostles were not stingy in their impartation of spiritual gifts. The Scripture records much about this process and those who possessed this power. A large block of 1 Corinthians is written to correct abuses of these gifts among the body at Corinth. Other books such as Ephesians and 1 Timothy mention these gifts. Indeed, they were an integral part of the primitive church.

But what power did these spiritual gifts give to those so endowed? How did these gifts aid in the formation of the canon? To answer this question let us discover the nature of these gifts and the offices in the church they influenced.

The Apostle Paul lists the offices within the primitive church in Ephesians 4:11-15. These offices function, he says, as a direct result of the Lord's gift to men and it included those offices that would lead the church to maturity. These offices are listed as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Note that Paul affirms that the power behind these offices was divine just as his apostolic calling had been.

As we look at this list of offices, we cannot help but recognize the importance that the "preaching of the word" held in each. Apostles obviously were the first to preach the word. As they traveled they trained evangelists such as Timothy and Titus to preach. As congregations were established, the apostles imparted spiritual gifts which enabled additional edification to go on within the church. Two of the functionaries within the early church were the pastors who were to be apt to teach (1 Tim. 3:2) and the teachers who taught God's Word (2 Tim. 2:2). Without doubt all of these offices possessed spiritual gifts. These gifts aided in preaching and confirming the correct message, a message that later would become the writings of our canon.

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The Nine Spiritual Gifts

It seems clear that not only did the specific offices receive spiritual gifts but other individuals did as well. And just as gifts were given to enable some to preach the word, gifts were given to enable others to determine the validity of their statements. Let us notice the listing of the nine gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11:

Now 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. But 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.

We believe that all nine of the spiritual gifts at least indirectly relate to the preaching of God's Word and the formation of the canon. At least four, however, directly relate to the canon. Time would fail us in this context to study all of the nine, but let us at least focus on the following four.

The Apostle Paul mentions the "word of wisdom." This is generally construed to mean the ability to preach the gospel of Christ. It seems to indicate that the recipient could, without the use of natural maturity or secular learning, impart God's revelation. Second was given the "word of knowledge" which apparently enabled one to understand and teach the words of the apostles. To others were given the gifts of "prophecy." This again included such things as the ability to speak the truth of God as guided by the Holy Spirit, and this to edify, comfort, perhaps predict or at least forth-tell, and encourage believers. Finally, the gift of the "discerning of spirits" was given.

David Lipscomb describes this last gift:

The power bestowed on certain persons by the Spirit to discern the secret dispositions of men. It was one of the gifts peculiar to that age, and was especially necessary at a time when God's revelation was not fully established or generally understood, and when many deceivers were abroad. This seems to have been exercised chiefly upon those who came forward as teachers of others, and whose real designs it was important that the church should know.¹¹

Perhaps the most important of gifts, as pertains to the canon, is this gift. As noted, this gift enabled the early church to immediately know if that which was spoken was true. We believe that this gift included the ability to discern the truth of those things which were written as well. The importance of this gift must not be underestimated. It was the very safeguard that the early church needed to keep its doctrine pure and to collect the correct documents for future generations.

When Did Spiritual Gifts Cease?

In our study of this inspiration process we must also note the time sequence involved. The apostles would not live forever. It is also clear that those on whom they laid their hands would not live forever. How long, then, did it take for the formation of the canon and how long can we say that those who possessed these gifts lived? At what time did spiritual gifts cease? Until what time did the primitive church know by inspiration which writings were to be accepted?

While not going into a full study of the issue of spiritual gifts, we must not overlook the statement of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. From this chapter, especially verses 8-10, we understand that he did not view them as permanent. He envisioned a time (v. 10) when something he called "complete" would replace the prophecies, tongues, and knowledge of verse 8. In fact, the condition he then viewed the church in was a state of immaturity in which complete and mature thinking was not yet possible. At some time in the future, however, these conditions would be replaced with a clearer understanding.

Much debate has raged among Charismatics and non-Charismatics as to what Paul referred when he spoke of the "complete." Again, without going into a full discourse of this issue, we see no reason to

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deny that Paul had in mind the completion of the inspiration process which ultimately culminated in the completed canon of Scripture. While the context of chapter 13 is indeed **agape** love, leading many to miss the point of Paul's message, the broader context is that of spiritual gifts and how they impacted the revelatory process. While the apostles lived the revelation they imparted was piecemeal—not all was given at one time. Indeed, had this been possible there is evidence the early church would have been unable to digest it. Maturity, like revelation, was a process of time, but a time that was not indefinite! Remember, Paul saw events unfolding that would bring forth a corpus of Scripture from which all could mature.

The Completed Canon

Historical testimony affirms that by the time of Irenaeus, at the later part of the second century, the New Testament canon was well on its way to being universally accepted. We understand that there were exceptions in some parts of the world for debates continued to rage over various books. We also understand that from an historical standpoint we might not actually be able to show a definitive list until sometime in the fourth century. These issues, however, in no way materially affect the fact that around A.D. 150 to 190 the canon was complete and fully accepted by the early church.

With this in mind it becomes enlightening to couple these facts with the truths we have discovered from the Scriptures in regard to the temporary nature of the revelatory process. If the last apostle to die was John around the years of A.D. 90 to 100, then we can know that at least until this time spiritual gifts could still have been imparted. It is also reasonable to surmise that at least some who had received spiritual gifts would live for fifty years after receiving the gifts, thus bringing the inspiration process to at least the mid-second century, assuming one received the gifts at an early age. This might even be extended further when we consider historical evidence. Milligan says that Polycarp, one of John's disciples, and bishop of the church of Smyrna for about eighty years, suffered martyrdom in A.D. 166. He goes on to say that it is not unreasonable to think that others had such a long ministry. Hence, if any of the "disciples" of the apostles were bestowed with spiritual gifts, a very reasonable conclusion, then we have no problem in putting the inspiration process well into the later part of the second century. Milligan traces such to at least A.D. 150.¹²

Our point in this is the fact that spiritual gifts included the ability to teach God's Word accurately and discern the accuracy of what others spoke and wrote until at least A.D. 150. When we couple this fact with the fact that by the time of Irenaeus (c. A.D. 150) the canon was practically established, we see that the primitive church would have had no difficulty in ascertaining the truth of letters that were circulated. Those with this discerning power could know by inspiration whether a letter were authentic or from the hand of inspiration. Thus historical evidence and Scriptural evidence about the completed canon agree perfectly!

In relation to this issue is the interesting point of whether or not those endowed with spiritual gifts wrote? We believe that such must have been the case. This, if true, would then account for the writings in our canon not written directly by an apostle. Much has been made of the idea that Mark received his material from Peter and Luke received material from Paul. While this seems historically accurate, thus giving the books credence, let us for a moment remove the human reasoning process from this question. Let us rather suppose that Peter imparted spiritual gifts to Mark and that Paul did the same to Luke. Let us then suppose that they had one of the four gifts that we have mentioned above. This would account for the accuracy as well as the inspiration of Mark, Luke, and Acts. A much better explanation we believe.

This does not discredit the association that these writers had with the apostles and neither does it diminish our belief that God allowed each writer to use talent and sources available to produce his writing. All we are emphasizing is the contention that it was not so much the hand of Peter or Paul in Mark and Luke's work as it was the hand of the Holy Spirit. Mark may have recorded what Peter told him since Papias asserts that Mark was Peter's interpreter. And Luke may have received much information first hand from Paul, but this does not negate the inspiration process in as much as we believe that those things which were written were written accurately regardless of their source.

Disputed Books

But what of those books that are said to have been disputed by various congregations? When did these disputes arise? Were they disputed during the days of spiritual gifts? How long after the apostolic period did it take before the matter was settled?

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It seems logical that the Holy Spirit had a hand in preserving all the books that we now enjoy in our canon. We see no other conclusion as logical in view of the aforementioned facts. However, there were certain books that were questioned: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelations. How then do we account for this?

We believe that during the "gifts era" there were no disputed books. Why should there have been? The primitive church had the ability to ascertain the truth of a document! We, therefore, opt for the explanation that most, if not all, of the "disputed books" were initially accepted but came to be disputed only in the "post-gifts era" as external influences and heresies began to work. Let us notice the following regarding the disputed books.

The situation regarding Revelation is rather clear. Widely accepted in the early days, it was later questioned due to a backlash against Montanism. It soon regained its place and has remained unquestioned since A.D. 400.¹³ We refer the reader to Harris for a fuller discussion of this and the issues surrounding the books we will now mention.

While external testimony for 2 Peter is weak, the book does claim to be the work of the apostle. If, therefore, any of its contents are valid—a fact that is beyond dispute—then we must accept it all. Polycarp alludes to it and so does Origen. Origen seems to indicate that its authorship was disputed in his day. This perhaps, as Zahn argues, is the result of the letter being sent to a different group of Jewish Christians thus giving it difficulty in establishing itself. Hermas, 1 Clement, 2 Clement, and the Didache use similar wording to 2 Peter that might lead us to conclude that they accepted 2 Peter as well.

In all of this we must keep in mind at least two things. First we must remember that modern printing methods were not available in the second century; thus, for a letter to be copied and distributed would take much time. We do not think it unreasonable to assert that several months or years might go by for even an apostolic letter to be circulated among a great majority of the churches. If, for example, a letter were written to the church at Antioch it might take some time for it to eventually get to Rome. Here we give the example of major church centers but we must assume that as the gospel spread, so too did the church, thus producing isolated congregations throughout the world. These congregations surely did not receive the writings so quickly. Because of this there may be what we might call "down time"

between a letter being written and it being fully accepted by a majority of churches. We therefore must ask a series of questions in regards to disputed books. Questions like: When was it disputed? Who disputed it? How long did it remain disputed? It seems very possible that a book might be disputed, or even unknown, by remote congregations long after it was already accepted by major churches.

Secondly, we must remember that, like Revelation, it is possible that 2 Peter (as well as other disputed letters) immediately received acceptance, especially by those to whom it was initially written, but as time wore on, undetermined events (such as heresies which developed from even some of the apostles legitimate writings) may have given rise to questions. Since we are dealing in speculation we deem it dangerous to theorize too far. Whatever gave rise to this dispute matters not, for we affirm that 2 Peter's content accords very nicely with other well-known apostolic writings. Thus, we see no need for contention. Indeed, like Mark and Luke, it may have been that another wrote the letter under the guidance of Peter and with his apostolic authority. Or it may be that Peter dictated its contents and another wrote its actual words, thus leaving some with the impression that it was not of apostolic authorship. Truly, we do not know and the foregoing is primarily speculation. Needless to say the book is valid, powerful, and doctrinal.

John's last two epistles have sufficient testimony to their genuineness, though it is not abundant.¹⁴ The dispute over these may be due in part to their being so short and because they do not contain the amount of doctrine that other works do. The Muratorian Canon mentions two epistles of the Apostle John and some have seen this reference to the two in question. Origen mentions the Epistles of John as if there were more than one. Thus, while limited, there is evidence that they are valid. Again, we point out that the above mentioned factors regarding distribution and circulation may have been at work. Because they are so short and personal it may be that they were not circulated widely and quickly. And while containing doctrine to some degree, they do not compare with the amount of doctrine that we find in a book like Ephesians.

The problems with James and Jude arise from the fact that there are at least two Jameses and two Judes in the New Testament—maybe more. James the brother of John and son of Zebedee, and James the son of Alphaeus, are both mentioned over and over as apostles. Judas Iscariot also was one of the Twelve, and another Jude, called "the

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brother of James" is mentioned in Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13. Without going into a full discussion of these individuals, suffice it to say that this situation caused some to dispute the books' authorship. We note that the contents were not so much called into question as to the mystery behind their authorship. To make matters more difficult early tradition has little to say about this question. Probably the author of James was the Lord's brother and the author of Jude was probably a brother as well. Additionally, some have seen Jude as quoting from Apocryphal literature thus throwing shadows on its origin. To this, however, we say that even Paul quoted pagan sources—as do preachers today in their sermons.

The final book we will briefly discuss is that of Hebrews. Without doubt this book contains some of the most beautiful doctrine of all of the early church. It definitely belongs in the canon of Scripture but it gives no hint of apostleship and does not bear its authors name. The words we find in Hebrews 2:3-5 seem to indicate that a post-apostolic time frame is logical. But in reality, no date or author can be accurately determined. As we shall see, however, Clement seems to have known of this book at a very early date. Origen is also quoted as saying:

If I gave my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are those of the apostle, but the diction and phraseology are those of someone who remembered the apostolic teachings, and wrote down at his leisure what had been said by his teacher. Therefore if any church hold that this Epistle is by Paul, let it be commended for this. For not without reason have the ancients handed it down as Paul's. But who wrote the Epistle, in truth, God knows.¹⁵

In reality we need not spend much time on the issue for without doubt it belongs in the canon of Scripture.

As the writings began to be collected, we must understand that while the limits of the canon were for all practical purposes quickly established there were other writings that were highly regarded.¹⁶ As indicated in the outset of our study a number of other writings appeared which vied for, but never attained, equal rank among the churches. We now give but a few examples.

Popular Non-Apostolic Books

The letter called 1 Clement, a letter written by Clement of Rome in the name of his church to the church at Corinth (c. A.D. 96), was highly and widely esteemed. It was even read in the public service of the church at Corinth about A.D. 170.¹⁷ Clement, a contemporary of Peter and Paul, was a bishop of the church in Rome. His letter is a gentle exhortation against a feud which had broken out in the Corinthian church. Thiessen says that 1 Clement was accepted by Irenaeus of Gaul, by Clement and Origen of Alexandria, as well as various other writers in Egypt of the fourth and fifth centuries. It is attached to the Codex Alexandrinus (A), as is also 2 Clement (falsely ascribed to Clement).¹⁸ Neither of the two Clements, however, found canonical recognition in the West. The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (A.D. 110) also found some acceptance. Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John and penned this epistle to the Philippian church in response to their request for advice. It bears much similarity to Paul's writings.¹⁹ The Epistle of Barnabas (A.D. 90-120) was a general epistle addressed to all Christians and is included in Codex Sinaiticus (A.D. 350). It enjoyed some acceptance, although it is still uncertain whether the Barnabas of Acts actually wrote the letter.

Other writings that came to be extremely popular were: the Didache (c. A.D. 120), also known as The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles; The Epistles of Ignatius (A.D. 100, a disciple of Polycarp who wrote seven epistles addressed to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, Romans and to Polycarp); The Shepherd of Hermas (c. A.D. 140—also found in the Alexandrinus manuscript); and at least a dozen less important books such as the Apocalypse of Peter (before A.D. 150). These were highly regarded but did not gain serious recognition.

Pseudepigrapha Writings

In addition to the non-canonical books which enjoyed limited acceptance, there were books that were clearly spurious in nature. Some of these works, though inferior to the New Testament, were written by Christians during the post-apostolic period. Others, however, were bogus writings which circulated with the falsely attached name of an apostle to lend them credence. We call these counterfeit works "pseudepigrapha writings." They contained numerous errors and doctrinal heresies and were often written by what we might call Christian cult groups.²⁰ Some were, however, used temporarily

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among the Eastern churches. Later, this would actually accelerate the crystallization of the New Testament canon. These spurious writings included several "Gospels" as well as "Acts of the Apostles" and "Epistles." Some of the more familiar ones include: The Gospel of Nicodemus (second-fifth century); The Gospel according to the Hebrews (A.D. 100+); The Gospel of the Egyptians (A.D. 130-150); The Gospel of Peter (A.D. 150); The Apocalypse of Peter (A.D. 150); The Acts of Paul (A.D. 150); The Acts of Peter (A.D. 190-200); The Acts of Thomas (A.D. 190-200); The Letter of Peter to James (A.D. 190-200); The Epistle to Laodicea (fourth century). And these are but a few of the scores of forgeries and pseudonymous writings that were circulated during the first few centuries of church history.

It is easy to see why the early church needed to know the limits of Scripture. Much confusion had arisen and many had proclaimed their own gospel just as the Apostle Paul had warned. The much needed limits were, we believe, a natural outgrowth of both inspiration and physical factors. We need to understand, however, that as far as secular research is concerned we cannot show with any degree of certainty that this process was complete or that there was a canon paralleling our current New Testament until the time of Irenaeus at the close of the second century A.D. And even for a few hundred years thereafter minor debates would continue.

This does not mean, however, that a canon did not almost immediately arise from within the first century church. We must keep in mind that the statements to which we turn for historical proof regarding the time frame for the canon's development are more a reflection of what was already accepted rather than what should be accepted. Therefore, if Irenaeus gives a very similar parallel canonical listing late in the second century A.D. the one definitive thing we can say is that those books were canonical "before" that time. We can push their canonicity to an earlier point before Irenaeus, but how much earlier is speculative.

Without doubt the canon of Scripture was set by about A.D. 150. Inspiration had dictated the books that were to be included and the primitive church had no problem in knowing which books were to be accepted. As time wore on, however, the early church began to encounter various physical factors that helped promote the crystallization of the New Testament canon. We stress, however, that the canon was already set and the factors that followed merely crystallized that which had already been given by God. In addition, as time

progressed various churches of the post-apostolic era began to depart from the known legitimate writings. This sent the church scurrying back to the authenticated works of the Holy Spirit. As is so often the case when man departs from God's will, he soon finds himself in trouble and must then work much harder to return to the truth. Such was the case of the post-apostolic church.

Physical Factors that Promoted the New Testament Canon

At least four physical factors materially promoted the crystallization and acceptance of the New Testament canon in the post-apostolic era.²¹ Again we stress that these were physical factors that followed the "inspiration process." God had given the canon but then allowed both physical and spiritual factors to hasten the wide acceptance of the twenty-seven books.

First, there was the recognition of 1 Clement, the Didache, etc. by many Eastern church leaders. As we have noted, this gave impetus to the setting of the Scripture's limits since some churches used these writings in their worship. Second, there were other apocryphal and pseudepigraphon books that purported to be inspired. Although these plainly exhibited inferior doctrinal soundness to even the writings of Clement, they still proposed a threat to many Christians who were influenced by them. Thirdly, another factor which materially promoted the crystallization of the New Testament came in A.D. 303 when Diocletian made an edict that all sacred books be destroyed by fire. This obviously gave stimulus to sorting and hiding those books that Christians did not want destroyed. Thiessen aptly points out that it may be because of Diocletian's edict that we have so little of the New Testament from the first three centuries available today.²² The fourth thing that promoted the acceptance of a New Testament canon was the influence of a heretic by the name of Marcion (c. A.D. 140). As we now turn to Marcion's story, we note that his heretical practices probably materially promoted the acceptance of the legitimate canon of the New Testament more than any other single physical event.

Marcion the Heretic

Marcion is the first known person to have published a fixed collection of what we might call the New Testament. There may have been others before him but we have no such knowledge.

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Marcion was born about A.D. 100 at Sinope, a seaport on the Black Sea in Asia Minor; his father was a leader in the church of that city. Raised in the apostolic faith, Marcion remained very interested in Christianity and began, in his adult life, to place very special emphasis on the Apostle Paul. To Paul's writings he became passionately devoted and eventually came to see Paul as having been the only apostle that truly preserved the teaching of Jesus in its purity.²³ Because Paul had de-emphasized the element of law-keeping in the message of salvation, Marcion eventually proposed that not only was the Old Testament law not needed in Christianity, but also the entire Old Testament had absolutely no value either.

Marcion embraced with ardor the gospel of justification by divine grace apart from legal works and taught that the true gospel was an entirely new teaching brought to earth by Christ. The law and the prophets made no preparation for it, and if some passages in Paul's correspondence suggested that they did, those passages must have been interpolated by others—by the kind of Judaizers against whom Paul had warned.²⁴ Marcion sharply attacked all forms of legalism and Judaism. He saw the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament as being distinct deities opposed to one another. F.F. Bruce says that Marcion's view of this distinction of two deities, each with his independent existence, betrays the prevalence of his gnostic views.²⁵

Marcion believed that the God who created the material universe, the God of Israel, was a totally different being from the Father of whom Jesus spoke. The Father was good and merciful and none had ever heard of Him until Christ came to reveal Him. Like much of Gnosticism, Marcion held that the God who made the physical world was inferior in status and morality to the Supreme God who was a pure spirit. Marcion even went so far as to state that Jesus did not enter the world by being born of a woman—indicating his disdain for the physical. Since the material world was evil, the ascetic life was to be embraced. Meat-eating and sexual intercourse only played into the hands of the Creator God who was evil and inferior.²⁶

Marcion regarded Paul as the only faithful apostle of Christ, and also held that the original apostles had corrupted their Master's teaching with an admixture of legalism. Christians, he held, should only give heed to Paul and should reject the Old Testament completely.

As long as Marcion remained in Asia Minor he remained in communion with the church. Bruce even sees some indication that he may have shared his views with other leading churchmen of the region, such as Polycarp of Smyrna and Papias of Hierapolis, but found them unresponsive.²⁷ In any event, whether to find more response to his teaching or some other reason, eventually Marcion made his way to the imperial city of Rome sometime around A.D. 139 when Antoninus Pius was principate. Because Marcion was a very wealthy ship-owner, he, upon his arrival, donated a large contribution to the church equivalent to ten thousand dollars.²⁸ When the Roman church began to listen to his doctrine, however, they not only rejected it but returned the money he had presented as well.

Marcion's endeavor to call the Roman church back to what he saw as the gospel of Christ and of Paul resulted in his own excommunication about A.D. 144. At this point, however, he started a church of his own and began to gather followers. This church survived for several generations. This is interesting since celibacy was obligatory on all its members and new members came only through conversion. At the same time, however, believing there to be no distinction between men and women (Gal. 3:28), Marcion allowed no discrimination against females in matters of privilege or function.

For his followers use Marcion compiled a canon of sacred books, composed of ten epistles of Paul (omitting the Pastorals), and the Gospel of Luke. He expurgated them of all passages which implied that Christ regarded the God of the Old Testament as His Father, or was in any way related to Him.²⁹ The birth of John the Baptist was omitted as it implied a connection between Jesus and something that went before. The birth of Jesus was omitted; for Marcion believed that Jesus entered the world by a "descent" as supernatural as was His later "ascension." Bruce points out that, besides all this, Marcion found the whole idea of conception and childbirth disgusting anyway.³⁰ Marcion dealt with the text of Paul's letters in the same way, omitting anything he believed to be inconsistent with true theology. Many of the epistles, he felt, had been subject to corruption or interpolation by the human hand and he took upon himself the task of correcting this "unfortunate event."

It seems interesting that Marcion felt at such liberty to perform surgery on the writings of Paul. This comfortableness, as mentioned, came from his view that the human hand of interpolators had corrupted Paul's true intent. This viewpoint would perhaps be some-

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what understandable as one considers Marcion's almost gnostic and dualistic anti-physical theology, if it were not for the fact that while condemning what he saw as corruption proceeding from the human mind, Marcion choose to replace those "mistakes" with his own human mind's inventions. Clearly, Marcion was at odds with himself. If humanness is corrupt then what right does a human have to correct the text? It seems logical that the work of a human's hands on an already humanly corrupted text would only succeed in making it more corrupt.

Before closing our thoughts on Marcion let us remember that his teachings materially influenced the petrification of the New Testament canon. Marcion had formed his Bible in declared opposition to the holy Scriptures of the church from which he had separated. It was in opposition to this criticism that the church began to intensely recognize its heritage of apostolic writings. Because Marcion had gained so much acceptance and because he had so easily and arbitrarily changed the apostolic writings, it was evident that a universally recognized canon was needed.

Tests to Determine True Scripture

As the need for a fixed canon of Scripture became apparent there also arose in the post-apostolic church various criteria whereby books could be included or dismissed. There was never any serious question as to some of the writings, and these the most important—the four gospels, the epistles of Paul, the book of Acts, 1 Peter, and 1 John had secured a firm position in Christian thought and passed without problem into the accepted list of "Scripture." Other writings, however, some of which are even part of our New Testament canon today, did not enjoy such wide and unmitigated acceptance. Over the years four basic principles or tests emerged to help in the determination process. Irenaeus (A.D. 180) hints of three of the four in his work.³¹

As we begin to look at these tests we must again remember that they were designed substantially as a rebuff against influential heretics, such as Marcion, and their threats against the church. It still seems logical to say that our twenty-seven books had always been accepted by the primitive church. This due to the inspiration process. The tests we now discuss were *ex post facto* and if they had any validity or usefulness at all, (a question that merits our discussion), it was more in the weeding out of uninspired literature rather than the commendation of inspired writings. Their usefulness is seen more in their negative power rather than in their positive. This being the

inherent nature of the tests, they too fell short in many ways of their desired effects. Again, in the face of being redundant, we remind the reader that the apostolic test had been "inspiration thru spiritual gifts and the apostles." These human tests now being discussed were devised after this era had ceased.

The first test of a book's canonicity was its apostolic origin. This test was the decisive one, but could not be strictly applied, for it would have excluded two of the gospels (Mark and Luke). Thus it was modified to also include books deemed to have been written by those sustaining such a relationship to an apostle that their writing was on the same level of the apostolic works. This consideration was especially important in determining the canonicity of the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Luke, the Book of Acts, and the Epistle to the Hebrews. Luke was not an apostle but sustained a very close relationship to the Apostle Paul. His words as found in Luke and Acts were obviously valid by this criteria. Mark also, while not an actual apostle, was a close companion to Peter, Paul, and other apostles. It is believed by many that Mark obtained his material from Peter—Irenaeus, Eusebius both hold this view. Hebrews, in like manner was viewed through the years as either having been the work of Paul, Barnabus, or a close associate of the apostolic age.

The second consideration was the book's contents. Over and over again in this study we have emphasized that a book is not inspired because it is canonical, but is canonical because it is inspired. If a book's contents did not reflect a spiritual character to entitle it canonical rank then it did not come to be accepted. On the basis of this test, most of the apocryphal and pseudepigraphon (books falsely ascribed to inspired authors) books were eliminated. If a book taught doctrine contrary to known apostolic teaching it was not admitted. This test was not an accurate one either, however, because it placed the assessment of the books contents on a subjective scale. If one interpreted a book's contents to be in accord with inspiration then the book was accepted even though one's interpretation might be wrong.

The third consideration was the universality of the book. Was the book received by most of the churches? In order to be fully accepted, a book had to be vouched for by one or more of the leading congregations.³² H. C. Thiessen identifies this criteria as that which perpetuated the debate about the canonicity of the so called "antilegomena" books—those books more or less opposed by many religious leaders. We shall discuss this briefly in the following para-

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graphs. Again we observe that this test was also subjective. In fact it was dangerous. Anytime mankind relies on popular opinion as to whether or not something is "truth" the margin of error is increased. How could a majority vote determine "inspiration?"

Finally, there was the test of inspiration. Did the book give evidence of being divinely inspired? Being much like the first and second criteria this test probed the internal evidence of the book's inspiration. Did it speak with authority? Did it reflect thought in keeping with other inspired literature? Again, however, this test was subjective in nature.

Problems with the Tests

We have summed up the four criteria in a nice neat package. However, there is evidence that although the tests were well devised they provided little real guidance in their practical application.³³ In some ways they were even misleading. Certain books, for example, were obviously of inferior worth and yet professed to have been the work of an apostle. How, with this criteria, could they be disproved? Were they to be accepted on the mere basis of title? On the other hand, there were books which obviously possessed the highest excellence but which lacked the stamp of apostleship. A good example was the Epistle to the Hebrews. It was undoubtedly one of the finest Christian books to come from the apostolic age—but was it to be accepted? In the East churches wanted it included, but in the West quite the opposite view prevailed, for it was thought to be non-apostolic.³⁴

The test for apostleship was also embarrassing. During the middle of the second century there arose a wild millenarian movement known as Montanism. Because of its radical stance on the end of time it left in its wake a backwash that rejected all apocalyptic teaching. Doubts were naturally thrown on the book of Revelation. Before this time the church had treasured it, but for some time after it shared the fate of other apocalyptic literature.

It is obvious that conclusions regarding the fate of various books were far from unanimous. Generally speaking, from Irenaeus' time (c. 190 A.D.) the New Testament contained the same books as we have today. However, there were certain leaders that questioned particular books. Origen (c. A.D. 185-254), the best known scholar in the Christian church in the first half of the third century, distinguished between what he called the "homologoumena" (books universally recognized as Scripture) and the "antilegomena" (books more or less opposed).

The homologoumena included the four Gospels, thirteen Epistles of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, Acts, and Revelation. The antilegomena contained Hebrews, 2 Peter, 3 John, James, Jude, Barnabas, the Shepherd, the Didache, and the Gospel of the Hebrews.³⁵ Origen, however, frequently cited Hebrews as being Pauline and canonical.

In like manner Eusebius of Caesarea (c. A.D. 300), who through Pamphilus inherited much tradition from Origen, distinguished between the homologoumena and the antilegomena, but makes a three fold distinction instead of two. In his listing of the "homologoumena" he includes the four Gospels, Acts, the Epistles of Paul, 1 John, 1 Peter, and the Apocalypse. Under those he called "disputed" he mentions James, Jude, 2 Peter, and 2, 3 John. And under those he classified as "spurious," he lists the Acts of Paul, the Shepherd, the Apocalypse of Peter, Barnabas, the Didache, and perhaps the Apocalypse. Hebrews seems to have been inadvertently omitted although his other material indicates that he viewed it as Pauline, having been translated by Luke or Clement of Rome.³⁶

The lack of unanimity among leaders of the post-apostolic church should not surprise us. Remember that the apostles had warned of coming impostors and remember too that not all the writings bore an apostle's name (cf. Hebrews). Disagreements were sure to arise. The church gradually began to depart from the known "inspired" books after the spiritual gifts era. Thus it found itself, at some point, with the task of re-determining that which had already been determined in the apostolic age.

Another item of interest that comes from this period of time (c. A.D. 165) is the Muratorian Canon. This canon takes its name from L.A. Muratori, a distinguished antiquarian and theologian, who discovered it and published it in 1740.³⁷ Taken from a codex copied in the seventh or eighth century at the monastery of Bobbio, in Lombardy, it later came to be lodged in the Ambrosian Library, Milan, and is there still.³⁸ This codex probably dates from the end of the second century and contains a substantial part of our current New Testament list. It shows that less than sixty to seventy years after the apostolic age the New Testament was well on its way to being fixed. While we cannot say with any certainty that this fragment was the list of any "faithful congregation," we can use it as additional evidence in determining the historical date of the accepted canon. F.F. Bruce sums up the Muratorian fragment by saying that the list reflects the Roman church's policy at this time to rebut the Montanist and

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other challenges to universal truth by identifying the sure written sources of apostolic teaching or, as they came to be called later, the canon of the New Testament.³⁹ Although the Muratorian Canon is damaged at the beginning, its listing has been ascertained as follows:

Matthew	1, 2 Corinthians	1, 2 Timothy
Mark	Galatians	Titus
Luke	Ephesians	1, 2 John
John	Philippians	Jude
Acts	Colossians	Wisdom of Solomon
Romans	1, 2 Thessalonians	

This document also mentions the Apocalypse of John and the Apocalypse of Peter "which some of our friends will not have read in the churches."⁴⁰ The Shepherd of Hermas is also mentioned as a recently written book which ought to be read but which lacked the weight of the prophets' or apostles' works.

Although it cannot be stated with "historical" certainty (we contrast historical with Scriptural) that the New Testament took its exact current form before the middle of the fourth century, the above evidence is sufficient to show that the process was not as long in coming as many have supposed. In the year A.D. 367, Athanasius, who had come to be acknowledged as the foremost man in the whole church, issued his famous Easter letter, in which he enumerated the books as we now have them, and declared that these would henceforth form the Christian Scriptures.⁴¹ The Third Council of Carthage (397) gives us the first Council decision of the canon, Augustine being an influential member of the Council, and our exact twenty-seven books being embraced. In addition, the Council of Hippo (419) also gives the Carthaginian list of twenty-seven books.

H. C. Thiessen sums it up well as he says:

It is a remarkable fact that no early Church Council selected the books that should constitute the New Testament canon. The books that we now have crushed out all rivals, not by any adventitious authority, but by their own weight and worth. This is in itself strong proof of the genuineness and

authenticity of the books that have survived. It is not until the close of the fourth century that any Council even discussed the subject.⁴²

Before we conclude our study on the formation of the canon we deem it appropriate to turn to a short survey of those books various leaders, documents, and Councils recognized. To do this we will endeavor to progress chronologically making use of the following list:

Clement of Rome
(c. A.D. 30 - 100)

Wrote 1 Clement A.D. 96 to Corinth church. Knew of Matthew, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and references Hebrews. May have also been acquainted with James, 1 Peter, 1 Timothy, and Titus, but not sure. Clement lived contemporaneously with Paul and may be the Clement of Philippians 4:3, although some dispute this.

Ignatius: Bishop of Antioch
(martyrdom c. A.D. 116)

Knew of our New Testament in general. Knew the Epistles of Paul. Favored Matthew and John.

Polycarp: Bishop of Smyrna
(c. A.D. 69 - 155)

Uses much of New Testament in his letter to Philippians. Knew of Matthew and perhaps other three gospels. Knew of all of Paul's epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John. Also had 1 Clement and probably Acts. Polycarp was a student of the Apostle John.

Papias: Bishop of Hierapolis
(c. A.D. 80 - 155)

Says that Mark wrote his gospel in accord with what Peter had told him. Says Matthew wrote his **Logia** in Aramaic. Knew of John's Gospel. Eusebius says that Papias quoted 1 John and 1 Peter.

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Justin the Martyr (c. A.D. 100 - 165)

Wrote **Apologies** and the **Dialogue with Trypho the Jew**. Used Matthew, Luke, and John. References the Memoirs of Peter which probably means Mark's Gospel. Speaks of Acts, 1 Peter, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, and Revelations. Also speaks of the Didache.

The Didache Teaching of the Twelve (c. A.D. 120)

Uses Matthew a good deal and Luke some. Knows most of our twenty-seven books but does not quote Mark or John.

The Epistle of Barnabas (written c. A.D. 130)

Falsely ascribed to Paul's associate but a very early work none-the-less. Quotes Matthew and echoes Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Ephesians. Writer probably knew 1 Peter and may have known John, for certain passages remind us of John's writing. Clement of Alexandria treated the Epistle of Barnabas as canonical.

Theophilus: Bishop of Antioch (c. A.D. 115 - 188)

Seems to know most of our twenty-seven books. Is first to mention Gospel of John by name.

Hermas: Bishop of Rome from (c. A.D. 141 - 157)

Reputed author of the Shepherd of Hermas which was regarded as inspired by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. From the contents of the Shepherd of Hermas it seems he knew of Matthew, Ephesians, and may have known of Hebrews and James. Knew Revelation very well.

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Irenaeus of Asia Minor

(c. A.D. 140 - 203)

Knew of our four Gospels, Acts, Paul's thirteen letters, 1 Peter, 1 John, 2 John and Revelation. May have known of others.

Tertullian of Carthage, N. Africa

(c. A.D. 150 - 222)

Accepts four Gospels, thirteen Epistles of Paul, Acts, 1 Peter, 1 John, Jude, and the Apocalypse. Says that Barnabas wrote Hebrews but does not accept it as Scripture. Does not mention James, 2 Peter, 2, 3 John.

Clement of Alexandria, Egypt

(c. A.D. 155 - 215)

Recognized all the books in our present New Testament. Held that Hebrews was written by Paul and that Luke translated it. Did not comment on James, 2 Peter, 3 John. Also recognized the Apocalypse.

Origen of Alexandria

(c. A.D. 185 - 253)

One of the greatest Bible scholars of the Ante-Nicene period. Accepts four Gospels, Paul's thirteen Epistles, 1 Peter, 1 John, Acts, and the Apocalypse. Saw as disputed Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James, Jude, Barnabas, the Shepherd, the Didache and the Gospel of the Hebrews. Probably accepted all the disputed books himself. Quotes Hebrews and cites 2 Peter and James as Scripture. Also cites the Shepherd and the Didache as Scripture. Regards the Apocalypse as inspired but not written by John. Values Jude highly but seldom quotes it.

Athanasius of Alexandria

(A.D. 298 - 373)

Perhaps the first to apply the term "canonical" to the exact twenty-seven books we now have in our New Testament.

Jerome

(c. A.D. 340 - 420)

Made the Latin translation of the Scriptures known as the Vulgate at the request of Damasus, bishop of Rome. His New Testament contained all twenty-seven of our current books. Explains how the

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various Catholic Epistles (i.e., James-2 Peter) gradually came to be recognized. He accounts for the differences in vocabulary and style between 1 and 2 Peter on the ground that Peter had a different "interpreter" for them. Jerome pleads for the acceptance of Hebrews.

Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354 - 430)

Foremost of the Latin "Fathers." Was bishop of Hippo from 395 to his death. Accepts all twenty-seven books of our New Testament but seems to distinguish between them as to what he saw as their value. Not all books, in his opinion, were of equal value or authority.

The Third Council of Carthage (A.D. 397)

Gives us the first Council decision on the canon. Demanded that nothing other than "canonical books" be read in the Church under the title of divine Scripture. Identifies our current twenty-seven books as canonical. Augustine was an influential member of this Council.

The Council of Hippo (A.D. 419)

Gives the Carthaginian list of twenty-seven books. Lists fourteen epistles of Paul instead of the usual listing of thirteen—the fourteenth being Hebrews.

Canonization and God's Will

As we conclude our study of the canonization process, one important question remains. How do we know that the sixty-six books are valid because they contain God's will and not because they were decreed such by various Councils or opinions of men? In reality we have already settled this question. But let us pause one final time and consider a few more points.

As we consider this question, we must first realize its importance. Not only is it significant from an apologetic standpoint, but it also holds special interest to those who oppose Catholicism. For in Catholicism, revelation is viewed as continuous, and tradition as equal with Scripture. A Council's decree or Pope's edict, therefore, would suffice in establishing the authority for any particular issue. If,

for example, the Third Council of Carthage closed the canon of Scripture at sixty-six books the issue is settled—at least until such time the decree is amended or overturned by subsequent Papal authority.

To many Protestants and other non-Catholics this solution proposes a problem. Non-Catholics generally do not accept the decrees of Council or Pope. At best they are viewed as non-authoritative and may even be seen as a direct fulfillment of apostolic warning that some would depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4). How, then, does the non-Catholic interpret and deal with the Catholic's assertion that the New Testament canon evolved "slowly" over a period of time with the church "Fathers" (in their view Catholic) endorsing or rejecting certain books? Must we assume that the canon is a product of Catholicism?

In answer to this issue a few observations are in order. First, as we have noticed, the perceived haze of obscurity surrounding the canon is not as impenetrable as one might first imagine. While many "Christians," Catholic and non-catholic alike, view the process as an unfathomable mystery, such is not the case. Believers need not be afraid that their faith is founded on spurious books or doctrines of men. We hope that in the previous pages we have sufficiently shown that even within a few years of the apostles, the canon was practically fixed. What we have in our New Testament is, without doubt, the writings of apostles or their close associates. While debates did occur regarding certain spurious and canonical books alike, the process did not take as long as some would like to think; for the initial process occurred during the era of spiritual gifts. Through the "gifts" God's hand dictated which books were to become normative. Only when the "church" began to depart from the inspiration process did problems begin to occur.

Second, we must realize that the "Catholic church" did not in any way decree or formalize the canon of Scripture. We have already shown that the apostles laid down the bedrock of truth to which all other writings could be compared. We have also shown that the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, and the inspiration process determined the remaining books of the canon. Any decree that came from Catholicism was in reality a reflection of what was already accepted by the common folk—not the hierarchy of the Catholic church. Non-Catholics need not buy into the notion that books were accepted because they were decreed canonical. To repeat, books were rather decreed canonical because they were already accepted. Formal

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decrees were merely human confirmation of what God had already caused to occur. We believe that man in no way forced the hand of God in this awesome process.

In addition, we must also realize that when the writings were first collected and circulated there was, as yet, no such formal institution as the "Catholic Church." The inaccuracy often propagated by Catholic theologians and modern scholars is that the Catholic Church was part and parcel with the apostolic church. Such is neither historically nor doctrinally correct.

Apostolic Christianity, when first given from above, was pure. As the Holy Spirit had predicted, however, there soon arose a "departure from truth." It is dishonest for Catholicism to claim for its roots Peter, Paul, or other apostolic tradition, for in reality it is within the "falling away" period that error's seed germinated into Catholicism. Were it not for false dogmas like "continued revelation," "Papal infallibility," etc., Catholicism would have no tap root with which it could anchor itself. A distinct separation between the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42) and Catholicism must be recognized.

We deeply appreciate the insights of Laird Harris in this regards:

Of course, the main assumption of Roman Catholicism is the usual contention that the Church of the first three centuries was a Roman Catholic Church. If so, it was a strange one. No present-day Roman Catholic would have felt at home in it. There was no doctrine of purgatory, of confession, of the mass. Both elements of the Communion were given to the laity. The infallibility of the Roman pontiff was nowhere held, because never claimed. There was no rosary, no celibacy of the clergy, no doctrine of indulgences, no treasury of merit, no doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary or special adoration of her, no immaculate conception or bodily assumption of Mary. The fact is that the Church of those centuries would have passed very well for a Protestant Church, but a present-day Roman Catholic would scarcely have known he had been to church if he had attended a meeting in the catacombs. This was the Church which for three centuries was testing the evidences concerning the New Testament books and was within

fifty years in full agreement on all but a handful of them. The remainder were accepted as the evidence was circulated and recognized. No church decree made them into Bible books.⁴³

Naturally, apostasy did not occur overnight, but secular history affirms that within twenty years of the last apostle's demise, unscriptural changes were taking place within the church. Ignatius of Antioch, previously mentioned, indicates that by A.D. 100-110 congregational leadership was undergoing change. Certain elders were being elevated to a higher position of "bishop" above their fellow "elders." This led to a hierarchy, ultimately giving way to the office of pope. This blatantly defied apostolic command regarding congregational autonomy and the various offices of leadership.

While not trying to demean the Catholic believer, our point is simply this: the canon of Scripture did not come about because the Catholic church created it. In reality the canon, for all practical purposes, was established long before Catholicism developed. Inspired apostles gave way in history to so-called "church Fathers" who were not only uninspired but who often taught error. This in turn gave way to "elevated elders within local congregations" which in turn gave way to a "hierarchy" among congregations. And this gave way to "Councils," "decrees of men," and eventually to sole power invested in one man—the pope. Finally, in the fourth century "the church" and the Roman Empire began to slowly merge under the influence of Constantine and his successors.

As we consider the validity of our sixty-six books we must not overlook the fact that God's hand often works through history. Perhaps it would be easier for the believer today if he could point to some exact moment in time when God revealed, in an instant, our sixty-six books. If perhaps one could pinpoint a single event that produced the canon then many of the surrounding questions that we now face would seem less perplexing. Since such is not the case, however, the believer is resigned to search for the truth of God's mind in trying to fathom the revelation process. This search begins and ends ultimately with God's will as given and revealed in the canon of Scripture.

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God in History

We believe that God's hand often works through history. God's will allows Him to accomplish things in His own way and by His own design. Since humans are creatures bound by time and space it seems only natural that God would use historical processes, at least in part, to accomplish His will among human flesh. We see such a manifestation of this process in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6-7). This same truth may be seen in the first covenant with the Patriarchs who, being men of historical proportion, found God working in and through their every day surroundings. God's almighty hand used the earthly flood to cleanse the world of wickedness. God used a literal bush aflame to speak to Moses. God's will chose the natural element of animal sacrifice to "roll" the Israelite's sins forward year by year. God used pagan nations such as the Assyrians and Babylonians to shape the history of Israel when they sinned. And over and over again we see God working through history and historical processes. This *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history), as the Germans called it, is but one method God employs to accomplish His will.

It certainly should be no less believable for us to see God's hand in the canonization process. While we believe that God grants all men a certain portion of reason and will, and while we believe that man then may use that to do as he pleases, we also believe that God's ultimate purpose endures in spite of man. This is the amazing paradox of providence. While the believer may find comfort and amazement in those events he assesses as being from the providence of God, the real manifestation of God's power is found in the fact that while man deliberately turns his will against God, in the end God's will is carried forth by the very defiant act conceived in the carnal mind to thwart the Almighty. The humanly designed crucifixion was carried out to silence Christ. It was the ultimate manifestation of rebellion. But by the same process of human cruelty all men now find salvation in Christ's redemptive blood. The divine blood shed by sinful man now becomes the very instrument of God's salvation for man.

It seems reasonable for us to believe that God used the events of human history to reveal His divine will. It also seems reasonable to believe that He used historical processes to shape the canon in which

His will was recorded. Because God did not reveal His entire Word at one instant in time, the logical conclusion is that He revealed it over a period of time. This period must surely have included the writing and collecting process.

Yet another problem for the non-Catholic is why God would use those heading toward apostasy to bring our sixty-six books to canonized status. Again we refer to the process of the collecting of legitimate books (i.e., canonization). We are not here referring to the process of inspiration. The apostles, Holy Spirit, and spiritual gifts allowed the inspiration process to occur as we have shown, but there were certain books that were at certain points disputed. These books, however, were eventually accepted unanimously. But what authority did any, be they "Church Fathers" or "Councils," have in saying certain books were legitimate?

In answering this question we gently remind the reader that "canonization" is a human process. It is a degree conferred by man, not God. We readily admit that evil men played a role in recommending and propagating certain writings. We also have seen in our study that evil men such as Marcion (as well as other physical factors) hastened the crystallization of the canon. Those writings that survived the fire of testing, however, did so because they were of divine substance—not because they were hailed by mankind.

One must understand that just as God uses history to accomplish His purpose, in like manner, He uses evil men. Even if (an "if" that is totally without validity, Scripturally and historically, for the truth is that "inspiration" gave us the canon) we were to hold that Catholicism, or some precursor to it, played a role in the shaping of our canon—so be it! The biblical precedent has already been set that God sometimes uses evil men and processes to accomplish His purpose. We see this over and over again in the Old Testament as God used wicked kings and rulers to mold and shape Israel. Could He not have done as much with our New Testament canon? We believe an answer in the affirmative is justified. Interesting is the fact, however, that even if one were to espouse the theory that Catholicism gave us the canon the issue of the canon's condemnation of Catholicism must still be addressed. Many are the practices of the Catholic church that violate the Scriptures. We find this ironic if the above theory is accepted!

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Finally, in considering the canon's development "faith" must play a role. If we accept the Scriptures as God's will then we must do so, at least in part, without empirical evidence. In a system of "faith" (i.e., Christianity) faith is the mandatory element. In addition, God requires it. We know that without "faith" it is impossible to please God. This we know because Scripture, on which our faith is based, tells us such (Heb. 11:6). Also, we believe that faith comes from hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17). Hence Scripture produces the faith that allows us to believe Scripture. On the surface it seems hopelessly circular, self authenticating, and illogical. In reality we find no problem with such logic. How can one speak of a document of faith without using "faith," or lack thereof, in a discussion of it? It is this writer's hope that every believer has processed his faith to the point that he has arrived at a reasonable, if not logical, basis for his conviction. Let us demonstrate our point.

In considering the canon it is impossible to empirically prove that our sixty-six books are inspired. Note that we must underscore the word "empirically." We have faith that they are inspired but science cannot, in and of itself, prove such. We cannot prove, scientifically, that only our sixty-six books, and not for example the Gospel of Thomas or the Shepherd of Hermas, belong to profitable Scripture. Could it be that the Shepherd of Hermas or the Didache contain that which is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness? This we may not employ science to access. There exists no litmus test to which we yield. We may, however, look at the canonization process and draw some logical conclusions about the final product that we now call the Bible.

Logic and Canon

First, because by definition God must be the highest, greatest, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Being of the universe, and we may rest assured that He has the POWER to reveal Himself. Were He not to have this power then by definition He would not be God. Second, because God is by definition the ultimate of goodness, love, grace, mercy and hope, and we believe by faith that He is WILLING to reveal Himself. We believe that He wants mankind, the created manifestation of His perfect love, to enjoy salvation in Christ Jesus through a knowledge of the truth. Additionally, we believe that God has the MOTIVATION to reveal Himself. He loves us. Therefore, because God has the power to reveal Himself, because He wants to

reveal Himself, and because He is motivated to reveal Himself, we logically believe that He HAS revealed Himself. This process we believe to be complete in the New Testament canon.

Because God has the power, will, and motivation to reveal Himself and because we believe that He has revealed Himself we also logically believe that His revelation is perfect. Again we use the test of the very definition of God. Were God not able to reveal himself perfectly then we would have to conclude that God was not perfect thus proving Him no longer God. We believe God's perfect revelation to be found within the canon of Scripture. This canon then, by definition of its source, must also be viewed as flawless as far as substance is concerned. If the canon does not contain all that pertains to life and godliness then we are left to seriously question the nature of God. Since God's perfect love desires all men to be saved, then we believe that God not only wanted to reveal himself perfectly but that He also wanted to make that record flawless. After all, what kind of revelation would it be that did not reveal the revelator clearly? Were the revelation to be less than perfect, the recipient's knowledge would be at best imperfect. Spiritual perfection would be impossible for the recipient.

Finally, because God has the power, will, motivation, and means to reveal Himself perfectly, we also conclude that He possesses the same in preserving a flawless record for all men of all generations. We cannot agree with the modern philosophy that while God may have initially revealed His mind perfectly, the record we have today of that revelation is hopelessly flawed by scribal hands. We believe that such a view seriously calls into the question the nature of God His goodness, His power. If God wants man to be saved through obedience to His will, it is logical that He would see that the saving message be preserved for all time. If He has not accomplished this task then we may no longer conclude that the gospel is God's power to salvation. Indeed, we may no longer conclude that God has any power whatsoever. Indeed, He is not God.

The above comments are not designed to engage the reader in an exercise of futility. Rather quite the opposite! We believe that the above considerations play a direct role in how we look at the canon of Scripture contained in our sixty-six books. We believe unequivocally that the sixty-six books contained in the biblical canon of Scripture are those, and only those, that God willed preserved. When we allow the above logic to guide our considerations we find no other conclusion credible. If God had the desire, motivation, will, power and means to

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reveal His perfect will, then the revelation we now enjoy is also perfect. And even though the human mind might not understand the process by which we have arrived at our sixty-six books this does not change the fact that God designed and implemented the process.

The Source of Truth

The final consideration we now probe in our survey of the canon is the theory that perhaps God did not intend to have a set collection of books containing all truth and that God allows the human mind to find truth wherever and whenever it sees best. By this view one might just as viably find truth in the Gospel of Thomas, Buddhism, or in the works of Shakespeare, as he would in the sixty-six books of the Christian canon. This view erases all distinction between secular and religious works. All that is secular becomes religious and all that is religious become secular depending on one's individual view.

While many in our world espouse this view-point, maintaining all the while that one can find truth in mixing differing philosophies, secular writings, and religions with one another, there remains, as we see it, a severe problem. The most apparent problem with this theory is that a breakdown occurs in the definition of "truth." Truth is no longer definable. All becomes subjective and the philosophy of the individual becomes the end-all of existence. Taken to its logical conclusion, morals, values, and ethics disappear. One man's definition of murder as unjustified becomes another's self-given right. One man's definition of adultery as that which is harmful to the family unit and to society, becomes another man's highest ethical standard. There arises an on-going flux in which nothing can truly be settled.

Naturally, we see the folly of such a system in practical every day living. Were there no set standard of truth in driving an automobile, for example, chaos would erupt. Were there no standard of truth in monetary exchange, business would grind to a halt. Obviously then, there has to be a standard of truth for society to function. Rejection of the standard results in chaos and a break down of social order. We believe the same to be the case in spiritual matters. Once society rejects the possibility of a single, coherent, body of "truth" the result is spiritual chaos. We are currently experiencing such chaos in our American society with the overwhelming influx of immorality, violence, disease, etc. We are amazed at the number of intelligent people who, while obeying the dictates of secular truth every day of

their lives, reject the notion of spiritual truth. May we not logically assume that truth in morality, philosophy and religion would be as stringent as truth in secular matters? May we not say with some confidence that the soul is at least as valuable as one's currency?

The conclusion we are working towards is obvious. For truth of any kind to exist there has to be, by definition, an ultimate truth. Else there would be no defining parameters of such. This truth we believe to be God. Since God is by definition the ultimate truth His word is also the ultimate truth to which nothing can be added or taken away. Given that God is good and that He wants us to know that truth we must look—not everywhere for truth—but in the system that provides us with the most logical, coherent, and noncontradictory evidence. This we believe to be Christianity as revealed in God's Word found in the canon of Scripture. 219 NE Carriage Ct., Lee's Summit, MO 64064

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The New Age Movement: School Curricula

The New Age Movement: School Curricula

by Jim Crouch

1. Is the New Age Movement affecting our school system?
If so, how?
2. What are parents' responsibility in regard to the above?

Humanism is a system of religion that focuses on humanity as the ultimate authority and purpose, leaving God out of the picture. Humanism is at the root of the New Age Movement, coupled with aspects of paganism and Eastern cult religions. Let us consider some of the core beliefs of New Agers.

1. **All is one (monism).** The entire universe swims in one great cosmic ocean. The only differences between humans, animals, rocks, etc. are only apparent differences.

2. **God is everything, everything is God (pantheism).** Trees, snails, books, people, etc. are all of one divine essence. God is an impersonal energy force or consciousness that moves through everything. As Shirley MacLaine says, "We are all gods, so we might as well get good at it."

3. **Self-Realization.** Since we are all gods, we need to know that we are gods. We must become cosmically conscious. Jesus was one of many "enlightened masters." He was such a dynamic person and teacher because He realized His essential "godness," something everyone is capable of doing.

4. **A New World Order.** New Agers believe in a progressive, evolutionary unification of world consciousness, eventually reaching the point of a one-world government (the new age, aquarian age, age of peace). A new global civilization and an eclectic world-religion are necessary because nationalism and traditional religious values keep humanity divided and unable to reach full potential.

5. **Reality is what you make it.** Reality is determined by what you believe. By changing what you believe, you can change reality. There are no moral absolutes because there is no distinction between good and evil. Whatever you believe to be good is good, and whatever you believe to be evil is evil.¹

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New Agers zealously seek an end to poverty, disease, homelessness, suffering, social discrimination, inequality, the destruction of the environment, and economic and political tyranny (all good goals). They claim to have answers to the questions of life and boast in the ability to enable people to tap into their "hidden potential."

How does one tap into his "hidden potential"? Once one is converted to the fact that he is god, he must raise his level of consciousness. This occurs through a variety of techniques, all of which have their origin in cult religions: yoga, meditation, transcendental meditation, chanting, astral projection, special dancing, self-hypnosis, biofeedback, or even sexual experiences. The thrust of the New Age religion is self-absorption. We must empty our minds of everything except the concept of being god. From here, through meditative techniques, New Agers rebuild the cognitive and behavioral character around the concept of divinity.

There is no way of calculating the number of New Agers in America today. As of 1991, four of the larger New Age Magazines claimed combined subscriptions of more than 600,000.² Based on this, we would conclude that the number of followers to be several million. They are loosely organized and lack strong cohesion, evidenced by a wide variety of beliefs and practices. Among the more "famous" New Agers of our society are: Shirley MacLaine, Linda Evans, Joyce DeWitt, Helen Reddy, Tina Turner, Lisa Boney, Paul Horn, George Lucas, Merv Griffin, John Denver, Phalicia Rashad, and Sharon Gless. Such "visible" spokespersons give the New Age Movement credence and greatly boost its growth rate.

The New Age Makes Inroads Into the Schools

The New Age Movement is certainly cause for concern, especially the rate at which it is growing. But have New Age beliefs and practices made inroads into our public schools? There can be no doubt about it. Marilyn Ferguson states,

Of the Aquarian Conspirators [her description of New Agers] surveyed, more were involved in education than in any other single category of work. They were teachers, administrators, policymakers, educational psychologists . . . Tens of thousands of classroom teachers, educational consultants and psychologists, counselors, administrators, re-

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searchers, and faculty members in colleges of education have been among the millions engaged in personal transformation. They have only recently begun to link regionally and nationally, to share strategies, to conspire for the teaching of all they most value: freedom, high expectations, awareness, patterns, connections, creativity.³

In a more recent work, Melody Baker presents a breakdown of the employment of New Agers that seems to indicate that perhaps 12%-18% of New Agers work in school-related professions.⁴ But do the personal beliefs of teachers and administrators, or the popular "higher consciousness" techniques of New Agers in general, make their way into the classrooms? If so, how?

Affective Education

Most public schools in the United States in 1992 are employing some form of affective education. By "affective education," educators mean psychological curricula that focus on the "affect," or the emotions. "Affective" education begins in kindergarten in many school systems. It is normally taught by school counselors and is supplemented by other material presented by teachers.

The purpose of affective education is to help students deal with their feelings and emotions in an effective manner. The hope is that in teaching children from a young age to understand themselves (i.e., what they feel and why they feel), they will become more rounded individuals and be able to understand better the feelings of others.

Since emotions and feelings have to do with the mind, affective education is simply another name for psychological development. Affective education is accomplished by a variety of means: therapeutic conversation, group conversation, meditation exercises (I will discuss this further), and even writing exercises, etc.

For example, in the Quest curriculum (used in 20% of public schools in 1992), an important feature is the student's journal, which is used for daily writing assignments. The curriculum states that the journal is to improve the student's writing and spelling techniques. However, the curriculum also tells the teacher not to correct spelling, sentence structure or organization! In actuality, the journal is used by the student to write his/her thoughts and emotions. The student may be asked to write about things that make them angry, sad, or afraid.

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They may be asked to write about their home, parents, teachers, etc. The idea is that students will open up their emotions and write things that they would never actually say. Further, teachers are instructed to keep the journals at school and not to allow anyone, including parents, to read their contents.

One Quest parent was startled when her daughter came home upset after a Quest class. The girl had been told to write in her journal about the last time her parents had made her angry. She was told to write in detail her feelings and thoughts. The child was very emotionally distraught after the exercise. When the parent asked to read the journal, the teacher refused. Only after a lengthy process was she able to read what her child had written. Further, the teacher explained that this a part of teaching the children to deal with their feelings and that she could see no harm in it.⁵

DUSO ("Developing Understanding of Self and Others") also explores student feelings. The teacher's manual introduction reads, "The teacher builds on feelings stimulated by the activities, and children are encouraged to discover the interrelationships among feelings, intellect and behavior" (p. 7). Throughout the curriculum, the teacher is instructed to ask questions such as the following as bases for group discussion:

—"Has anyone ever teased you or hurt your feelings?" (p. 77)

—"Have you ever been jealous of something someone else had? What was it?" (p. 79)

—"What are some things you know how to do? . . . feel confident about?" (p. 92)

—"Have you ever felt stupid because you couldn't do something?" (p. 121)

—"Have you ever felt guilty about something you've done?" (p. 176)

—"Have you ever been angry? What about? What did you do?" (p. 229).⁶

DUSO is a kindergarten through third grade curriculum. "Duso the Dolphin" leads the children into expressing and dealing with their feelings. PUMSY "In Pursuit of Excellence," a sister program for

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second through fifth graders, makes similar mind probes. In this curriculum, "Pumsy the Dragon" leads the students.

What Is Wrong With Affective Education?

First, it teaches children to be self-absorbed with their own feelings. The New Age Movement is very much centered on the individual's feelings and emotions. In order to raise our level of consciousness, we must look within ourselves to realize who we really are. Since there is no supreme "God," the only way we can determine right and wrong is to get in touch with our own feelings. Affective education teaches children to trust their feelings for guidance.⁷ Used to, people would say, "If it feels good, do it." New Agers say, "If it feels good, believe it; go with the flow; what you feel is what is real." Such emotional subjectivity leads people away from the truths of God's Word.

Second, affective education can have a negative emotional effect on children. In these curricula, counselors and teachers purposefully arouse strong feelings within the students, and then proceed to help the child deal with these feelings. Dredging up unpleasant memories, or dwelling on strong emotions, can be emotionally damaging, causing wide mood swings, general depression, and paranoia. Such emotional damage is enhanced by the fact that almost all curricula employing affective education is designed to be used in the classroom setting. Asking students to explain deep feelings before teachers and peers can, again, be hurtful and embarrassing.

Third, counselors and teachers are generally unqualified to engage in such mind probes, nor are they qualified to deal with emotionally crippling reactions that may result.

Fourth, not all students have emotional problems. While some troubled students may benefit from such exercises in the privacy of a psychologist's office, most young children have no need of such exercises. By utilizing such "emotion tampering" techniques, affective education can create emotional problems in healthy children. A small percentage of children have diabetes, but it would be disastrous to attempt to prescribe insulin for all the children: while some would benefit, many would be harmed. The same happens when affective education is prescribed on all children.

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Values Clarification

A second concern about current grade school curriculum is its employment of values clarification. In "values clarification," each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own moral values. The goal of values clarification is:

to involve students in practical experiences, making them aware of their own feelings, their own ideas, their own beliefs, so that the choices and decisions they make are conscious and deliberate, based on their own value systems.⁸

From the public educator's perspective, the purpose of values clarification is clear. The moral fabric of our nation is slowly unravelling. A host of children arrive at our public schools with a warped view of right and wrong. They do not know how to respect themselves, how to respect their peers, or how to respect authority. These children have never had a proper role model at home, and now teachers must deal with them in the public school system. As a result, one of the aspects of nearly every grade school curriculum, from kindergarten through high school, is values clarification. And since many of the children cannot depend on parents as a moral role model, the public schools are teaching children to formulate their own sense of values.

Of course, as Christians, we are not the least bit opposed to values being taught to our children. That is, if those values are Christ-centered values; if those values are the same as our values. The problem is that public school teachers, for a variety of reasons, are not able to teach "values" the way we would like to see them taught. They must teach general values in an indirect manner (non-directive education). Let me give you some examples from the Quest curriculum.

The Quest curriculum, like most affective education curricula, does not present decision-making as a matter of "right and wrong," but as a matter of "better and worse." Further, what is "better or worse" for one child may not be so for another child. In the junior high program, students are taught to follow a five step process when making important decisions:

1. identify the situation
2. look at alternative courses of action

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3. consider the information you have and examine the probable consequences
4. decide the best possible course of action
5. evaluate the results of the decision.⁹

Notice that the children are not asked to consider whether the activity is right or wrong, whether their parents would approve, and certainly not whether God would approve. In another exercise, the teacher presents the following list:

trying out for a part in the school play
skydiving
smoking cigarettes
approaching a person you don't know well
using a drug
sticking up for someone whom others are making fun of
drinking alcoholic beverages when your parents are not home.¹⁰

The teacher then tells the students that each item involves taking risks, and that "risks can lead to both positive and negative consequences." Another exercise entitled "Thinking About Taking Risks," tells students to list the positive and negative consequences of risks such as shoplifting.¹¹

In yet another exercise, the students are asked to rate various "philosophies" of life, including: pleasure centered, human centered, emotion centered and God centered. After rating each philosophy, students are asked to explain why they ranked them as they did. The students are then placed in discussion groups where they explain to one another the pros and cons of each life-style, as they see it. Afterwards, each child is given the opportunity to change his mind and re-rank the philosophies, based on how he would like to live his life.¹²

Interestingly, Quest International promotes its curriculum as a drug and alcohol prevention program (rated third best in the nation). While the program does describe the harmful effects of these substances and states the fact that they are illegal, students are still encouraged to make their own decisions regarding their use. By describing the harmful effects of drugs, Quest hopes that students will make the right choice. But nowhere in the program are students told not to

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choose to use these substances. Students are asked to make value-based decisions by considering the risks (low or high) and the possible consequences (good or bad).

What Is Wrong With Values Clarification?

The first problem with values clarification is that it does not work. While some students may receive benefit, many more students are harmed. Students who are engaged in strong values clarification programs actually, as a group, choose to take greater risks by participating in morally and legally wrong activities (i.e., drugs, alcohol, premarital sex).¹³ And interestingly, Quest's own research shows that this is the case with their students when compared to students not in a values clarification program.¹⁴

The second problem with values clarification is that it fails to teach "right and wrong." The fact is, there are some things that are morally wrong. In such cases, it is not a matter of determining the "risks" or the "consequences." If it is wrong, one must not do it on that basis, regardless of the risks or the consequences. Values clarification fails to recognize the moral absolutes of God's Word.

Values clarification plays into the hands of New Age thinking, because to New Agers, truth is perceived individually. It is not uncommon for the New Age believer to say "That's your truth, this is mine," as if truth, like beauty, exists only in the eye of the beholder. Because there is no great moral God (we are all "god"), we determine our own sense of morality. The threat of the New Age philosophy that teaches that moral, ethical, and spiritual values are purely subjective is real.¹⁵ It is in our schools. Have you noticed that many children today seem to have no sense of right and wrong? It is because they are not taught "right" and "wrong"—not at home and not at school.

Defenders of values clarification argue, "We are not teaching any one set of values; you on the religious right are just upset that we do not teach your values." That may sound reasonable on the surface, but in reality, it subjects good children to the New Age concept of self-determined morality. Sir Walter Moberly wrote,

It is a fallacy to suppose that by omitting a subject you teach nothing about it. On the contrary, you teach that it is to be omitted, and that it is therefore a matter of secondary importance. And you teach this not openly and explicitly, which would invite criticism;

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you simply take it for granted and thereby insinuate it silently, insidiously, and all but irresistibly.¹⁶

Meditation / Guided Imagery / Wise Guides

A third concern about grade school curriculum is the use of meditation and guided imagery techniques. Meditation and guided imagery techniques are used for a variety of reasons. Many psychologists utilize such techniques for relaxation, self-hypnosis, self-esteem improvement, positive thinking improvement, etc. Eastern cult religions and New Agers use such techniques in order to achieve a higher consciousness, for self-hypnosis, to communicate with the spirit world, etc.

The same techniques are used by a host of grade school curricula with the goals of: relaxation, improving self-esteem, improving creativity, and improving academic performance. The teacher's manual for DUSO ("Developing Understanding of Self and Others") reads,

A new guided fantasy activity is included with each goal. These relaxation and imagination exercises build on students' natural attraction to make believe experiences and increase their awareness of their own creative abilities (p. 8).

In DUSO1 and DUSO2, Duso the Dolphin leads children to discuss their personal feelings and problems. It employs relaxation techniques followed by guided fantasy. The children make regular journeys to "Aquatron," accompanied as they go by New Age music on a cassette tape.¹⁷ DUSO1 is designed for kindergarten and first grade, DUSO2 is a similar curriculum designed for third and fourth graders.

PUMSY ("In Pursuit of Excellence") is a sister program to DUSO, designed for first through fifth graders. Pumsy the Dragon is introduced to students in a storybook. Pumsy leads the students on various journeys and teaches them, among other things, the value of chanting. One of the end goals of the course is that the children come to realize that, "I am me and I am enough."¹⁸

The "Coping For Kids" curriculum contains the following on a guided imagery cassette:

Picture yourself lying on a cloud . . . take a nice slow ride to the ground and try to really feel calmer than you were at the tree tops. You may feel heavy in your

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arms and legs, and that's good. They may also begin to feel warm. That's good too. Keep breathing slowly . . . Feel the energy around you. You have a lot of healing energy. You can use it to make things feel better that may be bothering you. If you have an ache or problem in your body, imagine warm, healing energy moving there and making it feel better.¹⁹

In the process of meditation and transcendental meditation ("out of body experiences"), many New Agers claim to communicate to wise spirit guides or with deceased spirits. For example, Joyce DeWitt and Linda Evans both claim to receive advice from a spirit guide named "Mafu." Likewise, many grade school curricula introduce into their guided imagery the concept of "wise guides."

Huntsville, Alabama parents discovered that relaxation techniques associated with the New Age were being used with their children . . . The tape leads the child through deep breathing and guided fantasy to "feel strong and sure of yourself." Then the child is introduced to a "very wise rabbit" who has the answers to all the child's questions. In this guided fantasy, the child is taken to a "secret place" where he sits in "a white beam of light" and can get more answers to his questions "from deep underground springs within you."²⁰

The teacher's guide for the SOS ("Strengthening of Skills") curriculum reads, "Let your students know that if they find themselves unable to visualize a certain place or action, they can unblock themselves by visualizing a magic ring or wand or a magic energy pill or a powerful companion" (p. 172).

What Is Wrong With Meditation, Guided Imagery, and Wise Guides?

First, there is no evidence that guided imagery and meditation accomplish any of the stated goals for grade school children. There is no evidence that children's self-esteem improves or that academic performance improves. The research of Robert Marzano, author of "Tactics for Thinking" (uses a great deal of guided imagery) agrees with this. Since it has no academic value, it does not belong in the grade school classroom.

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Second, guided imagery techniques teach children to solve their problems by escaping reality. By teaching these techniques, it is hoped that these relaxation techniques will be used by the students for the rest of their lives. Michael LaBrosse, co-developer of "Whole Mind Learning," states that the goal is for students to eventually not be reliant on the teacher to direct the "imaging" exercises. Instead, the students should eventually "become self-guided."²¹ Instead of teaching children to learn to deal with reality is effective ways by teaching critical thinking and evaluation, guided imagery teaches children to turn their backs and escape reality.

Third, teaching children to turn to "wise guides" for answers to life's questions naturally teaches them look away from teachers, parents, and God's Word for answers.

Fourth, meditation and guided imagery techniques desensitize children to the religious practices of Eastern cults and the New Age. By teaching children that there is real benefit to deep meditation and the seeking of spirit guides, schools are teaching children to respect the practices of these false religions.

Interestingly, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has deemed that meditation and guided imagery techniques could not be mandated on employees who did not wish to participate (corporations often use similar techniques).²² Yet, school systems are allowed to employ such methods on young children, beginning in kindergarten, who can scarcely know how to object.

Other "New Age" Practices in Schools

1. **Magic/Sorcery.** Some programs contain a number of stories and pictures involving magic, witchery, sorcery, blood, and gore. Seemingly, the darkest of the available curricula is, "Impressions," published by Harcourt Brace, et. al. It is no longer being printed (printed 1982-91), but stock is still being sold.

2. **Self-Focus.** Many curricula have a self-focus: "You can do all things . . . You are the most important thing in life."

3. **Devaluation of Parental Authority.** Some curricula make statements that undermine the authority of parents. For example, consider the following from the Quest curriculum.

There are important things that you'll have to do in order to pass through the adolescent period success-

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fully . . . become independent from your parents and other adults . . . develop your own clear sense of right and wrong.²³

The generation gap . . . gets widest when young people are going through adolescence . . . it's normal for adolescents to want to make their own decisions and be as independent as possible. That's why parents . . . can suddenly seem like nosy prison wardens.²⁴

"Twelve Rules for Getting Along with Your Parents" include:

Let others have their way sometimes, especially with the little things . . . ask for your parents' advice now and then on something big enough to make them feel important.²⁵

Conclusion

Abraham Lincoln said, "The philosophy of education in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next."²⁶

If you are like me you might wonder, "Why are schools involved in such programs? Are schools not responsible for teaching the three Rs?" Somewhere along the way, the National Education Association and similar organizations decided that parents were not doing an acceptable job in teaching their children how to think and what to believe. And in many cases, they are right. Further, with both parents working (if there are two), children at school eight hours per day, and very little parent-child interaction in the remaining hours of the day; they determined that the school system was best equipped to teach these things to children. Children need a "whole education," they argue, "not merely an academic education."

Social psychologists underscore the importance of developing a firm set of values since they see our values as the prime determinant of our behavior. To be fully "in charge" each individual [student] needs to know the determinants of behavior and since the external world offers few consistent models [parents? religion?—jcl], each needs to look at other sources, namely internal sources. The role of the teacher becomes one of helping students discover and clarify

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their own values rather than one of teaching a prescribed set of values.²⁷

This is exactly what most public school systems set out to do. They do so through special curricula that parents may or may not know about. And often they do so without a "packaged" curriculum, so parents have virtually no way of knowing what their children are being taught. The DUSO curriculum specifically states, "Parents cannot directly influence the quality of their child's school day or TV viewing. As a matter of fact, they may run a poor third to these powerful elements in their children's lives." Unfortunately, for many children this is true.

What the NEA and other education organizations are setting out to do is not all bad, nor is it, in most cases, designed to turn children into "New Agers" (the techniques they employ come from suggestions from psychologists, not from some New Age textbook). They are doing what they think is right and helpful for children. Unfortunately for Christians, we live in a nation that is bent on eliminating all Christ-centered values from our schools. Unfortunately, few school teachers today are committed to Christ-centered values. And unfortunately, curricula writers seem bent on experimenting with various unproven psychological techniques in the classroom. The end result for Christians is that their children, who spend seven to eight hours per day at school, can be damaged greatly.

Parental Advice

1. **Teach your children.** The best defense against false teaching is proper teaching. We must take the time to develop within our children a proper relationship with Jesus, and a proper respect for God's will. The worst thing a Christian parent can do is to send a child to public school without a good, stable sense of values. If these values are not taught at home, children will almost certainly learn the pseudo-values taught at school.

2. **Talk to your children.** Pay attention to the books and school work that they bring home. However, we must realize that much of the "New Age" teachings and techniques in our schools is not found in the children's textbooks. To avoid parental outrage, much of this is found only in the teacher's manuals and supplementary materials. Talk to them about what happens at school throughout the day.

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3. **Talk to the school teachers and board members.** Try to find out what types of curricula are being used, beginning in kindergarten. Most damaging curricula are taught under the guise of: health education, drug education, behavioral education, social studies, home economics, cultural development, literature, writing skills, guidance counseling, sex education, and gifted children programs.

4. **Subscribe to useful materials.** There are organizations that do nothing but review various types of curricula and generally "watchdog" the public schools. Two publications I would recommend are: **Education Reporter** published by Eagle Forum and edited by Phyllis Schlafley), and **Citizen** published by Focus on Family. Other helpful organizations include: Citizens for Excellence in Education (CEE), Christian Educators, and Education Research Analysis.

5. **Censor your children's classes.** Most states allow parents to dismiss their children from non-academic exercises. However, one of the stated goals of the NEA is to convince states to disallow this.

6. **Consider other forms of education.** There are alternatives to public education. Private education (expensive and not fool proof, but generally better than public schools) and home education (time consuming, not for everybody, many advantages, some disadvantages).

Some of the more popular programs using New Age techniques include: Me-ology, Decide, Adapp, Growing Healthy, Project Charlie, Here's Looking at You 2000, Helping Youth Decide, Tactics for Thinking, Quest, Impressions, DUSO/PUMSY, Coping for Kids, Whole Mind Learning, Strengthening of Skills, Treasury of Literature, Flights of Fantasy.

Some of these programs are designed for T-A-G children (talented and gifted). Children in T-A-G programs are prime targets for the teaching techniques discussed. If you want more information on the New Age Movement or current trends in the public education system (including reviews of current curricula), contact:

Eagle Forum, Box 618, Alton, IL 62002; (618) 462-5415

Focus on the Family, (719) 531-5181

Christian Educators, (818) 798-1124

Education Research Analysis, (903) 753-5993

8 Gipson Ct., Columbia, MO 65202

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Recommended Reading:

- Anderson, Neil and Steve Russo, **The Seduction of Our Children**. Harvest House, 1991, 245 pp.
- Groothuis, Douglas R., **Unmasking the New Age**. InterVarsity Press, 1986, 192 pp.
- Martin, Walter, **The New Age Cult**. Bethany House, 1989, 140 pp.

Endnotes

- 1 **The Seduction of Our Children**. By Neil Anderson & Steve Russo, Harvest House, 1991, pp. 52-56.
- 2 **A New Consciousness**. By Melody Baker, New Thought Publishing, 1991, p. 7.
- 3 **Aquarian Conspiracy, The**. By Marilyn Ferguson, J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1980, p. 280-281. This work has been called the "Magna Charta" of the New Age Movement. The author has no problem describing the movement as a "conspiracy" designed to change the thinking of the world.
- 4 **A New Consciousness: The True Spirit of the New Age**. By Melody Baker, New Thought Publishing, 1991, pp. 26-27. The categories are ambiguous, but pertinent ones would include: Managerial and Management Related (13.1%); Administrative Support (11.7%); Teachers, Librarians, and Counselors (7.7%); Health Technicians (3.8%). It is interesting that a huge majority of New Agers are in "professional" positions.
- 5 "Quest: Review and Analysis," by Gary & Janice Beeker, p. 3.
- 6 _____, "Commentary on Huber Heights City Schools Self-Esteem Courses: DUSO & PUMSY," by Brian and Barbara Beyer, March 11, 1991.
- 7 _____, "Creating Healthy Self-esteem in Children," by Eric Buehner.
- 8 **Values Clarification**. By Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum, Hart Publishers, 1978, hardcover.
- 9 **Skills for Adolescence Teachers Manual**, 2nd edition, Quest International, Granville, OH, 1988, VI, pp. 29-30.
- 10 *ibid.* (VI, 20-21).
- 11 *ibid.* (VI, 22-23).
- 12 **Skills For Living**. By Howard Kirshenbaum and Barbara Glaser, Quest National, 1982, pp. 383-385.
- 13 One such study was conducted by Richard Blum of Stanford University in CA. Blum compared groups of school children receiving several different types of drug educations. Students in Rogers/Maslow non-direc-

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- tive classes (i.e., no "right" and "wrong") were more likely to use drugs. These results are published in **Drug Education: Results and Recommendations**, by Richard Blum, 1976, Lexington Books.
- 14 According to Quest International's own findings, students involved in their programs show "in general . . . higher reported use and lower perception of risk between the time of the pre-test and post-test for the group of students participating in SFA" (Memorandum dated June 26 and July 11, 1989). Professor Jurs, University of Toledo College of Education, was contracted to research the results of Quest on students. He, too, says that participation in the program is followed by sharp increases in experimentation with drugs.
- 15 **New Age Cult, The**. By Walter Martin, Bethany House, 1989, p. 22.
- 16 **Religion and Society Report**. "Belief is in the eye of the Beholder," by Sir Walter Moberly, August 1986, p. 2 (quoted in Martin's, **The New Age Cult**, p. 58).
- 17 _____, "Playing Mind Games, Citizens for Excellence in Education."
- 18 *ibid.*
- 19 **Coping For Kids**. "Cassette 1, Dialogue 4."
- 20 **Education Reporter**. "New Age Ed in Alabama," April 1989.
- 21 **Education Reporter**. September 1986.
- 22 _____, "Concerns On Tactics for Thinking," p. 7.
- 23 **Changes! Becoming the Best You Can Be**. p. 21.
- 24 *ibid.* p. 13.
- 25 *ibid.* pp. 113-116.
- 26 Martin. p. 57.
- 27 **Values, Concepts and Techniques**, National Education Association, p. 131.

Present Needs of the Church

by Bill Davis

The subject assigned for this presentation is the "The Present Needs of the Church." This suggests that what is presently needed may not necessarily be the same as in the past. This is obviously true because our age is unlike any other. The church today faces issues that were unheard of in the past. Many of its present needs are unique to this particular time frame.

This, however, is not to imply that the solutions to our present needs are different from the past because they are not. The answer to the needs of the church in any age can be found in the Word of God. While the Bible may not give specific answers to specific needs, it does present principles that can be applied to any age.

It should be apparent that the words of the New Testament were meant not only for the original readers but for us as well (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 1:13). The New Testament was never intended to be bound to any one age or culture. It is rather a message that will remain relevant through the centuries. To it, we must go for information to meet the present needs of the church.

The Church Needs to Maintain Pure Morals in a Time of Immorality

The first need I wish to discuss is that of maintaining pure morals in an age of gross immorality.

The need for moral purity is not new. What is new is that the church today is facing a changed culture with changed values and morals. In the past, moral issues could be reduced to a few things like immodesty, drinking, dancing, and gambling, but those days are gone. Today's issues are of a different kind and are on a different level. Abortion, euthanasia, surrogacy, fetal experimentation, gay rights, sexual harassment, and political correctness are but a few of the moral issues in our present society. Many of these are new and unfamiliar. And none of them are mentioned in the Bible directly. Yet the church must face these constantly, and make decisions about them in one way or another.

Needs of the Church

Making decisions about moral issues is not as easy as it once was. It is no longer a matter of simply choosing between right or wrong because in much of society today there is no right and wrong. A good example of this is found in *The Cultural Church*, a book written by F. LaGard Smith. Mr. Smith is a law professor at Pepperdine University. In his law and morality seminars, he asks questions such as: "Is there an absolute standard of right and wrong? Is there such a thing as inherent evil? Was the holocaust inherently evil?" Time and time again, Mr. Smith says the answer given by these students is an emphatic "NO".

It may seem absurd that anyone would think the murder of six million people is not inherently evil, but this is the extent to which our culture has gone to eliminate a standard of right and wrong. This simply means that is there if no inherent right or wrong, then one set of values is as valid as the next. No matter how spiritually or morally corrupt a thing may be, it must be accepted as equal with all other values and truths. This being the case, no one has the right to impose his morality upon another person, or to insist that his standard is correct while someone else's standard is wrong.

This concept includes the Bible. If no standard can be elevated above another, it would be unacceptable to insist on the Scriptures as the only authority in morality. According to this, *Playboy* magazine is as valid as the Bible. It is this kind of thinking that is the root cause of much of the immorality in society today. God's standard has been rejected. There is no right or wrong, and each person does that which is right in his own eyes (Judg. 21:25).

But what can the church do to maintain moral purity under these conditions?

First, the church must not assume that it is immune to the influence of present day culture. There is a host of ideologies in society which insist there are no ethical absolutes. Humanism, relativism, situation ethics, utilitarianism, and many others teach there is no absolute right or wrong. These philosophies are prevalent in every walk of life. They can be found in the street, on the job, and especially in the field of education. The church must be alert to these dangers and never think it is somehow exempt from them.

Needs of the Church

Second, the church must learn the principles of God's Word to the extent that they can be correctly applied to the changing moral climate of our age. This will require church members to become familiar with subjects like surrogacy, euthanasia, and so forth. This in turn will require much study.

Third, the Apostle Paul said the way to control culture (world) comes from within (Rom. 12:2). It will not help to be aware of the problems of society unless our hearts are committed (transformed) to the Lord.

The word "transformed" in Romans 12:2 is a form of the Greek word from which we get the word metamorphosis. This always carries the idea of an inward change that is manifested outwardly. The classic example is the caterpillar that is changed by metamorphosis into a beautiful butterfly. When this happens, the butterfly does not just change outwardly as though it had on a butterfly costume or disguise. It becomes a butterfly thoroughly—from the inside out.

The instrument for transformation in Romans 12:2 is the mind (heart). When the heart is changed, it will change everything about a person including his morals.

Finally, the church must preach against immorality. The church will never be morally better than it is taught to be.

Maintaining pure morals has always been a great challenge to the church, but it is needed more now than ever before.

The Church Needs Doctrinal Teaching

Just as the moral climate in society has changed, so has the doctrinal climate. We no longer seem to have the privilege of correcting the doctrinal errors of our religious neighbors. Issues such as, "once saved always saved," baptism, conditional salvation, and the one church, are seldom debated anymore. We rarely confront the false doctrine of the Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Mormons. We don't even debate cups and classes with our own brethren as we once did.

Needs of the Church

This, however, does not lessen the need to teach doctrine to the church. Although the church may grow weary of doctrinal teaching, it cannot do without it. The reason is simple—doctrine is what must motivate the church. Doctrine is the foundation for all church action. If the foundation is wrong then the action will be wrong. The less doctrinal teaching the church receives, the less motivated it will become.

In the church, we make a serious mistake when we try to impose a standard of conduct (do's and don'ts) without first laying a foundation for it. We are tempted to do this because most people want to know what is expected of them. As a church member recently said to me, "I wish someone would just give us a list of what we can do and what we can't do." We want to know what the law requires and when we have satisfied its demands. This, however, is the easy way out, and it will eventually short-circuit the system. The system is based on love and not on mere law-keeping. God is interested in why we do things, and not just in the fact that we do them.

In the Bible, the writers always lay a foundation before imposing rules or telling the church what to do. A good example of this is found in Hebrews 10. In verses 22 through 24 the writer gives three things the Hebrews were to do:

1. They were to draw near to God with a confident faith (v. 22).
2. They were to hold tenaciously to their hope (v. 23).
3. They were to provoke one another to love and good works, verse 24.

But before telling them to do these things he gives doctrinal reasons for doing them (vv. 1-22).

Among other things, the writer says the Old Covenant sacrifices were insufficient (vv. 1-4) and the sacrifice of Christ was all-sufficient (vv. 5-18). And because of Christ's sacrifice, access to God was now a permanent reality (v. 19). The only thing they had to do was have their hearts cleansed by the blood of Christ and be washed in water (v. 22). Once they had participated in the death and resurrection of Christ by baptism, they were welcome into the presence of God.

Because of the trappings of the Old Law, a Jew could never have the full realization of standing in the presence of God. Only the high priest, on the day of atonement, with all his priestly vesture, and washed in water, with the blood of an animal, could go into the Most Holy Place. Although this was a symbolic thing, it was still an awesome thing to stand in the presence of God. The writer realized this, and used the fact that because of the blood of Christ they had every right to stand before God. And he motivates them to do the things recorded in verses 22 through 25 by laying a doctrinal basis for it. In other words, before telling them what to do, he tells them what God had done for them.

The Apostle Paul did the same in nearly all of his writings. He established the roots before he called for fruit. He laid the doctrinal foundation before calling for action. It must always be this way. Otherwise, religious service becomes nothing more than law-keeping. It is law-keeping without knowing why the law is kept. The end result will be stunted fruit (Christians) because of an underdeveloped root system.

Real maturity comes by proper motivation, and proper motivation comes by true doctrine. Teaching doctrine may be a painstaking process, because teaching "why" is not easy, but the church must take the time and effort, or end up without a foundation to motivate its members. May God help us to teach the grand old truths upon which our faith is built.

The Church Needs Spiritual Members

Another need of the church is that we must become spiritual people. The only way this can be accomplished is by submission to the Word of God. The Corinthians were not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1). The reason they were not was because of their attitude toward the truth. Had they received the truth into their hearts, lived by it, and let it control their lives, they would have been spiritual. Paul wrote them, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).

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The best definition of "spiritual" comes from the noun form of the word "spirit." Jesus said, "God is Spirit" (Jn. 4:24). This describes the nature of divine existence, and is as close as one can get to the meaning of the word "spiritual." To make a long definition short, the word "spiritual" simply means to be like God. God is spirit and those like Him are said to be spiritual. The only way to be like God is to be like Christ (Jn. 1:18; 14:8-9).

Christ came to declare the Father for the purpose of our becoming like Him. How is this done? Paul gives the answer in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." This means that the Christian with an unveiled face looks into the perfect law of liberty as into a mirror, and there beholds the glory of the Lord. He is then changed into that same image little by little—from one degree of glory to another.

Being spiritual is a lifetime process of becoming more like Christ. There is no such thing as instant spirituality. But each day a person studies and submits to the Word of God he becomes more Christ-like, and thereby becomes more spiritual.

When Paul says, "We are changed into the same image," he used the word "metamorphosis" again. Remember, this means in inward change which is expressed outwardly. When one becomes like Christ there is a real change that takes place inwardly. It is not just acting differently. It is not just a superficial change or a cover-up. You can put a band-aid on a cancer and cover it up, but it won't cure it; you can put cosmetics on a dead body, but it won't bring it life. In the same way, spirituality is more than an outward change, it is a real change that takes place in the heart.

The concept of change presents a problem, because most people find it very hard to change. Even small changes are sometimes difficult and uncomfortable. Try shaving differently, or brushing your teeth in another way, or try changing pews at church, and you will get the idea why people don't like change. It is always troublesome to bring about change, but change we must, if we are ever to be a spiritual people.

The danger of failing to develop into the image of Christ is that we can easily become satisfied with the status quo and never change. What may even be worse, we might wait too late to start the process of becoming spiritual. It cannot be developed suddenly. Spirituality is the result of growth that comes from years of conforming to the Word of God. Consequently, it is very easy to wait too late to get started.

The significance of this can be illustrated by the story of a newspaper reporter who was doing a story about an ancient monastery located on a high mountain. The only way up the mountain was in a basket pulled by a rope. As the reporter and a monk were riding up in the basket, the reporter noticed the rope had worn until it was only held by a few tattered strands. He became very upset and in his excitement shouted, "When do you change that rope?" The monk calmly replied, "When it breaks." The point is—there is no sense getting excited when you are half way up the mountain, if it breaks then—you have waited too late.

The same is true of spirituality. Becoming spiritual is a lifetime process of being changed into the image of Christ. It is something that cannot be produced abruptly for there is no quick-fix to becoming spiritual. It must be developed over a period of time. If you wait too late there is very little that can be done about it. It is, therefore, imperative that the church mature into a spiritual, Christ-like people while we have opportunity.

The Church Needs to Get Along with One Another

The last need for this presentation is the need for the church to get along with one another. Its inability to do so may be the greatest danger facing it. If the church cannot offer some alternative to the alienation in society, not only is society in trouble, the church is also.

It is very clear that we live in a society of fractured relationships. This is seen in the abundance of divorces, domestic disputes, racial tensions, etc., that characterizes today's culture.

Sadly, the church is not far behind in this respect. It has its own set of relational problems. For example, we all know of congregations where certain members have not spoken to each other for years. Also, how many churches have been started by division? Then too, we

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have seen mass mail-outs, where one brother slanders another. We are heirs of a movement that was started to unite Christianity, but we may be better known for the nature of our fights than the nature of our unity.

It has been said that every church occupies one of three positions. They are (1) either getting over a fight, (2) they are in a fight, or (3) they are about to get into a fight. This observation is certainly not true of all churches, but it is true of far too many. It seems that somewhere along the way we went off in the wrong direction and overlooked something important about ourselves. In our quest to uphold truth, enforce morality, and debate religion, we have failed to love and relate to one another.

We are not the first to experience relationship problems. Several congregations in the first century (especially Corinth) had the same difficulties. They failed to recognize the church as an organism that is made up of members who are connected to and dependent upon one another. Paul addressed this problem by teaching that the church is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). He does not say it is like the body, but it is the body.

In the body, members should have the same care one for another (1 Cor. 12:25). To illustrate this, consider our hair as part of the physical body. While it is attached to the body we are very careful with it. We spend much time washing, combing, and brushing it, but after it is cut off or comes out, we don't continue to groom it. In fact, once it is detached from the body we throw it away. It becomes something alien and strange that is no longer wanted.

Why this change in attitude? It is the same hair, only now it is no longer a part of the body. While it is joined to the body, there is a sense of belonging. It is ours. There is a perception of ownership, and we are very concerned about it and feel responsible for it.

Perhaps, Paul had something like this in mind when he referred to members having the same care for one another. When we view ourselves as members of the same body there is a sense of ownership—belonging. We are extensions of one another and we feel responsible for one another.

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One of the most consistent messages of the Bible is that man was created for relationships with others. We were never meant to live in isolation. A most basic need of human nature is the need to know and be known—to love and be loved. This need is so much a part of our make-up that it will find fulfillment in some way, either good or bad.

Not only does the Bible present man as a relational being, it also teaches that the church is a place where our relational needs can be met. This simply means the church should be a support group for all its members. A place where we can receive compassion, appreciation, and affirmation. Regardless of how strong we may be, we often fail and need encouraging relationships.

The statement has often been made that there is a broken heart on every pew of the church. I don't know if this is true or not, but I do know there are a lot of hurting, alienated people in the church who never receive one word of encouragement. We surely do great damage to the Bible concept of the church when this is the case. But really, we don't have much choice in this; we either make the church a place where our relationship needs are met, or our people will turn to other surroundings for fulfillment.

What is true of church members in this respect is also true of the world. The world hungers to meet its need to love and be loved. If the church functions as it should, the world will view it as a place where these basic needs can be met.

This is what Jesus was saying in John 13:34-35: "... love one another, as I loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." How do we preach the gospel to a world that won't listen in the first place? How do we get the world to stop ignoring us and pay attention? Jesus gives the answer in the verse of Scripture just cited.

The thing that will attract the world is the same love Jesus had for His disciples. We must learn to treat each other the way Jesus treats us. We must accept one another on the same basis that Jesus accepts us. We must love as He loves us. The world of Jesus' day was amazed at how He treated people. Many of them were moved and transformed by His love. If men today could see that love, perhaps they would still marvel and be touched by it. The world today needs to know that the church practices Christ-like love.

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The world does not always see love in the church. Rather, it often sees a movement worn thin by biting and devouring one another over various issues. We can reply that we must fight for the truth; that our divisions have been caused by our love for the truth. Perhaps, but the world could care less about how much we love the truth, if that truth does not cause us to love one another.

The church needs to get along with one another, not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of an alienated world that desperately needs Christ and His church.

Obviously, there is a lot of subjectivity involved in a topic such as "The Present Needs of the Church." What one person thinks the church needs may not be what the next person thinks it needs. It all depends on the individual and his particular situation.

From my own perspective, I believe it needs pure morals, doctrinal teaching, spiritual members, and love. If it had these, I am convinced it would be a better church. 17 S.E. 23rd, Oklahoma City, OK 73129

The Role of Women in the Church

by Doug Edwards

In the fall of 1895, Brother J.W. McGarvey struggled with the question of the woman's work in the church. A young lady who hoped to become a foreign missionary enrolled in one of his classes at the College of the Bible. At first, McGarvey did not want to admit her. He was forced to relent, however, because of an arrangement previously worked out with Kentucky University that any student who enrolled in the University could also enroll in the College of the Bible. McGarvey did place some hardships on the young lady by not allowing her to sit with or talk to the men. She was not allowed to attend on certain days when the studies would deal with subjects not meant for mixed audiences. By 1904, however, women were allowed to enter this college without discrimination. McGarvey seemed to accept these changes in policy without controversy.

If it appears that McGarvey struggled during this time with the question, "What is the role of women in the church?" It must be stated that he was not alone. This subject was a lively and interesting one during the Restoration period, and it remains the same today.

I suspect the subject of women's work within the church is controversial today because of the women's liberation movement of a few years ago. We are inheriting the consequences of that movement today when we see the rush toward the ordination of women to the priesthood of so many denominations. By 1980, some 80 denominations had ordained women as priests. I imagine the number is far greater now. The ordination of women to positions of authority in the religious world is now as modern as tomorrow morning's newspaper.

Because of this current interest, and so many false doctrines being taught on this subject, I welcome the opportunity to open the Bible and investigate this vital subject. There are three areas of study that I would like to notice:

1. The treatment of women in the ancient world.
2. A comparison of Paul's teachings on the status of women.
3. Some biblical examples of the type of work that women can do.

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The Treatment of Women in the Ancient World

The term "property" best describes the treatment of women in the ancient world. In societies such as those of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor, men were clearly the dominating force. In the Greek culture women continued to be treated as inferior to men. They received very little education, rarely went out in public, and lived in separate quarters. Their purpose was to bear sons for their husbands. In the Roman culture conditions improved for the woman. She began to receive education and was treated with more respect.

It was under Judaism that the equality of women began to be understood. In the creation accounts of Genesis, the woman is said to be the helper for the man (2:18), not his slave. Adam said the woman is "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (2:23). Also, by reading the account of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, one can see the high honor paid to the woman. Thus, the Jews could read their Scriptures and see the importance of the woman. Yet, as the case is so often, men do not always live by the Scriptures. In some ways the Jews continued to treat their wives like property. In Judges, a Levite is threatened by a group of homosexual men. He responds by turning his concubine over to these evil men who ravaged her all night and then left her dead on the doorway. The Levite then cuts her body into twelve pieces and sends them throughout the tribes of Israel. Some rabbis also maintained that a wife was a hindrance to one who planned to study the Torah. In spite of these abuses, however, the treatment of women under Judaism was much better than that of the surrounding nations.

It is under these difficult conditions for women that Jesus entered the world. Jesus did not accept the current belief that women were property. He treated them with respect and they responded by lovingly following Him (Lk. 7:36-50; Mk. 16:1). The Lord used illustrations from the common occurrences of women in many of His parables. He took the time to teach them when many of the rabbis of that day would ignore them (Jn. 4; Lk. 10:38-42). His treatment of women elevated them to a position that no other culture had yet accepted. The writings of His apostles and prophets portray this same attitude towards women. We have heard a lot in the recent years over the Equal Rights Amendment and the rights it would grant to women, but women were really granted their freedom in Christianity.

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A Comparison of Paul's Writings on the Status of Women

Critics have long attacked Paul for what he had to say about women. He is pictured as being either a woman hater or confused and writing contradictory Scriptures. For instance, he writes, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Women are pictured as being equal with men in this passage. Yet he also says "women are to keep silence in the churches" (1 Cor. 14:34-35). In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul says that the man is the head of the woman. In 1 Timothy 2:11-12 women are not to teach or exercise authority over men. The question is often raised, how can the woman be equal with man if she has all of these restrictions placed upon her? How can she be in subjection to man if she is equal with him?

I believe that Paul has borne the brunt of a lot of unjust criticism. He is not a woman hater or a male chauvinist as some claim. In fact, these alleged contradictions can be cleared up rather easily for the one who is looking for the truth. When Paul says "there is neither male nor female in Christ," he merely means that every person regardless of sex, race, social status, or whatever condition, can become a Christian. There are no second class citizens in the kingdom of heaven. There are no class distinctions in the church. Every person can obey the gospel and become a son of God. While the roles we perform may be different, all are equal in their relationships before God. People make a mistake when they try to make Galatians 3:28 deal with the roles of men and women in the church. This verse does not deal with the roles that women perform within the church.

It would be appropriate to review what the Scriptures teach about the subjection of women to men and what that means. In the account of the creation, God says to the woman, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16). This concept of subjection is appealed to by Scriptures such as 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, 14:34-35, and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. In any organization, whether it be political, social, military, or religious, there must be a head. When two or more people unite to accomplish some common goal, one must become the head of the organization. If no one recognizes this line of authority, confusion and a lack of efficiency will occur. When one submits in this type of situation, it does not

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mean the individual is inferior and lacking in mental ability. It only means that in this situation one is recognized as the head so the operation will go smoothly.

This is exactly where the difficulty begins on the subjection of women to men. To some, the idea of subjection conjures up the picture of slaves yielding to masters. We Americans love our freedom and the thought of being in subjection to someone is repugnant to many. But remember, to be in subjection according to the Bible, does not mean that one is inferior, only that one recognizes the authority of others in certain situations.

The Scriptures give several examples of different groups besides women and men that are said to subjection to others:

1. Young men are to submit to older men (1 Pet. 5:5). Does that mean they are inferior?
2. Christians are to submit to the government (Rom. 13:1). Does that mean they are inferior to elected officials?
3. Christians are to submit to one another (Eph. 5:22). This verse means that Christians are to regard the rights of others and to seek to serve others. It does not imply either domination of others or inferiority. A judge one time said, "In my court room I am the authority, everyone must be in subjection to me. But when I leave I must be in subjection to others. When the small child crosses the street in front of me in the school crossing, I must yield to her." I think he understands how we are all in subjection to one another.
4. Jesus is said to be in subjection to God (1 Cor. 11:3; 15:28). Does that mean that Jesus is inferior to God?

So there is no disgrace in subjection. What Paul emphasizes in his writings is that while men and women are equal, they have different roles to fulfill within the kingdom of heaven. When we understand there are different roles to be performed by men and women, then we can understand Paul's words.

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Biblical Examples of the Work Women Can Do

I want to emphasize each category of a woman's work with the word "active." While the Bible forbids her to work in such areas as church leadership and public teaching, she must still be active in the work that she can do. I am afraid that because women cannot work in certain areas that some men and women view the woman's work as passive. This concept is not true. It is also a fact that many women want to do more for the cause of Jesus Christ, but they are not quite sure what they can do.

Women have an active role in bringing others to Christ. Some of the most loyal followers of Jesus during His earthly ministry were women. Their zeal and loyalty spilled over into the early church. Women waited along with the apostles for the establishment of the church (Acts 1:13-14). They also worked with Paul in the mission field. Paul writes to the Philippians,

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life (Phil. 4:2-3, NIV).

I do not know exactly what these women did, but it must have some type of active service. Paul singles out women in the book of Romans as being workers for the church (16:3,6,12). Again, we are not told exactly what these women did. Perhaps they helped with finances, perhaps they helped with food and lodging, perhaps they brought others to Paul for him to study with them. The point is, they rendered some active service. Christian women married to men who are not Christians may bring them to the Lord through their godly lives (1 Pet. 3:1-2).. This type of life also involves active service to Christ. The Samaritan woman introduced many to Jesus Christ (Jn. 4:28-30).

The question may be asked, can a woman teach the Word of God? The best answer that I can give is that it depends on where she is at the time. There are some places where a woman cannot teach, such as in the public assembly (1 Cor. 14:34-35) and in public (1 Tim. 2:11-12). In these situations a woman cannot teach men, women, or even children. On the other hand, there are times when

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women can teach. Philip had four virgin daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9), the older women are to teach the younger women (Tit. 2:2-5), Priscilla helped in teaching Apollos (Acts 18:26), and Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). It should also be pointed out that in some situations a woman can teach a man. 1 Timothy 2:9 does not say that a woman cannot "teach over a man" as so many in the Sunday School system like to point out. It teaches that in certain situations a woman cannot teach. So how do we harmonize these two different concepts of women teaching? Paul mentions in Acts 20:20 there are two different types of teaching—public and house to house (private). When one harmonizes these different Scriptures he discovers that while women may not teach publicly they can teach privately. The teaching that is prohibited is public and the teaching that is allowed is private. Where a woman can teach, she may teach anyone, including a man, where a woman may not teach, she can teach no one, even a child.

Women have an active role in prayer. There are several examples of women praying in the Bible. As the apostles waited for the day of Pentecost, the Bible says, "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (Acts 1:14, NIV). Paul discovered a group of women who had gathered by a river to pray in Philippi (Acts 16:13). Paul writes about the widow indeed who prays night and day (1 Tim. 5:5).

I think the older I become, the more I see that prayer is active work in our service to God. When we send our men and their families off into the mission fields, there is no greater encouragement to them than letting them know that we pray for them. When one goes off to do a work anywhere, it is a tremendous help to know there are others praying for you. When we grow sick and hear of others praying for us that boosts our spirits.

To our sisters I would like to say, make prayer a priority in your life. Be active in prayer. The Bible portrays prayer as an active and powerful tool. James says, "the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (5:16, NIV). Paul mentions that Epaphras "wrestled" in prayer (Col. 4:12, NIV). Prayer is not the least one can do, it is the most one can do. We generally do not think of prayer as being one of the greatest works within the kingdom. We usually think of the evangelist who preaches to hundreds, or the missionary who goes overseas to start new works, or the church leaders who watch over

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congregations as being the ones who do the greatest works in the church. The truth of the matter is that no successful work of evangelism, mission work or local work can be successful without godly Christians praying for it. Paul certainly recognized the need of the prayers of Christians. He said, "I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me" (Rom. 15:30, NIV).

Women have an active role in performing works of service. Paul writes concerning Phoebe, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you" (Rom. 16:1-2, NIV). I am sure that most of you are aware that the word "servant" comes from the Greek word from which we get the word "deacon." This fact has led some to believe she was a deaconess, and there was an official group of ladies within the church who held this office. I am not of this belief, yet there still remains the fact that in some way she was recognized as a servant in the church. She rendered some type of valuable service to Paul and others, and they recognized her as faithful.

What are some of the works of service that women can perform? In writing of the widows indeed, Paul mentions some of the good works they rendered, "And is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds" (1 Tim. 5:10, NIV). These works, while not exhaustive, would be excellent for any Christian woman to imitate. Please note the works:

1. Bringing up children. This work will be covered in the next section.

2. Showing Hospitality. These words imply the receiving of guests into one's home and giving them lodging. Lydia exemplified the hospitality that the Bible commends when she invited Paul and Silas to stay in her home in Philippi (Acts 16:15). It must have come as a great relief to Paul to know there was a Christian woman there who would shelter and feed him. Every preacher knows the value of hospitable women who make his work easier. I want to encourage women to practice this service even more. Hospitality is a tremen-

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dous service that can greatly aid the church. A warm, friendly home helps to break the ice and allow Christians to become better acquainted and grow stronger spiritually.

3. Washing the feet of saints. This service indicates a humble spirit of service to others. The expression is figurative for rendering menial service and not being too proud to stoop.

4. Helping those in trouble. This quality refers to one who has a sympathetic nature and looks to assist others.

5. Devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds. This woman does not selfishly look only to her own needs but to those who have problems. There are so many good deeds the Christian woman can do: sitting up with the sick, cooking and cleaning for them, and being available in times of emergency.

Women have an active role in the home. This realm is where she can do her greatest work and have the greatest influence. In 1 Timothy 2, after saying that men should be the ones who take part in the public worship of the church and that women should not teach in public, Paul says, "But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" (v. 15). He does not mean that literal childbirth is necessary for a woman's salvation, but rather her service to Christ is domestic rather than public. There is presented in this chapter a contrast between the public work of the man and the domestic work of the woman. She is not a public teacher and she does not exercise authority over the man.

In other Scriptures, Paul emphasizes this domestic work of the woman. We have already seen in 1 Timothy 5:10 one of the good works of the widow was "bringing up children." In the same chapter he says concerning the younger widows, "So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity to slander" (v. 14, NIV). While these words were originally meant for younger widows, it should be obvious that Paul's words are based on a general teaching of God's will for all women. I can think of no one who influences the home more than the mother. She sees to the physical and spiritual needs of her family as no other person will. She can shape and mold the minds of her children better than anyone else. Paul also refers to Timothy being trained by Lois and Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5) and that as a child he had been taught the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15).

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This domestic work of women is not just limited to her own immediate family. Paul says that older women are to be "teachers of good things." Then he says, "they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind and to be subject to their own husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God" (Tit. 2:3-5, NIV). It is the responsibility of the older sisters to assist the younger sisters in how to be effective in domestic work. I wonder if this is a work that we have failed to accomplish over the years? In our determination to avoid the Sunday School method of teaching and women teachers, have we gone to the opposite extreme and kept our older sisters from teaching the younger? Obviously, these women cannot do this type of teaching in any public capacity, but they are limited to the private realm. How can this type of teaching be accomplished? Must it be only spontaneous and unplanned as some believe? While it can be spontaneous and unplanned, it does not have to be limited to this type of teaching. This teaching can also occur through the godly influence of these older women. I also believe an older woman taking younger women under her wing and teaching them in a private capacity on a regular basis does not violate the Scriptures.

In some circles, the importance of the housewife is minimized and to be avoided at all costs. It does not help when the wife of the President makes similar comments. Some will argue that being a homemaker is a boring, meaningless job and a woman cannot find fulfillment in this type of work. A casual reading of the virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31 will show this philosophy to be false. The Bible simply does not support the theory that being a housewife is an unimportant work. As preachers, we should point out that being a housewife and a mother is the greatest work a woman can do. There is no shame in domestic work.

What does the Bible say about women working? It is not the purpose of this study to go into detail concerning the subject of women working. I realize there may be times when women have to work, but even then her first priority should be her home and family. What do we sacrifice spiritually in order to gain materially? Are material things worth more than the quality time of mother?

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We have seen in our study that equality has come to women through the teaching of the Bible. We have also seen that while she is seen as equal to man, she has different roles to perform. I would like to close with the words concerning the virtuous woman: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all. Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate" (Prov. 31:29-31, NIV). *Rt. 1 Box 201-C, DePauw, IN 47115*

God's Description of Heaven

by Gerald Hill

The focal point of Christianity is the doctrine of heaven. In the New Testament the word occurs 261 times in twenty New Testament books. Matthew and John quoted the word from the lips of Jesus a total of 151 times. Heaven is referred to in many other passages using other terminology. For examples, read Matthew 25:34 ("the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world"), John 14:2-3 ("the Father's house"), 2 Corinthians 5:1-2 ("a building of God eternal in the heavens").

This topic will be divided into the following divisions:

1. Heaven defined.
2. The new heaven and new earth.
3. What about musical instruments in heaven?
4. God's description of heaven.

Definition of Heaven

The word "heaven," from the Greek *ouranos*, has a root meaning, "to cover; to encompass. 1. The vaulted expanse of the sky with all things visible in it. Hebrews 1:10; 2 Peter 3:5,10,12. a) The aerial heavens or sky, the region where the clouds and tempests gather, and where thunder and lightning are produced. James 5:18; Luke 9:54; Acts 9:3; Acts 22:6; Revelation 13:13; Revelation 16:21; 20:9. b) The sidereal or starry heavens. Hebrews 11:12; Mark 13:25; Revelation 6:13. 2. The region above the sidereal heavens, the seat of an order of things eternal and consummately perfect, where God dwells and the other heavenly beings. This heaven Paul refers to as the third heaven, 2 Corinthians 12:2. Also note Ephesians 4:10" (Thayer, p. 464, #3772). It is the third heaven that we will consider.

Since the "third heaven" is where God dwells, the first heaven must be the aerial and the second must be the sidereal.

The New Heavens and New Earth

Some teach that the new heavens and new earth has reference to the earth on which we now live, and thus conclude that this earth is

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the future abode of the righteous. Those who do so are in error, as I intend to demonstrate in this part of our study. We will be considering the following passages:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. 3:10-13).

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea (Rev. 21:1).

I will now define the following terms:

1. New
2. Pass away
3. Melt
4. Elements
5. Burned up

The English word "new" (Greek, *kainos*) is defined: "As respects form; recently made, fresh, recent, unused, unworn. (Opp. to old, antiquated). New, which as recently made is superior to what it succeeds: 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1" (Thayer, p. 317, #2537).

"Pass away" in English (Greek, *parerchomai*) means: "To pass away, perish. 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 21:1. (Thayer, p. 488, #3928). The English "passed away" (Greek, *aperchomai*): "Of an evanescent (vanishing) state of things. Revelation 21:1,4" (Thayer, p. 57, #565).

For the one English word "melt" we will have to look at two Greek words: The first is *luo*, "To dissolve something coherent into parts, to destroy. 2 Peter 3:11,12 (dissolved); 2 Peter 3:10 (melt)." The second

is the Greek word *teko*: "To make liquid, pass. To become liquid, to melt, to perish or be destroyed by melting. 2 Peter 3:12 (melt)" (Thayer, p. 621, #5080).

Our next English word is "elements" (Greek, *stoicheion*): "2. The elements from which all things have come, the material causes of the universe. 2 Peter 3:10,12" (Thayer, p. 589, #4747).

Finally, our word "burned" (Greek *katakaio*): "To burn up, consume by fire. 2 Peter 3:10" (Thayer, p. 331, #2618).

It is evident from this brief word study that both Peter and John affirm that this earth on which we live will disappear. The heavens (aerial and sidereal) and the earth will be completely destroyed, dissolved, burned up!

It seems to me that what Peter has to say in 2 Peter 3, and John's description of what he saw, namely "a new heaven and a new earth" and "new Jerusalem, coming down from God," are all part of the state of, and eternal dwelling place of, the redeemed. This is the place about which the Apostle Peter speaks when he declared:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

As further evidence that the new heavens and new earth, as well as the New Jerusalem mentioned in Revelation 21:2, together make up "heaven," notice these verses of Scripture:

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13).

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or

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maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 21:27).

Peter tells us that righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and new earth. And John shows us that only those which are written in the Lamb's book of life will enter the New Jerusalem. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people!

Guy N. Woods has this to say concerning 2 Peter 3:13:

Man is a creature of two worlds—the heavens about him, and the earth below him. His future abode is where Jesus now is and where he is preparing a place for us. Jesus is in heaven. Thus, the material heavens and earth are made by Peter to serve as the type of this future abode from which Jesus is to return in order to take us back there (John 14:2). The phrase, "a new heaven and a new earth," can mean only to embrace the place now being fitted out for the faithful. There, in the many mansions of our Father's house, our Lord is preparing a place for us, from which he will ultimately come, and then carry us to it. That "new heaven and new earth" is simply the antitype of our current abode. It is hence the typical description of heaven—the New Jerusalem (*Questions and Answers*, Guy N. Woods, p. 204, Vol. 2).

What About Musical Instruments in Heaven?

There are a number of references to musical instruments in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 8:2, John saw seven angels who were given seven trumpets. But notice verse 13, "And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!" (Rev. 8:13). Here he speaks of the "other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!" While it is true that the term "voices" could simply refer to the sound of the trumpets, other passages seem to suggest that voices of some heavenly hosts sounded like trumpets. This is true in the following passages:

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet (Rev. 1:10).

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter (Rev. 4:1).

What is referred to as a trumpet or a voice like a trumpet is used when an announcement is being made or a woe is pronounced. "Trumpets" are never used in Revelation, as far as I can determine, to make music.

There are several references to harps in the book of Revelation.

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints (Rev. 5:8).

And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God (Rev. 15:2).

After stating that certain persons have the harps of God, they sang "a new song" (Rev. 5:9). In Revelation 15:3, "And they sing the song of Moses . . ." Coffman quotes Albertus Pieters as saying: "Literalism is here hopeless. How could one put the wrath of God in a bowl and pour it on the sun?" Pieters has reference to 16:8.

Still another reference to harps:

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps (Rev. 14:2).

The American Standard Version translates: ". . . and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps." From the New International Version: "The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps." The Revised Standard Version: ". . . the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps."

Then in 14:3, "And they sung as it were a new song . . ."

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The melodious harp is a symbol of praise—the voices of the redeemed praising God in song.

I think that these conclusions must be drawn: In this highly symbolic book reference to the trumpet and harp is symbolic of voices. “. . . and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me.” “. . . the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps” (RSV).

In the religious world many contend that since instruments of music are mentioned as being in heaven, and are mentioned in the Old Testament, that it is permissible to use them in the assembly of the church. However, what happened prior to, or after the Christian Age, does not dictate what we do during the Christian Age. The New Testament is our only guide today. Singing is specified by God as part of acceptable worship in the assemblies of the church (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), and instruments of music are never mentioned.

God's Description of Heaven

The most thrilling thought that has ever filled the heart of man is that of heaven!

Jesus sent out the seventy into the cities and places he would go and they returned with joy, saying: “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” To which Jesus replied, “Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Lk. 10:17, 20)

What a joy it is to the child of God to know that if he is faithful, one day heaven will be his eternal home. The fact that people who live in the city have a desire to move back to the country, and that folks who live in the country, especially young people, long for the bright lights of the city, is indicative of man's discontent for earth's temporal, decaying places of abode. Heaven is our fatherland. This earth is not our home; we are just passing through.

Jesus Christ and His Relationship to Heaven

James Coffman said:

There is no understanding of Jesus Christ except in the light of His unique relationship to HEAVEN.

In heaven He was from the beginning. From heaven He came. Of heaven He spoke. To heaven He pointed the way. From heaven angels announced His birth. From heaven angels ministered to Him in Gethsemane and in the wilderness.

From heaven angels came to announce His resurrection. From heaven the voice of God declared Him to be the Son of God. From heaven angels came to escort Him to glory. To heaven He ascended. From heaven angels announced His second coming. In heaven He sits at the right hand of the Majesty on High. In heaven he reigns till all enemies shall be put under foot. In heaven He intercedes for Christians. From heaven He will come again to raise the dead and summon all who ever lived to the judgment of the Great White Throne.

Heaven is surely the focal point of Christianity!

Where is Heaven?

The Apostle Paul was the only man who ever went to heaven and came back. Paul said that he was, "Caught up to the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2-4). After Jesus Christ had spoken some final words to the apostles, the Scripture says: "He was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9-11). The Apostle Paul declared: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven . . ." (1 Thess. 4:16).

So heaven, which includes what Peter and John referred to as the new heaven and new earth, as well as New Jerusalem, is always spoken of as being up. It is somewhere beyond the sidereal heaven.

What is Heaven Like?

Heaven is a place. It is not the atmosphere. It is not a state of mind. It is a *place* just as real as these United States. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:3).

Heaven will be populated with real people with beautiful, immortal, strong bodies. These bodies will be just as visible as those of

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Moses and Elias on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-5). When Jesus went into heaven His body was a visible body (Acts 1:9,10). And John tells us, "When he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn. 3:2). Our body will be a different body, not of flesh and blood. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption . . . It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:42-44). "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:50).

Heaven is described as a city. "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:16). May I emphasize, a city; not a village or small town. A city! But not an earthly city—a heavenly one! Are you looking for heaven here on this earth? This is no place for an eternal city. This earth will be burned up and destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10-12). The New Jerusalem will be an eternal city. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13:14). Heaven will be an eternal city of complete perfection, because God's works are good, perfect, and eternal. Many cities suffer with over-population, but in heaven there will be room for all. Jesus said: "In my Father's house are many mansions" (Jn. 14:2).

Notice that John describes the city as it would appear from a distance. The foundations of its walls were massive—twelve foundations in number. In them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the lamb (Rev. 21:14). The great wall may represent the security of the eternal city, or as Lenski suggests, "our inclusion for this is our eternal union with God (Lenski, *Revelation*, p. 631).

There were twelve precious stones making up the foundations of the wall:

1. Jasper—probably the diamond.
2. Sapphire—azure to deep blue.
3. Chalcedony—green silicate of copper.
4. Emerald—green.
5. Sardonyx—white broken by layers of red and brown.

6. Sardius—blood red in color.
7. Chrysolite—golden in color.
8. Beryl—a variety of emerald though not as green.
9. Topas—greenish gold in color.
10. Chrysoprasus—aquamarine, another variety of emerald.
11. Jacinth—sapphire.
12. Amethyst—purple or violet.

There is little agreement among scholars as to the symbolism represented by these precious stones. Surely this description of the foundation is indicative of the value and beauty of the church.

Paul declares:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God. And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone (Eph. 2:19-20).

Our eternal union with God rests on the Word, the inspired writings of the apostles here, it seems to me, symbolized by these twelve precious foundation stones.

Another interesting possibility is noted by Coffman. He quotes:

Charles pointed out that the twelve signs of the zodiac are represented by these same stones. The original order of these is the order in which the sun passes through the constellations indicated. The Apostle John exactly reversed that order! He is repudiating all heathen concepts; he is expressing the thought that in the end God reverses human judgments. This declares that there is nothing to astrology (Revelation, p. 510)

On this massive foundation John saw: "... a wall great and high" (v. 12). The wall was made of jasper (diamond, v. 18). It is no wonder John's description of this marvelous city viewed at a distance is as:

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"Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (Rev. 21:11). The first thing John saw was the dazzling magnificent wall.

John then describes the twelve gates. At each gate an angel stood. The names of the twelve tribes of the Israel were written on them. There were three gates on the east, north, south and west respectively. The wall and gates of the "New Jerusalem" correspond with the description of cities at the time John lived. Each gate was made of a pearl.

Each gate was identical to the others. This shows that all who enter must have met the same requirements for entering the Holy City. It has been noted by a number of writers that the pearl is symbolic of those who have overcome trials and tribulations in order to enter heaven. The reason is that the pearl is produced by the oyster's response to suffering.

The twelve angels appear as sentries at the twelve gates. It was a common sight in John's day to see soldiers posted at every gate of a city. Remember, in Genesis 3:24, when God had driven man out of the Garden of Eden, He placed at the east of the garden cherubims and a flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life. The angels posted at the gates of the Celestial City may symbolize that one cannot enter any way he pleases, as many reason today.

In verses 15 and 16 the city is measured. The dimensions are given to show the enormity of this wonderful city. This certainly shows that God has provided room for all. The city is foursquare. The length and the breadth and the height are equal. Each measured twelve thousand furlongs or about fifteen hundred miles. To give a better perspective of its size, consider that from Dallas, Texas to New York City is about fifteen hundred miles, from New York to Bismarck, North Dakota is about fifteen hundred miles, from Bismarck to San Francisco is about fifteen hundred miles, and San Francisco to Dallas is about fifteen hundred miles. But we must go straight up fifteen hundred miles and retrace our measurements. Now we begin to realize the enormity of the Celestial City. Someone has calculated five hundred quintillion cubic feet. That is five hundred followed by eighteen zeros. No over-crowded conditions in heaven!

Most cities become a cesspool of crime, violence, gambling, drinking, sexual promiscuity, riots, turmoil, and confusion. Heaven will be a city of righteousness. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).

Heaven, the New Jerusalem, is further described as a royal palace (Rev. 4:1-10) and a garden (22:1-2). There will be no night there (21:25). No need of lamps or light of the sun " . . . for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (21:23). The New Jerusalem will be free of disease, sickness, sorrow, suffering, dying, and tears (21:4). Just think about it. No more hospitals, doctors, undertakers, or cemeteries, and no more jails. There will never be another weeping widow or hungry orphan. Why? Because former things are passed away.

Heaven, a place of overwhelming glory, beauty, and majesty. A city of pure gold, like unto transparent glass. A wall of jasper, gates of pearl, and a street of gold. These terms are figurative and symbolic, and after we have exhausted every word common to man, we still will not have touched top, side, or bottom of the true beauties of the City of God.

Things That Will Be in Heaven

First and foremost God is in heaven sitting on His throne (4:2-8). But John also saw the Lamb of God.

And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth . . . And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing (Rev. 5:6, 11-12).

A great multitude of the redeemed will be there.

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands (Rev. 7:9).

The tree of life and the pure river of the water of life will be part of the Celestial City, the New Jerusalem. The hunger and thirst of redeemed saints of God shall be satisfied eternally (22:1-2).

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Our treasure and inheritance is there.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Mt. 6:20).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

The name of every child of God is written in heaven.

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven (Lk. 10:20).

James Coffman tells the story of an elderly man who said:

When I was young, I thought of heaven as a far away place of gold domes and spires, with mansions and a world of light and angels tripping about, none of whom I knew. Then my little brother died, and I thought of heaven as a place of golden domes and spires, streets of gold and gates of pearl, and one tiny little precious face that I knew. But the Great Reaper continued his harvest of the earth, and my father and mother, and my wife and children died; and my friends, one by one faded away, till like the last leaf on the tree I alone was left. And when I think of heaven now, I always think of the loved ones whom I have loved and lost awhile, but who shall welcome me into the eternal habitations.

"Oh think of the home over there,
By the side of the river of light,
Where the saints all immortal and fair
Are robed in their garments of white."

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Tithing—Contribution

by Edwin Morris

Introduction:

- A. What laws governed tithing in the Old Testament? Which of those laws, if any, were carried over to the New Testament?
- B. What about principles or attitudes? Do they carry over?
- C. Definition: "Tithe"—Hebrew, **maaser**, "tenth." Greek, **apodekaatoo**, "tenth."

I. Laws Concerning the Tithe in the Old Testament.

- A. All produce to be tithed

Leviticus 27:30

And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord.

Deuteronomy 14:22

Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.

A tithe of all that was brought forth from the land, both of the seed of the land, and what was yielded.

- B. Could be redeemed by adding a fifth

Leviticus 27:31

And if a man will at all redeem ought of the tithes, he shall add thereto a fifth part thereof.

Those bringing the tithe who wanted to keep it and give money were to increase the value by twenty percent.

- C. Tithe of the herd or flock

Leviticus 27:32-33

And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord. He shall not

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search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.

All who passed under the rod of the herdsmen, the tenth (animal) was to be holy to the Lord. No discrimination was to be made in this case between good and bad, and no exchange was to be made. If, however, this did take place, the tenth animal was to be holy as well as the one for which it was exchanged, and could not be redeemed.

D. Tithe to be received by the Levites

Numbers 18:21,24

²¹ And behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation."

²⁴ But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave-offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

The tithe consisted of the increase of the land. All crops, herds and flocks, fruits, and animals were to be brought and offered.

E. Levites were to give a tithe of the tithes they received.

Numbers 18:26-29

Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave-offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe. And this your heave-offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and the fulness of the winepress. Thus ye also shall offer an heave-offering unto the Lord of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the

Lord's heave-offering to Aaron the priest. Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave-offering of the Lord, of all the best thereof, even the hallowed part thereof out of it.

The Levites were to give the best and the holiest offerings to the Lord.

F. Tithe at the end of three years.

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

This tithe was to be offered every three years and was to be kept within the gates and used for the feeding of Levites, strangers, fatherless, and the widow within the gate.

G. Transporting the tithe

Deuteronomy 14:24-26

And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou are not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee: then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: and thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household.

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Notice in these verses that if it was too difficult to carry or too far, it could be converted into money and then reconverted into produce at the place of offering.

Further notice that they were instructed to bring it to the place designated by the Lord, that is, the place where His name dwells. It was not a place of their own choosing.

- H. Tithe to be eaten before the Lord. It is important to know that the Lord has designated the place that the tithe is to be eaten.

Deuteronomy 14:23

And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always.

- I. God's people had gone from His ordinances.

Malachi 3:7-10

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive.

They did not tithe, and they proved they had turned away from their source of blessing.

The giving of the tithe was an outward sign of their inner commitment. Job said in Job 1:21, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

God understands man's greedy, selfish nature and has given an identifiable sign of our love and sincerity.

J. Purpose of the tithe

1. Due to the requirements of the worship under the law, it was necessary to support those who would be involved in it. They would have no time for secular work.
2. Since the whole tribe of Levi was devoted to this public service, God decreed that the other tribes would give a tenth for them since they received no inheritance.
3. They performed a variety of religious duties, along with being teachers and intercessors of the people.
4. We can be assured this is just and right as it was ordained of God. It is reasonable that we should return a portion of what God has given us to His cause.

II. Abraham

Gen. 14:20 (read Gen 14:17-24)

And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

Hebrews 7:4-7

Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: but he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

There is no indication as to Abraham's reason for his act other than gratitude. We find no requirement, no command—just thankfulness.

On his return from the rescue of Lot from four enemy kings, Abraham came into contact with the priest Melchizedek and voluntarily gave to him a tithe (tenth) of everything he had.

Tithing—Contribution

Of the property belonging to the King of Sodom, which Abraham had taken from the enemy (Gen. 14:21-24), he would not keep the smallest part, from a thread even unto a shoe latchet, because he would not have anything in common with Sodom.

However he accepted from Salem's priest and king, Melchizedek not only bread and wine for himself and his men, but a priestly blessing also. In return he gave him a tenth of all the possessions, thus acknowledging this priest as being of the living God.

Abraham's subordination to Melchizedek shows a royal priesthood which is higher than the priesthood of Abraham's descendants, the sons of Levi.

Abraham gave these tithes as a tribute to the God of heaven, who gives all spiritual and temporal favors, and demands the submissive and living obedience of all His subjects.

Afterwards the tithes were given to the Levites for the maintenance of themselves and their families, as they had no other inheritance in Israel.

The incidental way in which this fact is stated seems to indicate an established custom that existed before the Law of Moses.

Jacob's vow seems simply to relate to compliance with and established custom:

Genesis 28:20-22

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on. So that I come again to my father's house in peace: then shall the Lord be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

Tithes were given during the Mosaic dispensation by the other tribes for the maintenance of the tribe of Levi.

On the other hand, Abraham gave because of his thankfulness and devotion to God. The tenth he gave was voluntarily. His dedication and love were so great he could not do otherwise.

God promised Abraham and his seed that they would be blessed. In Galatians 3:6-9:

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Since Abraham our father gave a tenth, and we are the children of the promise, we would be of the mind to give a tenth or more, if we have the love for God and his cause as Abraham did. We would not do it because it is a command but because we love God and His cause here on earth.

III. Some Say That They Cannot Afford to Give a Tenth or More.

Let us examine this attitude.

- A. A family that finds itself unable to make a commitment of a tenth of its resources to God should realistically examine its spending and living habits.
- B. Perhaps that will require a critical examination of spiritual values as well. Does the spiritual or the secular have the upper hand in our lives?
- C. If more funds were needed for family conveniences, the average family would in some way find the money to buy what they wanted. Some good advice here is to always set aside for the Lord first.
- D. We should not give just to meet some requirement. If we do, this falls short of "freely ye have received, freely give" (Mt. 10:18) We must remember in our giving that "God so loved, He gave."
- E. A Christian will give not as an accomplishment, but as a result of his Christianity.
- F. We should take care not to use our giving to buy influence. We should not feel we deserve a more prominent place just because we are good givers.

Tithing—Contribution

G. Let us notice the promise in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8:

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.

H. The Macedonians gave themselves first. When we have the love and joy as the churches in Macedonia had, we can truly give:

2 Corinthians 8:2-5

How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first *gave their own selves* to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."

IV. Contribution

- A. Those who love the Lord and his cause as they should will have no trouble giving freely to the Lord.
- B. But those who love material things more than they love the Lord will always find some excuse for not giving as they should. No argument will convince them because they will not listen.
- C. They need to learn to sacrifice their own personal interest in behalf of others. This will only happen when their hearts are turned to the Lord and they love Him, His cause, and the souls of men.
- D. Once they realize it is more blessed to give than to receive, they will seek opportunities to give instead of waiting to be convinced it is right.

Tithing—Contribution

A great famine had come in the land of Egypt and Joseph gathered up all the money and brought it unto Pharaoh. When the money failed, Joseph told them to bring their cattle. The Egyptians then sold their land to Pharaoh for food. Now notice what Joseph said in verses 23-25.

Genesis 47:23-25

Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.

They gave twenty percent to Pharaoh and were thankful because they knew Pharaoh had furnished all.

God has furnished us everything we have so why should we not be willing to give at least a tenth back into his service?

Luke 12:34

For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.

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Celebration of Holidays

by Joe Norton

There is no way in this presentation on holidays to please everyone or make everyone agree. My purpose today is to present some material that I hope will stimulate us to take a fresh look at this subject.

Everyone will not agree because there are so many shades of understanding and beliefs on this subject. I approach this study of holidays openly and objectively out of a genuine interest in reaching a better understanding of it. I pray that we can all approach it in this way. If, however, we approach the subject with our minds already made up, we really will do a grave injustice to it.

During the past several years, we have been taught that it is wrong to celebrate various holidays, especially Christmas; and it has been many years since I have been heavily involved in any of these holidays.

Through the years, though, I have questioned, "Why? Why do so many Christians continue to celebrate holidays (namely Christmas) and others do not?"

Some who are against any participation in certain holidays are not always open-minded to other thoughts and ideas. Consequently, they have not stopped to take a good look at the subject. And those who participate in one or more activities around holiday seasons have a variety of reasons for thinking it is okay for them to do so without violating their conscience or doing disservice to the name of Christ.

I want to point out that our attitude in this matter is of the greatest importance. Some who have not celebrated holidays have looked down their noses at those who have and have even considered them second class Christians. Some who have celebrated have felt a great deal of guilt because others do not celebrate. These attitudes cannot be right and cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit with good feelings between brethren.

I want us to understand the truth on these issues not just to preach and believe what is generally accepted—not to believe or practice something just because that is what we have done traditionally—but to think rationally about the subject.

If my presentation proves false, then I ask you to be fair in your judgment. I will listen to your points and give them prayerful con-

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sideration. If my presentation proves true, then I ask that you give equal consideration. We are not here setting brotherhood policy. We are here to discuss the topic and then go home to study further, drawing solid conclusions based on an honest investigation of God's holy Word.

This study will be broken down as follows:

1. Introduction
2. A brief history of holidays as observed or celebrated around the world.
3. Leading arguments used for not observing (religious) holidays.
4. A call for consistency.
5. Conclusion.

The charge for this study was to discuss the celebration of holidays in general. For the most part, when we think of the subject of holidays, we think of religious holidays. And we will focus on religious holidays in the main part of the study. When we think of religious holidays, we think of Christmas because that is the holiday people are primarily interested in. But I was not asked to discuss just Christmas.

In fact, we will concentrate on the "big four" as we begin our study: Valentine's Day, Easter, Halloween, and Christmas.

Valentine's Day

The first of these holidays is Valentine's Day, celebrated each year on February 14 and usually associated with love and romance. It was first celebrated in honor of two martyrs in the Roman Catholic Church, each with the name of Saint Valentine and each martyred on February 14. One of these men supposedly died in Rome and the other at Interamna about 60 miles out of Rome. One was a priest and the other a bishop in the Catholic Church. Some have concluded that they were not two but only one person—he was a bishop in Interamna but was martyred in Rome.

Customs now associated with this holiday have nothing to do with the martyrs. The customs probably go back to an ancient Roman festival called Lupercalia, celebrated on February 15. The festival was proclaimed in honor of Juno, the Roman goddess of women and mar-

riage, and of Pan, the god of nature. Lupercalia was "a lovers' festival for young people. Young men and women chose partners for the festival by drawing names by chance from a box" (**World Book** 205). Then they paired off, became better acquainted, and sometimes even ended up being married.

In the 400's, one of the popes changed this festival into Saint Valentine's day and changed the day to February 14.

Many customs and beliefs have developed since the beginning of Valentine's Day, and most of them have to do with love, the choice of a marriage partner, or things a young girl can do to get a husband. The practice of exchanging Valentines or cards on this day goes only as far back as the English poet, Geoffrey Chaucer.

Easter

Originally, the word Easter was the Saxon word **Estra**, the goddess of spring (**Unger's Bible Dictionary** 283). Or some write that it may have been from the word **Eastur**, referring to the festival of spring (**World Book** 25). The celebration came to refer to what the world calls a Christian celebration in honor of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. "By the 8th century Anglo-Saxons had adopted the name to designate the celebration of Christ's resurrection" (**Unger's Bible Dictionary** 283).

The **World Book** says, "It is the most important holy day of the Christian religion. People attend churches and take part in religious ceremonies" (25).

Several symbols have developed, referring to various aspects of the Easter celebration: (1) the cross, representing the crucifixion of Jesus and serving as a symbol of His triumph over death; (2) the Lamb, symbolizing the paschal lamb offered in the Jewish Passover; (3) eggs, suggesting new life or the coming back to life of nature around Easter time. This is an ancient custom. "The Egyptians and Persians often dyed eggs in spring colors and gave them to their friends as gifts. The Persians believed that the earth had hatched from a giant egg. Early Christians of Mesopotamia were the first to use colored eggs for Easter" (**World Book** 25); (4) rabbits. Sometimes children are taught to believe that the Easter bunny brings them Easter eggs, a belief that may have originated in Germany.

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One legend says that a poor woman dyed some eggs during a famine and hid them in a nest as an Easter gift for her children. Just as the children discovered the nest, a big rabbit leaped away. The story spread that the rabbit had brought the Easter eggs. In ancient Egypt, the rabbit symbolized birth and new life. Some ancient people considered it a symbol of the moon. It may later have become an Easter symbol because the moon determines the date of Easter (World Book 26).

Halloween

Halloween means hallowed or holy evening and is associated with Allhallows' Eve. It takes place on the day before All Saints' Day, November 1. The holiday comes " . . . from the rites of the druids celebrating the day of Saman, when the Lord of the Death called together the souls of the wicked who had died during the past year" (Collier's Encyclopedia). Celtic tribes, who practiced the religion of the Druids, brought this celebration to the British Isles. These people believed that ghosts, spirits, witches, and elves harmed people on Halloween. It was also used by the Druids as a celebration of the summer's end.

The theme of the harvest, which runs through modern Halloween celebrations, comes from both the old druidic celebrations and the old Roman festivals in honor of Pomona, goddess of fruit, which were brought to Britain during the Roman occupation (Collier's Encyclopedia).

It was common for horses and humans to be sacrificed during these celebrations. Men, mostly criminals, were imprisoned in wicker and thatch cages shaped like animals or giants; and Druid priests set fire to the cages, burning them to death.

During the Middle Ages in Europe, black cats were thrown into the flames in wicker cages because they were thought to be friends of the witches. During this time, too, some believed that witches rode through the skies on their broomsticks. On Halloween, these witches reportedly danced on hilltops with goblins and imps while the Devil played the bagpipes or castanets made from dead men's bones. This was also a time when young women used various fortune telling techniques to determine who their future husband would be.

After the spread of Christianity, enemies of the church made fun of the Christians; and one Halloween they worshiped the Devil, set

skulls on pretended altars or painted profane crosses on church walls. The Roman Catholic Church transformed this day into a Christian feast day in the 700's when they named November 1 as All Saints' Day.

Many superstitions and beliefs have developed from these original beginnings.

Christmas

The fourth holiday is Christmas, a time when the world celebrates the birth of Christ, even though the date of His birth is unknown.

Scholars do not know the exact date of Christ's birth. For more than 300 years, people observed His birthday on various dates. In A.D. 354, Pope Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate on December 25. He probably chose this date because the people of Rome already observed it as the Feast of Saturn, celebrating the birthday of the Sun as the Light of the World. The Christians of Egypt celebrated Christmas on January 6, and many members of the Easter Orthodox Church still observe this date (**World Book 416**).

As with other holidays, customs and celebrations have developed surrounding Christmas. One tradition honors St. Nicholas, a bishop who became known for his generosity in the A.D. 300's and later designated by the Dutch as "the patron saint of children" (**World Book 415**).

Even though Santa Claus is known as an American symbol, the idea came from various traditions in several European countries.

The Norse believed that the goddess Hertha appeared in the fireplace and brought good luck to the home. The name Santa Claus also developed from a European source. Dutch settlers in New York, called St. Nicholas *Sinterklaas*. American children loved this symbol and they called him Santa Claus (**World Book 415**).

No one is sure about the origin of the Christmas tree legend, but several legends and tales have developed, some being connected with so-called miraculous happenings and other just legends. Other symbols include the star, lights, Christmas cards, the yule log, mistletoe, and others.

These four holidays are ones that we usually think of when we think of religious holidays.

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As we broaden our study of holidays, I would ask you to consider the following also:

Thanksgiving

A holiday that originated in the United States, Thanksgiving is also celebrated in Canada and probably came from a similar type holiday in England. It is a time of feasting and prayer for the blessings received for the year.

The first Thanksgiving Days were harvest festivals, or days for thanking God for plentiful crops. For this reason the holiday still takes place late in the fall, after the crops have been gathered . . . One of the first Thanksgiving observances in America was entirely religious and did not involve feasting. On Dec. 4, 1619, 39 English settlers arrived at Berkeley Plantation, on the James River near what is now Charles City, Virginia. The group's charter required that the day of arrival be observed yearly as a day of thanksgiving to God (World Book 180).

The first Thanksgiving in this country took place less than a year after the people at Plymouth Colony settled. The first winter in Massachusetts was very severe and killed almost half of the people in the colony. But, because there was a good corn harvest during the summer of 1621, the governor (William Bradford) decreed that there would be a three-day feast and a Thanksgiving Day with the purpose of prayer and celebration.

The point is that it was begun as a religious celebration and not as just a secular holiday, as some believe.

New Year's Day

One of the oldest religious celebrations in the world is New Year's Day. From the earliest of times, all nations have celebrated New Year's Day. The different cultures—Chinese, Egyptian, Jewish, Mohammedan, and Roman—all began their new year at a different time, but the first day of the year has always been a time of celebration.

Thousands of years ago, the Egyptians celebrated the new year about the middle of June. This was the time when the Nile River usually overflowed its banks . . . In ancient Rome, the first day of the year was given over to honoring Janus, the god of gates and doors and of beginnings and endings. The month of January was named after this god (World Book 237).

Many people brought gifts to the Roman emperor to wish him well. In Persia, many gave eggs to their friends, symbolizing the beginning of new life. This custom meant the same thing as "turning over a new leaf." The custom of bringing gifts to the emperor was later brought over to England.

New Year's Day was made a holy day in what was termed the Christian church in A.D. 437, and it was called the feast of circumcision. This custom was brought over from paganism. "At first, parties were not allowed on this day because the pagans had followed that custom" (*World Book* 237).

A book titled *Holidays and Birthdays* says, "Because New Year's Day is called a Christian holy day, many people begin the day by going to church. But it is also a day to visit friends and relatives and to exchange gifts" (36-37).

New Year's Day is a holiday that has been celebrated for more than 5000 years, but not at the same time of the year by all cultures. And it is a holiday that we normally do not think of as religious as far as the world is concerned; however, its history shows that it has always been considered a religious celebration. In spite of that association, we think nothing of observing this holiday and of even integrating worship with it.

Birthdays

Another holiday not usually considered a religious holiday, is birthdays; but its origin comes from religious type celebrations that reach back into pagan times. The idea of a birthday being a special day goes back thousands of years, even to the time when people believed that good or bad spirits could help a person on that special day.

Long ago, people believed that on a birthday a person could be helped by good spirits or hurt by evil spirits. So, when a person had a birthday, friends and relatives gathered to protect him or her. And that is how birthday parties began (*Holidays and Birthdays* 12).

Birthday candles came from ancient Greece where people worshiped many gods and goddesses. Artemis, the goddess of the moon, was one of these. Each month, the Greeks brought cakes to her temple. "The cakes were round, like a full moon. And, because the moon glows with light, the cakes were decorated with lighted

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candles" (**Holidays and Birthdays** 12); thus the idea of the birthday cake and candles developed from paganism.

References are made to Herod's birthday celebration in Matthew 14:6 and Mark 6:21, although some scholars believe these may have been a celebration of his ascension to power instead of his day of birth.

The later Jews regarded the celebration of birthdays as a part of idolatrous worship. In the early Church the term 'birthdays' was applied to the festivals of martyrs, the days on which they suffered death in this world and were born to the glory and life of heaven (**Unger's Bible Dictionary** 147).

In spite of this background, I have heard some say they would celebrate birthdays in an extra special way, but they would not celebrate any of the Christmas traditions. This is a great inconsistency.

Other Common Items with Roots in Idolatry

Many other parts of our everyday lives today have roots in idolatry. For example, several of the months are named for Greek and Roman gods. January is named for the Roman god Janus, March for the Roman god Mars, May for the Roman goddess of spring and growth—Maia, June either for Juno (the Roman goddess of marriage) or from a Latin word meaning *juniores*.

Days of the week are likewise named for pagan gods.

In spite of these facts, no one hesitates to place a calendar on the wall because it began in idolatry. No one feels he is worshiping one of these gods when a month or a day of the week is showing on the calendar.

Even some of our New Testament words, so commonly used and so well accepted, came out of either paganism or Romanism.

For example, the word *saint*. Paul used this word many times, but one place is at the beginning of the book of Ephesians where he addresses his words to the "saints."

Paul took it right out of the terminology of the pagan Greek religions. He had to. There were no other terms which he could use so long as he was confined to the Greek language. There it meant "devoted to the gods." For instance, a Greek worshiper would bring an offering to the god as a gift. He devoted it to that god. Or, the

Greeks would build a magnificent temple and devote it to a certain god. The building was thereby set apart from any secular use, and separated to a religious one. It was consecrated to the worship of that particular Greek god (Wuest, Vol. I, 16).

The point is not that we should not use such terminology. The point is that just because something began in another age, even back in pagan times, does not necessarily make it either right or wrong. It is when it is used in connection with idolatry or with the wrong attitude that it becomes wrong. This fact we accept every day. We celebrate birthdays and we use calendars in spite of their beginnings. If something is wrong, it is wrong for another reason.

Reasons Some Use for Not Celebrating Christmas

When we discuss religious holidays and reasons that we should not celebrate them, we usually talk about Christmas and leave the others out of the discussion. The point of my approach in this study is that we need to be consistent, regardless of what our view is.

When brethren discuss Christmas, they offer various reasons for believing it is wrong. Some of these reasons are as follows:

1. It is paganistic because of where it began.
2. It was celebrated by the Roman Catholics who named it Christ's mass.
3. It is a "religious" holiday.
4. It celebrates the birth of Christ, but it is the wrong time of the year.

Those who have these reasons for not celebrating this holiday are, no doubt, sincere in their beliefs; and it would be wrong for them to observe it. My purpose is not to sway anyone from his conscience in this matter but to call all of us to consistency in our attitudes toward all holidays. As far as Christmas is concerned, we have a lot of closet celebrators and a lot of nibblers. Yet they hesitate to mention the subject for fear of being ostracized.

I see no reason to treat those who celebrate Christmas any differently from the way we treat those who celebrate Valentine's Day by giving their wife a bottle of perfume or allowing their children to exchange cards—this one is no different from other so-called religious

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holidays. I have shown through the histories of these holidays that every one of them, even those we do not usually consider religious holidays, have their roots in paganism or Catholicism and usually both.

The question is, then, does the observance of these holidays as family or social traditions cause one to be a idolater or a Catholic—does this act cause one to sin? I believe not, no more than one is a pagan if he has a calendar on his wall. If I believed that, I would have to eliminate all holidays, calendars, and some terminology so commonly used by Christians.

Things I do believe:

1. If one participates in any of the deceptions or lies commonly associated with Christmas, Easter, or any of the other holidays, it is wrong.
2. If one has the feeling of worship of an object or an idol as he participates in any of the traditions, it is wrong. But what is true of one is true of all, if we are consistent. If a Christian feels he is worshiping the moon when he has a birthday cake, he should not have one. If he feels he is driving evil spirits away by having candles on a cake, he should not have them. If one believes he is associating himself with the paganistic beginnings when he gives another a valentine, he should not do so.
3. If a Christian violates his conscience by observing any of the holidays, he sins if he does so.

By the arguments traditionally used for not celebrating some religious holidays, some brethren have shown an inconsistency and intolerance that cannot be right and cannot be proved scripturally.

Conclusion

May I repeat that I am not trying to get anyone to accept religious holidays wholesale or partially, nor am I trying to get anyone to reject them. I do hope to stimulate each of us to think deeper about our convictions about these matters and to be consistent with whatever belief we arrive at.

May I further emphasize that we must decide if we are dealing with law or liberty?

If we are dealing with law and if our traditional arguments are valid, then we must be consistent. We must give up all holidays that have similar backgrounds.

If observance of holidays is a matter of liberty, then we must allow the liberty without making another Christian feel guilty or like a second-class citizen in the kingdom if he does not agree with us. Some have been intolerant in some cases, for example, about Christmas; but they have been tolerant about other holidays, making us look inconsistent in the eyes of those whom we are trying to influence.

Paul speaks about matters of liberty in Romans 14:1-12, making it clear there is flexibility in some matters. He, of course, is not addressing the doing of anything that is a violation of holy scripture—he addresses only those things that are not in themselves sinful.

The apostle makes it clear that the Lordship of Jesus must be recognized and that He is to be respected (vv. 8-9). Further, he says that each of us must be aware of the judgment of God. "... every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (v. 12). In matters of liberty, we are not to judge or condemn others. In matters of law, it is, of course, the judgment of God that condemns one when he violates that law. The warning is that we are not to become confused in such matters, condemning where we should allow liberty and accepting when we should keep law.

Similar teaching is found in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10. Paul ate the meat set before him asking no questions. But if someone set meat before him and said this meat is sacrificed to idols, he then would not eat it. He refused, not for his own conscience sake but for the sake of the weak brother who would feel that he was worshipping an idol if he ate that meat. Eating meat was a matter of liberty—not law.

I believe it is safe to say that people who celebrate holidays today do not in anyway recognize their pagan beginnings or feel they are worshipping an idol by what they do.

It appears very dangerous from the teaching of these Scriptures to push our personal opinions on others and force them to abide by our opinions. When Christian liberties are the issue, Paul said "Let everyman be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 12:5).

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One elderly brother used to say, "I had just as soon go to hell for being a law maker as a law breaker." It is just as wrong to be a law maker as a law breaker.

Am I encouraging anyone to observe any of the holidays we have discussed? No I am not. I will leave that to your personal studies and decision. I am asking that we be consistent in our positions and arguments and not be guilty of making laws. 1712 Wanda Way, Arlington, TX 76017

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Stabilizing New Converts

by James D. Orten

Introduction:

The importance of this topic can be confirmed by noting that almost every church in the nation could double, perhaps triple, its membership over night if it could only reclaim the members it has lost. But I wonder if you noticed the flaw in my title? Stabilizing converts, new or old, cannot be done as a primary activity. Just as an airplane in flight can only be stable while making progress, a Christian can only be stable in growth.

- A. I do not say these things to complain about the brother who suggested the topic, or the brethren who assigned it to me, anymore than I am complaining about myself. I accepted the topic and was well into thinking about it before I realized that, technically, I had agreed to do the impossible.
- B. I point out the flaw in the title because I sincerely believe it is symptomatic of a flaw in the way we think about discipleship. I think we assume that if we can just get people stable in doing certain religious activities (which translates into doing them habitually), they will be all right. In fact, to do this and be satisfied with it could be the most dangerous position of all.
- C. As great a servant of God as Paul was, he did not consider himself to have arrived.
 - 1. Philippians 3:13, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do . . ."
 - 2. Nor did Paul expect other Christians to reach a state on earth in which they could stop growing. Ephesians 4:13, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man . . ."
- D. The switch that we must make is comparable to the one the medical profession is making from a "curing disease" model to a "promotion of health" model.
 - 1. Doctors used to think that if a child did not have any of the known diseases then he must be healthy. We know now how dangerous that assumption is. The number of things that can be wrong with a child was not known then, is not known

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now, and probably will never be known, because new diseases keep arising.

2. It is much more profitable to think in terms of promotion of health. Consequently, today pediatricians have charts that show normal growth curves for height, weight, metabolism, etc. They know that if a child measures up well on these standards, they can be more certain of his health than by looking only at whether he has measles, strep throat, or even cancer.

E. If you were going to construct some "normal spiritual growth" charts for young Christians, what types of characteristics would you put on them?

1. If you are like me, you have trouble even thinking in these terms. Again, this is a symptom of our problem.
2. Please continue thinking about normal, desirable growth patterns for Christians. We will come back to this principle later.
3. So much for a rather lengthy introduction.

I. The Scriptures teach that there are three sides to a Christian's growth and ultimate salvation.

A. The individual Christian's own responsibility. No one will ever be saved against his will. No one will grow as a Christian without his active participation.

1. 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."
2. The apostle's analogy is instructive in many ways. Children are born with an instinctive "will to live" that makes them crave their natural food. They are also equipped at birth with a sucking reflex that enables them to acquire it. Craving and accepting the food that is given them is about all we expect of infants, because that is about all of which they are capable.
3. This comparison of new converts to infants causes us to think about who is responsible for a Christian's growth at what times in his Christian life.
4. I picture a continuum in which at birth others are mostly responsible for him. At maturity, he is mostly responsible for himself, and he bears some responsibility for other disciples.

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5. Responsibility for Christian Growth

At birth

At maturity

*Others are mostly
responsible for you*

*You are responsible
for yourself and
some for others*

6. If an infant dies of starvation or exposure, who is responsible for its death?
- B. As a Christian grows, he bears more and more responsibility for himself.
1. 2 Peter 1:5 "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance . . ."
 2. This is a personal command, directed to individual Christians. "Add" means you add to your faith. It is clear that Peter here lays additional responsibility on the individual.
- C. Philippians 2:12 suggests a time when disciples could be told to "work out your own salvation," which suggests most of the responsibility would then be on them. This passage clearly implies growth. Ellicott says that the phrase "work out" means to carry through to completion.
- D. These passages and many others show that individual Christians have some responsibility for their own salvation at all stages of their spiritual lives. But they show just as clearly that in their infancy others are mostly responsible for them.
1. Many humans, especially men, fear having others be dependent on them. Because of this, I fear that we want to cut babes in Christ loose too soon, making them responsible for themselves before they are able.
 2. As one example of this, a young man is baptized and we put him up immediately to teach, i.e., before he can feed himself, we give him the responsibility for feeding others. And we have been known to send talented babes in Christ out to be preachers of the gospel! Some of these have been overwhelmed and discouraged by this responsibility.

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3. Paul said Hebrews 5:12, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers . . ."
4. This passage implies that there is "a time" when disciples ought to have grown to a state that they can be teachers, which also implies that there is a time they cannot be expected to do so. additionally it suggests a certain normal standard of growth.

II. The second side to man's salvation is God's part. While it is true that Christians of all stages of spiritual growth bear some or much responsibility for themselves, God promises to help.

- A. 1 Corinthians 3:6, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."
 1. The word "gave" here means made to grow. Some translations say, "I planted the seed, Apollos warned it; but God made it grow."
 2. The seed, as in other places, is the Word of God. The passage means that Paul preached the Word first, Apollos came later and preached supporting what Paul had done. But it was God who produced the results.
- B. I was surprised upon getting into this study at how many biblical passages speak of God's part in man's salvation. Here are some examples.
 1. Jude 24, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."
 2. This verse is not suggesting that God has this power but will not use it. Ellicott translates it, "who can bring it to pass that you stand blameless before the judgment seat."
 3. Romans 16:25, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel . . ."
 4. "Stablish" means to strengthen all facets of Christian character, or as we might say, to confirm in a healthy pattern of spiritual growth.
 5. 2 Timothy 1:12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."
 6. Paul's analogy is that of depositing a treasure with a strong and beloved king who will allow no enemy to steal it until

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it is returned to its owner at a specified time. This passage is linked by commentators to the one in Psalm 31:5 that was quoted by Jesus from the cross which says, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit."

7. There are many other passages that speak of God's willingness to preserve His saints: Colossians 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:17, 3:3-4, and others.

C. At this point I can imagine that some of you are saying to yourselves, "Now where is he going with that; how is he going to say that God strengthens and preserves Christians?"

1. Perhaps I am going to disappoint some and relieve others, but I am not going to describe the mechanism by which God works in this matter.
2. A part of the reason I shall not make this attempt is that I believe it to be the wrong question. We may never know, or at least never agree on, how God accomplishes such purposes.
3. In this, as in other matters, if we ask the wrong question, we will never get the right answer.
4. The right question is, "How do we access this great power of God?" And the answer to that question is clear. We access it through prayer.
5. Examples of Paul praying for new converts: Philippians 1:3-9; Colossians 1:9-11.
6. An example of Paul being strengthened: 2 Timothy 4:16, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me."
7. I see no evidence of this being a special miraculous process, but rather I assume it to be of the ordinary type available to all Christians.

D. Perhaps we often neglect the best possible thing we could do for new converts.

III. While it is certain that the individual bears responsibility for his growth, and that God helps, it is also clear that brothers and sisters bear responsibility for each other.

A. Jesus' analogy of Christians being born into the household of God as babes demands this view.

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1. We often puzzle over why Christians fall away, but I believe if we think in terms of what it takes to promote growth and health in an infant and translate that into spiritual terms, we will be on the right track.
 2. For example, we know that infants must be shielded from certain harmful influences.
- B. Jesus' law of offenses shows that we are held responsible for one another, and it shows one of the negative influences from which we must shield each other, especially babes in Christ.
1. Matthew 18:7 "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"
 2. The warning here is clear. In addition, Jesus seems to move in this verse to a general statement on offenses, from the verse just before it, in which he had talked specifically about offenses to the young.
 3. Matthew 18:6, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."
 4. This passage shows the responsibility of the elder for the younger. It is wrong to cause any person to stumble; but the young in physical life and spiritual life are so much more vulnerable, that Jesus seemed to give a stronger warning for their protection.
 5. It is interesting to note that the word "offend" in this passage is the same as used in Matthew 13:41: "The son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity."
 6. Many other passages teach this principle. For example, Romans 14:13: "Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."
- C. Because offenses loom so large in Biblical teaching regarding new converts, we must be concerned about what causes offenses.
1. Scandals.
 - a. The phrase "things that offend" in Matthew 13:41 is sometimes translated scandals.

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- b. As I understand it, the use of this word in this place is a figure of speech, synecdoche, in which a part of a thing or process is put for the whole. In this case, the scandal is put for the persons, their behaviors, the effects, etc.
- c. Christians, especially older Christians, who get involved in sins may claim they are hurting no one but themselves. Not only is that false, the Scriptures teach that they shall be held accountable for the hurt their sins do to others.
- 2. A misuse of Christian liberty. Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 both teach that liberty is not to be used to the discouragement of others. 1 Corinthians 8:9 says, "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak."
- 3. Strife and Divisions.
 - a. The books of 1 and 2 Timothy teach strongly on this topic. For example, 2 Timothy 2:23 says, "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive but be gentle unto all men . . ."
 - b. 1 Timothy 1:4 says that these types of questions promote "controversies" rather than godly edifying.
 - c. There is a parallel here with children who grow up in homes in which the parents fight. Children are always damaged by this experience. They frequently go through phases of fear, followed by anger, followed by cynicism and disgust. And they often distance themselves from the home as quickly as possible. Is there any wonder why young Christians leave the church in similar circumstances?
 - d. The church has just begun to take notice of child abuse in a physical sense. It is time we begin thinking in terms of "spiritual child abuse."

IV. But infants need more than just the absence of offenses. Their caretakers must provide positive benefits too. Two of the most important are nourishing food and loving care.

A. Actually, in life and in the Bible, these two go together.

- 1. In Ephesians 4:15, Paul clearly showed that "teaching the truth in love" would cause Christians to grow up to be in all things like Christ.
- 2. In the natural realm, there are numerous studies that show that infants who are held, cuddled, and talked to while they

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are fed, grow faster and have fewer feeding problems than those who have their bottle propped up for them.

3. Both elements are essential. No amount of love without food (the Word) will produce spiritual growth (1 Pet. 2:2), but conversely, teaching done in a cold and arrogant atmosphere will not be digested.
- B. An ancient French king's experiment illustrates this point. He hated other languages, especially German, which he considered coarse, and believed French to be the "natural" language. He thought all children would grow up to speak French if they were not corrupted by hearing other languages and he designed an experiment to prove his belief. Gathering several orphaned infants he built them a home and instructed their caretakers to provide well for them but never to speak a word in their presence. When these children grew up to speak French, as he was sure they would, he would have proved his contention. The caretakers, in fear of speaking to the children, avoided them except to provide care. What language do you think these children spoke? None. They died; every one of them! We could have predicted that in advance now; children literally cannot live without love. Neither can spiritual children.
1. The cause of these French children's deaths was originally called "Marasmus"; it is now called "Failure to Thrive Syndrome." Sometimes there is a physical cause, but most often it is due to poor nurturing. The child simply slips into a decline, refuses to eat, and unless it is reversed, dies.
2. We are seeing more "Failure to Thrive" in busy two-career families. Some children are put in nurseries at as little as five or six weeks of age. Nursery attendants feed them on schedule, change them, but provide little love. When busy parents take them home they may feel are relieved if the child is willing to lie quietly in his crib. But it is dangerous to allow them to do so.
3. When these children are brought to doctors, they pull out the charts to see how far behind they are, and quickly suspect "Failure to Thrive."
4. The cure for "Failure to Thrive"? In early stages the doctor talks to parents (or more likely has a social worker do it). There are programs which show naive parents how to love their infants. But in severe cases, they hospitalize the child and bring a grandmother who loves babies and enjoys holding, cuddling, and talking to a child. The doctors know that "Failure to Thrive" is deadly unless it is reversed.

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- C. I believe we have the religious equivalent of busy, two-career families in our congregations, and because of it, we are producing "Spiritual Failure to Thrive" cases in many of our new converts. In effect we tell them: "The feeding schedule is 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays and twice on Sundays; be here at those times and we will give you the pure milk of the Word." And we often never touch them in between.
1. We give new converts the pure milk of the Word, and that is absolutely essential, but it won't go down without love.
 2. 1 Corinthians 8:1, "Now at touching things offered into idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."
 3. In this passage Paul is not saying that knowledge of God's will is unessential; but rather that knowledge without love produces arrogance. knowledge with love produces growth.
- D. We are eager to promote knowledge among our preachers and teachers. This "Preachers' Study" is an example. You know that I am not opposed to it, because I have been a happy participant for many years every time I have been invited. But we have probably neglected other dimensions.
1. What do you suppose would happen if we held a preachers' training session on "How to Show Love to the Brethren"?
 2. The hoots would likely crackle like lightning in a storm. Yet, that might be one of the most profitable things we could do.
 3. Over the years I have had a small stream of Christians, especially young Christians, tell me they have trouble talking with preachers and church leaders. They say they get brushed off, ignored, or given Band-Aid answers.
 4. A good exercise for us older Christians would be to observe ourselves when a young person approaches us. Do we greet them with the same enthusiasm given to colleagues; do we listen with the same keen interest or take their problems as seriously?
- E. One of the saddest developments in our brotherhood in recent years is the process by which we have allowed "love" to become a four-letter word.
1. We did it because some people were teaching false doctrine in the name of love.
 2. We would have been better off to have maintained a balance and reminded ourselves that love includes discipline.

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V. Characteristics of Spiritual Growth.

- A. In closing I would like to return to the principle of "charting" Christian growth.
 - 1. The book of Hebrews is an excellent place to center this aspect of the study. It was written to "stabilize" the Hebrew Christians and keep them from falling away under their great persecution.
 - 2. In Hebrews 8:10-11 and Hebrews 10:16, Paul gives one of the surest tests of spiritual maturity. It is having the law of God written in one's heart.
- B. The Old Law could not produce this type of spiritual growth. It could not "make the comers thereunto perfect" (Heb. 10:1). But Paul says that we have a "better covenant" that was founded on "better promises" and a "more excellent ministry" of the better covenant. It can produce spiritual maturity.
 - 1. But what does it mean that one would have the "law written in his heart," and that we would not teach every man his neighbor to "know the Lord"?
 - 2. I believe it means that the gospel has the power to change an individual from the inside out. It can become so much a part of one's thinking and behavior that he does what is right not because it is the law, but because it is a part of who he is. Thus, the law is not written on tables of stone, as was the Old Law, but is written on the heart.
- C. For example, as long as one is still attending the worship because it is required, the law for that Christian is still written in the text. When he comes to worship because that is what he wants to do, the law is written in his heart. And so it is with all Christian duties.
 - 1. But what did Paul mean, that when we become spiritually mature we shall "not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest" in Hebrews 10:11?
 - 2. He did not mean that we will no longer need to preach the gospel to the lost or teach to edify believers. I believe he meant that among the spiritually mature we will not have to police each other to see that we do our duty. That will not be necessary when the law is written in our hearts.

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