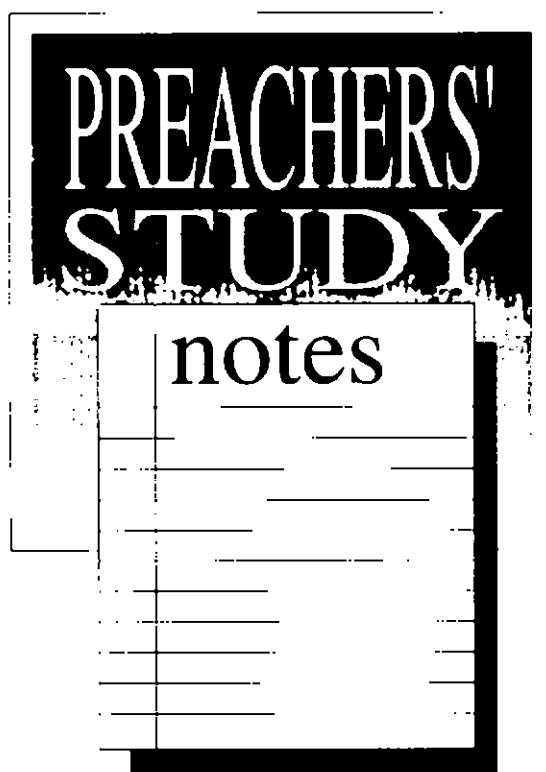

PREACHERS' STUDY

notes

notes

1996



1996 Preachers' Study Notes

held at the Twenty-first Street congregation
of the church of Christ, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
December 23-26, 1996

Moderators:

Cliff Arney
Allen Bailey

The views expressed in the **Preachers' Study Notes** reflect the studied beliefs of the particular and individual authors, and are not necessarily the views of the editors of this volume, moderators, host congregation, or other participants. Each article has the address of the author appended if you desire to respond. The editors of the volume 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.

—editors of the **Christian's Expositor**

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Foreword

The 1996 volume of the **Preachers' Study Notes** marks the fifteenth year that the manuscripts from this annual study have been collected for publication, and the ninth year that the **Christian's Expositor** has undertaken to oversee the publication.

It is our sincere belief that the study of the Scriptures is a worthwhile and fruitful venture, and that the sharing of knowledge so gained is the greatest of gifts. In publishing the **Preachers' Study Notes**, we are attempting to offer our readers the studied conclusions of able brethren for consideration and meditation, and to preserve the research of these brethren for future generations.

The 1996 Study was held December 23-26 at the Twenty-first Street congregation in Oklahoma City, OK. This congregation has participated in this work for many years and is to be commended for its efforts. While the topics for the 1996 Study did not follow a particular theme, three mini-themes are evident: biblical hermeneutics, major doctrines of some denominational movements, and some issues regarding the communion. The topics were selected and assigned to the various participants by the Twenty-first Street congregation with help from Allen Bailey. Cliff Arney (of the Twenty-first Street congregation) and Allen Bailey moderated the study sessions. Each presentation was followed by a "question and answer" session pertaining to the study presented.

Though we strive for full cooperation in producing the **Preachers' Study Notes**, this is seldom achieved. This year, we are pleased to include sixteen of the seventeen presentations. Not included in this year's publication is the presentation by Ron Courter on the major doctrines of Seventh-Day Adventism. Also not included are the "question and answer" sessions. If you are interested in either of these, they may be obtained in cassette format from **Contending for the Faith** publications through Allen Bailey, who publishes the Study in cassette format each year (1633 Trinity View, Irving, TX 75060).

The editors wish to give their sincere thanks to the participants of the study for their long hours of good research and their willingness to submit their research for publication. The quality of the oral and written presentations was quite high. And as managing editor, I wish to give my personal thanks to Leonard Dreiling of Denver, CO for helping me read through the articles for grammatical and spelling errors.

Since the **Christian's Expositor** assumed the responsibility for publishing the **Preachers' Study Notes**, brother Melvin Crouch has helped to underwrite the project financially. We are deeply indebted to him for his generosity, as are all those who benefit from the publications of the CE. We wish to publicly acknowledge his contribution to this project.

We publish this volume with the sincere prayer that it may bring joy, insight, and knowledge of the Scriptures to those who read it; and that it will in no way detract from or misrepresent the spiritual truths that we hold dear. We hope that you will find topics of interest that will not only shed light on your understanding of God's Word, but will lead you into further personal research. Appended to each article is the author's address—we encourage you to communicate with the authors in respect to their research, and to offer thanksgiving and encouragement to them for their efforts. May God bless you in your study of His Word.

Jim Crouch
editor of the PSN

Introduction to Hermeneutics

by Smith Bibens

The field of study involved in interpreting the Scriptures is called "biblical hermeneutics." The English word "hermeneutics" is descended from the Greek word **hermeneuo**, which is used in its verb and noun forms, including compound forms, nineteen times in the New Testament. Vine defines **hermeneuo** (Strong # 2059): "denotes to explain, interpret . . . and is used of explaining the meaning of words in a different language . . ." (424). This word is derived from Hermes, a god of the Greek pantheon (equivalent to the Roman god Mercury), who served as the messenger for the Gods, transmitting and interpreting their messages to man. The occurrences in New Testament follow. Italicized English words indicate those which translate the Greek term.

hermeneuo (verb, Strong's # 2059)

John 1:38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, *being interpreted*, Master,) where dwellest thou?

John 1:42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is *by interpretation*, A stone.

John 9:7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is *by interpretation*, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

Hebrews 7:2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; *first being by interpretation* King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.

hermeneia (noun, Strong's # 2058)

1 Corinthians 12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the *interpretation* of tongues:

1 Corinthians 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath *an interpretation*. Let all things be done unto edifying.

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dierneneou (verb, Strong's # 1329), "a strengthened form of No. 1 (*dia*, through, used intensively), signifies to interpret fully, to explain" (Vine 424).

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he *expounded* unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Acts 9:36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, *which by interpretation* is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

1 Corinthians 12:30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all *interpret*?

1 Corinthians 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he *interpret*, that the church may receive edifying.

1 Corinthians 14:13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may *interpret*.

1 Corinthians 14:27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one *interpret*.

metherneneou (verb, Strong's # 3177), "to change or translate from one language to another (*meta*, implying change, and No. 1), to interpret" (Vine 424). Occurrences: Mt. 1:23; Mk. 5:41; 15:22, 15:34; Jn. 1:41; Acts 4:36; 13:8.

Milton Terry says,

Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. The word is usually applied to the explanation of written documents, and may therefore be specifically defined as the science of interpreting an author's language. This science assumes that there are divers modes of thought and ambiguities of expression among men, and, accordingly, it aims to remove the supposable differences between a writer and his readers, so that the meaning of the one may be truly and accurately apprehended by the others (17).

In addition to applying the study of hermeneutics to the study of Scripture, there are other disciplines in which the study of hermeneutics is employed, such as in jurisprudence (legal issues), communication science, and information science.

Actually, everyone practices the science and art of hermeneutics every day, because we practice interpreting communication from others every day. We are constantly interpreting all kinds of communications: verbal, written, and visual. Whenever we read a newspaper, a billboard advertisement, or watch a TV program, we are interpreting communication. Most of the time it is automatic, and we are hardly conscious of the interpreting process going on in our minds, but it is going on. Most of the communication we receive on a daily basis is from people with whom we share a common culture, language, and history, so the interpretation process is an easy one.

What happens, however, when we encounter a person who is a foreigner and does not speak English well? Putting the shoe on the other foot, what happens when we are the foreigner, as when we visit overseas? We often have difficulty in communicating and understanding the messages we are bombarded with on such occasions. A traveler's dictionary, even an interpreter, might be brought into the picture to help us out.

What happens when we encounter a piece of writing that is written in a foreign language, or written a very long time ago, or written in a culture that was quite different from the one we live in today? We would certainly not understand such writings without a conscious effort at interpretation. For example, most people who read Shakespeare today have to read an annotated edition that explains all the unfamiliar words and figures of speech of the English of Shakespeare's day. As another example, once a brother in the church bought a multi-volume set of commentaries called **The Biblical Expositor**, thinking that he would receive a great deal of help on his chapter studies from this source. As he read the volumes, however, he found that the men whose works were included in this set were all dead and gone a century or two ago, and their writings reflected the forms and syntax of the English language of a century or two ago. He found it positively unreadable, and eventually gave the whole set away.

The foregoing examples illustrate the that may be encountered within our own language and culture, given the passage of a just a few centuries. In the Bible we encounter a body of writing that was set down nearly two millennia ago, in a culture that was radically different from ours, and in languages that we, most of us anyway, do not understand.

The Bible is a divine book in that it is inspired and authored by God through the Holy Spirit. But God has caused His Word to be clothed in human words. So the Bible is a book of human communication, and must

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be interpreted by the same methods, rules, and means that we would bring to the interpretation of any other written document. God has seen fit to put His self-revelation in written form, therefore, to understand what is written we must appeal to the same canons of interpretation that we would apply to any document.

How important is this written communication to our knowledge of God? Just think for a minute: what could we know about God or His will if we did not have this written communication we know as the Bible? Psalm 19:1 declares, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." Paul, before Gentile audiences, argues from creation (Acts 14, 17), to show that God is and that He is good. But that is about all that we can know about God apart from the Bible.

Revelation was necessary, for man was incapable of "reaching up" to God. "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21, NIV). Therefore, God had to reveal Himself to man through a medium that man could understand—the medium of human language.

From the foregoing, we see that the study of hermeneutics is a scriptural and essential endeavor. It is one aspect of Bible study that, if neglected, can produce dire results. It is with this in mind that we enter upon a study of this subject. As we launch out into the study, it must become immediately clear that there is not time enough in this whole week of study sessions to do justice to the subject. However, after looking over the schedule for this day, which includes other studies relating to hermeneutics, I thought it best to spend some time in laying a foundation for hermeneutic studies.

Foundation Facts of Hermeneutics: Axiomatic Truths About the Bible that Make Hermeneutics Possible

1. The Bible is inspired by God.

If the Bible is not inspired by God, then ultimately its message is not very important and understanding it aright need not be a high priority. On the other hand, if the Bible is the revelation of the Omnipotent God who is Creator and Moral Governor of the Universe, then the message of the Bible is of the highest importance, and understanding it becomes the highest priority.

The Scriptures affirm that they are from God. The human penmen of both the Old and New Testaments taught that their words were not their own, but the words of God. To some minds it is circular logic to claim that the Scriptures are inspired because they claim to be. However, we could not know that the Bible was a divine revelation unless it made that assertion for itself. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 presents the testimony of Scripture to Scripture.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Old Testament. Over 3800 times we read "The word of the Lord came unto . . .", or "The Lord spoke . . .", or "Thus saith the Lord . . ." or words of like import. Jesus affirmed the inspiration of the Old Testament by repeatedly quoting from it as the Word of God. (See my recent article "Jesus' Attitude Toward Scripture," *Christian's Expositor*, March 1997.) Of the twenty-four books in the Hebrew arrangement of the Old Testament, Jesus quoted from twenty-two of them.¹ Jesus quoted passages as historical truth that are most scorned by Bible critics: Jonah and the great fish (Mt. 13:40), Lot's wife (Lk. 17:32), Noah and the Flood (Mt. 24:37-38), the creation of man and of the institution of marriage (Mt. 19:4-6). Jesus often acknowledged that the Old Testament Scriptures were the Word of God (Lk. 16:17; Mt. 5:17-18; Mk. 7:6-9 [Isa. 29:13]; Mt. 4:1-11; Mt. 22:29-32). The apostles followed the Lord's example. In the apostolic writings there are, by one writer's count, 1600 quotations, allusions, and references to the Old Testament. Peter asserts, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21, NIV).

New Testament. Jesus made the same claims for His words that He made for the canonical Old Testament Scriptures. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt. 24:35). He stated that His words were from the Father (Jn. 12:49; 14:22-23). Jesus promised His

¹ The Hebrews did not have less in their OT than we do. They simply had it arranged differently. Instead of 1 and 2 Kings, they had a book called Kings. Other books were combined. For example, Ruth was a part of Judges. The order was different. For example, Chronicles was the last book of the Hebrew arrangement. The arrangement of the English Bible is borrowed from the arrangement adopted by the Septuagint. A book on Bible introduction will supply more information on this and other matters that are good to know in doing Bible exegesis. I would particularly recommend Geisler and Nix's *General Introduction to the Bible*, Moody, 1968.

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apostles that they would receive divine help in preaching the gospel (Jn. 14:26; 16:13). He promised,

And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you (Mt. 10:18-20).

This promise was fulfilled. Paul said, "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; see also Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 11:23). Peter affirms, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed" (2 Pet. 1:16-20).

There are three terms that are commonly used by conservative Bible scholars to describe the quality and quantity of God's inspiration of the Scriptures.

- a. Verbal
- b. Plenary.
- c. Progressive

Verbal Inspiration. This term signifies that the very words of Scripture are inspired. God has taken up human words and framed them in sentences that would accurately convey the thoughts He intended. Paul writes definitively on this in 1 Corinthians 2:4, 10-13.

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power . . . But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 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 (see also 1 Thess. 2:13).

Since the very words of Scripture are inspired, arguments are even made within Scripture that turn on the tense of a verb (Mt. 22:32) or the whether a noun is plural or singular in number (Gal. 3:16).

Because the very words of Scripture are inspired the importance of word definitions is crucial. This is clear when we see words like "baptize," "sing," "communion," "cup," in Scripture. All valid exegesis of Scripture begins with understanding the meanings of the words found in Scripture as they were used and understood in the time Scripture was penned. For instance, we do not define "baptize" by the modern English dictionary, but according to the common usage of the word in the Greek speaking world of the first century. Lexical and grammatical study is the foundation of Bible exegesis, and Bible hermeneutics has guidance to offer in these studies.

Plenary Inspiration. "Plenary" means "full, complete, entire, extending to every part." Plenary inspiration means the Bible is inspired in every part. The Bible does not just "contain" the Word of God, it is the Word of God. This means that the genealogies of Numbers and 1 Chronicles are just as inspired as Psalm 23, the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7), or 1 Corinthians 13. The latter passages may be of greater relevance to a spiritual need we have in our lives, but they are no more inspired, qualitatively speaking, than the former.

The practical significance of this is that we must take all the Scriptures teach into consideration when we study a subject. We cannot isolate a passage from other passages on that subject and expect to arrive at a valid interpretation. Also, we cannot be selective in what we accept as inspired. Some people want to take Paul's words on love in 1 Corinthians 13 as inspired, and reject what he says in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 about women speaking in the assembly. They say that when he addresses the latter issue, his human prejudice shows through! Either the Apostle Paul was inspired or he was not. His writings are either altogether inspired or not at all. Furthermore, if we adopt the idea that only parts of the Bible are inspired, who is to say which parts? Subjective human opinion becomes the highest authority in religion if it is left to man to decide what is inspired.

Progressive Inspiration. This means that God did not just send an angel to earth with the completed volume of the Bible. God did not commit its inscription to one man at one time. The Bible was penned over a span of 1600 years by about forty penmen who produced a total of sixty-six books: thirty-nine Old Testament and twenty-seven New Testament. Tracing the scheme of redemption through it's pages, we find that God's plan was unveiled gradually over three dispensations of time: Patriarchal, Mosai-

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cal, and the Christian. What began as personal revelation to selected persons (family heads or "patriarchs"), eventually became centered in the chosen nation of Israel. Moses was the first prophet to inscripturate God's revelation, and this ushered in a period of about 1600 years during which time further Scriptures were added to what Moses wrote. Hear the writer of Hebrews as that book opens.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (1:1-2).

There have been two great written revelations given by God. The first was given to Israel by the prophets. Beginning with Moses, this period of inspired writing continued through the return from Babylonian exile down to Malachi. The result is the Old Testament. The second was given to all mankind through Jesus, the Son of God, by His apostles and prophets—the New Testament (cf. Heb. 2:1-4). The first written revelation prepared for and made possible the second (Gal. 3:24-25; 4:1-5; Eph. 3:1-5; Heb. 8:7-10). However, God's revelation has not progressed indefinitely.

2. The Bible is a Finished Revelation.

The Bible is perfect and complete in its entire contents and only its contents are necessary to furnish us with the knowledge of truth and right. Everything pertaining to life and godliness has been revealed (2 Pet. 1:3). Jesus promised that His apostles would be guided by the Spirit into "all truth" (Jn. 16:13). When those men finished their earthly work and left behind the books that make up the New Testament, that closed God's revelatory work. In view of the Lord's promise, and the teachings of the New Testament writers, that leaves no room for further revelations like the Koran, Book of Mormon, or modern Pentecostal "revelations." James describes the New Testament as the "perfect" law of liberty (Jas. 1:25). How can you fill a full cup or go north when you are standing on the North Pole? Likewise, you cannot improve upon that which is perfect and complete.

3. The Bible is the All-sufficient Authority in Religion.

Since the Bible is a complete revelation, lacking nothing that is needful for man's spiritual well-being, then it alone is a sufficient authority and guide in the Christian faith. Denominational creeds, catechisms, manuals, and books of discipline; innovations in the work and worship of the church; theological modernism;

all these are evidence that the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures is not respected. Many would sooner listen to fellow mortals than the counsels of God (Mt. 15:9). We are specifically warned against changing the message of the Bible. We cannot add to it (Rev. 22:18; 2 Jn. 9). We cannot subtract from it (Rev. 22:19). We cannot change it in any way from what was delivered by the Lord's apostles and prophets (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:14). In the words of John D. MacDonald,

God may have more light to break forth from His word; but he has no light to give apart from his Word. We can never grow beyond these everlasting words; we can only grow into them more deeply (**What the Bible Teaches About the Bible**, Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1980).

Some people are not tolerant of such a view. A Unitarian preacher once protested, "Purity of heart and life is more important than correctness of doctrine." To this a more conservative preacher responded, "Healing is more important than the remedy; but without the remedy there would be no healing." Likewise, there can be no pure Christian living without pure Christian doctrine.

A final point to make about the Bible's authority over life: its words will be the standard by which humans are judged on the final day (Jn. 12:47-48; Rev. 20:12).

4. The Bible is Understandable.

A great error, widely held, is that the Bible cannot be understood by most people; some would say, all people. Some lament, "Everyone sees the Bible differently." On the other hand one hears, "Only those well studied in a seminary are fit to understand and interpret the Bible." In particular, the Roman Catholic church has claimed for centuries the right to be the sole interpreter of the Bible. To discourage people from reading it for themselves, many ecclesiastics have discouraged people with, "You cannot understand the Bible on your own." This tune is also sung by groups as diverse as the Mormons, Watchtower Witnesses, and Christian Scientists.

Scripture teaching, however, is completely against such claims. Jesus said, "Hearken unto me every one of you and understand" (Mk. 7:14). Jesus indicated that those who had difficulty understanding Him were those who were ensnared by the Devil (Jn. 8:43-44). Paul adds, "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17, NASV). Were Jesus and Paul mistaken to utter such exhortations? I think not!

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Admittedly, there are difficult passages in Scripture. These passages may be wrested by the unlearned and unstable to their destruction (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Note that it is the "unlearned" who fail to understand. Remember, just because something is hard to do does not mean it is impossible to do. If we make a commitment of time and effort we can understand God's Word (Prov. 2:3-5). Learning leads to understanding. Greater learning results in greater understanding. When I entered Algebra I my freshman year in high school, the subject was a dark mystery to me. Once I learned the subject, I found that I understood its principles, symbols, significance, and usefulness. This understanding came only after arduous study. In coming to understand Scripture we have to follow the same strategy. And we must keep it up all life long. Timothy knew the Scriptures from his youth (2 Tim. 3:15), but he is still enjoined to study (1 Tim. 4:13-16; 2 Tim. 2:15).

The Bible has been compared to the Earth. The farmer can make a living by scratching the surface of the Earth. The miner delves deep into the bowels of the earth to bring forth precious minerals, gems, and the treasures of the Earth's resources. Likewise, an ordinary reader of Scripture can find all that pertains to life and godliness very easily in the Bible. At the same time, the Bible scholar will delve deep into the text and bring forth great treasures of truth.

The perspicuity of Scripture was a controversial topic during the Reformation. For centuries the Scriptures had been regarded as a dark and mysterious book requiring arcane skills of interpretation to unlock; skills only possessed by the church. Martin Luther came to maintain the essential clarity and simplicity of Scripture. He said,

This does not mean there are no difficult or obscure passages in Scripture. But such passages can be interpreted through clearer passages or through . . . grammatical studies. If such passages still remain unclear after such investigations, the reason lies not in the obscurity of the text, but in the mind of the reader.

Would God be just to require that men obey His Word in order to go to heaven (Mt. 7:20-21; Jn. 12:47-48), and then give that Word in such a form that no man can understand? Hear Milton:

We count it no gentleness or fair dealing, in a man of power, to require strict and punctual obedience, and yet give out his commands ambiguously. We should think that he had a plot upon us. Certainly such commands were no commands, but snares. The very essence of truth is plainness and brightness; the darkness and ignorance are our own (Milton, quoted in Terry 160).

Terry adds,

We cannot believe that the sacred writers desired to be misunderstood. They did not write with a purpose to confuse and mislead their readers. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that the Scripture, given by divine inspiration, is of the nature of a puzzle designed to exercise the ingenuity of critics. It was given to make men wise unto salvation, and in great part it is so direct and simple in its teachings that a little child can understand its meaning (Terry 161).

The German commentator Lange gives us a fair illustration of the real difficulty.

As the sun in the earthly heavens has to break through many a cloudy media, so also does the divine word of the Holy Scriptures through the confusion of every kind which arises from the soil of earthly intuition and representation (Lange, quoted in Terry on p. 162).

5. The Bible is a Harmonious Unity.

The Bible is a unique book. Sixty-six books really, written over sixteen centuries, by forty men, it is nonetheless, a harmonious whole. Many deny this fact, but the truth of this claim can be easily established by one's reading through the Bible attentively. What forty human writers over the past two millennia could take up a controversial subject and all make the same observations and come to the same conclusions? A study of the history of philosophy will satisfy anyone that, for humans, this is impossible. How does one explain the marvelous unity of Scripture except by divine revelation?

Jesus inferred the unity and harmony of Scripture in His teaching. "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (Jn. 5:39, NIV; see also I.k. 24:27, 44). Paul affirmed the unity of apostolic teaching (I Cor. 15:9-11; Gal. 2:1-9), as did Peter (2 Pet. 3:15-16) and John (1 Jn. 4:6).

Because the Scriptures are harmonious, one can expect to achieve a proper grasp of the will of God on a particular subject only by bringing together all that the Bible has to say on that subject. Clearer passages must govern the understanding of more difficult passages. For example, Revelation 20 must not be interpreted in such a way that it conflicts with the plain teaching of 1 Corinthians 15. Remember that in the final analysis, Scripture must interpret Scripture. 717 N. 13th St., Ozark, Missouri 65721

Foundation Facts of Hermeneutics

1. The Bible is Inspired by God
(2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 14:37)
 - a. Verbal (1 Cor. 2:4, 13; 1 Thess. 2:13).
 - b. Plenary (2 Pet. 1:20-21; Lk. 24:44).
 - c. Progressive (Heb. 1:1-2; Deut. 18:15, 18).
2. The Bible is a Finished Revelation.
(2 Pet. 1:3; Jn. 16:13; Jude 3; Jas. 1:25).
3. The Bible is the Only Authority in Religion.
(Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Jn. 9; Rev. 22:18-19).
4. The Bible is Understandable
(Eph. 5:17; Mk. 7:14; 2 Pet. 3:15-16; Prov. 2:3-5)
5. The Bible is a Harmonious Unity
(Lk. 24:27, 44; 1 Cor. 15:9-11)

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History of Biblical Interpretation

by Johnny Elmore

When we speak of biblical interpretation, we are talking about the science called "Hermeneutics." The word itself comes from a Greek word meaning "to interpret, to explain." In Greek mythology, Hermes, or Mercury was thought of as the messenger of the gods, himself a god skilled in speech, writing, etc.

Examples of Biblical Interpretation

One of the most outstanding examples of the importance of biblical interpretation, as well as an illustration of the science itself, can be found in the Old Testament. The Jewish people were entrusted with the Oracles of God—so said the apostle Paul in Romans 3:1-2—but they often showed little appreciation for them. They finally erred to the extent that exile and dispersion became their lot. While still in captivity, however, one man set his heart on a devout study of the Scriptures, realizing that only a return to the Law of the Lord could restore Israel. We are told that "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10).

The result was that Ezra led a company of exiles back to Jerusalem, where he found a people humbled and chastened of God gathered at the water gate. Ezra stood before them and read the law and, with his associates, "caused the people to understand the law" (Neh. 8:7). Nehemiah 8:8 tells us how they did it: "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." That is biblical interpretation, pure and simple. The grand part is the terrific impact such instruction had on the people, for we are told that they "separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers" (Neh. 9:2).

The eminent Moses Stuart, who has been called "the father of American biblical literature," argued that the Bible should be interpreted by the same principles as all other books, and answered critics of this method. I want to read a paragraph from his pen, which has been quoted by Campbell:

In order to answer these inquiries, let us direct our attention, in the first place, to the nature and source of what are now called principles or laws of interpretation. Whence did they originate? Are they

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the artificial production of high-wrought skill, of labored research, of profound and extensive learning? Did they spring from the subtleties of nice distinctions, from the philosophical and metaphysical efforts of the schools? Are they the product of exalted and dazzling genius, sparks of celestial fire which none but a favored few could emit? No; nothing of all this. The principles of interpretation, as to their substantial and essential elements, are no invention of man, no product of his effort and learned skill; nay, they can scarcely be said with truth to have been discovered by him. They are coeval with our nature. They were known to the antediluvians. They were practiced upon in the garden of Eden, by the progenitors of our race. Ever since man was created, and endowed with the powers of speech, and made a *communicative*, social being, he has had occasion to practice upon the principles of interpretation, and has actually done so. From the first moment that one human-being addressed another by the use of language, down to the present hour, the essential laws of interpretation became, and have continued to be, a *practical* matter. The person addressed has always been an *interpreter*, in every instance where he has heard and understood what was addressed to him.¹

Stuart continues to say that "all men are, and ever have been, in reality, good and true interpreters of each other's language."² He affirms that the science of hermeneutics is one with which all men are more or less acquainted. He says:

If it were a far-fetched science, dependent on high acquisitions and the skillful application of them, then it would be comparatively a useless science; for, in such a case, only a favored few of the human race would be competent to understand and acquire it; still fewer could be satisfactorily assured of its stable and certain nature.³

Early Christians

But we are asked how early Christians interpreted the Scriptures. Did they use the same method we do? If not, what method did they use? Unfortunately, I am not acquainted with any early Christians, so I have been dependent upon other sources of information. We can learn something of

¹ Alexander Campbell, "On The Rules of Interpretation, No. II," *Millennial Harbinger* 3 (February 6, 1832):65.

² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³ *Ibid.*

how the early Christians "interpreted" the Scriptures by the way they applied the Old Testament.

It has been pointed out that the purpose of language seems to require literal interpretation, and that over three hundred prophecies surrounding the coming of Christ were literally fulfilled. Of the twenty-four sanctioned by the New Testament as being typically fulfilled, only seven are cited as examples of a non-literal hermeneutic. We find the writers of the New Testament using the Old Testament as an illustration (Rom. 9:9-12), as an analogy (1 Cor. 1:19), applicationally (Rom. 12:19), and rhetorically (Jas. 4:6).⁴

It must be obvious that people of the first century recognized the familiar fact that the Scriptures teach by command, example and necessary inference. We find them going into all nations, teaching and baptizing, in obedience to the Savior's commands (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15-16). We find them following examples, becoming "followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 2:14). We find Jesus using implication in his teaching, and his audience making the necessary inference (Mt. 22:31-33). We find the New Testament writers clearly implying certain things and expecting us to make the necessary inference (1 Cor. 2:1-2; Acts 18:1-8). We even find the writer of Hebrews using an argument from the silence of the Scriptures (Heb. 7:14).

I have not read all the uninspired histories of the Christians of the first century, but what I have read indicates that they understood the Scriptures the way we do. I might note two particular examples supplied by Mosheim.

The rites instituted by Christ himself were only two in number, and these designed to continue to the end of the church here below, without any variation. These rites were *baptism* and the *holy supper* ...⁵

All Christians were unanimous in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the triumphant Savior arose from the dead, for the solemn celebration of public worship. This pious custom, which was derived from the example of the church of *Jerusalem*, was founded upon the express appointment of the apostles, who consecrated that day to the same sacred purpose, and was observed

⁴Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1995), pp. 113-115

⁵John Lawrence Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History*, (Rosemead, CA 1959), Vol. I, p. 35.

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universally throughout all the Christian churches, as appears from the united testimonies of the most credible writers.⁶

The sacrament of *baptism* was administered in this century, without the public assemblies, in places appointed, and prepared for that purpose, and was performed by immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font.⁷

I am not saying by this that I can show that their understanding was identical to ours in every way, but, at least, they understood two of the things that we are most criticized for preaching today, and that is breaking bread on the first day of the week and immersing the whole body.

Apostolic Fathers

What about those early religious writers who have been styled "Apostolic Fathers" because of their supposed relationship as scholars of the apostles? They are identified as Barnabas, Hermas, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, and the author of the epistle to Diognetus. What method of biblical interpretation did they use?

Terry says, "In the writings of the apostolical fathers we observe a frequent, practical, and, in the main, appropriate, use of Scripture."⁸ Other than saying that Rahab's scarlet thread indicates "that redemption should flow through the blood of the Lord to all them that believe and hope in God" and citing the fable of the Phoenix as a fact to illustrate the doctrine of the resurrection, there is little in Clement's epistle that "can fairly be pronounced farfetched or fanciful."⁹

The writer of The Epistle of Barnabas, according to Terry, "seems everywhere anxious to allegorize or explain away those parts of Scripture which enjoin outward ordinances, or in any way favor Judaism."¹⁰ Of the author of the Ignatian epistles, Terry says that he was "a fanciful reasoner and an unsafe interpreter of the Scriptures."¹¹ The Epistle to Diognetus and

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p.36.

⁸ Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books n.d.), p. 631.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 632.

the Shepherd of Hermas are said to "contain no specimens of Scripture exegesis, and furnish no special help to trace the history of interpretation."¹²

Papias is described as "a man well skilled in all manner of learning, and well acquainted with the Scriptures, but much given to following traditions, and very limited in his comprehension."¹³

Terry says, "The Church of this early period was too much engaged in struggles for life to develop an accurate or scientific interpretation of Scripture."¹⁴

Justin Martyr, who wrote in the middle of the second century, was said to be a "fearless defender of Christianity," and "a man of great learning," but "he clung with tenacity to some of the teachings of Plato." His expositions are said to be "often fanciful, sometimes almost silly."¹⁵ Of all the writers of this period, Irenaeus is said to be the "greatest Church teacher." Terry says: "No one in the second century represents as he does the purity and the fullness of the development within the Church; scarcely any one in the Church of his time is so highly esteemed as he."¹⁶ Terry concludes that "during the second century of our era there was no uniform or settled method of interpreting the Scriptures."¹⁷

Long before the time of Christ, Alexandria had been the home of men of letters. "The Asiatic mystic, the Jewish rabbi, and the Greek and Roman philosopher there came together and interchanged their thoughts."¹⁸ At Alexandria, the philosophies of Plato and the fanciful speculations of Philo met and mingled, and as a result, the scholars of the Alexandrian church were much given to allegorical expositions of the Scriptures. Clement of Alexandria is described as a "fanciful interpreter," having read Philo and adopting his allegorical methods. Most of us are acquainted with the so-called "double sense" of biblical interpretation, but Clement found five possible meanings to a passage of scripture.¹⁹

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 630.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 634.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 635, 636.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 637.

¹⁹ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1981), p. 31.

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After Clement came Origen, who was not only well learned but also pure in character. The world owes a great debt to Origen for his labors, but he followed in the path of Philo and Clement, assuming that many portions of the Scriptures are unreasonable and absurd when taken literally, and teaching a threefold sense, namely, the corporeal, the psychical, and the spiritual. He also taught the pre-existence of souls, a new probation after death, and explained the sacred records as Platonists did the heathen myths; but in spite of that, he is generally acknowledged as "the father of biblical science." Other representatives of the Alexandrian school were Eusebius of Caesarea, and Cyril of Alexandria, both of whom subscribed to the allegorical method of explaining the Scriptures. For example, Cyril made the five loaves of John 6:9 to represent the five books of Moses as "a comparatively coarse food, and the two fishes" to "denote the finer and more luxurious nourishment of the teachings of Christ."²⁰

There was another great school of biblical interpretation at Antioch in Syria, where "the disciples were called Christians first" (Acts 11:26). This school opposed the allegorical exegesis which was so prevalent at Alexandria, and introduced a more scientific and profitable system of biblical study. Time would fail us to tell of all those connected with this school, but John Chrysostom is regarded as "the greatest commentator among the early fathers of the Church."²¹

The Western Church, which later developed into the Roman Catholic Church, produced contemporaries Jerome, Augustine, and Pelagius, whom Terry called "the greatest biblical scholar, the greatest theologian, and the most distinguished heretic" respectively.²² Jerome translated the Bible into Latin. Although he put great emphasis on the historical and the literal, being influenced by the school of Antioch, in practice he was an allegorist. Augustine developed a handbook of hermeneutics and homiletics, which "contain a number of very sensible rules for the exposition of the Bible, but in practice he forsakes his own hermeneutic principles, and often runs into excessive allegorizing." Although Pelagius was a man of great learning, his defective views of the nature of sin and the work of divine grace in salvation have disqualified him as a profound exegete.²³

²⁰ Terry, pp. 641-644.

²¹ Ibid., p. 649.

²² Ibid., p. 656.

²³ Ibid., pp. 657-658.

The Middle Ages did not bring a great deal of improvement in biblical interpretation. How could it have been otherwise when education of the masses was discouraged, Bibles were chained to the pulpits, and dissenters were burned at the stake? Ramm states: "It would be over-simplification to assert that the only method of exegesis during the Middle Ages was the allegorical. It would not, however, be an exaggeration to assert that the preponderance of exegetical work was allegorical."²⁴

The Reformers

But we must come to the Reformation. The great men of the Reformation are names we have come to know—Wycliffe, Huss, Calvin, Jerome of Prague, Luther, Knox and others. Obviously, I will not have time to mention each of them and their methods. Ramm says that there was a hermeneutic reformation which preceded the Reformation itself. One factor leading to it was said to be the philosophical system of Occam, [or Ockham] influencing Luther to see that what we know of God, we know by divine revelation and that the authority for dogma rests entirely on the Bible. The second factor was a renewed study of Hebrew and Greek. A lawyer, John Reuchlin, translated Kimchi's Hebrew grammar into Latin, enabling men to decipher Hebrew. Erasmus published the first Greek New Testament in 1516. Someone has said of the Reformation that "Erasmus laid the egg and Luther hatched it."

Truly one of the great moments in the history of man was October 31, 1517 when Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the churchhouse at Wittenberg. That was simply the opening shot. Luther's developed hermeneutic principles were: (1) The psychological principle; (2) The authority principle, i.e. the Bible is supreme and therefore above ecclesiastical authority; (3) The literal principle (Luther rejected allegory, accepted the primacy of the original languages, and insisted that the interpreter must pay attention to grammar, times, circumstances, conditions and the context of the passage); (4) The sufficiency principle, i.e. the devout and competent Christian can understand the true meaning of the Bible without official guides offered by the Roman Catholic Church; (5) The Christology principle; and (6) The Law-Gospel principle.²⁵

²⁴ Ramm, p. 38.

²⁵ Ramm, pp. 53-57.

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Another Reformer of note who developed a system of interpretation was John Calvin. Although we may have disdain for some of the tenets of Calvinism, we must have admiration for his courage in breaking away from the shackles of Rome. As we review the main points of his exegetical system, we may be able to perceive areas which could lead astray. He taught that: (1) Illumination of the Spirit was necessary spiritual preparation for the interpreter of God's Word; (2) Allegorical interpretation was Satanic, leading men away from the truth of Scripture; (3) Scripture interprets Scripture, with strong emphasis on grammatical exegesis, philology, and examining the context; (4) even orthodox doctrines are to be rejected if exegesis involved was unworthy; (5) exegetes ought to investigate the historical settings of all prophetic and Messianic Scriptures.²⁶

Our Traditional Method

It has become customary among us to use both inductive and deductive logic in the study and teaching of the Bible. In inductive logic, we reason from the particular to the general, or from the parts to the whole; in deduction, from the general to the particular. We can illustrate the inductive method by summarizing the accounts of the Great Commission, or by the factors which enter into our salvation, and drawing a conclusion.

It is charged that Campbell originated this method of interpreting the Bible. We do find Campbell advocating what could be described as the inductive method. He wrote: "To speak more plainly: The inductive style of inquiring and reasoning, is to be as rigidly carried out in reading and teaching the Bible facts and documents, as in the analysis and synthesis of physical nature."²⁷

It has been charged that Campbell borrowed the inductive method from Francis Bacon. It is undoubtedly true that Campbell was an admirer of Bacon, as well as John Locke. He published articles by Bacon and Locke in the *Millennial Harbinger*. But I think he was influenced also by many who studied and wrote on biblical interpretation. He was critical of John Cocceius' works, published in 1676, but appreciative of John Ernesti's book, written in 1761, and which served four generations of Bible scholars. He published articles by Moses Stuart and Thomas Horne and many others,

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 58, 59.

²⁷ Alexander Campbell, "Schools and Colleges—No. II" *Millennial Harbinger* (March, 1850): pp. 171, 172.

so he did not arrive at his conclusions in a vacuum. In 1834, Campbell published an article on biblical interpretation by a Paedo-Baptist in defense of infant sprinkling and remarked that the man laid down excellent rules but abandoned them in practice. He then remarked:

This was the fault of the great philosopher Bacon. Lord Bacon pointed out the true method of philosophizing; yet, in practice, he abandoned it, and his own physical investigations may be ranked among the most effectual specimens of that rash and unfounded theorism, which his own principles have banished from the school of philosophy.²⁸

J. S. Lamar published his **Organon of Scripture** in 1859 and set forth boldly the inductive method. He predicted that if we follow the inductive method, in most instances, "we shall perceive the exact place and the precise force of every fact, incident, circumstance, precept, doctrine, and communication; and thus learning 'rightly to divide the word of truth,' we shall assign to every sentence its proper place, and give to every word its legitimate force." He also predicted: "If properly used, it will make known the one only system of religion which Christ gave to the world, and will thus absorb whatever is true and reject whatever is false in all the systems and organizations in Christendom."²⁹

The inductive method of interpreting and reading the Scriptures was widely used by those seeking to restore the primitive church. C. Leonard Allen says: "One can hardly exaggerate the significance of the Baconian inductive method, for it gave rise, a generation after Campbell, to a stringent 'pattern' orthodoxy that has formed the very identity of Churches of Christ down to recent years." He also claims that Moses Lard "was among the first to systematize and harden the 'command, example, and necessary inference' schema that became standard among Churches of Christ" and that "Lard and numerous other second-generation leaders hardened Campbell's Baconian rationalism, pushing it to dogmatic lengths that Campbell, with his passion for unity, had resisted."³⁰

My first encounter with anything resembling a system of biblical interpretation was at the Preachers' Study in 1959, when we studied that and

²⁸ Alexander Campbell, "Six Rules for Scripture Interpretation," *Millennial Harbinger* (October, 1834), p. 487.

²⁹ J. S. Lamar, *The Organon of Scripture* (Rosemead, CA: The Old Paths Book Club, 1952), pp. 193-198.

³⁰ C. Leonard Allen, *The Cruciform Church*, 2nd ed. (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1990), p. 29.

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other subjects. I still have my well-marked copy of J. S. Lamar's book. My first clear conception of how to identify command, example, and necessary inference was to read N. B. Hardeman's sermon, "Teaching the Word of God." A second reading of Thomas B. Warren's book, *When Is An Example Binding?* also helped me to understand some things.

Three recent books have called in question the propriety of using this method of biblical interpretation. In the first one, *The Worldly Church*, the authors, C. Leonard Allen, Richard T. Hughes, and Michael R. Weed, state that "our forefathers in the faith—men like Campbell, Tolbert Fanning, Moses Lard, and J. W. McGarvey—adopted a way of reading the Bible called the 'inductive method.'" They continue: "The consequences of such a view were far-reaching. The focus began to fall heavily on obeying the laws, building by the blueprint, working the formulas, and knowing all the right 'facts,' in short upon human knowledge and performance." They charge further: "Christian identity and salvation came to depend on getting them all right, or at least the ones we judged to be 'binding.' Often enough, the result has been rancorous debate, division, and abiding animosity over what is central or peripheral, essential or nonessential."³¹

These authors state that the consequences of this way of reading the Bible has led to a secularization among churches of Christ resulting in the emergence of a gospel to meet subjective human needs, excessive focus on self, and a widespread reverence for power, control, and wealth.³²

They warn that by "accommodating faith totally to reason we abandon the transcendence of God and subtly promote a secular view of the world where God either does not act or acts solely according to the dictates of human reason." As an example, they say "self-assured pronouncements about what God can and cannot do (e.g., 'God works in history but only in a non-miraculous fashion')." In a scathing rebuke of what we think of as digressives, they charge that secular churches make up for a void at the center, and state: "That void is not filled by ministries to the infirm, the outcast, and the needy. Many churches spend more time ministering to the 'needs' of the affluent with an array of annual ski trips, golf tournaments, intramural games, musicals, and the like." They conclude by saying: "We do not object to the idea of a biblical pattern per se. We object, rather, to a

³¹ Leonard Allen, Richard Hughes, Michael Weed, *The Worldly Church: A Call For Biblical Renewal*, 2nd ed. (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1991), pp. 61-63.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 64-66.

kind of pattern authority that imposes modern ways of thinking upon the Bible."³³

In the second book, **The Cruciform Church**, C. Leonard Allen traces the beginnings of the inductive method. His thesis seems to be that this way of reading the Scriptures has essentially reduced the Christian life to a formula, dry and devoid of any power except human power, resulting in a secular church, very susceptible to intrusion by culture, and he recommends some solutions for change.³⁴

The third book, **Reviving the Ancient Faith**, traces the story of the Churches of Christ in America, from Richard T. Hughes' perspective. His main thesis seems to be that Churches of Christ started out as a sect and wound up as a denomination. When we see his definitions of a sect and a denomination, we will see, again, a scathing indictment of his own brethren. He defines a sect as "a religious organization that insists that it—and it alone—constitutes the entirety of the kingdom of God. Typically, a sect stands in judgment both on other religious organizations and on the larger culture in which it exists." He defines a denomination: "In the American context, a church that recognizes it is only a part of the universal body of Christ. A denomination has typically made its peace with the dominant culture in which it exists."³⁵

We may not like the conclusions and implications of these writers, but we should give them consideration. Remember that prophets are never wanted, but are needed. Remember that truth is truth, regardless of from what quarter it comes. When we see "gospel preachers" exchanging pulpits with Baptist preachers, we surely know that the digressives have made peace with the culture around them. Let us be warned. 419 K S.W., Ardmore, OK 73401

³³ Ibid., pp. 104-107.

³⁴ Allen, p. 169.

³⁵ Richard T. Hughes, **Reviving The Ancient Faith**, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), pp. xii-xiii.

Applying Our Traditional Hermeneutic (Command, Example, Necessary Inference)

by Alan Bonifay

In view of the fact that looking askance at our traditional method of interpretation is now in vogue among our digressive brethren and in the larger waters of mainstream denominationalism, and in view of the fact that there are "many false prophets gone out into the world" (1 Jn. 4:1), it seems judicious that a few axiomatic truths be brought to our remembrance. Especially is this so since some uncertain (though scattered) sounds are being whispered even among our own number.

1. The Bible is the Word of God Almighty.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

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 (1 Thess. 2:13).

2. Truth is discovered in the Word of God.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth (Jn. 17:17).

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel (Col. 1:4-5).

3. God's Word constitutes the will of God for man.

And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not mine but his that sent me. If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself (Jn. 7:15-17).

Ananias told Paul, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee that thou shouldest know his will and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard (Acts 22:14-15)."

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4. God's will is in human language so that we can know the truth.

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in a few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3:2-6).

... that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written ... (1 Cor. 4:6).

5. God intends for men to understand what His will requires.

Whoso readeth, let him understand (Mt. 24:15).

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (Mt. 18:23).

Wherefore be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17).

6. The process of understanding "what the will of the Lord is" is called interpretation of Scripture, or hermeneutics.

Milton Terry defines hermeneutics as "the science or art of interpretation" (**Biblical Hermeneutics**, p. 17). According to J. D. Thomas, the "Dictionary of Philosophy defines hermeneutics as 'the art and science of interpreting especially authoritative writings; mainly in application to sacred scripture, and equivalent to exegesis'" (**Harmonizing Hermeneutics**, p. 1).

Ezra defined it in these words: "So they read distinctly from the book in the law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the meaning" (Neh. 8:8, NKJV).

7. God expects men to discern and obey His will.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

If ye love me, keep my commandments ... 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 . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto 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 . . . Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you . . . If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you . . . 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 . . . Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:3, 10, 14).

Wherefore my beloved as ye have always obeyed not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

Those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:9).

These passages serve as but a sampling of similar statements that could literally be multiplied by thousands throughout the Word of God. However, they do call to note what cannot possibly be overemphasized in the discussion before us: God's Word must be received in faithful obedience if we would escape the fires of hell to enjoy the raptures of heaven in the day of judgment.

In counterpoint, there is a cry nowadays for a new system of interpretation or a new hermeneutic (see Richard Bunner's article). However, you will discover that the hue for a new hermeneutic means different things to different people:

1. For some, such as the students of Rudolf Bultmann, it means a complete denial of the supernatural inspiration of God's Word.
2. For others a tad closer to our way of thinking, it means merely that in our efforts to nail down the exact regulations of God's will we may have abused the process and consequently overlooked certain precious truths of God's Word.
3. For others still, the desire lies somewhere in between.

Nevertheless, whatever may be determined about all of that, we must not in the hurly-burly of discussion lose sight of the fact that God's Word is intended by God to be normative. Scripture is literally replete with verbs

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such as: will obey, command, do keep, charge, teach, instruct. Likewise, nouns including commandment, instruction, duty, rule, and pattern are more than plentiful. Whatever system of interpretation we adopt, it must not argue away these fundamental and axiomatic truths.

Having established these boundaries, let us see what can be learned about the application of our traditional hermeneutic.

Applying Commands, Examples, and Necessary Inferences As Our Traditional Hermeneutic

It must be recognized at the outset that the interpretation of Scripture requires far more of the interpreter than simply ferreting out a stack of obligatory commands, examples and necessary inferences. The Word of God is much more than simply a collection of loosely knit statements demanding compliance. In its entirety and particularly in the New Testament, the Scriptures constitute the complete revelation of God's will and the system of grace according to which obedient believers can be saved eternally.

The process of interpretation begins in its remotest reaches with biblical introduction, which is devoted to the historico-critical examination of the different books of the Bible. It inquires after their age, authorship, genuineness, and canonical authority; tracing at the same time their origin, preservation and integrity, and exhibiting their contents, relative rank, and general character and value. It proceeds on to textual criticism, which has as its object the ascertaining of the exact words of the original text by the collation and comparison of ancient manuscripts, ancient versions, and ancient Scripture quotations.

After the demands of criticism have been satisfied, hermeneutics properly begins. The aim is to establish the principles, methods and rules which are needful to unfold the sense of what is written. The application of these principles and rules is called exegesis, which describes the process of taking out of the text the meaning that is resident in the words used. Milton Terry concludes:

We observe accordingly that the writer on Biblical Introduction examines the historical foundations and canonical authority of the books of Scripture. The textual critic detects interpolations, emends false readings, and aims to give us the very words which the sacred writers used. The exegete takes up these words and by means of the principles of hermeneutics defines their meaning, elucidates the scope and plan of each writer, and brings forth the grammatico-historical sense of what each book contains. The expositor builds

upon the labors of both the critics and the exegetes and sets forth in fuller form and by ample illustrations, the ideas, doctrines and moral lessons of scripture (pp. 19-20).

In order to arrive at the understanding God intends that we receive, one must observe carefully the historical context in which a passage was written. He must likewise be entirely sensitive to the written context (see Smith Bibens' article). In addition he must recognize the attendant characteristics of the kind of literature he is studying. Fee and Stuart in their book, **How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth**, discuss ten different kinds of literature found in Scripture: Epistles, Old Testament Narratives, Acts, Gospels, Parables, Law, Prophets, Psalms, Wisdom, and Revelation. (I recommend this book with strong caution with particular reference to chapter four, "The Epistles—The Hermeneutical Questions.")

Leonard Allen (in a book I do not recommend—**The Cruciform Church**) advises that two points are worthy of notice:

1. We must not limit either God or His Word (pp. 43-52).
2. We may have overemphasized our study of the epistles and the book of Acts, thereby depriving ourselves of the knowledge of God's will contained in the Gospels and even in the Old Testament (pp. 52-57).

From these considerations and works there is obviously much more to correct interpretation of God's Word than is encompassed by our rubric of command, example, and necessary inference.

However, the establishment of Bible authority for a practice incumbent either upon individuals or the collective body of Christians today is another question altogether. In order to establish Bible authority for practice one must produce a command, an example, or a necessary inference. Such an obligatory instruction must, of course, be established in accord with the principles, methods and rules of hermeneutics. When any one of these three (a command, an example, or a necessary inference) is properly adduced, then it constitutes the authoritative will of God. We know that this method of establishing New Testament authority is the correct one primarily because it was precisely the line of argumentation used by Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament.

It is true that the churches of Christ in America are greatly indebted to Thomas and Alexander Campbell for enunciating these principles long ago. Many thanks are due to Moses Lard for "systematizing and hardening this schema." More recently Roy Cogdill (**Walking By Faith**), Ervin Waters (**The Communion**), and Ronny Wade, have elucidated these same argu-

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ments for establishing Bible authority. Personally, I learned these principles from Ronny Wade in his first debate with Jesse Jenkins at the old Trentman Avenue congregation in Fort Worth when I was in my teens. But the reason these principles are valid harks back to the argumentation used by Jesus and the apostles themselves as it is recorded in God's Word.

Jesus and the Apostles Establish Bible Authority by the Use of Commands, Examples, and Necessary Inferences

Commands

The imperative language of both Jesus and the apostles occurs so often in the Scriptures that substantiation is hardly warranted. However, by way of illustration, Jesus said, "These things I command you, that ye love one another" (Jn. 15:17). Paul instructed Timothy, "These things command and teach" (1 Tim. 4:11).

Examples

Jesus exemplified the observance of the Lord's Supper for us on the night He was betrayed. Peter said, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow in his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). Paul, referring to God's judgment against the idolatrous Israelites, warned us that "all these things happened unto them for ensamples."

Necessary Inferences

In his reply to the Sadducees' trick question concerning the Levirate law, Jesus necessarily inferred that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were still living somewhere even though their physical deaths had occurred hundreds of years before (Mt. 22:23-32). In Acts 15:12, Luke necessarily implies that the miracles and wonders wrought by Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles proved that God had accepted the Gentiles as proper candidates for conversion upon the same basis He did the Jews—in other words, without being required to keep the Law of Moses or any of its provisions. In 1 Corinthians 11:26, Paul necessarily implies the use of one cup in the proper observance of the Lord's Supper by using the figure of metonymy in the phrase "drink this cup." And in Hebrews 7:14 the writer implies necessarily that Jesus could not be a priest on earth because "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."

The obvious point of these illustrations is that we establish Bible authority by command, example and necessary inference; not because the Restoration leaders did or did not, but rather because that is exactly how Jesus and the apostles applied their lines of argumentation in the record of the New Testament.

Does this make other methods wrong and therefore dangerous to one's soul salvation? I suppose the question turns on what one means by "other methods." Suffice it to say that any method of Bible interpretation which seeks to escape the authority of God's Word or to diminish its requirements of man is wrong and extremely dangerous.

Let us now look more particularly at each of these methods of establishing binding New Testament authority and to some of the questions that arise around them.

Commands

I. Are there differences between a command, exhortation and principle?

A. There are some subtle distinctions between these words, but generally they are synonymous.

1. "To command" means to give an order or orders to; to direct with authority (**Webster's New World Dictionary**).
 - a. When the reference is to a giving of orders, "to command" implies a formal exercise of absolute authority as by a sovereign or a military leader.
 - b. Synonyms include "precept" (noun), "direct," "instruct," "enjoin," "charge" (verb).
 - c. A precept is a commandment or direction meant as a rule of action.
 - d. At least eight different Greek words are translated "command," but their meanings are essentially that of the English word (Bullinger).
2. "To exhort" means to admonish, to urge someone to pursue some course of conduct (W. E. Vine).
 - a. Interestingly, exhortation is always prospective, looking to the future, in contrast to the meaning of comfort, which is retrospective, having to do with trial experienced.
 - b. Exhortation carries with it also the ideas of advice and strong warning encouraging or beseeching some action on the part of the hearer.

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3. Principles may be either:
 - a. Rules of conduct, a fundamental law or doctrine, or motivating force upon which others are based.
 - b. Josh McDowell points out that precepts are the direct commands, rules, regulations, codes, and requirements of Scripture; whereas principles are the underlying truths that are the basis and reason for the precepts.
 - (1) A principle is a standard of truth that may be applied to more than one situation.
 - (2) Principles, further, help to explain the "why" behind the precepts (**Right from Wrong**, pp. 95-96).
 - (3) Nevertheless, principles are also commands.
- B. Illustrating the relationship between precepts and principles. (I am indebted to Smith Bibens for this material.)
 1. The precepts concerning our worship of God are discovered in passages such as:
 - a. John 4:23-24: "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
 - b. Hebrews 10:25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."
 - c. 1 Corinthians 11:23-29: "This do in remembrance of me."
 - d. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2: "Let every one of you lay by him in store."
 2. The broader principles underscoring these specific precepts are found in passages including:
 - a. Matthew 6:33: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God"
 - b. Ephesians 5:15-16: "Redeem the time"
 - c. Titus 3:1: "Be ready to every good work"
 - d. 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Take heed lest ye fall"
 - e. Ephesians 6:10: "Be strong in the Lord"
 - f. Mark 8:34: "Deny self"
 - g. Matthew 5:13-16: "Let your light so shine before men"
 - h. James 4:8: "Draw nigh to God"
 - i. John 14:15: "Love God"
- C. Whatever differences may be construed between commands, exhortations and principles, it must be recognized that the object of all three is to make action obligatory.

1. In determining whether or not a specific imperative is bound upon us today one must determine the writer's purpose.
 - a. Is he commanding all believers to action (2 Tim. 2:14)?
 - b. Is the command directed at only certain believers (2 Tim. 4:5)?
 - c. Is it one given only to one specific person (2 Tim. 4:13, 21)?
2. All of the rules of interpretation must be correctly applied to the passage.

II. Is it possible for the meaning or sentiment behind a command to be authoritative and not the command itself?

- A. In general, No!
- B. This notion derives from the supposed distinction between the spirit and letter of the law.
 1. 2 Corinthians 3:6: "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."
 2. The whole notion of a distinction between the sentiment of a rule and the rule itself is a complete fiction.
 3. Contextually the letter that kills is the "ministration of death, written and engraven in stones"—in other words, the Old Testament (vv. 6-7).
 4. That which gives life is the spirit or the New Testament (v. 6).
 5. One cannot obey the meaning or sentiment behind a command without obeying the command itself.

III. Questions arise about several passages as they relate to these points. Are these commands or principles? And presumably—Must they be obeyed today?

- A. 1 Thessalonians 5:26: "Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss"
 1. This command is voiced five times in the New Testament (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14).
 2. It should be noted first that numerous methods of greeting are suggested in the New Testament:
 - a. Verbal greetings (Acts 18:22; KJV—"saluted").
 - b. Written greetings (1 Cor. 16:21; 2 Thess. 3:17).
 - c. Embraces (Acts 20:1).
 - d. Kisses (Acts 20:37—the only express example of a kiss in salutation in the New Testament).

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- e. The point to be registered is that the holy kiss, while common during New Testament times, was not the only method used to greet people.
- f. Our common greeting of a handshake may be under consideration in Galatians 2:9 where it is recorded that James, Cephas and John extended to Paul and Barnabas "the right hands of fellowship."
- g. Clearly the holy kiss was not practiced as the exclusive method of greeting in New Testament days.
3. It should also be observed that the frequency of extending the holy kiss is not regulated by any of these passages.
 - a. By comparison, how often should a Christian pray (cf. 1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:8; Jas. 5:16)?
 - b. How often, in the light of 1 Peter 4:9, is one required to extend hospitality?
 - c. Both prayer and hospitality are commanded, as is the holy kiss, but the frequency with which these commands are to be obeyed is not regulated.
4. What is regulated in all these passages is the nature of the kiss bestowed in greeting. It was to be characterized by holiness.
 - a. Neither Paul nor Peter originated this mode of greeting.
 - b. But both sanctified it as acceptable provided that it be observed with the morality and purity characteristic of the high calling espoused by all Christians.
 - c. As Ronny Wade concluded in the December, 1996 issue of the **Old Paths Advocate**: "The kiss of love is as appropriate today as it was in New Testament times. It was not the only acceptable form of salutation then, nor is it now. When practiced it must be genuine and free of impure motives; it must be a holy kiss" (see also "Salute One Another With An Holy Kiss," by Irvin Barnes; "The Querist Column," OPA, [Vol. 70, no. 12, Dec. 1996], by Ronny Wade).
- B. 1 Thessalonians 5:16: "Be joyful always;" Philipians 4:6: "Be anxious for nothing."
 1. The question is, Can emotions be commanded?
 2. In a word—Yes!
 3. The command to be joyful always is remarkable in view of the suffering of the Thessalonians which has already been mentioned (1:6; 2:14; 3:2-4).

- a. Notice the emphatic "always."
 - b. Paul held this rejoicing at all times in all circumstances as a distinctive and abiding characteristic of the Christian.
 - c. Paul knew that suffering for the Lord was not incompatible with rejoicing in the Lord.
 - d. He himself could testify to the paradoxical experience of joy amid sorrow and suffering.
 - e. His explanation of this paradox is found in Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16-18).
 - f. Galatians 5:16-26 must also be considered in this light.
4. Jesus explains Philippians 4:6 in the sermon on the mount (Mt. 6:24-34), and in the same verse under question Paul provides the alternative to anxious worry over things we cannot control: "But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."
5. The New Testament constantly commands emotions—love, fear, joy, peace, hate, etc.
- C. James 5:13-14: "Is any among you afflicted let him pray. Is any merry let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call the elders."
1. If we are happy and do not sing songs, or afflicted and do not pray, or sick and do not call for the elders, do we violate these commands?
 2. James MacKnight offers this comment:
 As the precept concerning singing psalms when cheerful does not imply that we are not to pray then (1 Thess. 5:16; 1 Tim. 2:8; Jas. 5:16), so the precept concerning prayer in affliction does not imply that we are not to express our joy in suffering according to the will of God, by singing psalms as Paul and Silas did in Philippi in jail (Acts 16:25).
 3. The question here is: "let him pray" as opposed to what?
 - a. As opposed to swearing—v. 12
 - b. Notice the context of the passage:
 - (1) Brethren, be patient—v. 7
 - (2) Stablish your hearts—v. 8
 - (3) Grudge not one against another—v. 9
 - (4) Endure as the prophets did—vv. 10-11

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- (5) Above all do not swear and curse—v. 12
- (6) Instead, when you are afflicted, pray—vv. 13-14
- (7) When you are happy, sing—vv. 13-14
- (8) When you are sick, call for the elders—vv. 13-14
- c. Proper interpretation always involves discovering the author's purpose and observing contextual considerations.
- 4. However, if it be established that one must follow this pattern in every case of affliction, happiness, or sickness, that in no way impinges on the necessity for Christians to obey God's Word.
 - a. It would simply constitute one more obligation to be met.
 - b. It would not lessen our responsibility to worship according to the New Testament pattern one iota.
 - c. The same holds true for the holy kiss.
- IV. **How are we to determine which commands are universal commands to all people of all times and ages, and which are situational commands designed for a particular time and place and circumstance?**
 - A. The only possible answer to this question is that the purpose of the New Testament writer and the surrounding context must be evaluated in each case in order to determine which commands are situational and which are universal.
 - B. Two passages in particular were suggested as relevant to the inquiry:
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2
 - a. The question is, Was the contribution a universal command and consequently binding today, or a situational command designed to meet a specific need and thus temporary in nature and consequently not mandatory today.
 - b. The objectors to this passage being construed as a universal command point out that this collection was for a specific need—the poor saints in Judea—and when that need was satisfied this order ended.
 - c. 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 is binding today, but as an example rather than a command.
 - d. It illustrates how and when the church is to collect the money needed to obey a variety of background commands having to do with the financial support of:
 - (1) preachers (1 Cor. 9:14)
 - (2) elders (1 Tim. 5:17-18)
 - (3) widows indeed (1 Tim. 5:3, 5, 9-10)

- (4) needy saints (Gal. 2:9-10)
- (5) the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14; Heb. 10:25)
- e. Let me repeat: 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is binding today, but as an example and not as a command. However, within this example several commands hold sway, viz. the collection for the satisfaction of the church's financial needs is to occur upon the first day of every week, and each believer is to "lay by him in store as God hath prospered him."
- f. This passage, like Acts 20:7, illustrates a background rule.
- 2. John 13:14-15
 - a. The question is, Are we commanded to wash feet today.
 - b. As a matter of ritual ceremony—No.
 - c. This was not a ceremonial washing.
 - d. Jesus plainly said the disciples' feet were dirty and needed to be washed (v. 10).
 - e. Jesus did this as graphic illustration of the same lesson he had taught the apostles on at least three other occasions, when, as here (1.k. 22:24-29), they were arguing about who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt. 18:1-14; 20:25-28; 23:11-12; Mk. 9:32-37; 10:42-45; 1.k. 9:46-48).
 - f. The key verse that removes this from a ceremonial cleansing is John 13:10.
 - g. Are we commanded to wash feet today?
 - (1) Yes, if a brother or sister is in need of that service.
 - (2) Ceremonially or as a part of the Lord's supper—No.
 - h. Is Jesus' example more far reaching than literally washing feet? Yes, for He said: "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (Jn. 13:15-16).

Necessary Inference

I. What Constitutes a Necessary Inference?

- A. Moses Lard may have been the first of the Restorers to recognize this kind of New Testament teaching.

- 1. In 1866, in Volume 3 of *Lard's Quarterly*, he said:

Heretofore our motto, as a people, has been: we shall hold nothing, we will do nothing, for which we can not plead a thus says the Lord, or an approved precedent. Is this our motto wrong? I can not

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think it. Yet is our future conduct, in no sense, to be embarrassed by it? We shall see . . . The result may be, not that we shall alter our practice, nor yet abandon our motto; but that to the latter we may have to make a slight addition. This I have long felt to be a necessity; for it is clear to me that our motto is not sufficiently comprehensive. Procedure in a given case may be as authoritatively determined by necessary implication as by either a thus says the Lord, or by an approved precedent. In this, I think, our motto has been slightly at fault.

2. Notice that Lard used the phrase "necessary implication" as opposed to the more common parlance of "necessary inference."
 3. This distinction elucidates the most important principle of interpretation in this category.
 - a. When I am speaking to you, I imply; you infer.
 - b. We must be sure first that the point under consideration is fairly implied by the statements of Scripture and not merely read into Scripture by ourselves—that is, inferred without warrant from the text.
 4. Next we must establish whether or not what is implied is necessarily implied.
 - a. In other words—is it essential to understanding or necessary that the implication be recognized?
 - b. If it be so, then the necessary implication is binding upon us.
- B. Jesus and the apostles taught by necessary inferences.
1. Matthew 22:23-33—Jesus necessarily implies that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living somewhere.
 2. Matthew 22:41-45—From the fact that Jesus was David's son and the fact that David called him Lord, we are to infer both the humanity and the deity of Jesus.
 3. Matthew 11:3-5—Jesus answered John's question about whether or not he was the Messiah by necessary implication.
 4. Matthew 8:21 can only be understood by necessarily inferring that the dead who are to bury their own dead are spiritually dead and not physically dead.
 5. Matthew 4:7—In Jesus' reply to Satan's temptation, "Again it is written," He implies that one Scripture cannot be arrayed against another, but rather must be reconciled one with the other.
 6. Hebrews 7:14—Paul necessarily implies that Christ could not be a priest on earth because He came from Judah "of which tribe Moses spake nothing as concerning priests."

- C. The New Testament authoritatively instructs us today by the use of necessary implications.
 - 1. It is necessarily implied in Acts 8:37 that the preaching of Jesus requires the preaching of baptism as a condition of salvation.
 - 2. Paul's statement that he had determined "not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2) necessarily implies, at the least, that all of the material covered in 1 Corinthians involves preaching "Christ and him crucified," and probably all that Paul wrote by inspiration.
 - 3. Weekly observance of the Lord's supper is necessarily implied by Acts 20:7.
 - 4. That unleavened bread is to be used to represent the Lord's body in the observance of the Lord's supper is necessarily implied by Matthew 26:17, 26.
 - 5. The mandatory use of one cup on the Lord's table is necessarily implied by 1 Corinthians 11:26.
- II. **How Do We Determine Which Passages Fall Into the Category of Necessary Inferences?**
 - A. By careful study of every passage under consideration:
 - 1. By maintaining the proper observance of the author's intent,
 - 2. By careful attention to the context;
 - B. By the correct application of all the rules of hermeneutics;
 - C. Each case must be examined in its own right.

Examples

- I. **What Is An Example?**
 - A. Several questions have been proffered which beg the issue:
 - 1. Why and when are examples binding?
 - 2. Why are examples considered in interpreting Scripture?
 - 3. What is an "approved example"?
 - 4. How is an example approved?
 - B. The question resolving all of these quandaries is: What is an example?
 - 1. According to Webster's *New Twentieth Century Dictionary* (Unabridged), an example is "an instance serving for illustration of a principle or method; a particular case or problem illustrating a general rule, method or truth."
 - 2. In other words, an example is an illustration, clarification, explanation, or application of a background rule or rules.

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3. An example differs from an incident or a happenstance or an occurrence in that all of these simply report action and they do not carry binding authority.
 4. An example by its very nature is binding because of its relationship to the rule or rules it illustrates.
 5. If an incident can be demonstrated to be an example, then it is binding.
- C. Why are examples considered in interpreting Scripture?
1. They are considered because they are normative and because the New Testament teaches us by example.
 2. Acts 20:7 illustrates the precedent of 1 Corinthians 11:26.
 - a. "For as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death til he come."
 - b. How "oft" did they eat the bread and drink the cup?
 - c. Acts 20:7—"upon the first day of the week"
 - d. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all congregations to observe the Lord's supper on the first day of the week.
 3. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 constitutes an example illustrating how the church is to collect money to obey the commands regulating the church's financial obligations.
 4. The fact that the disciples were in an upper room when the Lord's supper was instituted is not binding because it illustrates no rule. It was simply an incident reported about the occasion.
- D. All examples are binding.
1. The question is whether or not an example can be adduced from any particular incident.
 2. If it is an example it is binding.

The Law of Exclusion

- I. Roy Cogdill voiced this law in **Walking By Faith** (1957):
 - A. "When there is no precept, approved example or necessary inference that includes the practice under consideration, there is no authority for the practice and it is excluded God's silence rules against it and to engage in such a practice is to add to the law of God. We must not only speak where the Bible speaks, but we must be silent where the Bible is silent (2 Jn. 9-11)" (p. 28).
 - B. The Law of Exclusion is a part of the Law of Silence.
 1. Sometimes the silence of Scripture allows or gives permission.

2. Sometimes the silence of Scripture denies permission.
3. The distinction can be ascertained through several steps:
 - a. First, it must be determined by careful perusal that Scripture is, in fact, silent about a matter.
 - b. Second, it must be determined whether or not God's silence is intended: if it is, it legislates; if it is not, it allows choice.
 - c. F. LaGard Smith gives this illustration:

Suppose that a father were to say to his teenage son, "Son, take the Ford Saturday night." If there were two cars in the garage—one a Ford and the other a Cadillac—everyone would understand that the father was intending his silence about the Cadillac to be controlling. In directing his son to drive the Ford, the father necessarily excluded the use of the Cadillac. But now suppose the father said to his son, "When you drive the car, drive carefully." From that statement alone, not one could assume any indication as to the father's intention regarding which of the two cars should be driven (The Cultural Church, p. 235).

4. If it is true that the Scriptures are silent about a matter then one must determine if doing whatever is under consideration violates any other authoritative teaching of Scripture: if it does, then the silence forbids; if it does not, then the silence allows.
5. These principles of interpretation explain why we can:
 - a. set whatever time is acceptable to the congregation for Lord's Day worship services—provided they occur on the Lord's Day;
 - b. have song books;
 - c. use a plate to pass the bread;
 - d. have a building owned by the church;
 - e. sing different parts;
 - f. use a cup with one handle, two handles, or no handle;
 - g. use a cup made of silver, glass, wood, or other material;
 - h. have services on Sunday and Wednesday evenings provided they do not include the communion or the contribution.
6. These principles also explain why, based on silence, we cannot:
 - a. use instrumental music;
 - b. establish colleges, orphans' homes and hospitals with the contribution.
7. All of this is explained under the concepts of coordinates and subordinates to a command:

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- a. If an action is coordinate to the command it is prohibited.
 - b. If it is subordinate it is allowed.
- C. Do specific commands automatically prohibit all similar actions?
- 1. Does 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, which gives us an example of collection on the first day of the week, automatically prohibit collection on any other day? even in an emergency? Yes.
 - 2. Does the example in Acts 20:7 explaining how oft the church gathered for communion (1 Cor. 11:26) prohibit observing the Lord's supper on a day other than the first day of the week? Of course it does.
 - 3. The church is instructed by the example of 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 that the contribution is to be a part of our weekly worship on the first day of the week and not some other time.
 - 4. Interestingly, this arrangement was legislated in order to avoid emergencies arising (v. 2).
 - 5. If an emergency should arise, an individual or group, each acting only on his own initiative may do whatever is consonant with the rest of the New Testament.
 - 8. But the collective body is to participate in the contribution as a part of our weekly worship only on the first day of each week.

Final Notes

As you strive to understand the will of God, remember these fundamental truths:

- 1. The Bible is the Word of God Almighty.
- 2. Truth is discovered in the Word of God.
- 3. The truth, God's Word, constitutes the will of God for man.
- 4. God's will is written down in human language so that men can know the truth.
- 5. God intends for man to be able to understand what his will for man requires.
- 6. This process of understanding "what the will of the Lord is" is called interpretation of Scripture, or hermeneutics, and God expects us to practice such interpretation.
- 7. God expects men to discern and obey His will.

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The New Hermeneutic

by Richard Bunner

Sometimes I think I live a pretty sheltered life; other times I think I am just uninformed. When Brother Cliff Arney called me a few months ago and asked me to do some research on the "New Hermeneutic" I had no idea what he was talking about or even why it would be of concern to us. My initial investigation led me to the works of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann who seemed to focus on the relevance of the text for today's reader and to ignore the historical meaning and intention of the writer. Their teaching called for an autonomous text which could have different values for people of different generations, or for that matter, even people of the same background and culture. Such views opened the door for creative interpretation by liberal theologians of this century.

I learned however that this was not the "New Hermeneutic" that was under consideration. Among the churches of Christ there are a number of brethren advocating some different methods of biblical interpretation. They refer to these methods as a "New Hermeneutic." To hear them out and have an understanding of their position, one would need to listen to the lectures of the Christian Scholar's Conferences (Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA and Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX) and to read some of the books written by C. Leonard Allen, Rubel Shelly, and Randall J. Harris to name just a few. Also a number of articles have appeared in such periodicals as **Image**, **Wineskins**, and **Restoration Quarterly** which call for a "New Hermeneutic." To give an explanation of what these brethren are advocating is difficult because they do not all agree among themselves as to what this new method of interpretation should be. One thing they do seem to be united on is this: they want a system of biblical interpretation that will replace "command, example, and necessary inference." Michael Casey expressed it this way at the Christian Scholar's Conference at Pepperdine University:

The important thing for our purposes is that the old rationalistic approach is dying and has died in several key sectors of the churches of Christ. People and preachers are hunting for and turning to alternative scriptural hermeneutics, whether some like it or not ("Scripture as a Narrative and the Church a Story-form Community: A Proposal for a New Hermeneutic," p. 2).

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Some Proposals for a New Hermeneutic

1. Beginning with God

The command-example-necessary inference hermeneutic focuses on the rules (that is, rules of logic), and the results, rather than on the actions of God. It gets the cart before the horse. We are committed to the book of God, but not for its own sake, but to the God of the book. The old hermeneutic may help us discover what Christ did, or what we should do in the concrete. But why not begin with the actions of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit . . . The action of God through Christ and the Holy Spirit is the center of the Scriptures . . . A Biblical hermeneutic therefore starts from God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and ends up by setting forth the guidelines by which scripture provides human kind with the manner of acting within specific contexts so as to be Godlike (**Hermeneutics: the Beginning Point**, Thomas H. Olbricht, pp. 11-12).

The argument is: One should live in Kenya before he writes a book about life in Kenya. The difficulty is: God is revealed through His book, and it is hard to get to know Him without first reading the book. One cannot possibly know what pleases God without perusing the Scriptures. The better we understand the Bible, the closer we can draw to God.

2. The narrative hermeneutic

Narrative is also an important literary form found in scripture. It occurs more often than commands. As the most prominent literary form of scripture, it then should be appropriate to propose the metaphor of scripture as a story and the church as a story-formed community as the basis of a new hermeneutic for the restoration tradition ("Scripture as Narrative and the Church a Story-formed Community," Michael Casey, p. 15).

This is a very common interpretive method among modern day religious teachers. The Bible is simply treated like a work of prose or poetry with a subjective understanding. "What does this story mean to you?" "How does this speak to your heart?" "What message does the Holy Spirit have for you in this reading?" Every man has his own understanding and there does not even have to be agreement among believers.

3. The "read it like Jesus" hermeneutic

So not only is Jesus the authoritative interpreter for his church, his church is to follow his lead! . . . Jesus draws us to interpret the instructions of God in the brighter light of the desires of God's heart:

justice, mercy, faith, righteousness, love. The argument here is not that Jesus provides us with a new (or old) method of interpretation, but rather a perspective from which to view people in relation to God's law . . . In Matt. 12:1-14, Jesus shows that the real issue of Biblical hermeneutics goes beyond mere methods in deciphering a book, to an understanding of the desire of God for people . . . This is the starting point from which we must discuss specific methods (**Bringing the Word to Life—Part II: The Scholarship Movement**, Gary Collier, pp. 26-27).

I do not know of anyone that would disagree that we should understand the Scriptures in the way that Jesus does since He is the Author. Often we use the appeal, "What would Jesus do in this situation?" when trying to help someone make the right decision in life. I do find it interesting that brother Collier used Matthew 12:1-14. In this passage, Jesus is questioned about his disciples picking and eating grain on the Sabbath. He gives a command, "Go and learn what this means, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.'" He uses an example: David ate the consecrated bread. And then he says, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath," which is to say, "Infer from this whether it is lawful or not."

Although there are a number of other proposals for methods of interpretation or a new hermeneutic, I think that the above will suffice. From the presentations that have preceded me, I think it is obvious what the differences are between these new proposals and the traditional methods of understanding the Bible. The "New Hermeneutic" teachings of our brethren are not that different from the "New Hermeneutic" of Barth and Bultmann. They interpret the Scriptures subjectively and open the door for relativism, pluralism, and utilitarianism, just to name a few of the liberal trends.

Related Questions

I now have a list of questions that have been appended to my topic. Since some of you may not have a syllabus to the study I will state the question and then give the answer for each one of these.

1. What kind of document was the Bible intended to be? Is it a "Constitution," "Blueprint," or "Pattern?"

While some may bristle at these terms and claim that they are unscriptural I find them to be neither offensive nor contrary to what the Bible teaches. A constitution is a system of fundamental laws and principles of a government or society. The church is referred to in the Scriptures as a

kingdom. Jesus Christ is our king. We are citizens of the kingdom. Can there be a kingdom, a government without a body of law? Do the Scriptures not give us the principles of right and wrong so that we may serve our King? In this sense how could anyone deny that the Bible is a constitution? The expressions "blueprint" and "pattern" give reference to the same idea—that of exactness. Any requirement that demands exactness is a pattern requirement. This very expression is used by the apostle Paul when he writes Timothy, "What you have heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13). Again, we have the apostle declaring, "But thanks be to God, that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted" (Rom. 6:17). The Bible has commands that are quite clear. Any exact requirement is a pattern and deserves an absolute and exact yielding to its demands.

2. Is it intended to regulate human life and actions by allowing man to know and follow God's will exactly?

The apostle Paul said to Timothy, "Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:14-15). Again, he says, "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). These and other passages of Scripture show that the Bible was designed to direct our lives. Furthermore the Scriptures teach that we are accountable for our actions and will be judged accordingly (see Mt. 12:36-37; 25:31-46).

3. How can we know when and if God intends the revealed example to be followed as a pattern?

The material that Alan Bonifay has presented in the previous discussion will adequately answer this question. Remember, if it is a pattern, it must be followed. A pattern illustrates a command or a principle given in the Bible. There are patterns for public worship as well as for personal living. The very lives of early Christians are examples for us. Paul wrote Timothy, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). To Titus he wrote, "In everything set them an example by doing what is good" (Tit. 2:7). Again he says of himself, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

4. If the Bible is a constitution/blueprint/pattern and it was intended to regulate human life and action, do we have to have authority for everything we do?

Yes. The apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17). David Lipscomb, in commenting on this passage, said,

To do a thing in the name of the Lord Jesus is to do it for him and as he directs. Do it by his authority; do it as his servant, for his honor and glory . . . [Our eating and drinking—acts which seem remote from the interests and sentiments of the spiritual life—these are to be "sanctified through the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:5), by the mention of Christ's name in thanksgiving to the Father, who through him sends us all life's blessings. And if our mere physical necessities of life are capable of being thus hallowed, there is nothing in family relations, or secular employments, or social duties, which may not receive and does not demand the same consideration. We should associate Christ with everything we do, doing all as his servants and under his eye, and in such a way that, in every part of our work, he may be glorified in us, and this will be a safeguard to the Christian. If he is to do everything in Christ's name, he must do nothing unworthy of that name, nothing with which he cannot associate it. Nowhere, in any company or in any business, must he forget, "whatsoever ye do in word or deed," that this worthy name is the name which he bears, and whose honor is in his keeping] (Commentary on Colossians, pp. 299-300).

5. Do we have authority to play sports or attend sporting events?

Participating in athletics is not wrong in and of itself as some may think. Paul wrote Timothy, "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). Athletics (physical training) improves our thinking abilities, our coordination, our physical health, and our self-discipline in this life. I feel compelled to point out here that the issue is not whether our children may play ball, but rather where we place our priorities. I worry when I see parents sending their children to basketball camp, but they are not able to attend a singing school. I worry when a father shows more pride and enthusiasm over his son making a touchdown in a high school football game than he does when his son stands up to edify the congregation. I worry when parents drive great distances to see their children participate in sporting events, but they cannot drive across town to a

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gospel meeting. I'm afraid that this generation of Christian parents is going to reap a bitter harvest.

6. Does the silence of the Scriptures allow or prohibit these and similar activities?

The silence of the Scriptures is not permissive. Perhaps I did not answer the two previous questions in the way that was expected, but I will stand by my convictions. The Word of God gives us principles for our daily living. God's will is either expressed explicitly or implicitly for every facet of our lives.

We should never be in the dark about God's approval or disapproval of what we are doing in life. Someone might say, "Is it scriptural to wear eye-glasses?" Luke was in an honorable profession (Col. 4:14); Jesus gave sight to the blind (Mt. 11:5); God wants us to be able to read (Mt. 24:15; Rev. 1:3). With this information, we conclude that it is not a sin to wear eye-glasses even though they are not mentioned in the Scriptures. Are there things the Scriptures are silent about? Certainly, but we cannot overlook the fact that our lives are to be guided by biblical principles.

7. What then does the Bible regulate in our personal lives?

The Bible regulates what we eat (Acts 10:9-16) and what we drink (Rom. 14:21); it tells us how to dress (1 Tim. 2:9) and the kind of friends to keep (1 Cor. 15:33). We are told whom we can marry (1 Cor. 7:39) and how to raise our children (Eph. 6:4). We have instructions for in the workplace (Eph. 6:5-7) as well as in the community (1 Tim. 3:7). We are advised in financial affairs (Mt. 25:14-27) and marital responsibilities (1 Cor. 7:3-5). We are told how to treat our enemies (Rom. 12:20), our rulers (Rom. 13:1), our neighbors (Rom. 13:10), and our brothers (1 Jn. 4:21). The fact of the matter is: The Bible has a pattern for our personal lives that is just as clear as the pattern we see for the identity of the church and for worship.

(When this was presented at the study, there were some who disagreed with the term "pattern" for our personal lives. The term "guidelines" was suggested. While this may sound more pleasing to the ear, I feel it is purely a semantic argument. The apostle clearly was talking about our personal lives in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, "We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow." A pattern more accurately describes a model than does guideline.)

8. Was the Bible intended to be nothing more than a series of "Love letters from God" that suggest a manner of living and are therefore not authoritative?

I first heard this taught back in the early 1970s, although the one teaching this "love letter" idea still believed in the authority of the Scriptures. I do not have any problem with the idea that the God of love has expressed his love to us through the written Word. To say that it is nothing more is to ignore the contents therein. The Bible clearly is more than just a collection of love letters. 2 Timothy 3:16 would settle that.

9. What implications does this theory have on interpretation of the Scripture?

If the above theory were true, then the Scriptures would be casual and not authoritative. Our understanding would become very subjective. The Bible itself would become meaningless. It is important for us to maintain a higher regard for the Word than just a collection of love letters.

10. Is the silence of the Scriptures authoritative?

Yes.

11. What does the silence of the Scriptures really mean?

The silence of the Scriptures means that all questions or problems that may arise can be answered by principles that are set forth in the Word of God. We cannot substitute for God's Word, nor can we add to it or subtract from it. The Bible alone is authority! "Do not go beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6).

12. Is it (the silence of the Scriptures) restrictive or permissive?

Restrictive.

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The Mission of John the Baptist

by Wayne McKamie

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it (Is. 40:3-5).

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Lk. 1:17).

In ancient times it was customary for a harbinger to go before an approaching king to make ready every village, every town, and every city, and to ensure that true appreciation would be shown by the populace to the king.

The obstacles spoken of by the prophets were not such as those that impeded the way of earthly monarchs—not literal mountains and valleys, but rather the unfaithfulness and wickedness of Israel. Indeed the whole world had plunged into iniquity; sin had become exceedingly sinful. The Jews had filled the cup of iniquity to overflowing.

In the fullness of this time, and for such a time, there was a man sent from God (Jn. 1:6). No less would do. No one else could do what this pivotal and prominent man was sent to do. As the writer Hegel said, "A great man condemns the world to the task of explaining him." There is some truth in that, but in this case it is neither unpleasant nor unprofitable.

When John the apostle wrote of John the Baptist, endeavoring to account for his greatness (Jn. 1:6), he traced the river back to its ultimate source. Back of his history, his biography, his heredity, and his environment lay the mighty purpose of God. When God needed a voice in humanity's wilderness, John was there. There was a man sent from God.

Even those who come from God must come through means and instrumentalities. All treasures in earthen vessels begin genealogically. Luke

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lays great stress on the fact and faith of his parents. There was "a certain priest named Zacharias, a priest of the course of Abijah," and Elizabeth, "of the daughters of Aaron" (Lk. 1:5), a kinsman to Mary, the mother of Jesus (Lk. 1:36), and "they were both righteous before God" (Lk. 1:5-6). John was a child of promise. His father was "an old man and well stricken in years" (Lk. 1:18); they had ceased to hope. It was no less than Gabriel who, in the temple, assured Zacharias, "fear not, thy prayer is heard: and thy wife shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John" (Lk. 1:13). Like Isaac, like Gideon, like Samuel; his birth was accompanied with the promise: "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Lk. 1:15).

John was so prominent and his preaching was so important that he alone could be the undeniable subject of Isaiah's prophecy: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness; prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Is. 40:3-5). His, indeed, was the tremendous task of making bridges, leveling hills, constructing causeways, cutting through forests; in short, to remove every possible obstacle for the inevitable struggle with the powers of sin and death. Only bold, tough, terrible truth would do. The spirit and power of the Tishbite would be needed to deal with "a brood of vipers" (Mt. 3:7).

When John was about thirty years of age, he appeared in the wilderness of Judea, preaching. The hills of Judea reverberated with, "Repent, and bring forth fruits of repentance" (Mt. 3:8). Matthew said, "the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locust and wild honey" (Mt. 3:1-3). This preacher-prophet was unique to say the least—gaunt, rigged, and austere as Elijah, his ancient counterpart (2 Kgs. 1:8).

John wore the garb of a prophet (Zech. 13:4), and he was a prophet, more than a prophet. Jesus said, "But what went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses . . . But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet" (Mt. 11:8). Luke said, "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost . . . And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God" (Lk. 1:15-16). What went ye out to see? Jesus described him as being the opposite of a reed shaken with the wind. John was stern and severe. His preaching was precise, distinct, absolute. He preached to the insincere, the blinded, false religionist, the impenitent, the

incestuous. Valley or mountain mattered not. John was a man of singular purpose. He was God's powerful, humble man of the hour.

And the people flocked to see and hear John. They seemed to sense that this man was sent from God. Even the recalcitrants, the enemies, had to admit that all the people held John as a prophet (Mt. 21:26). The Lord had even a more weighty estimation of him: "Yea and I say unto you, and more than a prophet" (Mt. 11:8). More than a prophet in that he was the last in a long line of prophets, and in that he prepared the way for the Christ and—unlike any other prophet—he personally identified the Lamb of God, baptized him, and manifested him to Israel.

Malachi wrote, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith the Lord of host . . . Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 3:1; 4:5). Jesus said, "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John: and if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was to come" (Mt. 11:15-16). Luke's account on the matter is, "The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it" (Lk. 16:16).

And so the "voice" came, preaching! Those who came into the wilderness were soon to learn that indeed he was a voice, not an echo, of the times. This man had a word from God. They discovered early on that this preacher was different. No trumpets, no flags, no grand processions. What they heard over and over was, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2). The preacher had words of searing judgment and impending doom for the impenitent. The heavens had moved in the heavy artillery. Leveling mountains and filling valleys was not for the faint of heart. This preacher demanded clean hearts, clean hands. His words were living and powerful: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Mt. 3:9). A new day had dawned. Ancestry or nationality would no longer do. It was necessary to be born again!

With poetic metaphor he spoke. The Divine Woodsman is at the door and He will lay the ax to the root of the unfruitful tree (Mt. 3:10). With fan in hand, He will sift the wheat and the chaff (Mt. 3:12). The heavy emphasis on repentance spoke of the spiritual, soon-to-come kingdom. This an-

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nouncement of the coming kingdom spoke of the need for a people prepared for the Sonlight Age. John called upon Israel for genuine repentance expressed in a baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Lk. 13:3). As Israel had passed through the waters in leaving Egypt (1 Cor. 10:1-2) as a prelude to reception and ratification of the covenant at Sinai (Ex. 34:7-8), so John claimed that they must pass through the waters again in order to ready themselves for the new covenant. The concept of passing through the waters as a transition is, and long has been, in the Scriptures. The theme of transition is of paramount importance in the Scriptures.

This seemingly abrupt transition from the Moonlight Age to the Twilight Age to the Sonlight Age was not abrupt nor should it have been any surprise to the Jews of John's day. They should have understood that the plan of God issued through the seed of Abraham. Messiah was to emerge from that people and, in the fullness of time, He does appear from the bosom of the Jewish church. A transition it was, but John made it very plain that his ministry, his preaching, and his baptism were not of the old covenant. His mission, though confined to the Jews, and although he lived under the law, was not by the authority of Moses, but directly from God the Father. John said of Christ, "I knew him not, but He that sent me [God]" (Jn. 1:33). Those who rejected John's baptism rejected the counsel of God (Lk. 7:30), not the counsel of the Jews. John had no plan to build a kingdom within a kingdom, but by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism to have a nucleus ready for Messiah. With John it was faith, no flesh; personal repentance, not fancy lineage that would allow all to meet on a new, solid, level "foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20). John had no intentions to reform, modify, improve, or perfect the Jewish system. It was not to stay. Messiah was born. The kernel had been extracted. Judaism was an empty shell. It was twilight time.

The record tells us that Jesus came into Canaan, his own country and to his own people, but, as a nation, they received him not. And yet there were those among the Jews who did receive him; the Holy Spirit declares, "To as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God—even to them that believe in His name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God (Jn. 1:11-13). In this profound statement, the spirituality of the coming new kingdom is both affirmed and emphasized. That kingdom that was of the world was giving way to a kingdom that was not of the world (Jn. 18:36). The Lord's sermon to Nicodemus (Jn. 3) was explicit on this matter. No longer would a physical birth into an earthly family suffice; from that time

on it must be a new birth of water and the Spirit. In short, the old, temporary system had to give way to the coming kingdom of heaven.

The new order called for personal reformation before baptism. Those who would confess their sins and repent were baptized. John had one plan for all who came to his Baptism. He baptized penitent sinners (Mt. 3:5; Mk. 1:15). (He thus baptized no infants.) John preached reformation with an immersion for the remission of sins, saying that "they should believe on him which was to come after him [John]" (Acts 19:4), and "that all men through him might believe" (Jn. 1:7). Faith was necessary, but faith alone had not as yet been discovered. He preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. The people were called upon for a personal reformation, not merely a change of views or feelings. To the Ephesian twelve, Paul said, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance" (Acts 19:4).

Repentance was not reformation, but was necessary to reformation. Those who would reform must repent, thus carrying purpose into conduct. When John called on them to repent and bring forth works worthy of repentance, it carried the connotation of a complete change of direction in attitude and behavior. John demanded repentance and the proof of it (Mt. 3:5, 11). At first reading and in contextual isolation, it sounds as if the baptism brought them to repentance. We know, however, that John required repentance before baptism. He even refused to baptize those who would not repent. Baptism did not bring them unto repentance, and it did not bring them into it either. And it certainly does not mean "because of." John did not baptize people just because of their repentance, although this repentance did precede their baptism. John's baptism was for the remission of sins. Knowledge of the forgiveness of sins must have been an added incentive to the unbaptized to repent. And the general purpose of it all was to bring reformation of life.

John's answer to the deputation that came from Jerusalem (Jn. 1:19-28) gives us further insight into both his mission and his baptism. In answer to the question, "Who art thou?," he said, "I am not the Christ." "Art thou Elijah? I am not. Art thou that prophet? No" (Jn. 1:19-22). "Why baptizest thou then?" (Jn. 1:25). Notice that the fact of his baptizing was the problem. John answered that he was making ready a people for the Lord, and that cleansing was through repentance and baptism. They had missed the point, but they did seem to understand that if one came baptizing, that such should be a special person in the plan of God.

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One of the reasons that John came preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins was that "He [Christ] should be made manifest to Israel." "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God" (Acts 13:24). "Then came also publicans to be baptized . . ." (Lk. 3:12). Matthew records that "many of the Sadducees and Pharisees came to his baptism" (Mt. 3:13).

John indeed baptized and it was immersion in water. He spent much of his time on the banks of the Jordan. "They went out to him and were baptized of him in the Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mk. 1:5). They were not baptized upon the Jordan, nor was John's baptism upon them; they were in Jordan. John baptized with water, in water, and came up out of water. The Word tells us that John was baptizing at Enon "because there was much water there" (Jn. 3:23). John did not camp there or stay in Enon for that reason; he immersed there for that reason. John was immersing in Jordan; he was not there to sprinkle or pour the water of Jordan upon them.

Water alone was never sprinkled on anybody by divine command under any age. Water alone was never poured on anyone in response to divine command. There were Levitical washings, divers washings (Heb. 9:10) which dealt with ritual purity. Blood was sprinkled on persons or things (Lev. 14:9); on persons, oil was poured, but water alone was never religiously sprinkled or poured on anyone. Those actions were under the law and upon persons already sons of God; they were not to initiate them into the Jewish order.

John's baptism was a new institution. The "law and the prophets were until John, since that time the kingdom of God was preached" (Lk. 16:16). The words "John the immerser" told who he was, what he did, and designated his work. He was the only man so designated. King Herod said that "John the baptist was risen from the dead" (Mk. 6:14). John was not a Baptist or one of the Baptists; this name and descriptor brought only one man to mind, then or now. John was the originator, under God, of the ordinance of baptism (Jn. 1:33).

Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins was unknown to the Old Testament. The suggestion that John's baptism was Old Testament proselyte baptism cannot be proven. It is doubtful that such existed among the earliest Jews as law, and if indeed it did, it was for those who were not Jews; it had no connection with forgiveness, and proselytes immersed themselves. John's baptism required an administrator. He baptized Jews.

Among those who came to John's baptism was the Lord Himself. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him" (Mt. 3:13). While many seize upon this to prove that John's baptism was not for the remission of sins, they overlook the fact that baptism is both for the remission of sins, and a solemn act of obedience to God. Christ, having no sins, could be, and was, baptized to "fulfill all righteousness." Until Christ's baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit, John said, "I knew him not" (Jn. 1:33-34). Following this act of obedience, God acknowledged him as his beloved son, and manifest him to Israel as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:34). Rather than proving that John's baptism was not for the remission of sins, the opposite stands. John's unwillingness to baptize Jesus proves that baptism was for the remission of sins. He not only could not baptize Christ for the remission of sins; he could not say to him, "Repent and confess your sins."

Although John required faith, repentance, confession of sins and baptism, he knew that his ministry and his baptism were not the ministry and baptism of Jesus Christ. He knew that he was not sent by Jesus, but rather by the Father Himself to prepare the way for the king. And yet the work and baptism of John continued during much of the personal ministry of Christ. By the time of Christ's death, there was indeed a people prepared for the coming kingdom. Out of the Jewish nation he was able to retain a remnant. The apostle John said, "He came unto his own, and his own receive him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1:11-13). Notice that "the prepared for the Lord" are called the Lord's people.

Those referred to as "his own" are those who were born (had been born) "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man." (v. 13). Those so described descended not from noble blood or genealogies of greatness; neither were they the offspring of the instincts of the flesh, nor were they made the sons of God by the will of man (who sometimes adopt the child of another); they were born of God! These were not references to those of the Jewish religion. They were born of God, baptized with the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Of these, his own, those prepared by John the baptist, there were those who did not heed John's command believe on the Christ when he came—some did, some did not. John gives a vivid account of the events immediately following the baptism of Jesus, "and the descent of the Holy Spirit."

John the Baptist

And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.

The imprisonment of John set in motion a number of important things, e.g. the selection of disciples to carry on the preparatory work. From among those prepared by John (and who were accepting of Him [Christ]), the Lord chose his apostles. These men, except Paul and Judas, were to serve under two commissions. They preached, "The kingdom is at hand," and they preached the kingdom received. Peter told Cornelius that the word he preached "began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached" (Acts 10:37). Later, these men would be "set in the church" (1 Cor. 12:28) when he [Christ] ascended up far above all heavens (Eph. 4:10-11). Until the new kingdom came, they were with Jesus, who was now preaching in Galilee (Lk. 8:1). Matthew tells us, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee . . ." (Mt. 4:12). From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4:17). Christ preached in Galilee the same thing that John had preached in the wilderness of Judea. What John had commanded to be done (and what Christ was now preaching) was to be done because the kingdom was at hand. The people could not have failed to see that their baptism had something to do with the coming kingdom.

The twelve were the ones (except the apostate one) who would continue with the Lord to the end, and to whom he would show himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall

be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts 1:3-5). These men were taught that the new covenant would be inaugurated in Christ's death; and in his invitation to receive the bread and the cup of blessing, in an anticipatory sense, the apostles would be first to receive the benefits.

Those who were said to receive Christ (those to whom he gave the power to become the sons of God), included far more than just the apostles. There were the 120, the 500 who were present on one occasion, and no doubt others. Out of this number, we know that the coming kingdom was proclaimed by the twelve and the seventy (Lk. 10:3). After John was beheaded by Herod, there were at least eighty men preaching the near approach of the kingdom. The Lord came to his Temple, his kingdom, literally on one day (Acts 2). Prior to that, those who understood and received these principles were said "to press into the kingdom," or to "have the kingdom within them" (Lk. 16:16). Wherever these principles were preached, the kingdom of heaven was "nigh." Those who opposed were said to "shut up the kingdom against men" (Mt. 23:13). The kingdom was not literally there because "the least in the kingdom would be greater than John." The kingdom could not literally begin until "Jesus was glorified," and was made both Lord and Christ and had "sat down with his father upon the throne." In order to accomplish this, Christ had to leave the earth "for to receive a kingdom" (Lk. 19:11-15).

Since two kingdoms of God could not exist at the same time (Rom. 7:1-4), the kingdom of God, mediated by Moses, had to cease before another could begin. In the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), Jesus appeared in the end of the Jewish age. He lived under the law, and that law, jot and tittle, would continue until, on the cross, he said, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30). At this time the temple was deserted, its veil rent, its foundation shaken, and its ritual abolished by Him who was Lord even of the Sabbath. Until His death, the kingdom could not commence; until his resurrection it did not begin.

There was a time to tarry. The Lord did not give his law of baptism and the commission until, he met with the apostles at a mountain somewhere in Galilee following his resurrection. Just before His ascension, in his last earthly act, he said: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mt. 28:18-19). The reign of heaven was to begin at Jerusalem, not in the wilderness (Acts 1:3; Is. 2:3; Mic. 4:2; Lk. 24:46-49).

John the Baptist

In his first act as crowned king, Christ did what John the baptist said he would do. Those apostles, who evidently were standing before John in the wilderness, heard him say, "I indeed have baptized you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Mk. 1:8). The apostles did receive the promise on that fully-come Pentecost day (Acts 2). On that day, heaven breathed into the body (i.e. the church) the breath of life. Just as Adam was a complete man with no manifestation of life until the spirit was in place, so also it was with the kingdom of God, the church.

The typical-antitypical matters of this transitional, twilight period were expressed beautifully by T. W. Brents over a hundred years ago. He wrote,

The temple of Solomon was typical of the church (1 Cor. 3:16-17) and the temple was built of prepared stones, made ready for position before they were brought from the quarry, so that there was neither hammer nor axe, nor tool of iron head in the house while it was in building (1 Kgs. 6:7). So the spiritual temple was made of prepared material; not a piece of it had to be worked over before it was ready for position in the temple (spiritual family, the church) organized on that day. It needed nothing but the Holy Spirit.

But if the disciples of John had to be baptized on or after Pentecost to enter the church or family of God, the power or privilege of becoming the sons of God, given to those who kept their obligation to believe on Him when he came, was mere sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. The promise was meaningless to them, for they were not a whit in advance of the murderers of Jesus, for, even they would come into the church in that way, on the day of Pentecost and afterward. If this theory be true, then John's ministry was a failure; and not withstanding all the miracles attending it, his mission seems to us a most ridiculous farce.

"The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached" (Lk. 16:16). "First the blade, then the stalk, then the full ear" (Mk 4:28). We call it corn, when as yet there is no corn. The Divine seed had been cast into the earth; John's ministry was indeed the blade. Mark's opening word was the last word, the definitive word. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk. 1:1). He then, in detail, described the ministry of John the baptist. *1921 McKamey Rd., McGregor, TX 76657*

Messianic Prophecies: Coming to Mt. Zion

by Doug Edwards

In the last part of the Old Testament one finds the writings of the prophets of Israel. Many of us are like tourists (and I include myself here) when we come to visiting this part of our Bible. We are tourists in the sense that we occasionally make a short visit to these passages but quickly head back to the safe ground of the New Testament. Some of the most difficult and hard to understand passages in all of the Bible are found in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. These are remarkable men. For the most part, theirs was the thankless job of trying to call the departed children of Israel back to the paths of God. The majority of Israelites were either apathetic, flirting with idolatrous gods, looking to other nations for deliverance from enemies rather than God, or else pursuing their own selfish interests. Because of this behavior, the enemies of death, destruction, captivity, and ruin stared them in the face. Most of the prophets painted a bleak picture for the immediate future of the people of God. Harsh and severe judgment was coming for them. Yet, these fiery prophets also painted another picture for Israel which showed that, rising from the ashes of destruction and captivity, the faithful remnant would receive great hope. That great hope was the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom. Throughout the prophets you will find words of judgment and punishment followed by words of salvation and hope. If the words about the Messianic kingdom could be a great source of strength and encouragement to those few faithful Israelites, then they should continue to be a source of strength and encouragement for us today. These words should help us honor and appreciate the Messianic kingdom more and not take it for granted.

The prophets often pull back the curtain of the future and allow their readers to see to see the time when the Messiah reigns. When one views the Messianic kingdom, he sees several outstanding events: all nations flow into Mount Zion; luxurious feasting and peace will be experienced; arid, desert places bloom into lush, watered oases; David once again rules over Israel; and the enemies of God will be conquered. How do we understand these characteristics? Should we look forward to a literal fulfillment of these promises or are they fulfilled in the spiritual realm?

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Understanding the Messianic Prophecies

We must begin our study, then, with an understanding as to how we must interpret the Messianic kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament. Are there any guidelines available in the Bible to help us understand these beautiful yet difficult passages? Fortunately, the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. The writers of the New Testament often quote from the prophets, so we must allow these inspired men to interpret these passages for us.

When we allow the New Testament to interpret the kingdom prophecies of the Messianic Age, we see their fulfillment within the Christian Age, the age in which we are currently living. Shortly after Pentecost, Peter said,

Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways (Acts 3:24-26).

Peter did not have to look far into the future to see the fulfillment of the Messianic promises. He simply tells us they find their fulfillment in Christ and the hope of redemption that He brought. Peter again informs us that the gospel fulfills the promises of the prophets,

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

There are many specific Messianic passages that the New Testament plainly tells us are fulfilled in the present dispensation. I would like to consider three of these New Testament passages. The first occurs when John, while in prison, sent his servants to ask Jesus if He was the one or if they should look for another. Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me" (Mt. 11:2-6). It is interesting that Jesus refers in His answer to two

different passages in Isaiah that speak of the Messianic kingdom (Is. 35:5-6; 61:1-2) and applies them to His ministry and not some future Age. In Isaiah 35, the prophet describes a time when the desert will again bloom (vv. 1-2, 6-7), and the redeemed will enter Zion on the way of Holiness (vv. 8-10). In Isaiah 61, the prophet discusses the blessings that await God's people in the Messianic Age. It is significant that Jesus uses these passages to refer to His ministry and the subsequent Christian Age and not some age that is distant to us. Jesus also tells His followers that Isaiah 61:1-2 was fulfilled in His ministry (Lk. 4:16-21).

The second New Testament passage that helps us understand the time of the Messianic kingdom is found in Acts 15:15-18. Some of the Christians were teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation. The debate grew so heavy that Paul and Barnabas went down to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. One party maintained that the Gentiles had to be circumcised and become a Jew to be saved. Peter points out there is no need to burden the Gentiles with a yoke their fathers could not bear. James then points out the acceptability of the Gentiles to God without their circumcision by appealing to the writing of Amos. He says, "The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: 'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' that have been known for ages" (Acts 15:15-18). The quotation is from Amos 9:11-12. When one looks at the passage in Amos, he discovers that it is a section that describes the Messianic kingdom (vv. 11-15). It foretells a time when the Gentiles would come into the Messianic kingdom. James appeals to this passage for help in understanding their current situation. It is again significant that an inspired man tells us that key events of the Messianic kingdom are fulfilled within the Christian Age.

A third New Testament passage that helps us understand the interpretations of Old Testament passages is found in the writings of Paul in Romans 15:12. Paul continues a discussion of the theme of the Gentiles coming into the church. We must remember this was quite an issue back in the first century. Many Jewish Christians did not understand that Gentiles would come into the church, and if they did enter, they had to become Jews first. They could not understand how the Gentiles could be recipients of the Messianic blessings as they were. So Paul writes, "And again, Isaiah says, 'The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him'" (Rom. 15:12). In order to prove the acceptability of the Gentiles, Paul appeals to Isaiah 11. In this chapter, Isaiah describes the

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character of the Messiah (vv. 1-5) and events within His kingdom (vv. 6-16). It continues to be significant that an inspired man takes a prophecy about the Messianic kingdom and applies it to his day. There are several other New Testament passages that teach the fulfillment of Old Testament Messianic prophecies such as Matthew 3:3; 4:13-17; Luke 4:17-21; Acts 2:16-21; 4:25-29; 13:34; 2 Corinthians 6:2; and Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-18.

Literal or Symbolic?

The problem over whether to interpret Messianic kingdom passages literally or symbolically deserves our attention at this point. There are some who maintain that in order to be consistent in our interpretation, we must interpret these passages literally. We are told that if the prophecies dealing with the first coming of the Christ are literal, then the passages that deal with His kingdom must also be understood literally.

We must turn our attention to the fact that there are two realms within our world today—the physical realm and the spiritual realm. One is just as real as the other. Just because something takes place within the spiritual realm does not mean that it is not important or not in existence. It is not a question over whether these passages are fulfilled literally or figuratively, but that these passages may be fulfilled actually in the physical or spiritual realm. Philip Mauro writes in **The Hope of Israel**,

In Scripture the contrast is not between the spiritual and the literal, but between the spiritual and the natural; for a passage of Scripture may refer, when taken "literally," either to "that which is natural" or to "that which is spiritual." In other words, the literal interpretation may call for a thing which exists in the realm of nature, or for the counterpart of that thing which exists in the realm of spiritual realities (1 Cor. 15:46) (p. 14).

The writer of Hebrews informs us, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways" (1:1). These words point out that God did not use only one method to reveal His Word. For us to say, then, that all Messianic prophecy must be understood literally or all figuratively is to misunderstand God's modes for revelation. Sometimes the prophets spoke in literal language, sometimes in symbolic language, and other times in typical language. How can one tell the difference? James Bales discusses this question in his book **New Testament Interpretations of Old Testament Prophecies of the Kingdom** by saying,

The question may be raised: How can one know in what manner a prophet is speaking? Can we ever be certain that we are right in

treating a prophecy as literal instead of as typical? Or typical instead of literal? The answer, which is elaborated in the following section is: Christ and the New Testament interpretation furnish us with the answer. No prophecy should be interpreted in a way contrary to the New Testament interpretation or principles set forth in the New Testament. Then, too, "typical" interpretations must be accepted whenever wholesale literalism would make the prophecies contradict themselves (p. 21)

Coming to Mount Zion

We are ready now to look at some passages from the prophets that discuss the blessings of coming to Mount Zion in the Messianic Age. The prophets tell us that Mount Zion will be:

1. Covered with smoke by day and pillar of cloud by night, and will be a refuge from the heat and storm (Is. 4:5-6).
2. A place where the wolf will live with the lamb, the calf will lie down with the lion and a little child will lead them (Is. 11:6-9).
3. A place of a great feast with rich, luxurious food (Is. 25:6).
4. A tent, where God saves His people (Is. 33:20-24).
5. A place where children do not die in their youths and old men live a long time. In fact, the one who lives only to be one hundred will be considered a youth (Is. 65:20).

How do we understand these passages? Are they to be taken literally or symbolically? Perhaps we should begin with a little history about Mount Zion. We are first introduced to Zion when David attacked the Jebusites living at Jerusalem. There was a plateau located there, on the southeast hill on Jerusalem, isolated on three sides by steep valleys, and it was considered to be an ideal fortress. It was such a natural fortress that the inhabitants greeted David with taunts when he tried to take it.

The king and his men marched to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites, who lived there. The Jebusites said to David, "You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off." They thought, "David cannot get in here." Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David (2 Sam. 5:6-7).

Later, David bought the threshing floor of Araunah (2 Sam. 24:24), which was located north of the stronghold of Zion at the highest elevation of the plateau. This location became the ideal spot for Solomon to build the temple for the worship of God. The old city of Jerusalem expanded north-

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ward to where it included the temple and the palace complex. The whole area then became known as Zion because it was known as the home of God, and it surpassed the old fortress of Zion in prestige.

In New Testament times, the spiritual significance of Zion is noted in that the word now indicates the Lord's church and His spiritual kingdom. Please note these two references.

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect (Heb. 12:22-23).

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (1 Pet. 2:4-6).

Thus we learn that during the Messianic Age, Zion is not a geographical location, but a spiritual condition. When one comes to the Lord's church he comes to Zion. Today one can come to Zion no matter where he lives. The one who lives in Africa, when he becomes a Christian, comes to Zion. The person who lives in Russia, and becomes a Christian, comes to Zion. In the United States, when we become Christians, we come to Zion. Mt. Zion is a spiritual location and anyone, no matter where he lives can come to it.

With this thought in mind we are ready to go back to those Old Testament passages that deal with Mount Zion during the Messianic Age and now better understand them. We are able to see the wonderful blessings that are now available to God's people.

Mount Zion: A Place of Refuge

Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain. (Is. 4:5-6)

To illustrate the protection provided for Zion, the prophet draws on Israel's experience when they left Egypt and wandered in the wilderness. God both led them and protected them by a cloud and by fire. Isaiah describes God's eternal dwelling place among His New Testament people. He will both protect and guide. He is always close by (Heb. 13:5-6). The result of God's constant presence with His people also is indicated here. Spiritual Zion is a refuge center open for all. The weather often made life miserable for those who lived and worked in it, such as shepherds and farmers. Zion is compared to a hut to which shepherds and vineyard farmers used to run escape unbearable weather. It can get very hot in Palestine during the summer. These small shelters provide shade from the searing heat. During times of violent storm, these shelters provided a dry, comfortable escape refuge. Similarly, Zion would provide shade and protection for its citizens. To those who are threatened with the storms of life, Jesus said, "Come unto me all of you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give rest" (Mt. 11:28-30).

The Wolf and the Lamb on Mount Zion

Perhaps one of the best known passages in Isaiah describes a time when wild animals and tame animals peacefully co-exist.

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (11:6-9)

Isaiah uses illustrations from the animal world to picture conditions within the Messianic kingdom. He places side by side wild and domesticated animals. Normally these animals are natural enemies, and yet here they are co-existing peacefully. Such describes the moral transformation that takes place within the kingdom of Christ. It is a picture of peace that is to be found within Mount Zion. There is peace with God (Rom. 5:1), with oneself (Phil. 4:7), with brethren (Ps. 133:1), and with all men (Rom. 12:18). One of the great blessings we enjoy in the church is peace (Eph. 2:14-18).

The Feast on Mount Zion

It was customary in ancient times, after the crowning of a king, to sacrifice and celebrate with a special meal. Isaiah tells us that when the Lord

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begins His reign, when He is crowned king, there will be a great banquet for His citizens to enjoy.

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines (25:6)

You will notice that this feast takes place on the mountain of the Lord. The prophets often use this phrase to describe where these wonderful events take place. In Isaiah 2, all nations will flow to this mountain. As Zion is to be understood in a figurative sense, so also is the banquet to be understood figuratively, signifying the spiritual blessings that God brings to all mankind through the Messiah's kingdom. What God does for all nations is to make a feast consisting of the best and choicest things that food and drink can offer. There is "rich food"—indicating richness, delicacy, and superabundance. This is not just ordinary food, but that which is worthy of a king. There is also "aged wine"—indicating the best and choice wines. The prophet stresses that the very best that can be offered is at this banquet.

The prophet tells us that when the Messianic kingdom is established and Christ reigns from Zion, all the world will be blessed. The world will not receive His scraps or leftovers, but the riches of all foods. What He offers will truly satisfy, bless, and enrich mankind. The good things of this banquet are those alone which quench the thirst and still the hunger of needy men. What are some of these blessings? The hope of salvation, the peace and security found in Christ, the thrill of bringing others to Christ, the satisfaction of eternal purpose, the hope of eternal life, the anticipation of a heavenly inheritance, and the enjoyment of fellowship with God and the redeemed both in heaven and on earth.

Forgiveness in Mount Zion

Jerusalem, during the time of Isaiah, was a troubled place. The Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and threatened to do the same to the southern kingdom. Even when the Assyrian threat was taken away, the Babylonian threat soon appeared. Yet the prophet here sees a time of peace and stability. In fact, he describes Zion as being a tent that will never be moved. In Isaiah's day, the picture of the tent meant being nomadic and constantly picking up and moving. Here he describes Zion as being a permanent tent, whose stakes will never be pulled up. Surely he is not describing the physical city of Zion, but the spiritual one, the one with God in its midst, to which the righteous come under the Messiah.

Look upon Zion, the city of our festivals; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a peaceful abode, a tent that will not be moved; its stakes will never be pulled up, nor any of its ropes broken. There the LORD will be our Mighty One. It will be like a place of broad rivers and streams. No galley with oars will ride them, no mighty ship will sail them. For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us. Your rigging hangs loose: The mast is not held secure, the sail is not spread. Then an abundance of spoils will be divided and even the lame will carry off plunder. No one living in Zion will say, "I am ill"; and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven (33:20-24)

What is important in this section is verse 24, which reads, "and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven." There is no greater need we have than that of forgiveness. There is no greater blessing that we can ever receive than forgiveness. The chief mission of Jesus was to die on the cross and bring about the forgiveness of man's sins. Notice it is not the sins of the world that are forgiven, but those in Zion. Those in Zion are the humble believers of Jesus Christ. We see then the importance of the church in our forgiveness.

Old Age in Mount Zion

Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed (Is. 65:20).

The promise of long life is regarded in the Bible as a blessing. The patriarchs were regarded as having been highly favored men, because God lengthened their days. This passage, however, should not be understood in a literal sense, but rather, as an image of prosperity and happiness. If Zion is understood to be a spiritual condition, then surely the picture of old age must also be understood in the same manner.

Zechariah also uses this same figure to describe the prosperity and happiness to be found on Mount Zion.

This is what the LORD says: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of his age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there" (8:3-5).

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Conclusion

One of the great dangers facing every individual is the threat of taking for granted those things that are precious to us. As children, and even as adults, we sometimes take our parents for granted. They have always been there for guidance and help, and many times we do not realize it or appreciate it until they are gone. We often take our health for granted. When we are younger we never seriously think of growing older. If we are not careful, we can also take our spouses for granted. It is not that we do not love them, it's just that we grow used to them. Another great danger is taking the church for granted. Again, it is not that we do not love the church—it is just with the passing of time and the demanding routines of making a living, there exists the real possibility of taking the church for granted. When we properly understand the Prophets and the wonderful time of the Messianic kingdom, it makes us appreciate the church.

We have seen from the prophets what a wonderful time we are currently living in. We now live in Zion and enjoy the blessings of the Messianic kingdom. We take far too many good things of life for granted, but may we never take for granted the spiritual blessings that are available to us in Christ. The prophet encourages us, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Is. 12:3). *104 N.E. 8th Moore, OK, 73160*

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Calvinism

by Glen Osburn

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ (Col. 2:6-8).

But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Tim. 3:13).

These passages warn us of the very real possibility of our being deceived, either through the efforts of others, or by deceiving ourselves through a desire to believe something that may not be taught in Scripture (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Knowing this, God has made provision for us to escape from others who would deceive us, or to correct ourselves if we are unaware of our error. As followers of Christ we are told simply to "test" beliefs, that is, "examine everything carefully" and then to "hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21, NAS). Like the Bereans, we are obligated to examine religious ideas with the Scriptures "to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11; see also 2 Tim. 3:16). Based upon this obligation, we would like to examine the principle tenets of Calvinism. When someone believes:

1. that one is saved by faith alone or faith only,
2. that faith is a gift of God acquired through a direct operation of the Holy Spirit,
3. that man has no spiritual ability to sincerely choose to believe in or obey God without a direct operation of the Holy Spirit,
4. that those who acquire faith have been previously chosen by God to obtain this ability ("predestination"),
5. that once one becomes a child of God it is impossible to sin in such a way as to lose salvation ("once saved, always saved"),

they have embraced some of the tenets of Calvinism. Remember, we are concerned for the souls of all people, but oppose false doctrine. We are examining ideas, not the people who hold these ideas to be valid.

History: John Calvin

John Calvin was born in Noyon, France, July 10, 1509; and died May, 27, 1564. He lived the same time as Martin Luther (although 25 years younger) and influenced Luther's Long and Short Catechism. He published "Institutes of the Christian Religion" at age 26, which went through five editions growing from six to eighty chapters. He helped organize the "Reformed Church" with Ulrich Zwingli and John Knox. Calvinism has profoundly affected the Protestant movement.

If, in your investigation, you probe into the history and influence of Calvinism, you will discover that its doctrines have been incorporated into the majority of the great creeds of the Protestant churches (**The Five Points of Calvinism**, David N. Steele & Curtis C. Thomas, Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1963, p. 61).

Calvinism has formed the doctrinal basis of the Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church, the Episcopal Church of America, and in the main the Baptist and Congregationalist Churches, which include the United Church of Christ. Most aspects of Calvinistic ideology are found in the Nazarene Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and almost all so-called "Evangelical" churches (McClintock & Strong, Vol. 2, p. 47.).

The five points of Calvinism are not original with John Calvin:

The Reformation was essentially a revival of Augustinianism and through it evangelical Christianity again came into its own (**The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination**, Loraine Boettner, Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1932, p. 367).

An easy way to remember the basic theological system championed by John Calvin is an acronym "T-U-L-I-P" (**The Five Points of Calvinism**, Edwin H. Palmer, Baker Book House, 1972, p. 6);

T - Total Depravity,

U - Unconditional Election,

L - Limited Atonement,

I - Irresistible Grace,

P - Perseverance of the Saints.

These five points were recognized as representative of Calvinism by the Synod of Dort (Church of Holland) in 1619.

The classification of Calvin's tenets into these five points were the result of a protest made to the Churches of Holland by followers of one James Arminius (a Dutch seminary professor). In 1610, just one year after the death of James Arminius, five articles of faith based on his interpretation of the Bible were drawn up by his followers. The Arminians, as his followers came to be called, presented these five doctrines to the State of Holland in the form of a "Remonstrance" (a protest). They insisted that the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism (the official expression of the doctrinal position of the Churches of Holland) be changed to conform to the doctrinal views contained in the Remonstrance. The Arminians objected to the doctrines relating to human inability, predestination, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. In 1618 the Church of Holland called for a national Synod to meet in Dort for the purpose of examining the views of Arminius. After rejecting the tenets of Arminius they proceeded to publish a point for point response to his views contained in five chapters, the headings of which have been designated as "the five points of Calvinism" (Steele & Thomas, p. 19; see also **Christian's Expositor**, Calvinism, Vol. X, Num. 2, 1996, p. 137; Palmer, p. 6; Steele & Thomas, p. 13-19).

Our desire is to: (1) Define each of these concepts or tenets, and (2) consider some of the spiritual ramifications of each tenet and applicable Bible passages. It is not our aim to exhaustively consider all the pros and cons of each tenet but to show a system of thought and its implications.

T—Total depravity

The Westminster Confession of Faith (creed of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.) states in regard to the sin of Adam and Eve:

Chapter VI . . . II. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body. III. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation (Palmer, p. 126)

The Philadelphia Confession of Faith, also known as the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith:

Ch. 6 . . . 2. Our first parents by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them, whereby

death came upon all; all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled, in all the faculties, and parts of soul, and body.

3. They being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room, and stead of all mankind, the guilt of their sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, (the servants of sin, the subjects of death and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus sets them free . . .

4. From this original corruption whereby all are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions (*Philadelphia Confession of Faith with Catechism*, Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc., p. 24 [also known as the *London Baptist Confession of Faith*]).

And:

Adam's act . . . was counted as the act of each of his descendants . . . as if they had individually and personally committed that sin. Because of Adam's sin we each stand before God from the moment of our existence as depraved and guilty sinners, for we each sinned "in him" (*Christian's Expositor*, p. 139: [Steele & Thompson, p. 42]).

The doctrine of "Total Depravity" is also known as "Hereditary Depravity" and "Imputed Adamic Sin," and is sometimes labeled "Original Sin." Total Depravity is also called "Total Inability" (Steele & Thomas, p. 24; Palmer, p. 14):

When Calvinists speak of man as being totally depraved, they mean that man's nature is corrupt, perverse, and sinful throughout . . . As a result of this inborn corruption, the natural man is totally unable to do anything spiritually good; thus Calvinists speak of man's "total inability" . . . the unsaved sinner is incapable of good. The natural man is enslaved to sin; he is a child of Satan, rebellious toward God, blind to truth, corrupt, and unable to save himself or to prepare himself for salvation . . . (Adam's descendants have lost) . . . the ability to make right choices in the spiritual realm . . . they do not have the ABILITY to choose spiritual good over evil (Steele & Thomas, p. 25).

Palmer shows that Calvinism maintains "1. Man cannot do the good . . . 2. Man cannot understand the good . . . 3. Man cannot desire the good" (Palmer, pp. 14-16). On the point of man not being able to understand the

good, he illustrates, saying that man "is as blind as Cyclops with his one eye burned out . . . In other words, without the Holy Spirit one is not able to understand the things of God" (Palmer, p. 15-16).

Scriptural Considerations

The Calvinist implies that since man is unable to understand, desire, or do the will of God, then it is impossible for a totally corrupt man to choose to put faith in God, an act of positive obedience (Jn. 6:28-30; 8:24). They reason that since man is unable to choose faith, faith itself must of necessity be a direct gift of God.

Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God . . .

Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift to the sinner (Steele & Thomas, p. 16).

The Bible, however, points out that God designed the testimony of the written Word of God to produce faith in our hearts (Rom. 10:17; Jn. 20:30-31; Eph. 1:13; Acts 15:7). These passages affirm that faith is our response to credible evidence recorded in the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16).

The Bible expressly teaches that man has the ability to respond in faith to the Word of God. In the parable of the sower (Mt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Mk. 4:3-9, 14-20; Lk. 8:5-8, 11-15) we are taught that within the hearts of men there are differences in understanding, commitment, and priorities that cause various responses to the Word of God. Please do not overlook that one of the hearts, illustrated by these differing soils, was called "good and honest" (Lk. 8:15) before the seed was sown. It was this nature of the heart which allowed the Word of God to be received. With Calvinism, a naturally receptive "good and honest" heart is not possible.

Jesus himself made man personally responsible for his faith: "unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). Calvinism teaches that one must receive the Holy Spirit before one can have faith. The Scriptures teach that it is "after" we believe that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13).

Calvinists make a comparison of a dead body to a dead spirit and speculate, "If a dead body cannot respond to something offered to it, how can a dead spirit respond to the gospel, unless God gives it life to respond?" First of all, being "spiritually dead" does not mean that our "spirit" is dead. When we sin, we are then separated from the source of eternal spiritual life, God (Is. 59:2). This separation is spiritual death. Jesus uses this imagery

speaking of those who would hear His word and believe when He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live" (Jn. 5:25). Jesus here says the spiritually dead can "hear," and those who would believe would live.

How does mankind supposedly acquire this "corrupt nature?" Calvinism says that Adam and Eve's corrupt sinful nature was "conveyed, to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation" (**Philadelphia Confession**, p. 24). If the guilt of sin and its corrupt nature comes through the flesh, then there is a problem with the fleshly nature of Christ. Mary is the fleshly mother of Christ. The fleshly nature of Christ fulfilled many prophecies and the will of God (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4; Mt. 22:41-46; Heb. 2:14-17; 2 Jn. 7, et al.). Did Christ somehow become infected with "Adamic" sin from Mary, His fleshly mother? Questions like these contribute to the formation of the Catholic doctrine called the "immaculate conception of Mary" (McClintock & Strong, pp. 506-510). This supposedly would enable Mary to give birth to a sinless, yet still fleshly, Jesus. Some who disagreed with this doctrine maintained that Christ's spirit was given by God to the conceived Jesus, and in this way Christ's spirit itself sanctified His body so that He was born without sin. They contend that all other men receive their spirits from their fleshly parents, not directly from God, and this is how spiritual corruption is passed on.

The Bible teaches that although we receive physical attributes from our parents, our life force (Acts 17:28) and eternal spirit come from God. "Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?" (Heb. 12:9). Zechariah declares that it is "the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him" (Zech. 12:1).

If the spirits we receive from God come with depravity, then for the Calvinist there is an ethical problem with a God who creates evil (Jas. 1:13). (Calvinist answer: God is sovereign, i.e. He can do anything He wants and still be righteous. True, He can do anything He wants, but He will not contradict His nature [act unrighteously]. Example: God will not lie. Therefore, it becomes "impossible" [Heb. 6:18] for God to lie.)

There is another consideration in this line of thinking; if our spirits emanate from our parents, how does the child of two Christian parents come to be born with a corrupt, depraved spirit? Calvinism says that "this

corruption of nature . . . doth remain in those that are regenerated" (*Westminster Confession*, Chapter VI . . . V [Palmer, p. 126]). The Scriptures teach, however, that all who have obeyed the truth have "purified" their souls (1 Pet. 1:22), "cleansing their hearts" (Acts 15:9). The Bible affirms that there most assuredly are those who are "pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt. 5:8). How, then, can two "pure" souls spawn a totally corrupt soul? Souls can not be "pure" and "not pure" at the same time.

The truth is that the spirit God gives us as children is not depraved (Heb. 12:9; Zech. 12:1). God initially gives us a pure spirit for our bodies, but we mess it up. Paul said;

And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me (Rom. 7:9-11, NAS).

Paul maintains that he was "once alive" spiritually to God. Paul is speaking of his own spiritual life, or fellowship with God, as a child, before he sinned. But then "the commandment came." This is not speaking of the inscription by God of the Ten commandments on Mt. Sinai (Gal. 4:24), it is speaking of the childhood of Paul, before the law "became known" to him (*Thayer's Greek English Lexicon*, B,2,b, p. 251). Before the age of accountability, Paul was "alive" to God. Then, at some point, when Paul knew right from wrong, he was deceived by sin, committed sin, and spiritually died (cf. Deut. 1:39). But remember, Paul was originally "alive" to God. This cannot mesh with the doctrine of Total Depravity or being "born in sin."

How does man become a sinner? "Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices" (Eccl. 7:29, NAS). Solomon, in his inspired insight, says that God makes men "upright," then man chooses to become a sinner. James details, "Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15, NAS).

It is not our spiritual death that creates lust and sin, but our lust which creates sin and spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). Calvinism says it is our being born in sin (naturally naughty) that causes all our sins. "From this original corruption . . . do proceed all actual transgressions" (*Philadelphia Confession*, p. 24). John MacArthur, a Calvinist, put it this way: "Committing

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sinful acts does not make us sinners; we commit sinful acts because we are sinners" (*Ephesians*, John MacArthur, Moody Press, 1986, p. 54). This is not what the Bible says. The Scriptures teach that it is our own personal sins and iniquities which bring about our "separation" from God (Is. 59:2). "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1).

The Scriptures are explicit, we shall not be held accountable for the sins of others.

Yet you say, "Why should the son not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity?" When the son has practiced justice and righteousness, and has observed all My statutes and done them, he shall surely live. The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself (Ezek. 18:19-20).

We may have to live with the temporal consequences of a sin we commit, even though we have been forgiven. And we may even physically suffer because of another's sin. But we will not suffer eternally for another's sin, or receive the guilt of their sin. (We are living with the consequences of Adam's sin (physical death), not the guilt (spiritual death); 1 Cor. 15:20-22.) If we lose our souls, it will be because of our own sin and failure to receive forgiveness (Deut. 24:16; 2 Kgs. 14:6; Jer. 31:29-30; Ezek. 18:1-4; 28:15).

"So then every one shall give an account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). If God created us totally depraved and unable to obey, why would He call upon us to "give an account" of ourselves to Him? The concept of God making us accountable to Him for doing something He knows is impossible for us, is incompatible with the true nature of God (2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Tim. 2:3-4). Judgment itself suggests that we are able to respond (responsible) in obedience to God. We shall be called upon to "give an account" of ourselves to God. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

We have spent much on this first tenet of Calvinism, for if this foundational concept is incorrect, then the rest of Calvin's system of thought is faulty. If we cut down the "trunk" of Calvin's doctrinal system, the "branches" fall with it.

U—Unconditional election:

Chapter III, I. God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass . . . III. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. IV. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished (*The Westminster Confession*, 1648 [Palmer, p. 124]).

The doctrine of election declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam's race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save. God could have chosen to save all men (for He had the power and authority to do so) or He could have chosen to save none (for He was under no obligation to show mercy to any)—but He did neither. Instead He chose to save some and to exclude others. His eternal choice of particular sinners unto salvation was not based upon any foreseen act or response on the part of those selected, but was based solely on His own good pleasure and sovereign will. Thus election was not determined by, or conditioned upon, anything that men would do, but resulted entirely from God's self-determined purpose (Steele & Thomas, p. 30).

Calvinism says: Because of being born in sin (Hereditary Depravity), all of us are spiritually dead, so dead we are unable to even have faith. Therefore, in order for us to be saved, God alone had to save us. We know that everyone does not "get saved" so, God had to choose those to whom He would give grace (Unconditional Election).

Scriptural Considerations

The first glaring contradiction between Calvinism and Scripture is the Bible's teaching on the impartiality of God. Paul, in discussing the justice of God, emphatically states "there is no partiality with God" (Rom. 2:11). Peter, after preaching Christ for the first time to the Gentiles says, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (Acts 10:34-35). God "desires all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4), but only those who fear and obey Him will be "welcome to Him." The problem keeping all men from being saved is not the sovereign will of God, but the arbitrary will of men.

The Bible does teach "election" and "predestination:"

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will (Eph. 1:3-5, NAS).

The phrase "He chose us" is from a word which originally meant "to lay out together." It carried the idea of making a selection or choosing from among different objects or things. Those, therefore, who were chosen by God were chosen from what consisted of many varied groups or persons. Rather than an arbitrary choice of particular individuals, God chose to receive all those who are "in Christ." He chose a class of people: those who in faith would obey Jesus (Heb. 5:9).

This relationship called "in Him" or "in Christ" and is where "all" or "every spiritual blessing" is found (Eph. 1:3). Ephesians 1 lists seven spiritual blessings that are found only "in Him": (1) we are chosen (1:4); (2) we are predestined to be adopted (1:5); (3) we are given grace (1:6); (4) We are redeemed and forgiven (1:7); (5) we are allowed to know the mystery of His will (1:9); (6) we are to obtain an inheritance (1:11); (7) we are sealed with the Spirit (1:13) (*Ephesians*, Glen Osburn, Contending For The Faith Pub.).

God's choice pertaining to whom He would save was made before the world was built, that is, before its "foundation" was laid (Eph. 1:4). Because of God's impartiality, this choice consists of individuals within a particular group. He chose to save those who had the quality of being "holy and blameless" (Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22). This separation from sin and guilt is attained only "in Christ," and maintained by us (2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Pet. 1:10).

The word "predestine" means literally "to set out boundaries in advance." God staked out the boundaries for the group He would adopt. The concept of this word is described in John's Gospel:

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. And a stranger they simply will

not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers. This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them. Jesus therefore said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (Jn. 10:1-9, NAS).

The imagery here suggests that the "sheep" represent people. God set out a boundary in advance that those in the "fold of the sheep" were to be the "saved." The "fold of the sheep" represents the church where salvation is (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23). The way to get into that "fold" is through "the door," which is Christ Jesus. God predestined, or "set out boundaries in advance," that the "fold of the sheep" or the church would be where salvation is, and that "anyone" who wanted to be saved would enter "through" Christ. Anyone? Yes, anyone: "If anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved" (Jn. 10:9). Jesus also said, "You are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life" (Jn. 5:40; see Jn. 10:16; Eph. 2:14-16).

By His sovereign decree, all those "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3) are in that group called the church (Eph. 1:22-23) of which Christ is the Savior (Eph. 5:23). Whether a person is or is not in God's church is dependent on whether that person has chosen to obey Jesus in faith (I Heb. 5:9; Rom. 8:29-30). God's call to come and be saved "in Christ" is offered to all through or by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). You get "into" Christ when, in faith, you respond to the gospel and are "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27). This is a general election, as opposed to the unconditional, particular election of the Calvinist.

I.—Limited Atonement

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation (Steele & Thomas, p. 17).

This tenet is known negatively as "Limited Atonement," but positively as "Particular Redemption."

Scriptural Considerations

Calvinism says: Because of being born in sin, all of us are spiritually dead, so dead we are unable to even have faith (Total Depravity). Therefore, in order for us to be saved, God alone has to save us. We know that everyone does not "get saved," so, God had to choose those to whom He would give grace (Unconditional Election). Jesus could not have died for everyone or everyone would be saved. So, because some are lost, we know Jesus did not die for everyone (Limited Atonement).

Did Jesus die for everyone? Let's see what the Scriptures say:

And He Himself is the propitiation (atoning sacrifice) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world (1 Jn. 2:2).

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (Jn. 3:16).

For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time (1 Tim. 2:5-6).

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

But we do see Him . . . Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone (1 Heb. 2:9; see also 2 Pet. 3:9; Mt. 11:28-30; Rev. 3:20.)

Can we tell anyone we will ever meet that God loves them, and Jesus died for them? Absolutely! But, what about the Calvinist?

As a Reformed (i.e. Calvinist) Christian, the writer believes that counselors must not tell any unsaved counselee that Christ died for him, for they cannot say that. No man knows except Christ himself who are his elect for whom he died (**Competent to Counsel**, Jay Adams, Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1975, p. 70). We do not need to worry (unlike the Calvinist) that we may have inadvertently lied to someone about Jesus dying for them just because we were unaware if they were one of "the elect."

I—Irrresistible Grace:

Although the general outward call of the gospel can be, and often is, rejected, the special inward call of the Spirit never fails to result in the conversion of those to whom it is made. This special call is not made to all sinners but is issued to the elect only! The Spirit is in no way dependent upon their help or cooperation for success in His work of bringing them to Christ. It is for this reason that Calvinists speak of the Spirit's call and of God's grace in saving sinners as being "efficacious," "invincible," or "irresistible." For the grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused, it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ! (Steele & Thomas, p. 49).

Scriptural Considerations

Calvinism says: Because of being born in sin, all of us are spiritually dead, so dead we are unable to even have faith (Total Depravity). Therefore, in order for us to be saved, God alone had to save us. We know that everyone does not "get saved," so, God had to choose those to whom He would give grace (Unconditional Election). Jesus could not have died for everyone or everyone would be saved. So, because some are lost, we know Jesus did not die for everyone (Limited Atonement). If you are one of the ones God picked, you can't change it (Irrresistible Grace).

Stephen said of the disobedient Jews who had deceitfully brought him to trial:

You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it (Acts 7:51-53).

Stephen said this rowdy assembly was "resisting the Holy Spirit." Evidently the work of the Spirit can be resisted. Their fathers had resisted the Spirit by persecuting the prophets and killing the ones who announced Christ. But the sons were "resisting the Holy Spirit" through betraying and murdering Christ, and even though they had the law, they "did not keep it." When people today refuse to obey the word of God, they also are resisting the Spirit. [We can also "grieve" (Eph. 4:30) and insult "the Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29)]. The Spirit's call is to all:

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And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost (Rev. 22:17).

Jesus said to some, "you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life" (Jn. 5:40). The Spirit's call is not "irresistible" for man has often resisted yielding to the Spirit's invitation and instruction. Therefore, the grace which God offers can be resisted by the insolent will of man.

P—Perseverance of the Saints:

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1648):

Chapter XVII, I. They, whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved (*Westminster Confession*, (1648) [Palmer, p. 130; Steele & Thomas, p. 56]).

This doctrine is also known as; "Once saved, always saved . . . Perseverance of God . . . Preservation of the saints . . . (and) . . . Eternal security" (Palmer, pp. 68-69).

Here is an excerpt from a Calvinist tract presenting some unavoidable implications:

We take the position that a Christian's sins do not damn his soul! The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul . . . All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger . . . the way a man lives has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul (*A Discussion Which Involves a Subject Pertinent to All Men*, Rev. Sam Morris, pp. 1-2; [Calvinism, Samuel G. Dawson, p. 13]).

Scriptural Considerations

Calvinism says: Because of being born in sin, all of us are spiritually dead, so dead we are unable to even have faith (Total Depravity). Therefore, in order for us to be saved, God alone had to save us. We know that every-

one does not "get saved," so, God had to choose those to whom He would give grace (Unconditional Election). Jesus could not have died for everyone or everyone would be saved. So, because some are lost, we know Jesus did not die for everyone (Limited Atonement). If you are one of the ones God picked, you cannot change it (Irresistible Grace). And since God picked you to be saved and you cannot do anything about it, there is no sin that you could ever commit that would cause you to lose your salvation (Perseverance of the Saints).

Calvinists, speaking of salvation, say: "If you ain't got it, you can't get it. If you get it, you can't lose it. If you lose it, you never had it." To verify that they approve of this little aphorism:

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not maintain that all who profess the Christian faith are certain of heaven. It is saints—those who are set apart by the Spirit—who persevere to the end. It is believers—those who are given true, living faith in Christ—who are secure and safe in Him. Many who profess to believe fall away, but they do not fall from grace for they were never in grace. True believers do fall into temptations, and they do commit grievous sins, but these sins do not cause them to lose their salvation or separate them from Christ (Steele & Thomas, p. 56).

Because of this, when discussing the "possibility of apostasy," a Calvinist will often try to escape the force of a passage by insisting that the person being discussed was not really a Christian. They say that he might have professed to be, or even thought he was, but in reality had never been redeemed by the blood of Christ. We want to look at some passages which cannot possibly be speaking of anyone but those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, those who are unquestionably Christians.

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame (Heb. 6:4-6).

Someone has "fallen away" ("if," v. 6 [KJV, NIV] is not in the Greek text). This is someone who has "once been enlightened," has "tasted of the heavenly gift," and has "been made partakers of the Holy Spirit," etc. This cannot possibly be speaking of anyone but a once true Christian. This passage is contending that it is possible for a Christian to fall away to such an extent that they find it impossible to repent. (Contextually it is speaking of

ex-Jewish Christians who would leave Christianity altogether, and probably return to the Old Law, Heb. 2:1-3; 3:12; 4:1, 11; 6:11-12; 10:23, 32-39; 12:3, 12-13.)

As Christians, we are instructed to "repent . . . and pray" if we sin (Acts 8:22, note Simon was a true believer, Acts 8:13). "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9).

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves (2 Pet. 2:1).

These fallen, now false, teachers were "even denying the Master who bought them," consequently "bringing swift destruction upon themselves." The phrase "who bought them" is speaking of the redemption of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19). These false teachers were going to deny Christ, the very one who had redeemed them. Would this cause them to lose their salvation? Jesus says, "Whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 10:32-33).

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:26-29)?

This passage is speaking of one who had been "sanctified" by "the blood of the covenant," something he now regards as "unclean." This is someone who "after receiving the knowledge of the truth" has "insulted the Spirit of grace." This was a true "sanctified" Christian who, without repentance, will suffer a "severer punishment" than death.

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned (Jn. 15:5-6).

This is addressed to those who do "abide in" Christ, a Christian. Jesus warns those who would not continue to "abide in" Him that they would be "cast . . . into the fire." Abiding "in" Christ means to continue being in fellowship with Christ through obeying His word (2 Jn. 8-9).

Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:2-4).

Paul is addressing Christians in the churches of Galatia. Paul is warning those who had benefited from the grace of God found in Christ, that if they went back to seek justification in the Old Law (represented by receiving circumcision), they would be "severed from Christ." They would find that Christ would "be of no benefit" to them for they would have "fallen from grace." "Certainly no one can be severed from something to which he has not been joined, and one cannot 'fall out of' something he has not been in" (Calvinism, Samuel G. Dawson, p. 17).

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree (Rom. 11:17-24)?

The Jews are represented as natural olive branches, and Gentile Christians are represented as wild olive branches. The thing that is said to connect the branches to the tree of fellowship with God is belief. The warning is that the Jews were "broken off" because of "their unbelief" in Christ, and the Gentile Christians would "also be cut off" if they failed to continue in "faith." Some, "believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away"

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(I.k. 8:13). "Take care, brethren, lest there should be in anyone of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God" (Heb. 3:12, NAS). If, however, the Jews "do not continue in their unbelief," they "will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again."

For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died (Rom. 14:15). Also, "For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died" (1 Cor. 8:11).

Both of these passages are warning us to recognize we may inadvertently contribute to a brother's sin against his own conscience (1 Cor. 8:7, 10, 12; Rom. 14:14, 23). If we are not sensitive to the conscience of young "weak" Christians, we may encourage them to do something against what their conscience says is pleasing to God. When our "weak" brother "doubts" but goes ahead and does what he doubts is right, "he is condemned . . . because . . . whatever is not from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). The believing "brother for whose sake Christ died" did not act "from faith," he sinned, and is now "hurt," "ruined," and "destroy(ed)." This is a sanctified Christian, one "for whom Christ died," who has been spiritually destroyed through sin. The word "destroy" in Romans 14:23 means "to lose eternal salvation" (Thayer, p. 64). The Bible goes on to say to those who are not sensitive of another brother's conscience, "And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ" (1 Cor. 8:12).

The passages cited above clearly speak of sanctified Christians losing their salvation. It is, therefore, possible for us to sin as Christians and revert to a state that is worse than before:

For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Because we can sin, we must regard the warning: "therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

Conclusion

Calvinism says: Because of being born in sin, all of us are spiritually dead, so dead we are unable to even have faith (Total Depravity). Therefore, in order for us to be saved, God alone had to save us. We know that everyone does not "get saved," so, God had to choose those to whom He would give grace (Unconditional Election). Jesus could not have died for everyone or everyone would be saved. So, because some are lost, we know Jesus did not die for everyone (Limited Atonement). If you are one of the ones God picked, you cannot change it (Irresistible Grace). And since God picked you to be saved and you cannot do anything about it, there is no sin that you could ever commit that would cause you to lose your salvation (Perseverance of the Saints).

However, as we have shown, the Bible says: We all are born spiritually alive to God and innocent to sin. But there comes a point of accountability, a time when we are responsible for understanding and doing the will of God. There comes a time when we lust, commit sin (Rom. 3:23), and, therefore, lose our fellowship with a Holy God (spiritual death). As sinners we then need to hear (Acts 15:7), believe (Mk. 1:15; 16:16), and obey the gospel (2 Thess. 1:8). This includes repentance (Acts 17:30) and confession (Mt. 10:32). When we obey the gospel, we are "redeemed" (1 Pet. 1:18-19) and placed "into Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27). Once "in Christ," we are responsible to grow in "knowledge" (2 Pet. 3:18), all the while keeping our body and mind obedient to what we have learned (1 Cor. 9:27). We are aware that we can lose our salvation through careless sin (2 Jn. 1:8; Mt. 12:36-37; Heb. 10:26-29). If we sin, as a child of God we have the privilege of penitently calling upon our Father for forgiveness (1 Jn. 2:1-2; 1:9; Heb. 4:15-16). If we abandon our Father, we must find repentance, come back to our Father in prayer and confess our unfaithfulness, like the penitent prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-24). If our sin has caused a breach in our fellowship with our brethren, we must let them know of our change of heart (Jas. 5:16).

We are not born "Totally Depraved" but have a free will, an ability to choose right from wrong, that we will give an account for in the Judgment; the election is not an "Unconditional Election" but conditioned upon our abiding in the body of Christ; the atonement of Christ is not a "Limited Atonement" but is offered to all; we can insult the Spirit of grace, therefore, it cannot be an "Irresistible Grace"; and we can lose our salvation through sin, therefore, the concept of "once saved, always saved" or "Perseverance of the Saints" is not biblical. The reasoning of Calvinism is not of God.

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The Scriptures teach that salvation is of grace: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Tit. 2:11). The Scriptures also say, speaking of Jesus, "And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9).

We can correctly conclude: Jesus, through grace, offers salvation to all, but only those who choose to obey Him will receive God's grace and eternal salvation. *3261 Cameron Park, CA 95682*

The Crossroads Cult

by Jimmie C. Smith

In 1963, an Asbury Professor, Robert Coleman (Asbury College, Wilmore, KY), published a book entitled, **The Master Plan of Evangelism**. This book deals with this basic thesis: Jesus selected twelve men whom he carefully trained over a three year period; these men submitted themselves to his leadership and authority; when fully prepared, they were sent out to do his work; this basic plan is the one that we should follow today in "making disciples."

In Fall 1967, a young evangelist, Chuck Lucas, became the campus minister of the Fourteenth Street Church of Christ in Gainesville, FL. Lucas developed a program of evangelism as described in Coleman's book and the Fourteenth St. church changed its name to the Crossroads Church of Christ. The campus program mushroomed and the focus on evangelism as described in the "Master Plan" became the driving force of the church. A school of evangelism was established conducting workshops for other churches, and the concept was exported to some 150 communities across the nation and in several foreign countries.

The books which formulated this movement were not written by Christians, nor did the movement take root from Bible teaching. There were really four principle books that guided the leaders of this movement. They were:

The Master Plan of Evangelism, by Robert V. Coleman

Competent to Counsel, by Jay F. Adams

The Disciplined Life, by Richard Shelley Taylor

Manna in the Morning, by Stephen P. Olford

Of late, there is a fifth one, **The Three R's of Urban Church Growth**, by Alvin Jennings.

The Movement

While numerous big name liberal preachers endorsed the movement in its early stages, nearly every religious journal soon had something negative to say about it. To name a few, it was condemned in the **Gospel Advocate**, **Contending for the Faith**, **Guardian of Truth**, **Preceptor**, and numerous church bulletins and lectureships. **The Freed-Hardeman Lectures** assigned

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six lectures on the topic spanning a nine year period. Some big name preachers who opposed the movement early on were Ira North, Batsell Barrett Baxter, Guy N. Woods. The most voracious was Ira Rice, Jr. in **Contending for the Faith**.

Coleman wrote in his book,

Jesus expected the men He was with to obey Him. They were not required to be smart, but they had to be loyal. This became a distinguishing mark by which they were known . . . None of the disciples were asked at first to make a statement of faith or accept a well-defined creed, although they doubtless recognized Jesus as being the Messiah . . . No one will follow a person in which he has no trust, nor will he sincerely take the step of faith unless he is willing to obey what his leader says. When it is all boiled down, those of us who are seeking to train men must be prepared to have them follow us . . . we are the exhibit (pp. 50, 81).

Under Coleman's plan, each person is assigned a "prayer partner." It is claimed that the prayer partner or "leader" is following Christ, thus, not to comply to his exhortation is to reject Christ. At the command of his prayer partner, the convert is required to finish assignments, give up sleep or recreation, have "quiet time," attend "soul talks"; and if one misses a "soul talk" or "quiet time" the questioning may go as follows:

Prayer Partner: What did you do in your "quiet time" today?

Convert: Today, I missed my "quiet time."

Prayer Partner: Don't you love the Lord?

Winford Claiborne quoted Sam Hester in a 1982 **Freed-Hardeman College Lecture** as saying,

As a Campus evangelist at Ole Miss, I once took a group to a seminar at Gainesville. In one of the "soul talks" [now called "evangelistic Bible studies"] conducted by Tom Brown, one of the leading students in the movement, the following incident happened. In a group discussion I turned to my Bible and read a Scripture. Immediately after that, Tom Brown stated that what we wanted to do in the group was to "share our feelings and not to study the Bible." I knew then that something was wrong (p. 76).

Such "sharing" in many cases amounts to little more than testifying and expressing one's own feelings as the Pentecostals do.

In a paper entitled, "Why I left the Crossroads Movement," Tom Vail was asked, "What eventually happened in your church (the Call St. Church of Christ, Tallahassee, FL)? Have the problems been resolved?" Tom replied,

In a way, they have been. In January 1980, without previous discussion or warning, the campus minister, two deacons, the women's counselor, and our secretary resigned and started their own group. They did this without permission of the elders or even giving the elders an opportunity to speak to all the young Christians they had led away with them. You see, either this movement's philosophy ruins or rules both churches and people (*Freed-Hardeman College Lectures*, 1982, p. 74).

According to Winford Claiborne's lecture in the same volume,

The basic program of the Crossroads campus ministry involves two leading figures, the campus minister and the women's counselor. Under the campus minister is the soul talk leader, then under him the co-talk leader, then the host (the person in whose house these talks take place). Surrounding this arrangement are the prayer partner relationships. Tom Vail and others who have come out of this movement affirm that the campus minister has tremendous authority. He really is the commander in charge. The word "commander" may seem too strong in describing the authority of the campus minister. However, Tom Vail says that "the structure is militaristic, with a commander, lieutenants, and troops. Obedience is expected and questioning is discouraged. All direction is to be taken as if it were infallible (p. 76).

In the Crossroads system, everyone seems to spy on everyone else. The campus minister checks very carefully on the soul talk leader. Detailed records of his production in numbers of people who attend the soul talks and those who are baptized are kept. The co-leader is a neophyte leader who is just learning how to do soul talks. He has to prove his effectiveness by baptizing and guiding his followers. The host provides the place for the meeting. He has to prove his worth by getting out and inviting a large number to the talks. This gains approval from the soul talk leader and from the campus minister. If any of these fail in their mission, they are severely criticized, made to feel guilty, and in some cases they have the love of the group withdrawn from them.

All of this is based on the concept that "new converts must have personal guardians placed over them. To do otherwise would be to abandon them to the devil" (Coleman, pp. 48-49).

Prayer Partners

This practice undergirds the Total Commitment system. The campus minister assigns an older and more experienced brother or sister (called a "discipler") to pray with a younger member (the disciple). The senior partner guides the younger member to a higher spiritual plane. The senior prayer partners who are particularly effective may be given as many as four or five junior prayer partners. Tom Vail affirms that those who are really super-spiritual are given the privilege of having prayer with the campus minister or the women's counselor.

The older, more mature brother guides the younger in learning to confess his sins "one to another" (Jas. 5:16). This passage is interpreted to mean that one must confess his most intimate sins and even his thoughts to his prayer partner. If the younger member refuses to confess his innermost thoughts, he is not considered to be open and honest with his spiritual superior. The younger brother must seek the advice from his older brother and must follow that advice to remain in the good graces of those who are above him. The senior prayer partner attempts to regulate the dating behavior of his charges. He tries to tell the younger members whom they may date, how often, when, and whom they may marry. The younger partners who resent this kind of regulation and who fail to abide by the directions of those over him are punished for their rebellion. Many of the "senior" prayer partners were very immature, in their late teens and early twenties.

Roy Lanier, Jr. accuses some of the leaders of having a Messiah Complex: "They envision themselves as being superior to ordinary mortals and charged with the responsibility of directing lesser mortals" (**Freed-Hardeman College Lectures** (1982), p. 78).

Some sins are to be confessed to God only—not to a campus minister, senior prayer partner, women's counselor, or to anyone else.

Hollis Miller said, "The nucleus of the prayer partner idea is for the 'lesser' to confess his every weakening thought and deed to the 'greater,' never downward from the 'greater' to the 'lesser.' That kind of systematized relationship is a perversion of James 5:16 (**Freed-Hardeman College Lectures** (1982), p. 284).

In the May 24, 1979 issue of the Gospel Advocate, brother Guy N. Woods pled with the advocates of the Crossroads philosophy:

- I. Stop refusing baptism to mature persons requesting it.

2. Eliminate from the prayer-partner concept the implication that the "one another" passages of the NT justify confessing intimate sins.
3. Correct the impression now being made in some areas by "Crossroads graduates" that only those churches, preachers, elderships and parents which support the philosophy are faithful to the Lord.
4. Denounce the concept that "The end justifies the means."
5. Desist from the application of all psychological pressures, seek for a better fellowship among sister congregations, and put an end to the bitter alienation now existing in some families over the philosophy.

The New Concept of Discipleship

Several books have been written to explain what Coleman promoted. What they agree on is:

1. The example of Jesus in training his apostles is our model for making disciples today.
2. In the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19), the term teach/make disciples refers not just to converting people to Christ (saving the lost), but it also includes the practice mentioned above.
3. The person being disciplined must place himself under the guidance and authority of the one doing the discipling in somewhat of a disciple/master relationship.

Let us examine the concept. Should we follow the example of Jesus regarding making disciples? Certainly Jesus did, in fact, select, train, and commission twelve men to accomplish his plan. But the simple fact is this: these men were trained as *apostles*. They were being suited for the unique work of the apostleship.

In the Great Commission, the command "teach/make disciples" involves the process of converting people to Christ. The parallel is found in Mark 16:15-16 which teaches the same basic lesson, namely, preach the gospel and baptize the believers. Obviously one was not limited to "discipling" a small group because the command involved "all nations." In Matthew 23:1-12, Jesus warned about the danger of one elevating himself above his brethren. Never do we make disciples for ourselves—only for Christ.

The verb form of disciple (*matheteutheis*) which can be rendered "discipling" is found only four times in the New Testament. Roy Davison

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said, "In the first two passages it is intransitive and means 'to be or to become a disciple.' In Matt. 26:19 and Acts 14:21 the word is transitive and means 'to make disciples'" (**Freed-Hardeman College Lectures** (1990), p. 81). In these passages, it has nothing to do with maturing or training Christians, rather, it refers to *making Christians*. In fact, if it did refer to maturing Christians, one would expect to find it used extensively in the epistles of Paul, Peter, etc. But interestingly enough, neither "disciple" nor "discipling" is found even once in any of the epistles. They appear only in the Gospels and Acts. It is plain that the "multiplying ministries" brethren are distorting and abusing both "disciple" and "discipling" by giving them non-biblical meanings.

Matthew 23:8 reads, "But do not be called Rabbi, for One is your teacher, and you are all brothers." Therefore, instead of having one who commands and another who obeys, we all should show concern for each other. We are to be subject to one another (Eph. 5:21), forgive each other (Eph. 4:32), admonish one another (Col. 3:16), encourage and build up one another (1 Thess. 5:11). Each of us is responsible for serving the brethren he knows in these ways, but nowhere in the Scriptures does one find the idea of assigning a certain small group to one "discipler" such as is taught as a biblical obligation by the multiplying ministries brethren. Nowhere in Scripture can we find that we ought to take one who is already a Christian and "disciple" him to Christ. Such is a complete contradiction of the way these terms are used in Scripture.

What Happened to Crossroads?

One of the Crossroads satellite churches gradually began to eclipse the mother church. A group of brethren in Boston began to have phenomenal success as they moved "beyond the Crossroads." **Christianity Today** comments on their growth:

The rapid growth of the Boston Church of Christ began in 1979 when evangelist Kip McKean was hired by a suburban congregation with fewer than 100 members. By December 1980, Sunday attendance exceeded 250. Today, more than 3,300 people worship weekly at the Boston Garden, home to the Boston Bruins and Celtics. In addition, more than 1300 were baptized in 1986 at churches planted by the Boston congregation on five continents since 1982 (Feb. 19, 1988, p. 53).

Kip McKean was baptized by Chuck Lucas at Gainesville, FL. The shift in leadership occurred, not only because of the phenomenal success of the

Boston Church, but also because of the removal of Chuck Lucas as preacher at the Crossroads Church in Gainesville. The Crossroads Movement was shocked by an announcement in the August 25, 1985 issue of ATC.

Our hearts are heavy and hurting as we share with you the unanimous decision of the elders to terminate Chuck Lucas as evangelist of the Crossroads Church of Christ. This decision was made necessary because of recurring sins in his life, which he has acknowledged.

Later, the Crossroads congregation at Gainesville denounced the discipling practice. The Boston Church soon filled the vacuum and moved to the forefront, and the movement has since been designated in lectures and articles as the "Discipling Movement" or "Multiplying Ministry."

The Boston Church has a growth plan which involves what they are calling "house" churches. They are using a book by Alvin Jennings, **The Three R's of Urban Church Growth**, which advocates an episcopal church structure, i.e. all of the churches in a city under one single eldership. Operating without a building of its own, the Boston Church rented facilities for meeting on the Lord's day and divided their membership into house churches for other meetings. The elders "delegated" authority to house church leaders to oversee these groups. Many of these 'house churches' have long ago outgrown the "house" size, some of them having as many as 250 members. Therefore the two elders of the Boston church, still headquartered in Lexington, are not only elders of a plurality of churches in the Boston area, but across the country and even in foreign countries.

The **Guardian of Truth**, October 17, 1996 reprinted the following from **National & International Religion Report**, August 5, 1996.

Three of the 10 fastest-growing congregations in the United States belong to The International Churches of Christ Boston movement (NIRR, 5/17/93). ICCB congregations in Los Angeles and New York City were the country's fastest growing from 1993-1994, the latest year for which statistics are available, according to researcher John Vaughn. The Los Angeles ICCB church grew by 2,520 members to 7,711, and the New York church by 1,609 to 6,010 in that period, Vaughn reported in his newsletter **Church Growth Today**. Chicago Church of Christ grew by 933 members, to 3,982, during that same period. The ICCB, formerly known as the Boston Church of Christ, is an offshoot of the traditional Churches of Christ. The network moved its international center from Boston to

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a facility in inner-city Los Angeles that also serves as the office center for the city's congregation.

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The Business Meeting: Is There a Better Way?

by Ronny F. Wade

Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone and no man with thee? And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know anything of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place. And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste (1 Sam. 21:1-2, 8).

Now, just as then, the King has a business. It is the most important business in the world, and should be treated with the utmost concern and care. Its progress and success depend, in part, upon those of us charged with its keeping.

Note that in verse 8 David said that the "king's business requires . . ." That was true then, and is true now. Good, successful businesses do not run themselves. They extract time, energy, and dedication from the people who run them. Only when they die do they no longer require anything.

What Does the Lord's Business Require?

1. The Lord's Business requires great men. Just as in ages past when great men like Abraham, Noah, Moses, David, Paul, and Peter led the work of God, so today God needs great men to carry on the work of the church. The church is in desperate need of men of knowledge, faith, purity, wisdom and optimism. A church will be no greater than its leaders. It will never rise any higher, nor travel any farther than its leadership can carry it.

2. The Lord's business requires planning. "Not slothful in business but fervent in spirit" (Rom. 12:11). The word "business" translates a Greek word meaning diligence. In the execution of this great spiritual enterprise, diligence should be manifested in every aspect of our planning and work. In Acts 6:1-2, we see the value of planning. When a problem arose, the apostles charged the multitude to "look ye out among you . . . whom we may appoint over this business." According to Vine, the word translated "business" in this passage "signifies a necessity, a need and is used in this place concern-

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ing duty or business." The problem was addressed, not swept under the rug, and a solution was forthcoming. Why plan?

- a. It is essential for the church to control its own future (avoid trouble, division, etc.—see Acts 20:28-30).
- b. Planning establishes priorities.
- c. Planning aids in the implementation of goals. Where are we now? Where do we want to go? How do we get there?

Remember, if we continue to do the same things we are now doing, in the way we are doing them, we will continue to get the same results we are now getting.

3. The Lord's business requires effort. Proverbs 22:29 reads, "a man diligent in his business shall stand before kings." Galatians 4:8 reads, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." Titus 2:13-14 reads, "Who gave himself that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

Why do we not accomplish more, grow faster, pack the building, etc.? Many times it is because we have not put forth sufficient effort. A persistent, patient, continuance in well-doing is necessary for success. The life of the church must become a way of life for every member.

4. The Lord's business requires cooperation. Cooperation implies two things: (1) everyone must work—you cannot have cooperation until you have operation; (2) there must be coordination of effort. Coordinating the efforts of a group involves both planning and execution plus dedication. We must have a plan of attack, a battle plan, if you please—some kind of a plan that addresses all the needs of a congregation, as well as its expectations for growth and development. When everyone works together doing his/her part, the church can grow and make progress. As long as we bite and devour each other, the church will exist in a continual state of turmoil and confusion.

5. The Lord's business requires urgency, "haste." Ezra 6:12 reads, "I have a decree, let it be done with haste." Every moment we waste in doing the work that needs to be done, we lose time, souls, opportunities, and ground for the truth. May we all realize the urgency of our task and be about it.

The fact that the Lord has a business that is to be implemented, necessitates some type of procedural approach in dealing with it. But how? In what way may the Lord's business best be handled? What approach, or ap-

proaches should be used in an attempt to execute this great work with utmost urgency? Shall we allow the work of the Lord to drift aimlessly? Shall we argue and disagree while the ship on which we float, sinks?, or shall we be up and about "the Father's business?"

Business Meetings in the Bible

Any congregation which functions scripturally, has business with which to deal. Deciding on and carrying out that business must be done within certain divine precepts. "Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Cor. 14:26). "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).

There is not a specific detailed example of a business meeting, such as is characteristic among most of our churches, given in the New Testament. There are, however, instances of some meetings where the church or its leaders came together to consider spiritual matters. In Acts 6:1-7, we have the account of the Jerusalem brethren coming together to consider the needs of Grecian Jewish widows who were being neglected in the daily ministration of the church. The text says, "And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said . . ." (v. 2). In this instance, action was taken and the results were immediately apparent according to verse 7. In Acts 15, we have an account of a meeting where the leading lights of Jerusalem gathered to resolve the difficulties over the issue of circumcising Gentile converts: "And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter" (Acts 15:6). Thayer defines the word "consider" to mean "to see about something, i.e. to ascertain what must be done about it" (p. 173). Although there was much disputing (v. 7) and earlier "no small dissension and questioning" (v. 2), order was maintained and a consensus was reached on the issues involved. Immediate and decisive action was taken to stop any "uncertain sounds" which were emanating from Jerusalem on these particular matters.

These two examples are clearly models for us today when we meet to deal with problems facing the church. Note that in both situations decisive action was the thing which brought about the desired results. These brethren did not meet just to talk, they met in order to act. Unfortunately, today many business meetings are nothing more than "talk sessions" where nothing is accomplished.

This reminds me of what John Kenneth Galbraith said about the meetings held by President Herbert Hoover after the horrible stock market panic of 1929.

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Yet to suppose that President Hoover was engaged only in organizing further reassurance is to do him a serious injustice. He was also conducting one of the oldest, most important and, unhappily, one of the least understood rites in American life. This is the rite of the meeting which is called not to do business but to do no business. It is a rite which is still practiced in our time . . . Finally there is the meeting which is called not because there is business to be done, but because it is necessary to create the impression that business is being done. Such meetings are more than a substitute for action. They are widely regarded as action (*The Great Crash: 1929*, pp. 138-139).

Sad to say, the "no-business" meetings of Herbert Hoover and his colleagues did not lead to decisive action which might have avoided the collapse of the economy and the onset of the great depression of the 1930s. All too often this describes what happens at the business meetings conducted by many churches today. A regular meeting is scheduled whether there is business to be discussed or not. Brethren then proceed to manufacture something to talk about, which often leads to disagreements, arguments, and all kinds of disruption. Finally the meeting is adjourned with nothing accomplished.

In Acts 20:17-38, we have an account of a meeting between Paul and the Ephesian elders in which various aspects of their duties as shepherds were discussed. One might refer to this as an "elders meeting" or a "business meeting of the elders" to discuss spiritual matters. Regardless of the terminology used, the purpose is clear, and becomes a precedent for elders today to meet and discuss various aspects of their task as it relates to work of the church.

Is There a Better Way?

One might answer by saying, "That depends." Certainly any attempt to transact the business of the church that ends in frustration, argumentation, or stalemate has failed. There surely is a better way than that. On the other hand, to suggest that all business meetings are wrong, meaningless, or of no value, is equally wrong. Since the business of the church must be attended to, we must be sure that whatever format is used expedites rather than hinders its progress.

Things to Consider When Conducting Church Business

1. Communication.

Good communication is absolutely necessary if the leadership of a church is to function effectively. More problems are created when people do not know what is going on than we realize. I continually hear, "no one knows what is going on here," "we don't even know how much money we take in," "we don't know how much is in the treasury," "we always learn after the fact what this church is doing." Leaders who operate under a veil of secrecy are inviting disaster. An eldership that makes determinations without sharing these decisions with the church will soon find the trust they previously had, eroding. Communication has been defined as merely "fostering understanding." In Acts 15, the meeting concluded by (1) the writing of a letter to the Gentile brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia (vv. 20-23), (2) the choosing of two men (vv. 22-25), (3) the letter was sent and read in Antioch (vv. 30-31), and (4) Judas and Silas confirmed the contents of the letter by mouth (vv. 22, 27, 32). Good communication was necessary to ensure the success of the meeting and the decisions reached.

A leader who communicates will:

1. Motivate and inspire people to take action;
2. Build cooperation and trust;
3. Maintain focus on the issues;
4. Resolve conflict;
5. Provide accurate information;
6. Prevent communication breakdowns.

When decisions are reached in a business meeting, those decisions should be relayed to the whole church so that everyone can become involved in carrying out the agreed upon goals.

2. Resolution of Conflicts.

Conflict usually arises when someone's power or pursuit of a goal is threatened, or when an individual believes someone else is interfering with the pursuit of his belief or goal. If, as a church, we expect to accomplish anything, we do not have the luxury of ignoring conflict. One thing we know, when standoffs start, communication usually stops. The key to resolving conflict is to get people talking. How can we get people talking again, defuse a hostile situation, and swing people to another side of an issue?

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Steps to conflict resolution include:

1. Collect information—don't wait for information, pursue it.
2. Clarify the issues—defuse hostility by listening to all sides.
3. Move to neutral territory—go to where neither adversary has the advantage.
4. Identify common ground—seek areas of agreement.
5. Form an action plan—clearly communicate the plan to all.

In the Acts 15 meeting, there was much disputing (v. 7). However, order was maintained and all conflicts resolved. "It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord" (v. 25).

3. Gaining Consensus.

The object of every meeting in which decisions are made, goals are set, and work is discussed, should be consensus. The way decisions are reached can strongly influence the quality of the decision, the speed with which it is made and the willingness of the group's members to support it. Some approaches used to reach decisions include the following.

Decision by a single individual. This often occurs in a situation where one person feels the right to "run the church." This individual makes all the decisions without consulting anyone. Often, when his power or right of leadership is questioned, trouble erupts. Such a procedure overlooks many important points, e.g., the ability of others to contribute to the decision making process, the involvement of everyone in the work of the church, etc. In some situations, it may be that everyone refuses to "get involved," leaving the entire load on the shoulders of one man. Such a situation is regrettable. (Diotrephes is an example of one man rule, 3 Jn. 9.)

Decision by minority. In this case, two or three people make the decisions for the group in which they are a small minority. Such a procedure seldom leads to high-quality decisions. In reality, such a procedure also often leads to a lack of support on the part of those who were not a part of the decision. Minority rule is a poor substitute for effective decision making.

Decision by majority. As a result of democratic ideology, a majority vote is probably the most popular group decision mechanism. A number of problems emerge with this approach in church business meetings. There is always the danger of opposing forces "stacking the deck," bringing in sufficient numbers to get their way. In addition, those who lose and are out-

voted may become embittered. In some situations, people vote who have no business participating in the process (young Christians, immature members, recent converts, etc.). Finally, winners are often convinced that they are always right about everything. The "majority" becomes the norm for establishing all actions as well as the "right" and "wrong" of spiritual matters. Since the church is not a democracy, it seems foolish to try to conduct its business by "majority rule." Some may complain: "If the majority does not rule, then the minority will." That is why neither approach is valid in determining matters of right and wrong. Even in matters of judgment and indifference, both approaches are seriously flawed.

Decision by consensus. Consensus means full participation by all group members until all members have become committed to a decision. Consensus can be obtained only when members freely express their opinions and keep working together to reach a decision that meets with the approval of the group as a whole. Consensus building is designed to identify commonalities of beliefs and knowledge among group members. In a consensus session, the goal is to seek the highest level of agreement without dividing the participants into factions. Voting and compromising are avoided in order that the decision may be based on facts and full-discussion. In Acts 15, consensus was reached. When James placed the suggestion before the group that a letter be sent to the Gentiles explaining that God did not require them to "be circumcised and keep the law" (v. 24), there was unanimous agreement.

Helpful Ideas for Conducting Business Meetings

1. Know when and why to have a meeting.
2. Always have an agenda.
3. Get input for the agenda ahead of the meeting.
4. Set meeting priorities.
5. Determine time allocations for each topic.
6. Set a time limit.
7. Plan the meeting ahead. Have everything you need (handouts, equipment, etc.).
8. Choose an appropriate place.
9. Start on time—end on time.
10. Summarize often, make sure everyone understands what has been decided.

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11. Keep good minutes.
12. Close on a positive note.

Conclusion

In conducting church business, we must always be sure that all things are done according to the pattern. We have no right to do anything that is out of harmony with Bible teaching. We must also remember that the Lord's business is the most important business in the world. It demands our very best. To approach it in a half-hearted manner, or to slight it, is but to reveal our lack of dedication and love for the Lord. Brethren, let us be up and about "our Father's business." *P. O. Box 10811, Springfield, MO 65808*

Questions Regarding the Cup

by Bill Davis

Although the subject now under consideration is not the burning issue that it was a few years ago, we must not assume it is unimportant. Many today relegate it to a secondary position and seldom study the subject or teach on it. We must remember however, that a failure to teach a subject may cause loss of faith in that subject. Faith comes by hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17). If we never hear anything about the cup, the inevitable result will be a loss of faith concerning it. When we lose faith, we lose our motivation and dynamic. This may explain our lack of zeal and fervor for this subject and other basic doctrinal issues as well. Consequently, we must study God's Word regarding the cup, and teach it continually.

Three Questions Regarding 1 Corinthians 10:16.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

Is the cup singular or plural?

Obviously the word "cup" is singular. It is not "cups" of blessing. The word "cups" is never used in the Bible with reference to the Lord's Supper. Jesus began the Supper using a single cup, and it is not difficult to understand the language.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it (Mt. 26:27).

And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it (Mk. 14:23).

These verses clearly teach that Jesus took one cup, blessed one cup, commanded His disciples to drink of one cup, and they drank of one cup. If men today would accept that which is simple and obvious, and obey the plain commands about the Lord's Supper, there would be no problems with it. However, when men wish to change the simple and obvious, they sometimes resort to strange reasoning to do it.

For example, to get around the fact that a single cup was used in the Lord's Supper, there are those who try to prove that 1 Corinthians 10:16

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contains two cups. The argument goes like this: although the singular "cup" is employed, it refers to at least two cups because Paul uses the plural "we" to describe those who blessed it. Paul wrote from Ephesus, and he included both Corinth and Ephesus, when using the phrase "cup of blessing which we bless." Then the conclusion is reached: if singular "cup" can include two cups, it can include hundreds of them.

There is one basic problem with this reasoning. If the congregation at Ephesus and the one at Corinth both blessed the same cup, they were of necessity worshipping in an inter-congregational capacity. If all congregations of the church bless the same cup, the church is worshipping in a universal capacity. There is no other possible conclusion. There is, however, no scriptural precedent for a universal or inter-congregational function of the church. In the Bible, each congregation is independent of all others. The church does not act on any level other than the congregational unit. Ephesus blessed a cup and Corinth blessed a cup, but they did it independently of each other. The only way to get two cups from this situation is to have two congregations.

A scriptural parallel to this is the observance of the Passover by the nation of Israel. They were commanded to have a "lamb for an house" (Ex. 12:3). This meant that they were to observe the Passover on a household level. Yet, Exodus 12:5 reads, "your [plural] lamb [singular] shall be without blemish." They understood this to be one lamb for each household. They did not say as people do today, "the word 'your' is plural, and that means there were many households in Israel. If there were many households there were many lambs and that means each house could use several lambs." The fallacy of this is that the Passover was observed on a household level and not on a national level. Just as each household was to have one lamb, each congregation of the church is to have one cup.

The plural "we" in 1 Corinthians 10:16 refers to the assembled members of each congregation. It is not a reference to congregations forming the universal church. Jamison, Fausset, and Brown identify "we" as "we the many (viz. believers assembled, so the Greek)."¹ Alford put it this way, "we (the assembled)."² These and other scholars recognize that the only level of communion is the congregation. The church functions in no other way.

The Apostle Paul used the pronoun "we" to include himself with the Corinthians in spirit. He often does this in his writings, and 1 Corinthians 10:16 is one such example.

Is the cup one thing and the blessing another?

To answer this, we must find out what the "cup of blessing" means. There are at least three positions about what constitutes the "cup of blessing."

1. Among Bible commentators, the most popular position, is that it refers to the third or perhaps the fourth cup in the Passover feast. This view is based upon the fact that Jesus had been observing the Passover when he instituted the Supper. It is therefore believed that if He were observing the Passover, He must have used a drinking vessel from that feast.

It is never a good idea to take a view that is contrary to world scholarship. If one does take such a view, it must be with extreme caution. Here, however, the stance taken by many scholars is based upon assumption rather than Bible facts. First, it is assumed that the Passover included a drink element. Second, it is assumed that Jesus observed the Passover using a drink element. Third, it is assumed He used a cup from the Passover when founding the Lord's Supper.

The facts are, there was no drink in the Passover feast. The four or five cups of the Passover were introduced much later in history and were a tradition of men. In view of Jesus' severe condemnation of these traditions (Mt. 15:9), it is not likely that He followed them in this regard. If Jesus did not follow their traditions, He did not use a cup from the Passover. G. G. Findlay says concerning the view that makes the "cup of blessing" the third or fourth cup of the Passover "such a technical Hebraism would scarcely be obvious to the Corinthians." The Corinthians were Gentiles and did not understand Jewish tradition. Paul then surely did not employ Jewish tradition as a means of explaining the communion to the Gentiles. Jewish tradition would make no sense to them.

Someone may wonder, if the cup Jesus used was not from the Passover, where did it come from? The answer is, Jesus (or someone) brought it for the express purpose of using it in the Supper. The memorial Supper was not begun suddenly or on a whim. Jesus had planned it and was prepared for it.

Again, someone might ask, what does the cup in Luke 22:17 refer to if not to a Passover cup? It refers to the cup used by Jesus in the Lord's Supper. The fact that Luke mentioned the cup again (v. 20) does not prove that the first cup mentioned was a Passover cup. This is simply an instance of Luke making a general statement and then a more precise statement about

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the cup. Both statements are alluding to the same cup, the one in the Lord's Supper.

2. A second description of the "cup of blessing" is that it is a cup over which a blessing is pronounced. The NIV translates it "a cup of thanksgiving," implying that it is a cup over which thanks is offered. This position is similar to the above but without the trappings of the Passover. It is much closer, I think, to the truth than the first position. That thanks (or a blessing) was offered for the cup in the Lord's Supper is true.

In this sense, as Thayer says, it is a "consecrated cup."⁴ It is a cup set aside for communion by offering thanks for it.

3. There is a third view, and I believe the correct one, which affirms that the "cup of blessing" is a cup, containing or conferring a blessing. Olshausen expresses this view in these words, "... if we take the **poteerion**, not passively, 'cup, that is blessed' but actively, 'cup which confers blessing, the cup of blessing ...'" F. L. Godet quotes Heninrici who says of 1 Corinthians 10:16, "the cup which contains the blessing of Christ."⁶ G. G. Findley comments that it is "the cup which gives blessing, for which we give blessings to God."⁷ Then finally, Joseph Exell says of the cup of blessing, "... it [cup] contains the blessing, the long promised, long looked for blessing. The wine in the cup is impregnated with blessing."⁸ The idea of all these scholars is that the contents of the cup represents the blood, and His blood (death) is the source of all spiritual blessings.

It does not matter whether one contends that "the cup of blessing" is a blessed cup or a cup containing a blessing, the cup is one thing and the blessing is another.

Is the cup and the fruit of the vine the same?

Our cups brethren have been trying to prove for years that the cup and the fruit of the vine are the same. This verse (1 Cor. 10:16) however does not help them. There are three basic views concerning this question.

1. There are those who take a literal view. Thayer, for instance, lists 1 Corinthians 10:16 under the literal use of the word **poteerion** (cup).⁹ The **Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia** states, "the cup of wine in the Lord's Supper is called a cup of blessing."¹⁰ These scholars suggest that the "cup of blessing" is a literal cup containing literal grape juice. If the cup of blessing is literal, it is impossible for it to be the same as the fruit of the vine. A cup is a solid and the fruit of the vine is a liquid.

2. Some believe the phrase cup of blessing is figurative. Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich cite "cup" in 1 Corinthians 10:16 under the literal usage, but indicate in their comments that it is used by metonymy.¹¹ Lenski states that 1 Corinthians 10:16 is a "figure which names the vessel when its contents are referred to."¹² These quotes show that some Bible students understand the cup of blessing to be a figure of speech called metonymy. The reason some scholars list "cup" under literal usage and then say it refers to the contents, is because metonymy requires a literal cup to suggest its contents.

Metonymy is, "a figure of speech by which one name or noun is used instead of another, to which it stands in a certain relation."¹³ Three things are involved in this definition of metonymy: 1. the thing named, 2. the thing suggested, 3. the relationship between the two objects.¹⁴

By applying the above definitions to 1 Corinthians 10:16, we would have the following conclusions:

1. the thing named (cup of blessing);
2. the thing suggested (fruit of the vine);
3. the relationship between the two (fruit of the vine is in the cup).

In this type of metonymy, both the thing named (cup of blessing) and the thing suggested (fruit of vine) must exist.¹⁵ One cannot be literal and the other imaginary. The cup is just as literal as the fruit of vine which it suggests.

Also, the thing named (cup of blessing) and the thing suggested (fruit of vine) cannot be the same. The "cup of blessing," which is named is one thing, and the "fruit of vine," which is suggested, is another. It takes both the cup and the fruit of the vine to make metonymy. If 1 Corinthians 10:16 is metonymy and the "cup of blessing" refers to what is in the cup, then what is in the cup is not the cup.

3. There are a few individuals who think the cup of blessing is used in 1 Corinthians 10:16 as a metaphor. Bullinger is one scholar who takes that position.¹⁶ He says of a metaphor, "that one thing is another thing, owing to some association or connection in the uses or effects of anything expressed or understood. The two nouns must both be mentioned, and are always to be taken in their absolutely literal sense. The figure lies wholly in the verb, or copula, which in English, must always be expressed and never understood ellipsis." E. W. Bullinger then gives an example of a metaphor,

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“all flesh is grass.” In this metaphor, flesh is literal and grass is literal. The figure is in the verb “is.”

Bullinger translates 1 Corinthians 10:16, “the cup of blessing is it not [i.e., does it not represent] the communion of the blood of Christ.”¹⁷ The point being made by Bullinger is that the “cup of blessing” is literal and that which it represents (joint participation of the blood) is also literal. If the “cup of blessing” is a metaphor, it does not make the cup and the fruit of the vine the same.

By any law of language, the cup and the fruit of the vine cannot be the same.

Three More Questions Regarding the Cup.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:27).

Do we drink the cup? or the contents?

Clearly, this verse says, “drink this cup.” One of the first rules of language is that words should be understood in their literal sense unless it creates an impossibility.¹⁸ Since it is impossible to drink (swallow) a literal cup, the phrase must be understood figuratively. As in 1 Corinthians 10:16, this too is metonymy of the container for the contained. In this metonymy, one thing is named (cup) to suggest something else (fruit of vine) which is closely associated with it (fruit of vine is the contents of the cup).

Thayer comments on 1 Corinthians 11:27 under the definition of the word “drink,” and he says, “this cup” i.e. what is in the cup.¹⁹ One can drink what is in “the cup,” only if, it is in a cup. If it is in cups, it would have to be, “drink the cups.” In metonymy of the container for the contained, one can suggest the contents of only as many cups as he names. The plural and singular do not change in metonymy. The reason the fruit of the vine in 1 Corinthians 11:27 is referred to as “this cup,” is because it is in the cup. The fruit of the vine cannot be called a “cup” when it is not in a literal cup.

The answer to the question, do we drink the cup? or the contents? is: we drink the cup by drinking what is in the cup.

Did the church in Jerusalem use one cup for the city?

This question assumes that the city of Jerusalem had only one congregation and that it was too large to use one cup. The argument is then advanced that several cups would have to be employed to accommodate the crowd.

There is no scriptural or historical proof that the early church met in large assemblies. That the church in Jerusalem met in assemblies of thousands is pure supposition. Actually the evidence points in the direction of small home assemblies to observe the Lord's Supper.

Notice Acts 2:46, "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (KJV).

The "breaking bread from house to house" is in contrast to their meeting in the temple. The words "continuing daily" modifies temple not breaking bread house to house. They met daily at the temple, but their home meetings were not necessarily on a daily basis. The NIV guards against the impression that they met daily at home by making two sentences of verse forty two: "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (NIV).

There is a solid body of scholarship²³ that confirms the early church met in their homes and not in large assemblies.

So, how did the large numbers in Jerusalem meet to partake of the Lord's Supper? They did it by meeting in small home assemblies. They did not use one cup for the city, but one for each congregation.

What can we scripturally prove and what do we surmise in this regard?

We can prove that the church in Jerusalem met to "break bread house to house." In Acts 2:42, the phrase, "breaking of bread" has the article "the" before "breaking" as well as before "bread." It would literally be "*the* breaking of *the* bread." This would indicate that a specific breaking of a specific bread is under consideration, viz. the bread of the Lord's Supper. The article is not found in verse 46, but it does not have to be because it has already been established that a specific bread is referred to. It is not likely that Luke used the phrase "breaking of bread" in two different ways in the same con-

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text. In both verses, the "breaking of bread" is the Lord's Supper, and they met in homes to observe it.

We can prove there is scriptural authority for more than one congregation in a city, but we cannot prove there is authority for more than one cup. We can prove the early church used one cup and that disproves assemblies too big for one cup. It takes more surmising on the part of the cups advocates to establish large assemblies than to establish one cup in each small assembly. The large assemblies argument is like most arguments used by our cups brethren—they prove nothing.

In truth, the Bible teaching concerning the Lord's Supper is not that difficult to understand. We would not have to revert to metonymy, metaphor, syllogism, etc. if men would accept the simple truths concerning the communion.

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20. **The Expositor's Greek Testament** op. cit., p. 97; Jameson, Fausset, and Brown op. cit., p. 259; Alford op. cit., p. 31. These are but a few. Most Bible scholars recognize that the early church met in homes in the first century.

An Exposition of John 6:51-58 (Questions Regarding the Bread)

by Jim Crouch

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever" (Jn. 6:51-58).

John 6 constitutes a pericope of Scripture consisting of portions of two days in the life of Jesus. At best estimates, this episode occurred in Spring A.D. 29, roughly one year before the crucifixion. The chapter opens with Jesus feeding more than five thousand people with a few loaves and fish, proceeds to an intense discussion with a portion of these five thousand during which Jesus describes Himself as the Bread of Life, and closes with a poignant discussion that tested the loyalty even of the twelve.

In this study, we wish to consider this intense discussion that led some to forsake Jesus as the Messiah. What did Jesus mean when He described Himself as the Bread of Life? And what did He mean when He said that only those who eat His flesh and drink His blood have eternal life? Was He referring to the communion?

Establishing the Context

The only miracle that has been recorded by all four Gospel writers must have special importance. It involved Jesus feeding more than five thousand people with a few loaves and fish. Each writer sets the scene a bit differently.

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Matthew (14:1ff) notes that the incident occurred immediately after Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been beheaded, while Mark (6:30ff) and Luke (9:10ff) record the miracle after the twelve had returned from an evangelistic campaign. Both events prompted Jesus to want to be alone—He needed to grieve the loss of His cousin and forerunner, and He wanted to visit with His disciples about their work. Matthew and Mark note that Jesus left the crowds in search of solitude, Luke says that He set out in the direction of Bethsaida, and Matthew, Mark and John add that the mode of transportation was by boat across the Sea of Galilee.

The crowds, from whom Jesus was trying to escape, thwarted His plans. As Jesus and His disciples traversed the sea toward Bethsaida, the crowds streamed along the shoreline. With sailing such as it was, and the Sea of Galilee being relatively small, the crowds were able to arrive to the north shore of the lake before the boat arrived. Jesus did not rebuke the people. Solitude would have to wait. He took the time to heal their sick, to teach them about the kingdom, and at dinner time, to feed them with a few loaves and fish.

After dismissing the crowds, Jesus sent His disciples to Capernaum by boat while He retreated to the mountains to pray alone. Caught by a storm on the sea at night, Jesus approached His disciples walking on the water. After a lesson in faith, Jesus entered the boat, calmed the storm, and they soon arrived to Capernaum. John records what happened next.

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus (Jn. 6:22-24).

The crowds had seen the disciples leave by boat, and had taken note of the fact that Jesus did not get in the boat with them. Therefore, many of the people stayed in Bethsaida for the night expecting to see Jesus the next morning (perhaps for a free breakfast). Not finding Him there, and having the means to sail back to Capernaum instead of walk, they continued their search there.

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The crowds caught up with Jesus near the synagogue. They asked Jesus how He could have left Bethsaida without their notice, but He ignored their question. He knew their hearts. "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you" (vv. 26-27). This statement by Jesus sets up the discussion that follows.

The people wanted to receive a miraculous, perpetual food supply. That this was their motivation is seen not only in Jesus' statement, but in their own words (vv. 31-32). Jesus had already provided the miraculous sign for which they were ostensibly yearning. But by these suggestive words, they were hoping that Jesus would respond by providing a greater, more enduring supply of food.

On the other hand, Jesus wanted to give spiritual food that was more valuable and enduring in nature. He explains, "Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die" (v. 49).

Exposition of the Passage

Having noticed the occasion that produced the words of our text, we are now prepared to consider an exposition of the discussion under consideration. I will first outline the contents of the discussion (vv. 25-59), then notice the interpretation of our text based on the immediate context and how this interpretation harmonizes with other passages in John's Gospel.

Brief analysis of the discussion

Verses 25-27. The crowd that sailed from Bethsaida catches up with Jesus at the synagogue. They cannot figure out how His departure from Bethsaida escaped their notice. Jesus ignores their question and, reading their hearts, addresses their motivation for wanting to find Him: they were not convinced by the miraculous signs; they just wanted more free food. Jesus treats these people differently than He had treated them the evening before. At that time, they were like sheep without a shepherd instilling compassion in Jesus. But now they are panhandlers, unable to appreciate the significance of the miracle that they had witnessed a few hours earlier. They are now seeking Jesus, not because His miraculous feeding was a sign,

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but because His sign was a miraculous feeding. And they want more food.¹ Jesus encourages them not to work (i.e. go to so much effort) for physical food, but to work for the lasting spiritual food that only the Son of Man can provide.

Verses 28-29. The idea of a lasting food supply intrigues the crowd. Jesus had mentioned that they should work to obtain this food, so they want to know what kind of work is required (i.e. what was expected of them). Jesus tells them that the required work is faith. Those who believe in Him will have an endless, spiritual food supply.

Verses 30-33. The people are not ready to believe in Jesus, at least not without a miraculous sign. And they all but tell Jesus what sign they want to receive: "What will you do? Our forefathers ate manna in the desert." It is incredible that these individuals who had already witnessed a miraculous feeding would ask for a sign of miraculous feeding! Such a demand further reveals their motivation. They do not care about signs; they want more free food. It is as if they dismiss Jesus' words altogether: "Yeah, Yeah, we would like to believe you. Hey, how about giving us a few years of free food to convince us." Jesus argues that the true bread from heaven was not from Moses, but is the one who has come from the Father to give spiritual life to the world.

Verses 34-40. The crowd is ready to give up on the receiving anymore free food, so they say, "Sir, from now on give us this bread" (i.e. the bread that has come from the Father to give spiritual life to the world). Jesus tells them frankly (and closes the door on their carnal pursuits), "I am the bread of life." By this, Jesus does not mean that He is the bread that is eternal (though Jesus is eternal), but that He is the bread that gives eternal life to the world. How can one partake of this bread? Jesus tells them that those who believe in Him will never hunger and will never thirst. Thus, He reveals Himself not only as food for the spirit, but also drink for the spirit. Through faith in Him, the spirit of an individual is sustained.

The crowd before Him had seen Him and had witnessed the miraculous signs that He had performed, and yet they do not believe. For this reason, they do not have the spiritual life that they need—they refused to eat the

¹ Since these men came to Capernaum on boat, this is but a remnant of the five thousand who were fed the night before. Further, based on their carnal motivation, that these represented the baser sort of the five thousand.

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Bread of heaven. Jesus tells them very clearly that He is the Bread of life, that He came to earth from heaven, and that His mission is to provide life to those who believe, in keeping with the will of His Father.

Verses 41-42. The crowd is perplexed. Before them is a man who claims to be the Bread of life who came down from heaven, and yet they know good and well that He is the son of Joseph and Mary. They know that His family lives just down the road in Nazareth. To them, what He is saying is blasphemous.

Verses 43-51. Jesus authoritatively tells the crowd to quit grumbling. He says, "No one can come to me unless my Father who sent me draws him." Calvinists use this verse to support their claims of irresistible grace and predestination. However, the context will not bear this out. Jesus explains what He means by the Father's drawing in verses 45-46: those who are drawn by the Father are those who have read and believed the inspired Scriptures, and therefore recognize Jesus as the Messiah. These are the ones who come to Jesus. Why would Jesus make mention of this fact? The crowd before Him has seen the Messiah and the miraculous signs accompanying Him, and yet they do not accept Him as the Messiah and accuse Him of blasphemy. Jesus says the reason they do this is because they have not yet read the Scriptures so as to recognize the Messiah when they see Him. Because they do not know God, they do not have a desire to believe the Messiah about whom God prophesied. This is very similar to what Jesus said to another group of Jews:

And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life (Jn. 5:37-40).

Jesus then reiterates, only more emphatically, that He is the Bread of life, the living bread from heaven. He contrasts the power of this spiritual bread with the manna that the crowd referenced earlier: your forefathers ate the manna and later died, but whoever partakes of me, the living bread, will have eternal life. Again, the phrase "living bread" does not emphasize the life of Jesus, but the spiritual life-giving force that He possesses.

Jesus further states that this bread is His flesh which He would sacrifice for the world. Therefore, Jesus Himself is the Bread of life (v. 48). How will

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He give this bread to the world? By sacrificing His life on their behalf (v. 51). And how will they be able to receive and partake of this bread? By believing in Him (v. 47).

Verse 52. When the crowd hears this, they are stunned. They did not understand that the way that they were going to eat this spiritual bread was through faith, but they clearly heard Jesus say that the one who eats this bread will have eternal life and that this bread was Jesus' own flesh. And this latter understanding, without the former, causes them grossly to misunderstand the intent of Jesus' message. They must have come to the conclusion that Jesus was either speaking of something impossible or was advocating cannibalism. And they could stomach neither. They were focused on a physical application of Jesus' words, while Jesus' explanation is a spiritual application (cf. Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, 3:1ff).

Verses 53-59. This brings us to our text. Here, Jesus even more emphatically states the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood: "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (vv. 53-54). We are now ready to consider the interpretation of these verses.

Interpretation based on the immediate context

What does Jesus mean when He says that, in order to have spiritual life, an individual must eat His flesh and drink His blood? Contextually, Jesus means that an individual must have faith in Him. This is evident from the following verses.

In verses 28-29, the crowd asked how they could do the works that God requires in order to receive everlasting spiritual food. Jesus responded that the work they needed to do was to have faith in Him.

In verses 34-35, the crowd asked to receive the life-giving bread from the Father. Jesus responded by saying that He was the Bread of life and that whoever believed in Him would never go hungry or thirsty.

In verse 40, Jesus said that His Father's will was to give eternal life (the life comes from the partaking of the bread) to those who believe in the Son of God, and that these would be raised to life at the last day.

In verses 44-47, Jesus said that those who believed were those who, having studied God's Word, recognized and believed the Messiah. Those who

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believed would have eternal life. And Jesus again said, "I am the bread of life." Anyone who would eat this living bread would receive eternal life. And this bread would be offered when He sacrificed His life for the world.

As we consider the meaning of verses 51-59, we must consider Jesus' message in the rest of the conversation. In every exchange with the crowd preceding our text, Jesus clearly states that the way that they could receive and partake of the living bread was by having faith in Him. Four times in verses 25-50 Jesus stated that faith was the means of receiving this life-giving bread. In verses 51-59, Jesus stated in even stronger language that only those who partook of His flesh and blood, the elements of physical existence, could have eternal life. By mentioning flesh and blood, Jesus further clarifies His statement in verse 51: He would give His flesh to the world by means of a sacrificial death. And the means of appropriating this life-giving nourishment was, and is, faith in Jesus. "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty . . . This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world . . . Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (vv. 35, 51, 54, cf. v. 40).

Therefore, when we read verses 51-59, we should be careful not to read into the text more than is there. Does Jesus refer to the communion meal in verses 51-59? Contextually, no. By Jesus' own words, He has faith in mind. We partake of the life-giving flesh and blood of Christ when the whole personality of Christ, all the facts of His life, all the teachings and miraculous signs that He presented, and especially the significance of His death, become the pure, life-giving, spirit motivating nourishment for the inner person. Jesus' life is the example for our lives. Jesus' miracles are the signs that verify His teachings and claims. Jesus' teachings are the instructions that guide our beliefs and behavior. And His death and resurrection form the foundation for all that we believe about the present and expect for the future. He is the Bread of life that gives life to our lives!

Interpretation based on the context of John's Gospel

Not only does "faith" fit the context of Jesus' discussion with the crowd, but it also fits the context of John's Gospel.

Consistent with John's treatment of "faith." Throughout John's work, faith is the key element to a person's relationship with Jesus. John does not mention repentance in His Gospel. He does not include the Great Commission. He records Jesus' teachings on obedience, but always as a

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natural result, and never as a command. For example, of the ten times that Jesus speaks of obedience in John's Gospel, seven contain the admonition, "If you love me you will obey me" (14:15, 21, 23, 24; 15:10). In another passage, Jesus explains to His disciples, "If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also" (Jn. 15:20). John never presents obedience as a command. The two commands requisite for discipleship in John's works are faith and love. For unbelievers, the requisite is faith; for believers, the requisite is love. These are the fundamental elements for discipleship. Not that these accomplish anything alone, but in John's works, faith and love lead a person to devotion and obedience to every command.

John mentions "faith" ninety-five times (cf. Matthew, 24 times; Mark, 15 times; Luke, 22 times). But more significant than just the frequency with which John mentions faith is the emphasis that he places on it. In John's Gospel, sixteen times faith is the requisite for receiving eternal life and avoiding condemnation. How does this compare to the other Gospels? In neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke does faith ever appear as the requisite for receiving eternal life or avoiding condemnation, except in Mark's account of the Great Commission (Mk. 16:15-16). John's Gospel is truly unique in this regard. Therefore, faith produces eternal life (4 times in our text, 12 times elsewhere in the Gospel); eating the living bread produces eternal life; a person partakes of the eternal bread by having faith in Jesus; and this is equivalent to eating Jesus' flesh (which He defines as the living bread) and drinking His blood.

Consistent with John's concept of "eternal life." John's emphasis on belief is only important as a means to an end—life. "These are written, that you might believe . . . and that by believing you may have life." "Life" is equated with Christ (14:6), for "in him was life" (1:4; 1 Jn. 4:11-12). Of the seventy-four times that John speaks of "life," fifty-six are references to eternal (or spiritual) life (cf. Matthew, 13 times; Mark, 4 times; John, 9 times). And in about one-third of John's references, the requisite for life is belief in Jesus. In John's works, eternal (or spiritual) life is something that can be obtained in the present through a faith in Jesus Christ that leads one to do the things that the Lord has asked. Eternal life is not just time without end—it is the quality of life and communion with heaven available only through Jesus Christ (3:5; 5:24-26; 6:14, 54; 17:3; 1 Jn. 5:19). Jesus said,

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? (Jn. 11:25-26).

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Consistent with other Johannean metaphors. Jesus uses a similar personal metaphor in chapter four when visiting with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Jesus offers to give her water, and she thinks that He is offering physical water. Jesus explains to her that the water that He has to offer is living water, i.e. water that can give life (cf. "living bread"). She still does not understand, but she is convinced that she wants some. Jesus explains,

Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life (Jn. 4:13-14).

The "living water" corresponds to the "living bread" of John 6, and the "water of the well" with the "food that spoils." In John 4, Jesus does not specifically state how a person obtains the "living water." However, in another passage and under the same metaphor, Jesus compares Himself to a source of living water and clearly states that individuals can partake of the living water (i.e. Himself) by having faith in Him.

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him (Jn. 7:37-38).

The analogy in John 6 is also similar to that described in John 15, where Jesus said, "I am the vine and you are the branches." The requisite enjoined on the disciples here was to remain in Jesus and in His words. Similarly, those who eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man remain in Him, and He in them (6:56). There is a life-giving and life-sustaining relationship between Jesus and His followers. As long as one maintains fellowship with Jesus through faith in Him, he receives the spiritual nourishment that is needed for life (cf. 17:23; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:16).

Consistent with John's Purpose in Writing. There is no need to guess at John's purpose in writing. A clear summation of his purpose is found near the close of the Gospel:

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (Jn. 20:30-31).

In this summary statement, we see three of the key elements to understanding John's Gospel: Jesus' miracles were intended as signs of His Messiahship

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and divinity, that Jesus is the source of true life, and that the means of obtaining this life is through faith in Him.

But in addition to John's stated purpose for writing, He was combating the seeds of Gnosticism. This undercurrent is evident in John's Gospel and his first epistle. The particular brand of Gnosticism of John's day with which we are most familiar is that espoused by Cerinthus, a forerunner of the Gnostics. Cerinthus and his followers denied that Jesus was Christ. They differentiated between Jesus, the earthly son of Joseph and Mary, and Christ, the Son of God. They taught that Christ entered Jesus (the natural-born man) at His baptism, and departed at the cross. Hence, the cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Therefore, they denied that the Christ ever put on flesh and blood and that He suffered on Calvary.

John would naturally take advantage of the opportunity to include this discussion in chapter six, for in it the Christ declares that He is the Bread of life, and that this is His flesh which He would later sacrifice. The discussion of the flesh and blood necessitates that the Christ, at this point, possessed flesh and blood, and that He would sacrifice these physical elements for the world.

Therefore, not only does the discussion itself bear out that a person partakes of the Bread of life, the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, through faith in Him, but we see that this interpretation also fits the context of John's Gospel as a whole.

Other Arguments from Reason

First, a communion reference would not make sense to the hearers, for they would not know anything about the communion, nor would it be introduced until more than a year later. Jesus was offering something that the people could have right then, living bread and drink through faith in the Son of God, not something that they would have to wait months to receive. Jesus never taught the people concepts that were uniquely tied to the established church to such a degree that they had no bearing on the audience to whom He was speaking. This would be a waste of time and would unduly perplex the crowds. What Jesus taught in John 6 had application to His hearers, and this argues against a reference to the communion.

Second, if Jesus would have had the communion in mind, one could reasonably expect that He would have made this clear in an explanation. After all, this teaching was so difficult to receive that many people quit fol-

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lowing Him after hearing this discussion. Jesus easily could have mollified His words by stating, "Those who believe in me will have the opportunity to partake of this spiritual food and drink in a memorial service after the kingdom is established." Instead, by way of explanation, Jesus repeatedly states that faith is the means of partaking of this spiritual food and drink.

Third, John's Gospel places no emphasis on the communion service—John does not even record the institution of the communion at Jesus' last Passover. This is probably because John's Gospel was written much later than the synoptics. The church already understood the importance of observing the memorial supper and the other writers had clearly explained its institution. John had other specific goals that he wanted to accomplish in his work, e.g. dealing with Gnostic heresies. But since John does not even record the institution of the communion, why would he refer to it here in a such an obscure way? and without any further explanation?

John 6 and Its Relationship to the Communion

If John 6:51-59 does not refer to the communion, why does it seem to fit so well? In the communion, do we not eat bread that represents His flesh and drink an element that represents His blood? Yes, we do. While John 6 does not refer directly to the communion, there is a connection.

Jesus said that the living bread was His flesh that He would give for the world. Therefore, John 6 looks forward to the sacrifice that Jesus would make on the cross. Here, He would officially sacrifice His flesh and blood for the world. Faith in Jesus as the life-giving Messiah was, and is, based on His miraculous signs and fulfillment of prophecy. And the figure Jesus used to represent this faith was that of eating and drinking the spiritual food and drink that would be offered at Calvary. This is the invitation that Jesus offers to those who did not (do not) believe in Him.

Similarly, in the communion, Jesus pictures His death at Calvary in the same metaphor. Once a person accepts Jesus through faith, the foundation of his salvation still centers at Calvary. In order to commemorate Jesus' death and the salvation obtained there, the Christian (saved individual) revisits Calvary weekly. And (perhaps) by design, and (perhaps) to rekindle the initial faith, Jesus uses the same metaphor of eating His body² and

² When Jesus spoke to the crowd in John 6, He instructed them of the need to eat His flesh and drink His blood through faith. The phrase "flesh and blood" is used consistently in

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drinking His blood to describe this visitation. For the Christian who already has faith, literal bread is used to represent Jesus' body and grape juice is used to represent Jesus' shed blood. The communion becomes a symbol of, and support for, the fellowship that we share in the life and death of Jesus Christ through faith in Him.

Therefore, the connection between John 6 and the communion is Calvary. For the lost, Jesus says that faith in Him will provide true living food and drink, that being His flesh and blood that He offered on Calvary for the forgiveness of sins. This faith produces life in the otherwise spiritually dead sinner. For the saved, Jesus offers a memorial service in which believers revisit Calvary each week, eating bread and drinking juice that represent the body and blood that He offered on Calvary. Focusing one's mind on Calvary, the foundation of one's faith, serves to provide spiritual nourishment for the soul. Thus, faith is the initial source of life for the sinner, and the communion service serves to sustain the life for the saved. And Calvary is the key for both.

It is incorrect to say that the sermon delivered in the Capernaum synagogue refers to the sacrament of the Supper. The true state of the case is, that both refer to a third thing, viz. the death of Christ, and both declare, in different ways, the same thing concerning it. The sermon says in symbolic words what the Supper says in a symbolic act: that Christ crucified is the life of men, the world's hope of salvation (Bruce, p. 144).

Having said this, it is certainly possible that, while Jesus was speaking to the unbelieving crowd about life-giving faith, He was also thinking of the memorial supper that He would later institute as a life-sustaining source for believers. Even so, we must not lose track of Jesus' contextual meaning—His words had meaning and application to the people to whom He was speaking. While Jesus' words may have prefigured the communion service (much as the Passover applied to the Jews but prefigured Jesus' death, or as the flood applied to the people of Noah's day but prefigured baptism), they are not a direct reference to it.

Scripture to represent the elements of physical existence. However, there may be some significance in the fact that, in the communion, Jesus used the word "body" instead of "flesh." The word "body" is a broader term that includes more than the flesh. The bread in the communion not only represents the flesh that Jesus sacrificed on the cross, but also calls to mind the fellowship that we enjoy in the church, Jesus' spiritual body.

A failure to understand the context and meaning of John 6 has led some to a misunderstanding of purpose of the communion service. In John 6, those who eat have eternal life, and those who do not eat do not have eternal life. Therefore, a misapplication of the passage has led some to conclude that the communion is efficacious in nature, miraculously cleansing one's transgressions and vaulting the soul to a heavenly plane. Others have gone a step further and used John 6 as evidence of transubstantiation in the communion service—the bread and juice become the literal flesh and blood of Jesus, and by partaking, the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. Therefore, we should be careful to properly understand and apply the teachings of this chapter. And to avoid misunderstandings, particularly in the minds of the weak, this author suggests that great care be used when reading or citing John 6 during the communion service. 9955 W. 82nd Pl., Arvada, CO 80005

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Questions Regarding “When” We Commune

by Raymond Fox

The purpose of biblical research should never be the simple acquisition of knowledge because something important is at stake: the truth that our salvation ultimately depends on. Even the search for answers to very specific questions leads us to a fuller understanding of how to live in obedience and harmony with God. Ironically, knowing what is at stake may tempt us to defend a personal position on a Bible issue with so much vigor that we cannot carefully examine what we believe. But if biblical research has the goal of discovering saving truth, then we ought to calmly and rationally seek the right answers without prejudice. In fact the greatest struggle of biblical research is to lay aside preconceptions and let the Word of God surprise us and reveal to us the truth.

What is true about the study of the Bible in general is also true about such specific questions as those dealing with the Lord's Supper, a central element in Christian worship. An investigation of two questions in regards to the Lord's Supper has been both surprising and revealing to me, because it overturned some assumptions that I had previously taken for granted. This article will address these two questions: First, when should Christians observe the Lord's Supper? Second, may Christians observe the Lord's Supper more than once on the same day? This study will also discuss other issues that derive from these two principle questions such as: whether Acts 20:7-11 is an account of the observance of the Lord's Supper, the first century Christian's view of when a regular civil day began and ended, and the nature of the communion as a congregational activity.

When Should Christians Observe the Lord's Supper?

Some Facts about Acts 20:7-11

During Paul's second missionary journey, he spent a very brief time in Troas, a Gentile community on the coast of Asia Minor, before going on to Macedonia. Then while traveling on his third missionary journey, Paul stopped again at Troas, but this time to spend seven days with the brethren in that city. During this seven day period Paul spent one Sunday or “first day of the week” with the brethren.

"When" We Commune

The phrase "first day of the week" translates a Greek phrase that literally meant "the one of the Sabbaths." The early Christians apparently adopted the Jewish names for the days of the week which they numbered according to the distance from the Sabbath. The first day after the Sabbath was the "one of the Sabbaths." Among the Romans, the seven days of the week bore the names of Roman gods associated with the planets, a practice that originated with the ancient Egyptians. The Christians thus avoided giving homage to the idols by using numerical names for the days of the week.

Luke reports that the disciples in Troas came together on the first day of the week. He does not specify the time of day when they came together, but we have the tendency to assume that it was in the evening. The basis for this assumption is another assumption, namely, that Luke was reporting history using the Jewish method of calculating the beginning of the day with sunset. If the disciples gathered on the first day of the week, as the text states, then, according to the assumption concerning Jewish time-keeping, they could not have gathered any earlier than sunset, the hour when the first day of the week began. But one purpose of this study is to determine whether Luke did indeed use Jewish time-keeping methods in his narratives.

The purpose of their meeting recorded in Acts 20:7 was to "break bread." The infinitive form of the verb "to break" indicates purpose (Rienecker 1980, p. 316). The phrase "to break bread" generally meant to eat a meal, but it took on a new significance in the vocabulary of New Testament Christians as a name for the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper includes the breaking and eating of the bread that represents the body of Christ. By a figure of speech called synecdoche, the part stands for the whole. The breaking of bread stands for the entire Lord's Supper, a part of which is the breaking of bread. The immediate context where this phrase is found determines if the meaning is a common meal or the Lord's Supper. For instance in Luke 24:28-35, two disciples, who were unaware that they were speaking with Jesus, invited him to spend the evening with them in their home. Verse 35 states, "Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread." The setting implies that the breaking of bread refers to sharing the evening meal. The phrase could not refer to the breaking of bread in the Lord's Supper since Cleopas, one of these two disciples, had not been present when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. He therefore would not have recognized Jesus somehow through his manner of breaking the bread of the Lord's Supper. However, in Acts 2:42 the breaking of bread is included in a list of religious duties and activities, implying that it refers to the Lord's

Supper, since a common meal is not on the same level with the other activities mentioned. In the same chapter, but in a different context, in Acts 2:46, Luke again talks of the Christians breaking bread: “They broke bread in their homes and ate together . . .” The context is describing the common meals the Christians enjoyed eating together. Then Acts 20:7 states, “On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people . . .” The primary purpose of the meeting was to break bread. Paul’s preaching was incidental, taking advantage of the circumstances. They did not come together for the purpose of listening to Paul, but to break bread. Paul’s preaching would not have been of secondary importance if the breaking of bread were just a common meal in this passage. In addition, verse 11 of the same context, the phrase “broke the bread” has the definite article “the” in the Greek text. The use of the article indicates that Luke is referring to breaking a specific bread, the bread mentioned earlier in the text, and not a common meal.

The First Day of the Week and the Lord’s Supper

The fact reported by Luke that is central to our present study is that they came together on the first day of the week to break the bread of the Lord’s Supper. Although the Scriptures do not explicitly clarify the connection between the Lord’s Supper and the first day of the week, the events recorded in the New Testament explain the significance of that day. The accounts of the four gospels agree that Jesus rose on the first day of the week (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1-2; Lk. 24:1-2; Jn. 20:1). Jesus appeared several times to different groups on that day. Then on the following first day of the week, he again appeared, proving himself alive (Jn. 20:26). From a very early time the disciples began meeting on the first day of the week. For example, Paul wrote the first letter to the Corinthians even before Luke penned the book of Acts (Tenney 1961, pp. 233, 296). I Corinthians 16:1-2 shows that the congregations existing at that early period were already meeting regularly on the first day of the week. What John calls the “Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10) must have been the first day of the week because no other day has more significance in the message of Christianity. This was the day that the Lord triumphed over death and Satan. Therefore that day belonged to him.

The resurrection provided the foundation for belief in Jesus as the Son of God (1 Cor. 15:14). During his earthly ministry, Jesus had predicted that he would rise from the dead on the third day (Jn. 2:18-22). Jesus’ resurrection on the third day has led to a discussion of when Jesus died, but a full

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treatment of this issue is beyond the scope of this present study. Nevertheless, if he died on Friday, the day of Preparation before the Sabbath began (Mk. 15:33-47), then was he in the tomb for three days? One must remember that parts of a day count as a whole day in the thinking of that period. For example, the Greek text in John 20:26 states that "after eight days" Jesus again appeared to the disciples, Thomas being present. Eight days is a week later on the following first day of the week. (In addition, Acts 10:1-30 illustrates this method of counting: two entire days and parts of two other days count as four days.)

Time-keeping Methods

The New Testament Christians met to observe the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, but one specific question to be addressed in this study is: when did the first day of the week begin? This question owes its relevance to confusion today about the time-keeping customs in the first century.

Throughout history different cultures have counted the beginning and ending of the day, as well as the hours of the day, in various ways. The Romans considered the day to begin and end at midnight. The Jews in the first century at least viewed the Sabbath and other feast days as beginning and ending at sunset. How did Luke count time, according to the Jewish system or the Roman system? The answer will explain what day it was, Sunday or Monday, after midnight, when Paul finished his first discourse with the Troas Christians, and what day it was when he left Troas. This information in turn could help us understand the limits of the first day of the week.

One problem in approaching this issue of time-keeping is that the Old Testament is not entirely clear or consistent about the limits of the civil (24 hour) day. The law of Moses clearly taught that certain feasts and special days were to begin at twilight, such as the Passover and the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:4-8, 26-32; see also Dan. 8:14). However other passages suggest the Israelites were to view the day as morning to morning, from sunrise to sunrise (Lev. 7:11-15; Deut. 21:22-23; Ex. 16:13-30; Ps. 1:2). McClintock-Strong states, "There seems, in fact, no other way of reconciling these apparent inconsistencies than to assume that no absolute rule had been laid down with respect to the commencement of the civil day, and that usage varied somewhat with the customs of the people where the Hebrews were for the time sojourning" (McClintock-Strong 1895, vol. 2, p. 702). The Old Testament provides no clear explanation about the beginning

hour of the regular Sabbath. Perhaps the Hebrews already counted time from sunset to sunset and so there was no need for explicit instructions on this point. But if this possibility is true, then why was it necessary for the law to explain that the Passover or the Day of Atonement was to begin at twilight? Did this represent a change in time-keeping methods as Keil-Delitzsch suggests? (Keil-Delitzsch 1976, vol. 1, p. 51) We cannot know for certain in history so far removed from the present.

Is there such a thing as "essential" time? Did God create days to begin at a certain time and end at a certain time? Genesis 1:3-5 is the central ground for discussion of this point since there are no other passages in the Bible concerning what might be called God's "official time." But different sides of the issue, those who want the day to begin at sunset and those who want it to begin at sunrise, attempt to support their thinking with this passage. McClintock-Strong implies that the Jews historically quoted this passage in favor of the day beginning at sunset (McClintock-Strong 1985, vol. 2, p. 702). Keil-Delitzsch on the other hand argues, "The first day commenced at the moment when God caused the light to break forth from the darkness; but this light did not become a day, until the evening had come, and the darkness which set in with the evening had given place to the next morning" (Keil-Delitzsch, vol. 2, p. 51). The Scripture says, "And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day." Keil-Delitzsch reasons that "evening" does not have the same meaning as "night." "Evening" is an "obscuring" and this "obscuring," the transition from daylight to dark, did not happen until after the first daylight. So the commentators conclude that the first daylight started with the morning and the first night began with the first obscuring; thus the day runs from morning to morning. Others have historically countered by saying the first day was thirty-six hours long, including the appearance of light, the first night, and then the next daylight period (McClintock-Strong 1895, vol. 2, p. 702). Is there an "essential" time? Probably there is not since the biblical evidence is not strong enough to support either view. If it really mattered to God how we view the beginning of the day, He would have clarified the point in His law.

One fact is certain, due to either the Jewish interpretation of the law of Moses or Rabbinical traditions, the Jews in Jesus' day appear to be consistent and count time from sunset to sunset. The events around the death and resurrection of Jesus illustrate the Jewish view of time. The disciples of Jesus, who were of Jewish background, respected the Sabbath as beginning in the evening of Friday (I.k. 23:50-56; Jn. 19:31-33). (But see also Deut. 21:23;

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Jos. 8:29; 10:26. Was the body of Jesus taken down before sunset because the Sabbath was approaching or because it was against the law of Moses to leave the body of a criminal exposed after sunset?) Luke reported that Jesus told Peter, "before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me" (Lk. 22:34). The "crow of the rooster" referred to an early morning time before sunrise. Therefore in this passage Jesus counted the same day as continuing from the previous evening through the following morning.

In other aspects of time-keeping the Jews seemed to accommodate themselves to the cultures around them, especially if they were living under the dominance of another culture. For instance, dividing the daylight hours into twelve parts (Jn. 11:9) was not strictly a Jewish custom. References to time in the New Testament such as "the sixth hour" or the "third hour of the day" (Acts 2:15; 10:3) were not uniquely Jewish. They borrowed this method of enumerating daylight hours beginning at sunrise from the Babylonians during the exile hundreds of years before the time of Christ (McClintock-Strong 1895, vol. 4, p. 366; see Daniel 4:16). The Greeks and Romans also followed the same practice originating from the Babylonians. At an earlier time the Jews were content with dividing the day into three parts, morning, noon, and evening (Ps. 55:17), and, on occasion, into four parts (Neh. 9:3). The parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-7) reflects a more ancient custom of dividing the day into four parts. Likewise, the Jews had divided the night into three watches before the captivity in Babylon (Ex. 14:24; Jgs. 7:19; Lam. 2:19). But passages in the New Testament assume a four part division of the watches during the night, a practice also borrowed from the Greeks and Romans (McClintock-Strong 1895, vol. 2, p. 703).

How Did the New Testament Historians Report Time?

Therefore, the Jews in the first century did not necessarily follow a strictly Jewish method of time-keeping. But a more precise question that will illuminate Acts 20:7-11 is, how did the historians of the New Testament, when writing about the events of that day, report elements of time in their narratives? One interesting reference in John clearly shows the apostle counted the passage of the day in Roman terms, from midnight to midnight, with the evening following the day. In John 20:1, he reports that the women came to the tomb "early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark." Later, in verse 19, he states, "on the evening of that first day of the week," Jesus appeared to the apostles in Jerusalem. The Greek word for

“evening” in this text is *opsia* which “really signifies the late evening, the latter of the two evenings as reckoned by the Jews, the first from 3 p.m. to sunset, the latter after sunset; this is the usual meaning” (Vine 1940, p. 44). According to the method of viewing the day as beginning with sunset, that evening appearance to the disciples would not have been the same day, but the next day, Monday. However, John puts this evening appearance on the same day as the appearance to the women, on the morning of the first day of the week. For this reason it is an assumption to think that the writers of the New Testament always recorded time in Jewish terms.

Luke, the author of the text in Acts 20:7-11, was Gentile. In Colossians 4:7-14, Luke is not included in the list of fellow-workers of Paul who were of Jewish background. He began to travel with Paul as early as the second missionary journey, joining Paul at Troas. Acts 16:10 is the text where the “we” passages begin in Acts, indicating Luke’s direct involvement. Luke addressed his account to Theophilus, whose name suggests an aristocratic Gentile (Tenney 1961, p. 171). In addition, Troas was a Gentile community (Conybeare-Howson 1980, p. 215ff). Among the issues that divided the Christians of Jewish and Gentile background, the New Testament makes no mention of differences in time-keeping. There apparently were no major squabbles about whether the day begins at sunset or midnight. Neither can one assume that Gentiles adopted the time-keeping methods of the Jews upon becoming Christians.

In fact, in the book of Acts there is no indication that Luke recorded time by strict adherence to Jewish methods. His enumeration of the hours of the day (Acts 10:3; 10:9; 23:23) was the common method of counting time not only among the Jews, but also among the Romans, as was previously pointed out. The passage under consideration, Acts 20:7-11, actually gives some clues as to how Luke viewed the beginning and ending of the civil day. In verse 7, Luke explains that when Paul met with the Christians on the first day of the week, he intended to leave on the “morrow” (“next day,” NIV). The Greek word translated “morrow” or “next day” in English versions of the New Testament is *aurion*. *Aurion* is the common word for indicating the following day or next day in a sequence of days. It does not mean “in the morning.” Luke’s common phrase for “in the morning,” describing the coming daylight period, did not use *aurion* (see Lk. 2:42; 22:66; Acts 12:18; 16:35; 23:12; 27:29, 33, 39). *Aurion* simply means the “next day” or “tomorrow” (Vine 1940, p. 84). Examples of a series of days where Luke uses this word to indicate the day following include: Luke 13:32-33 and Acts 10:23-24. (Notice other passages where *aurion* means the “next

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day": Luke 12:28; Acts 4:3-5; 23:32; 25:22.) So Paul intended to leave Troas on the next day after the first day of the week which was Monday. But in verse 11, Luke reports that Paul left at day-break. So Luke considered day-break to be part of the next day, Monday. These facts indicate that Luke was using Roman time, viewing the day as beginning at midnight. If he had been counting the day from sunset to sunset as the Jews did, daybreak would have been part of the same day as the previous evening, not part of the next day.

When Did the Disciples in Troas Observe the Lord's Supper?

Understanding when the disciples in Troas observed the Lord's Supper during the evening that Paul was with them depends on a correct understanding of the order of events in Acts 20:7-11. The disciples came together on the first day of the week sometime before midnight, although we do not know the exact time when they began their meeting. Luke reports that Paul continued speaking to the gathered group until midnight. It was while "Paul talked on and on" that Eutychus, falling asleep, fell from a third story window where he was sitting. Eutychus therefore fell before midnight, before Paul stopped his speech. Paul then went down to the ground level and revived the young man from death. Then, Luke states, Paul returned to the upper level room and "broke the bread," obviously in company with the brethren. Remember the use of the definite article "the" before the word "bread" points to a specific bread, the bread which they came together to break, belonging to the Lord's Supper. So the disciples observed the Lord's Supper after Paul revived Eutychus. However, we cannot pinpoint the moment that they partook of the Lord's Supper. Eutychus fell from the upper story window sometime before midnight (one must realize that "midnight" is not necessarily a very exact term in a culture antedating the invention of wristwatches). Why did Paul end his speech at midnight? Did he stop because Eutychus fell from the window? Although the answer to this question would help to pinpoint when the disciples observed the Lord's Supper, the answer is not clear from the context. Later, sometime after observing the Lord's Supper and eating, Paul continued to converse with the brethren until daylight when he and his companions left Troas (the word in verse 11 for "talk" is a different Greek word than the word translated "speak" in verse seven; the word here means to converse while the word in verse seven means to instruct or teach).

Understanding that Luke reported using Roman time implies that the disciples observed the Lord's Supper near midnight on the first day of the

week as Monday was approaching. The important fact of the meeting was that the disciples convened it on the first day of the week. The disciples had come together on the first day of the week to break bread. If the meeting passed slightly over into Monday, then Luke would still record it as having transpired on the first day of the week. If such a conclusion does not conform to our customary ideas concerning the passage, one must remember that interpretation must conform to the demands of the context and must not be manipulated to produce desired consequences. If the context indicates that Luke was using Roman time, then our interpretation of the events in Acts 20:7-11 must conform to this fact.

What Time-keeping Method Must We Use Today?

There remains one fundamental question concerning time-keeping methods. Are the methods used by the historians of the New Testament, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit, binding on us today or are they incidentals? If one were to grant for the sake of argument that Luke was keeping time according to Jewish methods, would his custom bind us to use the same methods? One could ask this same question about the fact that the two passages that mention the time of day that the disciples observed the Lord's Supper both agree that it was at night (Mt. 26:20-29; Acts 20:7-11). Must Christians today observe the Lord's Supper in the evening? The answer to this last question is no, because the time of day had no stated or implied significance or symbolism in the Lord's Supper. This same conclusion must be true of time-keeping methods. What the scriptural instructions about the Lord's Supper lack that the instructions about the Passover include is a command concerning the time-keeping method used in observing it. One must conclude then, after considering the evidence concerning time-keeping methods, that Christians are at liberty to choose the time-keeping method that they consistently use.

Can Christians today respect Jewish time-keeping methods and observe the Lord's Supper Saturday evening? The significant and binding example is that the Christians came together on the first day of the week to participate in the Lord's Supper. The first day of the week had meaning for the Christians because it was the day of the Lord's resurrection. The hours of our observance of the Lord's Supper are a liberty, but should at least conform to the manner of viewing the beginning and ending of the day in the culture in which we live; otherwise our method of counting the beginning and ending of the first day of the week would cause confusion. According to those who have traveled in Israel today, Jewish citizens of that country view the

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beginning of the first day of the week as midnight and not as sunset on Saturday. The Sabbath is a ritual time the begins Friday evening at sunset and terminates on Saturday at sunset. However, they view the civil day as beginning at midnight. So the question, at least in regards to congregations in Israel, would be moot.

Can Christians Commune More Than Once on the Lord's Day?

Mission work often faces us with new situations that we have not encountered before in the work we are accustomed to doing in the United States. Often the work raises questions that require careful study of God's Word in order to understand the course that is pleasing to God. One such issue is the question about participating in more than one communion service on the same Lord's Day.

In mission work, certain unavoidable predicaments may arise that require the evangelist to worship with two different congregations on the same Lord's Day. For instance, in countries where more than one language is spoken, it may be necessary, because of a language difference, to establish two congregations in the same locality. The evangelist may be responsible to teach and lead the worship in both congregations until leadership develops within the congregations. In another situation in a foreign field, an evangelist may need to establish two congregations in different localities. Though the members of the congregations may not be able, because of travel conditions, to meet together in one location, the evangelist may need to travel between them on the Lord's day to teach and assist in leading the worship at least until leadership develops. In such circumstances, the evangelist is faced with the question of whether he should participate in the communion in both places.

In the New Testament, there is no explicit example of someone participating in the communion more than once on the same Lord's day. When carefully used, the argument that there is no example is a strong argument. However, to simply say there is no example of a practice is not sufficient to prohibit a practice. Not only must we reason that there is no example, but we must also reason that there is no principle that would imply the validity of a certain practice. Though there may be no example of a practice, the Scriptures may elucidate a principle that has a direct and logical bearing on the issue in question. Thus a practice may authorized in principle without an explicit example. There is no explicit example of church buildings or using the Lord's money for the construction of church buildings, yet it is

agreed that a principle exists that authorizes the use of the Lord's money for this purpose.

There is one principle concerning the communion that argues in favor of participating in the communion anytime one is present with a congregation that is observing the communion. This principle is that the Lord's Supper illustrates a joint participation in the body and blood of Christ. Communion, by the very definition of the word, means to participate together in something. According to Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, when we commune we illustrate our joint participation in the Lord's body and in his blood. The Christians in the congregation at Corinth were divided over several emotional and doctrinal issues. Paul's criticism of them in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 is that they were participating in the Lord's Supper which should illustrate their profound spiritual unity with one another; yet in reality they were divided. "We who are many, are one body, for we all partake of one loaf." But in reality they were not conducting themselves as one body in Christ.

Communion is thus a congregational activity because joint participation can only take place within a congregated body. Those who have congregated have come together to show their joint participation in the body and blood of Christ. Through the communion they manifest their joint participation in Christ.

The principle of joint participation is one reason why we do not believe in night communion or hospital communion. In such cases, individuals are partaking of the emblems of the Lord's supper as individuals and not in joint participation with the congregated body. In such cases there is no "communion" in the strict sense of "joint participation." Night communion and hospital communion evolved from the use of individual cups. Once individual cups were used, "communion" came to have an individual sense about it. In fact, in discussions concerning the use of individual cups, advocates of their use have defended individual cups by reasoning that communion is "vertical" and not "horizontal." By "vertical" they mean that the central event in the Lord's Supper takes place between you and God and not between you and your brother or sister in Christ. With such thinking, of course, the principle of "communion" completely vacates the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is no longer "communion;" it is instead an individual act.

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Because communion is a joint participation, when one comes together with a congregation that is observing the Lord's supper, he is responsible, if he is a child of God, to illustrate his joint participation with them in the body and blood of Christ. The communion principle is satisfied when those present in an assembled congregation have, together, illustrated their joint participation in the body and blood of Christ. For this reason, if a person present with a congregated assembly does not participate in the communion, he has failed to illustrate his unity and participation in the body and blood of Christ with those present.

Someone might answer that if this person has already communed in another place, he has satisfied his responsibility to commune. But thinking primarily about satisfying the individual's own responsibility to commune leads to an incorrect view of the communion, by excluding the individual's responsibility to the congregated body. Because communion is a joint participation, the individual is responsible to the congregated body to manifest with them his share in the body and blood of Christ. If the individual does not participate, he has isolated himself from the sharing that unites them. He is caught in a "no-man's-land" of ambiguity, being part of them in some ways and not being part of them in other ways.

Thus, in addition to one's personal responsibility to commune, one also has a responsibility to the congregation with which he has assembled to show his joint participation with them in the body and blood of Christ. If he is assembled with them and does not commune with them, he has failed to illustrate his joint participation with them in the body and blood of Christ.

It might be further argued that perhaps in a given situation everyone present may know that he does participate with them in the body and blood of Christ and so it is not necessary to illustrate his participation if he has already done so in another place. However, the point of the communion is to manifest one's joint participation. We may meet to commune with a congregation every first day of the week and the members of that congregation may well know that we participate with them in the body and blood of Christ. But we are still responsible to manifest this joint participation anew with them every first day of the week. Furthermore, if outsiders or strangers are present, one is compelled by their presence to manifest his joint share in the body and blood of Christ with the other members of the congregation who are communing.

In summary, what is implied by the communion principle of joint participation is that when one is present with a congregation that is observing the Lord's Supper, one is bound to manifest his joint participation with them. In essence, the very principle we correctly use to defeat individual cups also binds us to observe the Lord's Supper whenever we are present with a congregated body that is observing the Lord's Supper. 753 *Saucito Ave., Salinas, CA 93906*

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History of the Communion (2nd Century to 20th Century)

by George Battey

The history of the communion through the Christian Age is an interesting one and covers much more than merely how many cups should be placed on the table. The changes which took place through the years were wrong, but it is easy, after studying church history, to understand why these changes occurred. Once change started, it was difficult to stop that change until the supper was completely unrecognizable from the New Testament pattern.

This study helped me to understand better why we must resist even small changes, no matter how innocent they may seem, for changes in the communion have affected doctrinal beliefs about forgiveness of sin, the destiny of the dead, and the structure of church worship.

The Original Supper

The Lord's supper, as set forth in the New Testament, was a very simple church ordinance. It contained only three elements: (a) a single loaf of unleavened bread (Mt. 26:17-26; 1 Cor. 10:16-17) representing the Lord's body, (b) a single cup (Mt. 26:27; Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25) representing the new covenant ratified by Jesus, and (c) unfermented grape juice (Mt. 26:17-29) symbolizing the blood He shed to ratify the new covenant. With apostolic approval, the early church observed the communion every first day of the week (Acts 20:7). It was a simple meal designed by the Lord Himself to remind Christians of the tremendous sacrifice made on their behalf.

As simple as this meal was, and as forthright as the Scriptures are about how to observe it, men soon began to tamper with the pattern. The tampering began even in the days of the apostles themselves. Paul had to write to the Corinthian church and correct their abuse and misunderstandings of the supper (1 Cor. 11). As far as we know, they accepted the correction given by Paul and the communion was observed scripturally once more. Yet, as in the days of the Judges of Israel, "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel" (Jgs. 2:10). More changes were to come and more changes continue even to this day. This paper is a brief outline of what occurred from the second century onward.

Communion: History of

The Second Century

(A.D. 101-200)

The second century began with the absence of all apostles. The **Didache**, or **Teaching of the Twelve**,¹ was a document written during this time and it states that "on the Lord's own day [Christians] gather together and break bread and give thanks."² This concurs with Acts 20:7. It also records that only those "baptized in the name of the Lord were to partake."³ So far, so good. The communion continues to be observed on the right day and offered only to members of the church.

Justin Martyr,⁴ an apologist of the second century, wrote:

... bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.⁵

Here is the beginning of transporting the communion to those not assembled. Mosheim concurs that, "A part of the consecrated bread and wine was carried to the sick or absent members of the church, as a testimony of fraternal love, sent to them by the whole society."⁶

Note Justin's use of the word "wine." Evidently "wine" here meant fermented wine, for an early Christian named Titian⁷ objected so much to its use that he substituted water for it in the communion.⁸ Titian must have been a prohibitionist of the purest type, because the wine being used in those days was already diluted with water.⁹ F. W. Mattox speculates, "The wine often was mixed with water, not for ceremonial reasons, but to dilute

¹ This is a very old document. It was published in 1883 and the dates for its original composition range from A.D. 60 to late in second century. (Davies, 81).

² Via Mattox, 70.

³ Dollar, Apr., 1960, 147.

⁴ Lived 103-165, Mattox, 68.

⁵ Via Mattox, 70; cf. Davies, 104.

⁶ Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, via Brandt, 190

⁷ A pupil of Justin Martyr, Davies, 82; lived 125-200, Mattox, 71.

⁸ Mattox, 120.

⁹ Justin, via Mattox, 69; cf. Davies, 104; Mosheim, via Brandt, 189; Dollar, Apr. 1960, 148.

its strength."¹⁰ Hippolytus,¹¹ used John 19:34 in an attempt to justify the mixing of water with wine.¹² He also advocated shaping the loaf into an image of the body of Jesus. This watered-down wine, however, was not universally practiced.¹³

Justin concurs with the **Didache** that communion was to be "closed" to only baptized believers. He writes:

And this food is called among us Eucharistia [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins.¹⁴

The practice of confessing sins before taking communion began. The **Didache** specifically stated that before the communion, each faithful member must "confess [their] transgressions that our sacrifice may be pure."¹⁵

The communion brought Christians of the second century under suspicion. Their secret meetings were believed to be occasions for immorality and they were often accused of cannibalism¹⁶ because they were said to be eating the body and blood of Jesus.

More than one drinking vessel was already in use. Irenaeus,¹⁷ in his writings, **Against Heresies**, speaks of smaller cups of the supper being filled from the large one.¹⁸ One of the Ante-Nicene Fathers writes, "The priest says the prayer of the Oblation . . . We pray and beseech Thee, O Lord, in Thy mercy, to let Thy presence rest upon this bread and these chalices on the all-holy table."¹⁹

¹⁰ Mattox, 119-120.

¹¹ Called by Davies, "the first author of any learning, [who] still wrote in the language of the New Testament" (p. 122). He was martyred in about 230 according to Dollar, July, 1960, 256, footnote 36.

¹² Davies, 151.

¹³ Dollar, Apr. 1960, 148.

¹⁴ Via Mattox, 69.

¹⁵ Davies, 107.

¹⁶ Davies, 87-88; cf. Mattox, 67.

¹⁷ Lived late in the second century (Walton, #6).

¹⁸ Via Dollar, Apr. 1960, 152.

¹⁹ Ante-Nicene Fathers to 325 A.D., Vol. VII, p. 544, via Phillips, *The Voice*, 26.

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The practice of fragmenting or "breaking" the bread into several portions was practiced. Mosheim writes: "The wine was mixed with water, and the bread was divided into several portions."²⁰

A heretical group of the second century, called the "Ophites," a sect of the Gnostics, had an interesting communion service. Although they claimed to be Christians, they had the notion that the God of the OT was really the Devil and the serpent in the Garden of Eden was the true God trying to liberate Adam and Eve who had been imprisoned. The serpent suggested that if they would eat the forbidden fruit, they would be given the knowledge of Gnosis which would free them. They stressed the healing effects of the brass serpent of Moses and they sanctified the communion by having snakes crawl over the bread and into the wine.²¹

The Third Century

(A.D. 201-300)

The third century sees the emergence of a practice called the **agape**,²² or "love feast." The majority of historians and Bible commentaries believe that a common meal, known as the **agape**, was eaten in the Lord's Day assembly just before the communion. It is believed that 1 Corinthians 11:17-20 and Jude 12 both refer to this meal.²³ It never seems to occur to any of these writers that the very text they use to find Biblical basis for the **agape** (1 Cor. 11), actually teaches against the practice of having a common meal in the assembly—specifically the Lord's Day assembly!

What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you (1 Cor. 11:22, NKJV).

I suppose commentators and historians believe the answer to Paul's rhetorical question is, "No, we don't have houses to eat and drink in."

In spite of Paul's clear teachings about common meals in the assembly, the third century church began practicing just that. Congregations would

²⁰ Via Brandt, 189; cf. Davies, 151.

²¹ Mattox, 76.

²² Agape is a transliteration of the Greek word ἀγάπη, which means "love."

²³ 2 Pet. 2:13 in some Greek texts also use the expression "love feast." Examples of historians who take the position that the **agape** was eaten in the assembly and then the communion, see NDT, 236; Mattox, 119-120; Davies, 106.

share an ordinary meal together and after the meal they would eat the Lord's supper. It is said that Ignatius wrote about this feast in the early years of the second century ²⁴ and a passage from the *Didache* is offered as proof that the second century church practiced this observance,²⁵ but even Davies, who offers the passage, admits it is inconclusive. The practice was clearly observable during the third century but it was soon separated from the assembly itself. It became more of a private party, but was usually conducted under the supervision of a bishop.²⁶

Communion continues to be "closed" to only baptized believers, only now mention is made that those in a "penitential state" are not to be offered the communion either.²⁷

Late in the third century, while persecution was raging, Christians continued to meet on the first day of the week, but only under the cover of darkness. Much ceremony and pomp were added to the service and, according to Mattox, gold and silver vessels came into use.²⁸ Also, the elements of the communion are beginning to be looked upon as having magical powers. Some are calling it the "Medicine of Immortality."²⁹

Persecution

(A.D. 64-313)

The great persecution of the second and third centuries was much to blame for the changes in communion. Whether some of the persecuted "Christians" were actually immersed believers according to Acts 2:38, it would be impossible to know for sure, but probably they were. The Catholics and their predecessors were guilty of many things, but they were not guilty of practicing "Baptist baptism." In fact, as will be noted later, they went to the other extreme of saying baptism was efficacious within itself. These persecuted souls counted themselves as Christians and suffered greatly for what they believed.

²⁴ Davies, 106.

²⁵ Davies, 106-107.

²⁶ Davies, 106, 153.

²⁷ Mosheim, via Brandt, 190.

²⁸ Mattox, 119-120.

²⁹ Mattox, 120.

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Nero (emperor 54-68)³⁰

The first to persecute Christians was Nero. His persecution began A.D. 64³¹ when a massive fire broke out in Rome. Nero wanted to initiate a massive renovation and building program in Rome, but was unable to get approval for the project. By setting fire to Rome, he cleared the needed space³² much like Ahab did in his dealings with Naboth (1 Kgs. 21).

To escape blame for the fire, Nero accused Christians of setting the fire and a persecution began, but was not world-wide in scope. This persecution was limited in and around the vicinity of Rome. During this time Paul was evidently put to death by beheading.

Trajan (emperor 98-117)³³

Trajan was the first emperor to persecute Christians because they were Christians.³⁴ This persecution was on a more wide-spread scale than Nero, though not world-wide yet. Trajan inherited a kingdom in which senatorial proconsuls had been trying to outdo each other in building projects. To end this, Trajan issued an edict forbidding all clubs.³⁵ When he even refused to sanction a fire brigade,³⁶ it was not expected that he would show much toleration to Christians.

Trajan's envoy, Pliny, was not prepared to deal with Christians. He sent word to his master asking what course to take and Trajan wrote back:

No search should be made for these people; but if they are denounced and found guilty, they must be punished; with this proviso, that when the party denies that he is a Christian, and shall give proof that he is not, by worshipping the gods, he shall be pardoned for his penitence, even though he may have formerly incurred suspicion.³⁷

So, accordingly, the practice began of persecuting anyone who would not worship the gods of Rome. Even if a person had been a professing

³⁰ Nero Claudius Caesar Drusus Germanicus, lived 37-68, Webster, 1391.

³¹ Unger, 917.

³² Davies, 35.

³³ *Marcus Ulpius Trajanus*. Lived A.D. 52 or 53-117, Webster, 1402.

³⁴ Mattox, 93.

³⁵ Davies, 76.

³⁶ Davies, 76.

³⁷ Davies, 77.

Christian, they could, by bowing to Rome's idols, be pardoned and they would be spared any punishment.

One important fact to focus upon what the opportunity offered to accused Christians. They were given ample opportunity to reject their faith. When any did recant, it was deliberate. When any stayed faithful, it was after many trials and many bypassed opportunities to escape torture. These faithful brethren had many opportunities to spare themselves torture, but they remained loyal throughout.

Decius (emperor 249-251)³⁸

Decius was the first emperor to initiate a persecution throughout the entire Roman Empire.³⁹ He issued an edict that demanded all citizens sacrifice to the gods of Rome within a specified period. The purpose of this edict was to determine the loyalty of citizens to the emperor.⁴⁰ When a citizen appeared to sacrifice to the idols, a certificate was issued to demonstrate compliance.⁴¹ This certificate was much like a passport in that it was necessary to carry it at all times. If stopped by the police without possessing the certificate, one could be arrested on the spot.

This plan was painful enough for the church, but could have been worse, for the following year, Decius died and the persecution was dropped. However, two years following his death, Valerian ascended the throne and resumed the policies of Decius.⁴²

Diocletian (emperor 284-305)⁴³

Diocletian launched the most brutal and far-reaching persecution which the Christian Age ever saw. In March 303, the decree was issued that Christians could no longer hold meetings, their buildings were to be destroyed, their leaders were to be imprisoned, all "lay members" were to sacrifice to the idols, and all copies of the Scriptures were to be turned in to be burned.⁴⁴ Eusebius described the torture which followed:

³⁸ *Gaius Messius Quintus Trajanus Decius*, lived 201-251, Webster, 13/2.

³⁹ Davies, 116.

⁴⁰ Davies, 116.

⁴¹ Mattox, 97.

⁴² Mattox, 97.

⁴³ *Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus*, lived 245-313, Webster, 13/2.

⁴⁴ Mattox, 97-98; Davies, 118.

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Christians were caused to suffer in every conceivable way. The prisons ran over, and slave labor camps were set up in which Christians were worked to death in the mines.⁴⁵

In January 304, the magistrates of North Africa arrested forty-nine men, women, and children as they were assembled for the Lord's supper in a friend's house. They were transferred to Carthage and on February 12 were brought before the proconsul and charged "as Christians who, contrary to the decisions of the Augusti and Caesars, had frequented the Lord's assembly."⁴⁶ Each person was asked separately why they had been present at an unlawful church assembly and each replied in the same words, "As if a Christian could exist without the Lord's Supper, or the Lord's Supper without a Christian!"⁴⁷ They were condemned to death and executed immediately.⁴⁸

In contrast to the above story, some Christians weakened under the pressure and sacrificed to the idols. Others obtained forged copies of certificates to present to police as evidence they had sacrificed to the gods.

CONSTANTINE (emperor 306-337)⁴⁹

Constantine I, after much struggle, emerged the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. His mother was a Christian and, after supposedly having a dream in which he saw soldiers carrying shields emblazoned with the sign of the cross, he became a lifelong friend of Christians. In 313 he issued the famous "Edict of Milan" in which Christianity became a legal religion.⁵⁰ Not only did this legalize Christianity, but it even encouraged the spread of Christianity. Constantine declared:

We therefore, announce that, notwithstanding any provisions concerning the Christians in our former instructions, all who choose that religion are to be permitted to continue therein, without any let or hindrance, and are not to be in any way troubled or molested . . . Moreover, concerning the Christians, we before gave orders with respect to the places set apart for their worship. It is now our

⁴⁵ Mattox, 97-98.

⁴⁶ Davies, 118.

⁴⁷ Davies, 118.

⁴⁸ Those who miss the Lord's Day assembly for work or pleasure should blush at such stories as these.

⁴⁹ Constantine I, lived 280?-337, Webster, 1370.

⁵⁰ Mattox, 99.

pleasure that all who have bought such places should restore them to the Christians, without any demand for payment.⁵¹

Post-Persecution Developments

(A.D. 313-1517)

This ending of persecution was most abrupt. Instantly Christians received relief from the most bitter persecution they had ever known. Now the church was free to grow without governmental interference . . . or so it seemed. Perhaps a better way to word this is to say Christianity was free to grow without governmental molestation, because the church and state would certainly mingle and interfere with one another in days to come.

Fifty-five years prior to Constantine,⁵² a doctrine had been advocated by Cyprian, bishop of Carthage,⁵³ that men inherit the original sin of Adam. Along with this theory was the doctrine of "baptismal regeneration" was developing to coincide with the doctrine of original sin. "Baptismal regeneration" grew out of the Biblical teaching that baptism was for the remission of sins, but it went further and included the idea that baptism itself was efficacious and would bring the desired results even if the candidate was unaware of what was happening. Baptism was viewed as having mystical powers of its own which, if performed by a properly ordained clergyman, saying the correct formula, the sins of an individual would be remitted.⁵⁴ These beliefs were the soil out of which grew the practice of infant baptism.

There was a doctrine working against the practice of infant baptism. Tertullian⁵⁵ was an outspoken advocate that baptism was for the remission

⁵¹ Mattox, 99.

⁵² Mattox, 117-118.

⁵³ A Christian martyr. Died in 258, Webster, 1371.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 118-119. "Baptismal regeneration" is what the church of Christ is often accused of advocating. This is an untrue and unfair accusation, for, although we teach that baptism is for the "remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), we teach that it is the blood of Christ, applied by God at the point of baptism (Acts 22:16; Mt. 26:29; Heb. 10:22; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:1-7) which takes away sin, provided baptism is preceded by faith in Christ (Mk. 16:16), repentance (Acts 2:38), and confession of faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10). The illustrations of the brazen serpent (Num. 21:9) and Naaman (2 Kings 5) demonstrate our position on baptism as simply being a positive command of God.

Belief in "baptismal regeneration" explains why Spanish Conquistadors would baptize entire Indian villages on pain of torture and death. These heathen Indians were going to be baptized, forgiven, and saved "if we have to kill them in the process"

⁵⁵ An early "church father" who lived 160?-230, Webster, 1401.

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of past sins, but he argued there was no remedy for sins committed after baptism and furthermore, baptism could not be repeated.⁵⁶ Consequently, many put off baptism until old age. Constantine himself is a classic example, for he delayed baptism until shortly before his death hoping it would cover all his sins.

When Constantine brought the persecution to an end, many of the Christians who had forsaken Christianity came wanting admission back into the church. Some had sacrificed to the idols, some had turned in Scriptures to be burned, and still others had obtained forged certificates. Though it was not right, many who had lived through the persecution and remained faithful, were reluctant to accept these traitors back into the church. They had suffered the loss of property, family members, and had suffered through torture, and they were not inclined to look favorably upon traitors who had forsaken the faith.

In 311 Donatus began to teach that these traitors had committed an unpardonable sin and could not be restored to the church. Christians in general did not accept this view. A synod at Rome decided against the Donatist position and later councils upheld this decision.⁵⁷

The official position of the church was to allow the backsliders back, but there was a need for the backslider to show genuine proof of sorrow for his sin. This gave rise to penance, or the performance of rigorous, tedious works to demonstrate genuine sorrow. Again, this is not scriptural, but it is easy to see how the conditions of the time brought about these doctrines and beliefs. The communion was offered to those who (a) confessed their sins and (b) did penance to demonstrate true sorrow.⁵⁸ The *Didache* says:

Thou shalt confess thy transgressions in church, and shalt not come to thy prayer in an evil conscience," therefore, **before the Eucharist**, the faithful must "confess your transgressions that our sacrifice may be pure [emph. mine, gb].⁵⁹

In this way, worshippers were "worthy" to partake of the communion—an assumption based upon a faulty understanding of 1 Corinthians 11:27-28.

⁵⁶ Mattox, 118-119.

⁵⁷ Mattox, 115.

⁵⁸ Mattox, 153; see also p. 162.

⁵⁹ Via, Davies, 107.

Communion Viewed as Efficacious

Just as baptism was viewed as efficacious, the communion likewise began to be viewed as having mystical powers within itself to bestow blessings upon worshippers. Over and over in the writings of "early church fathers" John 6 is appealed to as proof that there is something more to the communion than simple remembrance.

Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day (Jn. 6:53-54, NKJV).

Though this passage has nothing to do with the communion,⁶⁰ yet it was and is appealed to over and over again to demonstrate there is something mysterious and mystical about the communion service. Eusebius,⁶¹ the "father of church history," was one of the few early writers who understood that John 6 had nothing to do with communion.⁶²

Early on, writers began to view the communion as being mystically efficacious. Irenaeus⁶³ speaks of eating "unto the remission of sins."⁶⁴

Cyprian believed spiritual life itself came from the communion and without it, one would die spiritually. He used the passage in the Lord's prayer about "daily bread" to justify eating the Lord's supper every day.⁶⁵ He believed the communion was so worthy that penalties would ensue the irreverent—"penalties such as choking, strange fires, the hands scorched to cinders, and assaults by evil spirits and even insanity."⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Many untaught brethren read this passage at the communion table and thus wrongly apply it. This does not apply to the communion because, (a) the communion is never mentioned in this passage, (b) these words were spoken before the communion was ever given making it impossible for the disciples and the apostles to understand this as referring to the communion, and (c) the context itself demonstrates the communion is not under consideration at all. Jn. 6:35 demonstrates that "coming" to Jesus is equivalent to "eating His flesh," because "coming" satisfies hunger. Again, "believing" in Jesus is equated with "drinking His blood," because "believing" satisfies thirst. The abuse of Jn. 6 has been the springboard of an untold number of false doctrines.

⁶¹ Lived 260?-340, Webster, 1374.

⁶² Dollar, Oct. 1960, 343.

⁶³ An apologist. Lived 130-200, Mattox, 78.

⁶⁴ Dollar, July, 1960, 256.

⁶⁵ Dollar, July, 1960, 255.

⁶⁶ Dollar, July, 1960, 254.

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About ninety years after the death of Cyprian, Cyril⁶⁷ of Jerusalem was consecrated. He is noted for using the Lavabo, i.e. the ritual cleansing of the hands before communion.⁶⁸ He stressed John 6 to the point that if any Christian did not assemble for communion, he would forfeit salvation. He taught that the communion was depicted in the marriage in Cana. There the water was literally changed into wine, and in like manner the communion wine is literally changed into the blood of Christ.⁶⁹ Cyril was also the first to clearly advocate the idea that the communion had power to help the dead.⁷⁰

The efficacious communion began to be celebrated at the tombs of martyrs and at funerals.⁷¹ The bread and wine would be held high into the air by the bishop so all the assembly could see the miracle of the transformation of ordinary bread and wine into the actual body and blood of the Lord.⁷² It was believed that prayer offered in the presence of the bread and wine would be more effective than in their absence.⁷³ Thus, before communion, many prayers and lengthy prayers were added to the service—for the whole earth and for the living and the dead.

Though long in coming, the doctrine of transubstantiation was officially recognized as a dogma of the Catholic (Western) church during the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).⁷⁴

Eucharistic Sacrifice

Cyprian's theory that men inherited Adam's sin was a persistent doctrine which would not die. Augustine⁷⁵ popularized this theory and taught

⁶⁷ Lived 315-386, Mattox, 151.

⁶⁸ Davies, 204.

⁶⁹ Dollar, Oct., 1960, 344.

⁷⁰ Mattox, 151.

⁷¹ Mosheim, via Brandt, 191.

⁷² Mosheim, via Brandt, 191; Stookey, 74-75.

⁷³ Cyril of Jerusalem advocated this. Davies, 267.

⁷⁴ Mattox, 188; NDT, 326. Though this was the official acceptance of the doctrine, the exact "founder" of the idea is open to debate. The NDT states that "Paschasius Radbertus is usually regarded as the first propounder of transubstantiation" (NDT, 326). Mattox would argue that "John of Damascus (700-750) seems to be the first to clearly defend a literal change from elements into actual flesh and blood" (Mattox, 152). Dollar leaves the impression that Cyril of Jerusalem was getting close to the doctrine any where from 348 to 386 (Dollar, Oct. 1960, 344). So the answer to this question is much like the answer to the question, "Who was the first Pope?" You get as many answers as the number of people you ask.

that baptism should be administered as soon after birth as possible, for without it, even infants could not enter heaven, but would be consigned eternally to a place called "limbo."

Baptism took care of inherited sin, but beyond this, something must be done about sins committed by each man himself, or "actual sin" as it was called. It was believed that some men led such good lives that their good works would cancel out their "actual sins," and at death these rare individuals could enter heaven immediately. But what about everyone else? Everyone else, it turned out, must pay for their sins before they could obtain bliss in heaven. Hence, the idea of purgatory—a place of "purgation" where men make up for the sins they committed after baptism.

The pictures of the tortures and agonies in purgatory became more and more vivid and anxiety increased as this doctrine was emphasized. It became natural for people to want some way of shortening their stay in purgatory. Various ways were devised, and one of those ways has a direct bearing on the communion. One disastrous idea was that the Lord's Supper was a propitiatory sacrifice—i.e. an actual sacrifice offered to God which satisfies His wrath toward sin. This sacrifice (communion), when offered in the name of a Christian in purgatory, would reduce the time he would be confined there and would hasten his entry into heaven.

The idea of the communion becoming an efficacious sacrifice was a natural conclusion for men to make once they have accepted the doctrine of transubstantiation. If the bread becomes the actual body of Christ and the wine His actual blood, then, when the bread is broken and the wine is poured out on an altar, the events of Calvary are actually being re-enacted and have as much merit as the historical crucifixion itself. If the historical crucifixion of Jesus carries enough merit to counteract inherited sin, then surely this re-enactment of the crucifixion could counteract "actual sin." This, then, is the beginning of the "Sacrifice of the Mass"⁷⁶—the idea that Christ is sacrificed every time communion was administered. In 1562 the Council of Trent declared:

In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass, that same Christ is contained and sacrificed in an unbloody manner, who once offered himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross . . . The

⁷⁵ The bishop of Hippo, lived 396-430, Webster, 1363.

⁷⁶ "Mass" comes from the Latin, *missa*, which means "sent." The custom was to "dismiss" the congregation at the close of a regular service before serving the supper. (Dollar, Apr. 1960, 145).

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victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different . . . If anyone says that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving . . . but not a propitiatory sacrifice . . . let him be anathema [emph. mine, gb].⁷⁷

This reasoning provided an appealing way for men to shorten their agonies in purgatory. Each Mass offered in one's name after death would reduce one's time of suffering in purgatory. But these Masses were not free—a price had to be paid. Here was a perfect solution to Medieval society. The church was anxious about how to raise money and men were anxious about spending time in purgatory. Money for Masses solved the worries of both. Wealthy people were doubly privileged, for they could not only arrange for Masses to be done perpetually in their own names, but in the names of their family members as well. Extremely wealthy people could arrange for Masses to be offered for themselves daily.

Soon the demand for Masses far outnumbered the priests available to offer them. Furthermore, a priest is restricted to one full Mass and personal communion per day. This problem gave rise to an abuse known as "the dry Mass." Laurence Stookey writes:

The priest needed to offer, let us say, eight propitiatory Masses on a given mourning. Seven times he read his way through the formula right up to the point of consecrating the bread and wine, then backed up and started over; only the eighth time did he complete the rite. Furthermore, all of this the priest had to do on a fasting stomach—that is, before breakfast (hence our word for the meal that "breaks the fast"). The rate at which the hungry priest worked his way through seven "dry" Masses on his way to the full Mass is not difficult to imagine.⁷⁸

There was a mental exercise in which worshippers could engage in, known as the "Allegorical Mass." Here, every action taken by the priest is allegorical of something which occurred at Calvary. For example, when the priest ascends the altar stairs, the worshippers were to imagine Jesus ascending the staircase of Pontius Pilate to face judgment and sentencing.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ NDT, 237.

⁷⁸ Stookey, 73.

⁷⁹ Stookey, 75.

The belief that the bread and wine actually became the body and blood of Jesus presented the problem of what to do with the remaining elements when Mass is over. It was decided at the close of Mass, the priest must drink all the wine and then cleanse the chalice carefully lest any trace remain. If any wine is spilled, special, ceremonial rites were developed for its removal. Because the wine could spill so easily and readily when offering it to the worshippers, it became the practice that only the officiating priest could drink the wine.⁸⁰ This practice of withholding the cup was called "receiving communion in one kind," because the worshippers were receiving only *one* element of the communion. All others could receive only the bread, but it was argued that after the "miracle of the Mass" had occurred and the bread was changed into the actual body of Jesus, it contained enough of the blood within it to suffice for communion.⁸¹

Even when the laity received the bread, great care must be taken lest it be dropped. It became the practice for the priest to place the bread directly upon the tongue of the communicant while an assistant held a tray under the worshipper's chin in case the wafer should be dropped or ejected. The people were taught to swallow the bread whole, lest by chewing they mutilate the body of Christ in an impious manner.⁸² There was another reason why the wafer was placed directly upon the tongue of the worshippers. In the past, some unsophisticated members would take the wafer handed to them and slip it into their pockets, taking it home for other uses—as medicine during some grave illness, or rubbing it like a "lucky rabbit's foot."⁸³

Bread which was not eaten was saved for a variety of purposes: to be taken to the sick and dying and, interestingly, if more communicants appeared for communion than there was consecrated bread available, rather

⁸⁰ This was decided at the Council of Trent which lasted from December 1545 to December 1563. Cf. Mattox, 292.

⁸¹ Mattox, 292.

⁸² Stookey, 76. This veneration of the bread and wine are tantamount to idolatry. Yet, on the other extreme, some brethren show disrespect at best and profanity at worst in their treating the loaf and juice as though it were nothing. After communion in one congregation, the brethren give the children the leftover bread to eat and the juice to drink. In another congregation, after services, the loaf was thrown into the men's toilet and left floating. It seems we have generally lost respect for things used in worship. While we should not worship anything as an idol, yet there surely there is room for respect for a loaf that was used in worship to God. Brother Homer King believed the leftover loaf should be burned in fire because the leftover bread of consecration in the OT was burned. J. Durham, President of Washington College in Irvington, CA believed the same (via Brandt, 111).

⁸³ Stookey, 78.

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than repeat the act of consecration, the priest could simply use this bread which had been reserved, for, after all, it was sanctified bread.⁸⁴

Because consecrated bread would often be reserved for long periods of time, it was unsuitable to continue using ordinary bread, though it was used in olden days and is still used in Eastern Orthodoxy. Hence, unleavened wafers were used because they took up less space and could be stored longer.⁸⁵

The Reformers (A.D 1517-1775)

When we examine the abuses and superstitions which existed during medieval times, it is no wonder that the Reformers were moved to action. That action came when the Renaissance⁸⁶ brought men to the point of re-examining long held religious positions. Men began to read the Bible for themselves and they awoke to the novel idea that religious authority resided within Scripture, not within the decisions of councils.

The communion was one of the major focal points upon which the Reformation was ignited, being outweighed only by the question of papal authority and the infamous "sale of indulgences." Passages, which had previously been unheard of, were being read by religious thinkers with honest hearts and were creating doubt that the communion was an efficacious sacrifice after all. Nine passages in particular caused great concern:⁸⁷

... who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself ... not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another; He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this

⁸⁴ Stookey, 76.

⁸⁵ Stookey, 77.

⁸⁶ The Renaissance, or "rebirth" was a "transitional movement" which brought Europe from the medieval to the modern era. It began in Italy in the 14th century and lasted into the 17th century (Webster, 9/1).

⁸⁷ Catholic scholars have felt the sting of these passages and many books have been written in an effort to counteract this obvious contradiction of Scripture. The NDT lists several works which have been published with this end in view (NDT, 237).

the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation [emph. mine, gb] (1 Heb. 7:27; 9:25-28, NKJV).

By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all** . . . But this Man, after He had offered **one sacrifice** for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God . . . For by **one offering** He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified . . . Now where there is remission of these, there is **no longer an offering for sin** [emph. mine, gb] (1 Heb. 10:10, 12, 14, 18).

How could it be argued that Christ was being actually sacrificed each time Mass occurred when these passages declare plainly that Jesus was sacrificed "once for all"?

Wycliffe

John Wycliffe,⁸⁸ who pre-dated the Reformation by one hundred thirty years, became outspoken in rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation. He was at that time the professor of theology in Oxford and this stand put him in disfavor with the chancellor of the university.⁸⁹ This would only cause him minor problems compared with his translating work.

Luther

Martin Luther, the "father of the Reformation," was born in 1483 and reared a devout Catholic. He entered the priesthood and rose rapidly in the Augustinian Order. In 1511 he made a business trip to Rome for this Order and was shocked by the widespread immorality which he observed there. Though disheartened, he made his rounds to all the sacred shrines hoping to receive every blessing which could be derived from such a pilgrimage to the "Holy City." Luther was, at this time, very loyal to the Pope. In one church he was stunned when he observed a priest saying the Mass in Latin, but not performing the "miracle" of transubstantiation before giving the bread to the worshippers. Later, the priest laughed to the other priests because the people could not tell the difference.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Lived 1320?-1384, Webster, 1405.

⁸⁹ Mattox, 225.

⁹⁰ Mattox, 244.

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In 1517, Johann Tetzel⁹¹ came to the area of Wittenburg, Germany, where Luther was residing, selling indulgences. While Luther was preaching sermons about salvation by faith, Tetzel was selling indulgences to some of Luther's parishioners in a booth at Juterbock only a few miles away. On October 31, 1517, Luther, in opposition to the indulgences, nailed a document to the door of the church building listing ninety-five theses against the Papacy in Rome and the indulgences. He offered to debate anyone who differed with him on the subject. Soon began the writing warfare between Luther and John Eck over indulgences.⁹²

In 1520, Luther wrote a composition entitled, "On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church." This was an examination of the sacramental system of the Catholic church. Within this paper, Luther examined all seven sacraments of the Catholic church and eliminated all but two: baptism and the Lord's supper. He thought there could be sacramental value to repentance, but not in the form of penance as developed by the hierarchy.⁹³

Luther rejected the idea of transubstantiation, but was too cautious to reject all aspects of the doctrine. He advanced the doctrine of consubstantiation, or the idea that the bread and wine did not literally change into the body and blood of the Lord, but the Lord's body and blood were present "with, in, and under" the bread and wine. So, while the bread remains bread and the wine remains wine, there is a mystical, mysterious real presence of the Lord's body and blood in both elements.

Zwingli

Zwingli,⁹⁴ the Swiss Reformer, was not as timid as Luther. He was a keen debater and sat on the town council. He removed pictures of idols from church buildings. He removed all instrumental music from churches. The doctrine of transubstantiation was rejected altogether and the communion was taught to be strictly a memorial supper with no real or spiritual presence of the Lord in any of the elements.⁹⁵

Since the Reformers, Luther and Zwingli, were in constant danger from the Catholics, it was in their interests to unite their followers and efforts. Accordingly, representatives from Luther and Zwingli met in the castle of

⁹¹ A German Dominican monk. Lived 1465?-1519 (Webster, 1401).

⁹² Mattox, 244-245.

⁹³ Mattox, 247.

⁹⁴ Ulrich Zwingli. Lived 1484-1531 (Webster, 1406).

⁹⁵ Mattox, 255.

Philip of Hesse in Marburg in 1529. This was a mediating session in hopes of working out their differences. Out of fifteen propositions, these representatives discovered that they agreed on fourteen points, but the one, disagreeable point concerned the communion. Both sides agreed that the priests could not perform the "miracle" of transubstantiation. Yet Luther's side insisted that the actual body and blood of Christ were present in the elements.

Zwingli and Luther eventually met face to face in person to discuss this matter further. Luther argued that if iron were heated until it was red hot, it was still iron, but with heat inside of it. He argued that in the same way, the bread and wine retained their physical properties, yet had the body and blood of Christ contained within them. Zwingli contended the bread and wine were strictly representative of the body and blood, nothing more. Luther took a piece of chalk and wrote on a banquet table, "this is my blood," and he insisted that Jesus meant what He said. Zwingli agreed that the Lord "meant what He said," but he made a powerful counter-argument by demonstrating that after Jesus said, "this is my blood," He then said He would not drink any more of the "fruit of the vine," showing it was still only "fruit of the vine" even after calling it his blood. Luther refused to agree and declared Zwingli had a different attitude than himself and he was unwilling to extend fellowship to Zwingli.⁹⁶

Other Reformers

Martin Bucer,⁹⁷ John Calvin,⁹⁸ and others took a mediating position⁹⁹ in contending that the Lord's body and blood were present *spiritually* within the communion elements.¹⁰⁰

Also worthy of mention are John and Charles Wesley who came a hundred and fifty years after the Reformation began. One notable thing these brothers stood for was weekly communion on the first day of the week.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Mattox, 257.

⁹⁷ Called the "Peacemaker of the Reformation." Lived 1491-1551. He influenced Calvin and tried to reconcile warring Lutherans, Swiss Reformers, and Catholics. (Walton, #34).

⁹⁸ Lived 1509-1564. (Walton, #32).

⁹⁹ NDT, 236-237.

¹⁰⁰ House, #80.

¹⁰¹ Mattox, 286.

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The Restorers

(A.D. 1775-1996)

The Restoration Movement brings us to events of which we are generally more familiar with in the church of Christ. F. W. Mattox begins his chronicles of the Restoration with James O'Kelly, Abner Jones, and Barton W. Stone, before ever mentioning the Campbell family.¹⁰² This period of history is rich and interesting as men began to break further and further away from manmade traditions and were looking more and more to the Scriptures for guidance.

Weekly Communion

Thomas Campbell had left for America before his family, hoping to prepare for their arrival. Waiting in Scotland for word from Thomas was the rest of the Campbell family. Alexander attended the University in Glasgow during the wait. There Alexander met Greville Ewing who had established an independent congregation and was practicing weekly communion.¹⁰³ This appealed to Alexander and, upon arrival to America, he was pleasantly surprised to learn that his father was reaching similar conclusions about communion and other Bible subjects.

In 1811, Thomas and Alexander Campbell organized an independent congregation called the Brush Run Church. Thomas was appointed as the elder and Alexander was licensed to preach. The next day after being founded, the congregation met for worship and celebrated the Lord's supper for the first time. In their determination to follow the Scriptures, they decided to have weekly communion since there was "approved precedent" for it.¹⁰⁴

By 1820 the Campbells had only four congregations and less than two-hundred members who accepted their principles of Restoration.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, Barton W. Stone had fellowship with five hundred congregations with fifteen thousand members. What made the difference? Among other things, Stone was more liberal in whom he fellowshiped and in what he taught. Although Stone was himself immersed in 1807, he did not make immersion a "test of fellowship." He felt such matters should be left to each man's conscience. Also, he did not observe the Lord's Supper often, believing that the

¹⁰² Mattox, 311-313.

¹⁰³ Mattox, 326.

¹⁰⁴ Mattox, 327.

¹⁰⁵ Mattox, 341.

communion was too sacred to be observed on a regular basis.¹⁰⁶ Stone made the following admission:

The only distinguishing doctrine between us and [the Campbells] was, that they preached baptism for the remission of sins to believing penitents. This doctrine had not generally obtained amongst us, though some few had received it, and practiced accordingly. They insisted also upon weekly communion, which we had neglected.¹⁰⁷

Transubstantiation

J. W. McGarvey, considered by some to be the finest scholar produced by the Restoration Movement, and others continued to fight the doctrine of transubstantiation. McGarvey wrote an excellent treatise on the communion in which he argued that Jesus could not have meant that the bread and juice were His actual body and blood. As the disciples understood Him that night in the upper room, we today are to understand Him as meaning the elements merely represent and symbolize His body and blood. He argued that the "blessing" pronounced by Jesus over the bread was not a magical formula to change the elements into literal flesh and blood, but, as the alternate wording suggests, He was only giving "thanksgiving" to God for the elements (Mt. 26:26-27; Mk. 14:22-23; Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24). McGarvey pointed out that we are to give thanks in like manner. A powerful point was made concerning 1 Corinthians 10:16-21:

Let it be observed also, that, in order to communion of the Lord's body and blood, it is no more necessary that the Lord himself be in the bread and wine, than that, in order to commune with demons, the demons must be in the meats and drinks offered to them. The term communion, in this place, has the sense of participation.¹⁰⁸

Closed Communion

"Open" versus "closed" communion became an issue in the 1800s for the Restoration Movement. Wayne House, in chart form,¹⁰⁹ demonstrates that the Catholic, Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli movements all practice "closed" communion. Under the Zwingli position, he notes the following: "Some groups practice closed communion, where participants must be a

¹⁰⁶ Mattox, 341-342.

¹⁰⁷ Mattox, 347.

¹⁰⁸ McGarvey, via Brandt, 319-320.

¹⁰⁹ House, #8C.

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member of the denomination. Others practice closed communion, where one must be a member of the local church assembly."

From the writings of Robert Graham in the *Christian Quarterly*,¹¹⁰ there was a desire on the part of Disciples to associate with the Baptists.¹¹¹ The Disciples desired to meet and commune with the Baptists but were rejected when the communion was passed. Evidently communion was being withheld for disciplinary reasons because of the stand Disciples made on issues of baptism, predestination, eternal security, etc. Communion was viewed as evidence of fellowship. The Baptists were not offering communion to the Disciples because they were not in fellowship with them. Graham was appalled by this, because the Baptists, while withholding communion from the Disciples, were at the same time offering it to Pedo-Baptists¹¹² with whom they differed.

Should the communion, then, be "open" to any and everyone who attends the assembly? This was the question of the day. McGarvey addressed the issue head on.

The much disputed question, Who is entitled to partake of the Supper? must be settled like all the others, by the Scriptures. It was given to the disciples of Jesus, and to them alone. To these then it must be forever confined. But all the disciples had been baptized; and consequently, only baptized believers are scriptural participants. The unfortunate dispute as to what baptism is, has given rise to this question, and it can never be settled but by settling the baptismal controversy. Those who hold immersion alone to be baptism, are compelled by a necessary inference from their position to conclude that immersed believers alone are entitled to this ordinance, even though their practice may not be in harmony with this conclusion. This sacred privilege is further limited by the conduct of the believer subsequent to his baptism. He who eats, not discerning in the loaf the Lord's body, eats unworthily, and brings on himself condemnation. In this no man can judge his neighbor, except by the neighbor's avowal; and consequently it is only when such an avowal is made that one can on this ground be debarred. Again, we are forbidden to eat with a disciple who is a fornicator, or a covetous man, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner (1 Cor. 5:11). It is supposed by some that this prohibits

¹¹⁰ Via, Brandt, 263.

¹¹¹ This is confirmed by Mattox, 329-331.

¹¹² A Pedo-Baptist is someone who practices infant "baptism" by sprinkling.

eating social meals with such persons; but whether this view is correct or not, it certainly forbids eating with them the Lord's Supper. It requires the church to withhold the cup and the loaf from all such characters. The supper is a holy institution, and it is polluted by the touch of unclean hands (1 Cor. 10:19-21).¹¹³

In McGarvey's interpretation, to "not eat" with an immoral brother (1 Cor. 5:11) meant not to share the communion with him.¹¹⁴

Individual Cups¹¹⁵

Another issue arising in the late 1800s concerned the number of cups to be used in distributing the fruit of the vine. Early in the Restoration Movement, congregations commonly used either one or two cups.¹¹⁶ The number of vessels was not an issue at that time. An issue did arise, however, when Dr. J. G. Thomas, a physician and a minister, became concerned over people drinking after each other from the common cup. Accordingly, he invented the first set of individual communion cups. The first congregation using the new invention was the Vaughnsville Congregational Church in Putnam County, Ohio in 1893.¹¹⁷ In March 1894 Thomas received a patent for his newly invented tray to hold the small cups.

The **Christian Standard**¹¹⁸ at the turn of the century placed an ad in their paper for the individual communion sets. Within the ad was published a letter from a pastor who had used the sets in his congregation with great success. He states, "Besides the convenience of the Service, it is handsome."¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Via, Brandt, 322-323.

¹¹⁴ Cf. W. F. Harper, Pastor of the First Baptist Church in San Diego, via Brandt, 346. The apostle Paul made the communion "closed" in 1 Cor. 10:21 when he plainly stated, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." In other words, if a person is a partaker of the "table of demons," the communion is to be closed to him.

¹¹⁵ The definitive historical account over the controversy of individual cups is Ronny Wade's, **The Sun Will Shine Again Someday**. It would be a "re-invention of the wheel" to research the topic again and I would not come close to what he has produced in this excellent volume.

¹¹⁶ Wade, 61.

¹¹⁷ Wade, 60.

¹¹⁸ The paper issued by the Christian Church. (Wade, 61).

¹¹⁹ Wade, 62.

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McGarvey was opposed to all of this and wrote against individual cups in 1900. Both he and Lipscomb thought the worry over germs and microbes was ridiculous. McGarvey's famous article on microbes is filled with satire of most excellent quality.

We have always been a little squeamish about drinking out of the same cup with certain persons that we could name and now, seeing that by doing so there is a risk of our swallowing some of their microbes, the practice has become intolerable. It is true that our Lord appointed it this way; but then he may have forgotten, just at the moment, that he had made all these microbes, and that they were such awful things; or else he thought that, as in the case of our new criticism, the age in which he lived was not prepared for a revelation on the subject, and so he left matters as he found them. Perhaps he reflected that the many millions who were destined to premature graves by swallowing these microbes at the Lord's Supper, would die in a good cause, and he therefore left them to their fate until an enlightened age would correct the evil. We have now reached that enlightened age, for the Spirit is still leading us into the new truth; and we propose to stop that needless waste of human life by having individual cups from which to drink the wine. If any man cries out against it as being unscriptural, exclusive or finicky, or anything of that sort, we will call him a legalist, a literalist, a Pharisee, a back number, a last year's almanac, and a whole lot of things that we use to silence croakers with.¹²⁰

Although McGarvey opposed individual cups and instrumental music, he did not "draw a line of fellowship" over these issues.¹²¹

Brother Ronny Wade wrote that C. E. Holt of Florence, Alabama may have been the first "non-instrumental" preacher to advocate the use of individual cups. In the July 11, 1911 issue of the *Gospel Advocate*, a letter from brother Holt appeared:

I do not claim that this is the only scriptural way of taking the Lord's supper, but it is as scriptural as any other way, and besides it has the advantage of being clean. We are aware that some brethren ridicule the idea that microbes can be transmitted from one to an-

¹²⁰ McGarvey, "Microbes," *Christian Standard*, March 31, 1900, via Wade, 62.

¹²¹ Wade, 65.

other by the common cup, yet the weight of authority is against them.¹²²

In this very same issue of the Gospel Advocate, David Lipscomb responded to the following question: "Will you kindly give your opinion as to the scripturalness of the use of individual communion sets in partaking of the Lord's Supper?" In response he wrote: "Does anyone think that it was instituted by Jesus and observed by his disciples as an individual communion service? If not, why do it now?"¹²³ Later, after a visit from G. C. Brewer, Lipscomb would renege and state that in the paper that he did not feel individual cups were wrong provided the grape juice began in one cup and, after the blessing, the small cups were filled from the larger common cup. This made it easier for advocates to get the individual communion set into the majority of the congregations.

Fighting to be first in the "Who's Who In Religious Innovations," was G. C. Brewer. He wants the credit of being the first to advocate the use of cups:

A good many of the fights that I have made have been with my own brethren on points where I believed them to be in the wrong. I think I was the first preacher to advocate the use of the individual communion cup and the first church in the State of Tennessee that adopted it was the church for which I was preaching, the Central Church of Christ at Chattanooga, Tennessee, then meeting in the Masonic Temple. My next work was with the church at Columbia, Tennessee, and, after a long struggle, I got the individual communion service into that congregation. About this time, Brother G. Dallas Smith began to advocate the individual communion service and he introduce it at Fayetteville, Tennessee; then later at Murfreesboro. Of course, I was fought both privately and publicly and several brethren took me to task in the religious papers and called me digressive. Brother Smith came to my rescue and, in the year 1915, Brother David Lipscomb wrote a short paragraph in the Gospel Advocate saying that he had changed his view in reference to the communion cup and that he did not believe it was any digression or in any way a corruption of the service to use as many cups as might be demanded by the occasion. This brought that con-

¹²² Wade, 65. To dispute this often made claim, brethren James Orten and Alton Bailey wrote a tract entitled, *Sanitation in Communion*. Those interested in this aspect of the subject should consult that work.

¹²³ Via Wade, 65-66.

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trovery to an end and, from then on, the churches began using the individual communion cup everywhere [emph. mine, gb].¹²⁴

If what Brewer says is accurate, he pushed and advocated the use of individual cups long before he actually installed them into the services of the church. Note the words "fight" and "long struggle" in Brewer's own writings. Neither he, nor his helpers were as interested in unity among brethren as they claimed they were. Contrary to what Brewer thought, the controversy did not "come to an end."

A great number of debates were waged over the usage of individual cups—both written and oral. Some of the more well known defenders for the usage of only one cup were H. C. Harper, Dr. G. A. Trott, Homer King, Homer Gay, J. D. Phillips, E. H. Miller, and Ervin Waters. The most widely circulated debate was probably the Porter-Waters Debate when Ervin Waters met Curtis Porter on November 7-10, 1950 in Quincy, Illinois over this very issue. To this very day brethren from both sides of the controversy look to this debate as a point of reference. The arguments made by both debaters are still in use today.¹²⁵

Other issues arose which revolved around the cup. Should the cup have a handle or not? If so, how many handles should there be—one or two? Should the cup be made of silver or not? Would it be scriptural to have one cup when blessing the fruit of the vine and then pour the juice into other containers after the blessing? If it could be poured into other containers, how many would be allowed? These were minor issues compared with the question of how many containers should be used. That is, these other issues never caused a split in the church that resulted in another brotherhood be-

¹²⁴ Brewer, xii-xiii.

¹²⁵ For a fairly comprehensive list of most arguments used to justify plurality of cups and how to scripturally respond to those arguments, see my book, *Debate Notes: Individual Cups*. See also *The Communion*, tract by J. Ervin Waters; *The Divine Pattern Advocate*, by Alfred Newberry; *The Cup of the Lord*, tract by J. D. Phillips, Ronny Wade Pub.; *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness*, tract by J. D. Phillips, Ronny Wade Pub.; *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, by I. Howard Marshall, Eerdmans Pub. Note: I. Howard Marshall is not a New Testament Christian as we understand the Scriptures, yet, here are his conclusions listed on the back cover of his book: "The Lord's supper should be celebrated frequently in the church, and there is good reason for doing so on each Lord's day . . . The New Testament envisages the use of one loaf and a common cup. It would be good to maintain this symbolism today." Marshall is a very scholarly and respected writer among denominational writers. Concerning the symbolism to be found in the container itself, see Ellis Lindsey's research paper: "The Meaning of 'Cup' in 1 k. 22-20 and 1 Cor. 11:25." This is considered by many to be the definitive work on the subject.

ing forged. Congregations may have been split, but such disturbances were localized and did not carry far reaching effects.

Bread-Breaking¹²⁶

Next came the problem of bread-breaking, or fragmenting the loaf into one or more pieces before the worshippers partake. This seems to have become an issue just after the cup issue. Evidently, when brethren began to question the number of cups to be used in communion, they also questioned how many loaves should be used and whether or not the loaf must remain whole or should be fragmented. The practice of breaking the loaf in half or fragmenting it centered around the meaning of the expression "break bread" as used in Acts 2:42, Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 10:16. It was assumed by the bread-breakers that this meant the loaf must be fragmented or at least broken in half before partaking. Those insisting the loaf must remain whole correctly interpreted "break bread" to mean "break off a portion for the purpose of eating."

Churches using individual cups were not affected by this controversy because they had already broken away with their individual cups. To them, if more than one cup could be used, it was easy to justify the use of more than one loaf, and in some cases, wafers. Plurality of cups and plurality of loaves seemed to go hand in hand. To accept one was to accept the other. Thus, the controversy was confined to churches using one cup.¹²⁷

The debate between J. D. Phillips and Bob Musgraves (a one cup man himself from Elk City, OK) occurred between 1930 to 1932. This was considered by some to be the definitive debate which solidified both sides of the division. Both men were held in high esteem by the sides they represented. Phillips contended the loaf must remain in one piece and Musgraves

¹²⁶ This information came from private conversations with Lynwood Smith and Ronny Wade. I spoke with both on December 1, 1996 and received essentially the same information from both. For a helpful article which gives a brief outline of the bread-breaking arguments and the scriptural response, see Bennie Cryer's article in, *Old Paths Pulpit*, No. 2, Lynwood Smith Pub., pp. 214-221. Also see, *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness*, tract by J. D. Phillips, Ronny Wade Pub., pp. 7-15; *Lindsey-Dickson Debate on One Loaf in Communion*, Ellis Lindsey Pub.; *How Should We Break the Bread? Why?*, tract by E. H. Miller; *The Communion*, tract by J. Ervin Waters, pp. 13-22.

¹²⁷ A rare exception to this would be brother Claude Mickey from Tulia, TX. He and his brethren are unique in that they believe the grape juice must be in one cup before and while being blessed, but may be poured into as many as four other cups after the blessing. Although they use a plurality of cups after the blessing, they believe only one loaf may be used, but they believe it must be broken in half.

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contended for fragmenting the loaf. In 1938 Phillips debated again. This time it was against G. W. Roberts in Flemington, Pennsylvania on, not only the bread-breaking issue, but cups and classes as well. Phillips was, by this time, gaining recognition as the "brotherhood expert" on the subject. J. S. Beddingfield was another opponent around 1941 in the Albuquerque, New Mexico area. That same year Beddingfield would also meet Ervin Waters on the same issue.

The Wine Question¹²⁸

The final issue we will discuss at length is the use of alcoholic or fermented wine in the communion. It was as though the use of individual cups and bread-breaking were not enough to wrangle over. Faithful brethren also had to fight an effort by some to push fermented wine into the communion. This was occurring sometime in the mid-1920s. *The Apostolic Way* carried an article by H. C. Harper on the subject in 1925.¹²⁹ The deep south and the state of Texas were the two areas where fermented wine became an issue and there seemed to be no connection between these two movements. That is, those pushing fermented wine in Texas were not the same ones pushing wine in Mississippi.

In 1928, *The Apostolic Way* carried a written discussion between W. G. Tucker (a wine advocate) and D. L. Shelton (unfermented grape juice).¹³⁰ Tucker was a strong advocate of wine and was moderately successful in persuading some congregations to follow along with his ideas. When he came to the New Salem, Mississippi congregation, he caused a split in the church over the use of wine. The New Salem congregation secured brother H. C. Harper to meet Tucker in a debate. This occurred in 1927 and would last three days.¹³¹ Later Harper would have a written debate with A. J. Trail in 1933. This debate was first published in the paper of which Harper was the editor—*The Truth*. It was later reprinted in tract form by Lynwood Smith.

T. E. ("Nong") Smith, Lynwood Smith's grandfather, became the local leader at New Salem to fight this unscriptural practice. He correctly pointed out that the Lord's Supper was instituted during the Jewish feast of unleavened bread—a time when all leaven was to be removed from the

¹²⁸ This information came from private conversations with Lynwood Smith and Ronny Wade. I spoke with both on December 1, 1996 and received essentially the same information from both.

¹²⁹ Wade, 109.

¹³⁰ Wade, 109.

¹³¹ Wade, 109-110.

houses. Smith correctly argued that fermented wine contains leaven and therefore could not have been what Jesus used. Brother Smith's arguments were weighty with brethren concerned about "doing Bible things in Bible ways," but his arguments were meaningless to those unconcerned about Biblical authority. T. E. Smith became recognized by many as the "brotherhood expert" on the wine issue. Later, Smith's son Carlos took up the cause and became the next "expert." When brother Homer Gay wrote his tract, **The Inside of the Cup**, he admitted he got most of his argumentation and material from Carlos Smith.

Other debates in those days included a debate between T. E. Smith and Hewitt Smith in 1930. This was a written debate published in Harper's **The Truth**. There was also the T. E. Smith—R. T. Case debate in 1939. A synopsis of brother Smith's material on the wine issue was published in tract form by Lynwood Smith entitled, **Emblems of the Body and Blood of the Lord**.

Texas, as was usually the case with most church troubles, also became a hotbed for the wine issue. A former editor of the **Old Paths Advocate**, William Freeman Jones, began to put out his own paper, **Footprints of Time**. Freeman teamed up with Wesley Ballard and John Staley and began to push the wine question. Sometime between 1950 to 1952 Ervin Waters debated Staley in Waco, TX.

Other Issues

- a) Should a second offering of communion be offered in the evening for those unable to attend the Sunday morning service?
- b) It is scriptural to have communion after sunset on Sunday evening? Is this still the first day of the week?¹³²
- c) Do the Scriptures require meeting on Saturday night for communion?
- d) Must the communion be in the afternoon, for, after all, who ever heard of eating a supper in the morning?
- e) Does the order of the church services matter and can the communion come during any portion of the service?
- f) Can raisin water be used for communion when fresh grape juice is unavailable?¹³³

¹³² See Jerry Cutter's article, "The First Day of the Week," OPA, Oct., 1984.

¹³³ See Duane Permenter's article in **Preachers' Study Notes**, 1993. See also J. Durham, via Brandt, 111.

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- g) Do the Scriptures require a song to be sung after the communion?
- h) Can oil be used in making the unleavened loaf, or must flour and water only be used?
- i) Should salt be added to the loaf recipe?
- j) Must whole wheat flour be used when making the loaf?¹³⁴
- k) Is it scriptural to use bottled grape juice that has vitamin C added?
- l) Is it scriptural to have table clothes on the Lord's table?
- m) It is scriptural to set the table without clothes?
- n) What color should the table clothes be?
- o) Should the brother in charge of the table partake first or last?
- p) Should the brother in charge of the table stand or sit while communion is passed?

There is no doubt that some of these issues are posed by brethren and sisters who have some personal agenda to push, but probably most of the issues are discussed in a spirit of true concern to restore the communion to its original state as Jesus and His apostles observed it. Some of these issues involve mere preferences while others involve divine pattern and principles. A careful study of Romans 14 is in order as well as a careful study in rules of hermeneutics. Though brethren generally agree that personal opinions cannot be pushed to the point of division, we need to learn how to distinguish between an opinion and divine law. In almost every case, Scriptures are appealed to in an effort to prove a point as a matter of law. Yet, if sound hermeneutic principles were applied, it would be discovered that mere human opinion is often being promoted. If an item can truly be proven to be part of the divine pattern for communion, then let us insist on that item no matter how small or insignificant it may seem.

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven [emph. mine, gb] (Mt. 5:19).

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¹³⁴ Issues involving the ingredients of the loaf, see Greg Gay's article, "The Bread Which We Break," OPA, Sept., 1982. This has since been put in tract form.

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The New Heavens and New Earth

by Terry Baze

The promise of a new heaven and earth is one of great interest to Christians, as it holds the realization of the hope that every one of us have for the future. We are promised a life beyond this veil of tears, that far exceeds our mortal, corruptible existence here on earth. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19).

The first reference to the "new heaven and earth" in Scripture is found in Isaiah 65:17-18: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." The second occurrence is in virtually the same context in Isaiah 66:22: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain."

There are also two occurrences in the New Testament. The first is found in 2 Peter 3:12-13, which says, "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." Then in Revelation 21:1, John records, "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."

What does the Bible refer to when it speaks of the "new heavens and new earth" that God has promised? As with many Bible subjects, there is certainly a great variety of opinions and interpretations as to what this phrase means. It is probably wise for all to realize that in matters pertaining to life beyond this one on earth ("the age to come"), man is limited in his experience, knowledge and understanding. Revelation seems to be limited on this matter, yet it may be that it is man who is limited and not Revelation. It is best, therefore, not to be dogmatic in our studies and conclusions regarding such matters. The full realization of this promise will no doubt far exceed anything that we have ever imagined it might be while here on this earth. Furthermore, it is important to understand that the exact location of the "new heavens and earth," the particular elements or substance of it, and the specific activities enjoyed therein, need not necessarily be identified with certainty in our present existence. The fact is, these issues are not

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what is really important. What does matter is that the promise is sure and man will best spend his time preparing for that time so as not to miss out on the promise. In 2 Peter 3:17, which is the same context of the promise of a "new heavens and earth" says, "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness" (NAS).

The Difficulty that Often Clouds the Issue

The problem that often causes us to delve into the details of such subjects, is not simply our curiosity of the final things, but the false doctrines that often arise from man's attempts to determine the meaning of Scriptures pertaining to eschatological events. In the particular case of the subject at hand, there are two primary views as to the meaning of the "new heavens and earth." These two viewpoints unfortunately are often tied to one's view on millennialism. Usually, the premillennialist and postmillennialist views "the new heavens and earth" and most prophecy, in a literal sense, while the amillennialist approaches these in a figurative sense. Premillennialists typically believe that the "new heavens and earth" occur during the millennium (literal 1,000 year reign of Christ), which they say occurs after the **parousia** (second coming of Christ), and Postmillennialists usually believe that the "new heavens and earth" occur after the millennium, which they say comes before the **parousia**. The amillennialist believes the whole millennium idea is a symbol. There are no stages or dispensations with series of events and resurrections and kingdoms. When Christ returns it will be the decisive culmination of all things, and the world as we presently know it will give place to the new heaven and earth of God's eternal order. Some amillennialists believe the 1,000 year reign refers to the entire Christian age, while others view the 1,000 years as a symbol of God's complete victory over evil. Most amillennialists view the "new heavens and earth" as simply a figurative phrase referring to heaven itself, while a few believe in the more literal sense that the Premillennialists view the phrase.

As stated, one viewpoint concerning the meaning of the "new heavens and earth" is that it is a figurative reference to heaven itself. The most popular view, however, is that the "new heavens and earth" will be a reconstitution of the present heavens and earth after they have been burned up and melted down. This restoration of the present heavens and earth that has been polluted and corrupted by sin, will be the final abode of the saints where only righteousness will dwell. Essentially, it is the restoring of that which was lost by man at the Fall. It will be a virtual paradise that will be similar, but likely more spiritual, to that found in Eden in Genesis 1-2.

A Note About the History of these Ideas

There is much historical evidence that supports the likelihood that all three of the most common positions concerning the millennium have existed from the first three centuries of the church's existence on earth. It is pure subjectivism which contends its particular position is the only historical one from the early church. Since this debate has existed for centuries, it is all the more unlikely that we can assume to settle it in such a brief work as this.

It is important to our study to look at the Biblical evidence dealing with the phrase "new heavens and earth" as objectively as possible, without regard to one's position on the millennium.

Isaiah 65:17; 66:22

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD (Is. 65:17-25).

Verse 17 contains the promise of a "new heavens and a new earth." God said he would "create" them, which shows that this is not a reference to heaven itself. A similar statement is made in Isaiah 66:22, where the Bible says, "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name re-

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main." The words "create" in Isaiah 65:17 and "make" in Isaiah 66:22, are found throughout the creation account in Genesis 1-2.

Old Testament Hebrew had no single word for "universe," and the phrase "heaven and earth" serves to supply the deficiency. The original word in Genesis (Gen. 1) for heaven is in the plural number, and this is the consistent usage of the word in Scripture, therefore, the promise is not of a new "heaven," but "heavens." Accordingly, the ancient Jewish writers spoke of three heavens, which reminds us of the apostle Paul being "caught up into the third heaven." It is this, the third heaven, which is usually supposed to be the residence of God; so far as any residence can be ascribed to his omnipresent Spirit, who pervades and fills the whole universe. It is here (if we speak after the manner of men) that the Lord sits on His throne, surrounded by all the heavenly host. We cannot think that this heaven will undergo any change, any more than its Inhabitor. Surely this palace of the Most High was the same from eternity, and will be, world without end. Only the inferior heavens are liable to change; the highest of which we usually call the starry heaven.

The question is whether this promise of a "new heavens and a new earth" is therefore equivalent to a promise of world renewal (a reconstitution of the present heavens and earth), or is this phrase a figure, or symbol of a new order, or state of things? The answer to this question generally has much to do with a man's theology and his hermeneutics. How are we to interpret prophecy? Is one inclined to interpret prophecy according to a literal view or to a spiritual one? Does one look to a historical fulfillment or a futuristic one? Let us consider some sound principles of interpretation before we attempt to answer the question set before us.

Principles of Interpreting Prophecy

Allow the New Testament to interpret the Old Testament prophecies if possible. Remember that the Messiah's reign is spiritual, rather than material. This is perhaps the greatest mistake the Jews made in rejecting Him. The blessings of Christ's reign which are cast in material terms refer in principle to the spiritual blessings enjoyed in the kingdom of God. Many of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel are fulfilled in the church which is the new Israel. Biblical prophecies can have more than one level of fulfillment. The prophets often while speaking to their contemporaries and making predictions in terms of their immediate situation, also may have reference to events hundreds, even thousands of years later.

Back to the Question

The question posed was whether the promise of a "new heavens and a new earth" is a promise of world renewal (a reconstitution of the present heavens and earth), or if the phrase is a figure, or symbol of a new order, or state of things? Primarily, the passage is dealing with a prophecy concerning a promise of a new order, or state of things. The reference is to the Messianic kingdom, the church, or Christian age. The context of verse 17 and the related passage in chapter 66, as well as other similar prophecies will bear this out.

For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD (Is. 66:18-23).

Verses 18-20 are clearly prophetic predictions concerning God's acceptance of the Gentiles. The vital keys to this passage are: the phrase "to my holy mountain;" verse 21 which refers to the universal priesthood of believers taught in 1 Peter 2: 5, 9 and Revelation 1:5-6; then, verse 22 connects the prophecy with Isaiah 65:17 by mentioning the "new heavens and the new earth;" and finally, verse 23 predicts the worship of God by the church.

God's Holy Mountain

The church is the target of the prophecy by virtue of the phrase "holy mountain," made evident by studying similar terms in other prophecies.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that *the mountain of the Lord's house* shall be established in the top of the mountains, and

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shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Is. 2:2-4).

The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in Acts 2 in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, when the Lord's church was established. Now consider the prophecy of Isaiah 11:11:1-9.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb*, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy *in all my holy mountain*: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

This is clearly a Messianic prophecy according to verses 1-5. Notice the similarity of Isaiah 65:25, "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD," to verses 6-7 of Isaiah 11. The "holy mountain" of Isaiah 65:25 is in the immediate context of verse 17 which promises the "new heavens and earth."

A New Spiritual Order

The coming Messiah would introduce a new spiritual order or arrangement. In Ephesians 1:10, Paul said, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." This is what Isaiah is prophesying when he speaks of the "new heavens and earth" that God would create. The fact that a new order would commence implied the passing away of the present order. This was prophesied in a number of places.

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 . . . And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people (Is. 51:6, 16; see Joel 2:1-3; Is. 34:4-5).

This "planting" of the heavens, and "laying" the foundations of the earth refer to the new order. Isaiah 45:8 captures the spiritual aspect of such phrases, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it." That which the Lord created was a new system of righteousness and salvation through the Messiah, Jesus Christ. This new order found fulfillment in the kingdom of God, the church.

God said through Isaiah that He would create the new heavens and the new earth. The change was made the One who had the authority to make new ordinances, as well as power to make new worlds. It was a very great and universal change. Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17). The Old Covenant was set aside, and a new covenant, a covenant of grace, established (1 Heb. 8:13). We are now to serve in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:6). New commandments and new promises are given making a New Testament. It was to be an everlasting change (a change never to be changed); a new world that will be always new, and never wax old, as that which is ready to vanish away. It shall remain unalterable, for the gospel dispensation is to continue to the end of time and not to be succeeded by any other. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom that cannot be moved; the laws and

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privileges of it are things that cannot be shaken, but shall for ever remain (Heb. 12:27-28). It shall therefore remain, because it is before God; it is under his eye, and care, and special protection. God, therefore, created new heavens and a new earth, and these are preparative for the new heavens and new earth designed at the end of time (2 Pet. 3:13).

Isaiah 65:22 reads, "Your seed, and in them your name, shall remain." This refers to a seed of Christians; as one generation passes away, another generation shall come; and thus the name of Christ, with that of Christians, shall continue on earth while the it remains.

I especially like the comments of Matthew Henry on verse 23 (except of course his statement about monthly communion):

The public worship of God in religious assemblies shall be carefully and constantly attended upon by all that are thus brought as an offering to the Lord, according to verse 23. This is described in expressions suited to the Old-Testament dispensation, to show that though the ceremonial law should be abolished, and the temple service should come to an end, yet God should be still as regularly, constantly, and acceptably worshipped as ever. Heretofore only Jews went up to appear before God, and they were bound to attend only three times a year, and the males only; but now all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, women as well as men, shall come and worship before God, in his presence, though not in his temple at Jerusalem, but in religious assemblies dispersed all the world over, which shall be to them as the tabernacle of meeting was to the Jews. God will in them record his name, and, though but two or three come together, he will be among them, will meet them, and bless them. And they shall have the benefit of these holy convocations frequently, every new moon and every sabbath, not, as formerly, at the three annual feasts only. There is no necessity of one certain place, as the temple was of old. Christ is our temple, in whom by faith all believers meet, and now that the church is so far extended it is impossible that all should meet at one place; but it is fit that there should be a certain time appointed, that the service may be done certainly and frequently, and a token thereby given of the spiritual communion which all Christian assemblies have with each other by faith, hope, and holy love. The new moons and the sabbaths are mentioned because, under the law, though the yearly feasts were to be celebrated at Jerusalem, yet the new moons and the sabbaths were religiously observed all the country over, in the schools of the prophets first and afterwards in the synagogues (2 Kin. 4:23, Amos 8:5, Acts 15:21), according to the model of which

Christian assemblies seem to be formed. Where the Lord's day is weekly sanctified, and the Lord's supper monthly celebrated, and both are duly attended on, there this promise is fulfilled, there the Christian new moons and sabbaths are observed" (Matthew Henry, Commentary on Isaiah 66).

Back to Isaiah 65

The entire passage is quoted again since we have been pursuing other prophecies. Isaiah 65:17-25 says,

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

Verse 18 says, "You shall be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create. The new things which God creates in and by his gospel are a matter of everlasting joy to all believers. He says, "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy." The church shall not only rejoice but be rejoiced in. Verse 19 reads, "I will rejoice in Jerusalem's joy, and will joy in my people; for in all their affliction he was afflicted." God will not only rejoice in the church's well-doing, but will Himself rejoice to do her good and rest in His love for her (Zeph. 3:17). Here are some related prophecies referring to this great time of joy (Is. 25:9; 35:10; 51:11; 62:5).

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The rest of the passage deals with the joy and peace that Christians possess in the kingdom. The life that they enjoy is of such greater quality and on a higher, more spiritual plane than life under the Old Covenant that Isaiah could fitly say that God would create a new heavens and earth.

There shall be a new enjoyment of the comforts of life. If we have opportunity to enjoy it, that is the gift of God's grace (Eccl. 3:13); and, if we live to enjoy it long, it is the gift of God's providence, for that is here promised: "As the days of a tree are the days of my people; as the days of an oak (Is. 6:13), whose substance is in it, though it cast its leaves; though it be stripped every winter, it recovers itself again, and lasts many ages; as the days of the tree of life" (the Septuagint). Christ is to them the tree of life, and in him believers enjoy all those spiritual comforts which are typified by the abundance of temporal blessings here promised; and it shall not be in the power of their enemies to deprive them of these blessings or disturb them in the enjoyment of them.

There shall be a good correspondence between them and their God (v. 24): Even before they call, I will answer. God will anticipate their prayers with the blessings of his goodness. David did say, "I will confess, and God forgave" (Ps. 32:5). The father of the prodigal met him in his return. While they are yet speaking, before they have finished their prayer, I will give them the thing they pray for, or the assurances and earnest of it. These are high expressions of God's readiness to hear prayer; and this appears much more in the grace of the gospel than it did under the law; we owe the comfort of it to the mediation of Christ as our advocate with the Father and are obliged in gratitude to give a ready ear to God's calls.

There shall be a good correspondence between them and their neighbors (v. 25): The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, as they did in Noah's ark. God's people, though they are as sheep in the midst of wolves, shall be safe and unhurt; for God will not so much break the power and tie the hands of their enemies as formerly, but he will turn their hearts, will alter their dispositions by his grace. When Paul, who had been a persecutor of the disciples (and who, being of the tribe of Benjamin, ravened as a wolf, Gen. 49:27) joined himself to them and became one of them, then the wolf and the lamb fed together. So also when the enmity between Jews and Gentiles was slain, all hostilities ceased, and they fed together as one sheepfold under Christ the great Shepherd (Jn. 10:16).

Men shall be changed. When those that lived by spoil and rapine, and coveted to enrich themselves, are brought by the grace of God to accommodate themselves to their condition, to live by honest labor, and to be

content with such things as they have—when those that stole steal no more, but work with their hands the thing that is good—then this is fulfilled, that the lion shall eat straw like the bullock.

Satan was chained, the dragon bound; for dust is the serpent's meat. All the enemies of God's church, that are subtle and venomous as serpents, shall be conquered and subdued, and be made to lick the dust, Christ reigns as Zion's King till all the enemies of his kingdom be made his footstool. In the holy mountain above, and there only, shall this promise have its full accomplishment, that there shall be none to hurt nor destroy.

Hebrews 12

Isaiah 13:13 uses somewhat different terms to describe the events of the destruction of the heavens and earth: "Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger." This ties in yet one more relevant passage to our study in this section found in Hebrews 12:22-28.

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

There is little question whatsoever that within the context of the Hebrew letter the essential and prevailing message is of the superiority of the Christian age to that of the Mosaic. Once again, the writer is following this line of reasoning as he introduces some interesting terminology in chapter 12. Notice carefully verse 26, "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." Two passages from Joel are related to this "shaking":

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Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them (Joel 2:1-3).

The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come (Joel 2:10, 28-31).

Other passages refer to this "shaking" as a period of judgment to be exercised on the Jews and the Mosaic system, as the Messianic age dawns.

And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth (Is. 2:19).

Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger (Is. 13:13)

The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel (Joel 3:16).

For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

This relates primarily to the building of the second Temple by Zerubabel. Jesus is "the desire of all nations" and the shaking of the heavens and the earth was to commence soon with the coming of the Messiah and the

inauguration of the new era under him. Therefore in Hebrews 12:27 we read, "And this word, *Yet once more* [cf. Hosea 2:6-7], signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

"Yet once more" means one more time. The shaking will continue until all things perishable shall be removed; so that nothing will remain but what is eternal and immutable. This leads to the next verse, which identifies what cannot be shaken as the kingdom of God. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28, KJV).

The Dual Nature of Isaiah's Prophecy

We have gone to great lengths to show that Isaiah's prophecy was one relating to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. However, it is important to note that as we move to related passages in the New Testament, Peter says in 2 Peter 3:12-13, "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." Peter says, "according to his promise," we "look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The promise that Peter refers to must come from Isaiah 65:17. Peter, therefore, shows us that Isaiah looked forward to the end of time, as well as seeing the establishment of a new heavens and a new earth, as the conditions that would exist when Christ set up his kingdom on the earth. From Isaiah's perspective, he saw the kingdom in all its glory, hundreds of years before it arrived. From Peter's perspective, he looks forward to a new order where there will be a full accomplishment of God's will, when sin and death will have ultimately been overthrown and defeated, and where all will be a perfect state of eternal life and bliss in communion with God. In a sense, Isaiah's prophecy may find fulfillment in the kingdom of God, in its yet imperfect state on earth in this age, as well as looking toward its perfect state, which occurs after the present heavens and earth are dissolved

2 Peter 3

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

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his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless (2 Pet. 3:11-14).

Thus, Peter informs us that this present heavens and earth, "is reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." In that day, it shall, first, "shrivel as a parchment scroll;" then "be dissolved, and shall pass away with a great noise;" lastly, it shall "flee from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and there shall be found no place for it."

Peter takes occasion thence to exhort Christians to pure and godly lives. Seeing all these things must be dissolved, how holy should we be, departing from the sin that has so corrupted and defiled all creation that there is an absolute need of its dissolution! All that was made for man's use is subject to vanity by man's sin: and if the sin of man has brought the visible heavens and earth, under a curse, from which they cannot be freed without dissolution, what an abominable evil is sin, and how much to be hated!

We must keep ourselves unspotted from the world. We must be perfecting holiness in both the fear and love of God. We must exercise ourselves unto godliness, trusting and delighting in God. We should devote ourselves to the service of God, glorifying and enjoying Him who endures forever; whereas what worldly men delight in and follow after must all be dissolved. Those things which we now see must in a little while pass away. Let us focus therefore on what shall abide and continue, which, though it be not present, is certain and not far off. This looking for the day of God is one of the directions the apostle gives us, in order to our being eminently holy and godly in all manner of conversation. "Look for the day of God as what you firmly believe shall come, and what you earnestly long for." The coming of that day is what every Christian must hope for and earnestly expect; for it is a day when Christ shall appear in the glory of the Father.

The most important consideration in the entire passage is to prepare for the coming of the Lord. The focus is not on the particular nature or whereabouts of the new heaven and earth, but simply to prepare for the Day of the Lord. We must not miss this exhortation in our efforts to investigate the promise. John speaks similarly of the resurrected, glorified body, and the fact that those who have this hope purify themselves, in 1 John 3:2-3. One note of interest is that regarding the glorified body he said, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." It may be presumptuous to think we can know what the new heavens and earth shall be, when John says of our glorified body that such revelation has not been given.

The Dissolution of the Present Heavens and Earth

The promise of the dissolution of the heavens and earth are likened to the destruction of the world in Noah's day by the deluge.

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Pet. 3:5-7).

The various terms and phrases Peter uses to describe the dissolution of the present heavens and earth follows in verses 10-13.

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 (KJV).

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will *pass away* with a roar and the *elements will be destroyed* with intense heat, and the earth and its works *will be burned up*. Since all these things are to be *destroyed* in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be *destroyed by burning*, and the elements will *melt* with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. (NAS)

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will *disappear* with a roar; the elements will be *destroyed* by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be *laid bare*. Since everything will be *destroyed* in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the *destruction* of the heavens by fire, and the elements will *melt* in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. (NIV)

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Annihilation or Reconstitution

It behooves us to study the various terms employed to attempt to determine whether or not the passage teaches that this present world will be totally annihilated, or reconstituted. If this can be answered with any certainty, it will be invaluable in determining the truth concerning the nature of the new heavens and earth.

Apollumi (ap-ol'-loo-mee) is the Greek word for the term perished in verse six that refers to the flood in Noah's day. It is defined as, "to destroy fully (reflexively, to perish, or lose), literally or figuratively." It is translated in the KJV, "destroy," "die," "lose," "mar," and "perish." Peter uses the same words "heavens" and "earth" in verse 5 and in the next verse says the "world perished." The "world" was obviously a reference to the people on the earth and not the earth itself, as Noah and his family continued to reside on the literal earth. The "world" that perished could also have reference to the state of affairs that existed at that time. In other words, the state of things was such that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Gen. 6:5, KJV)." Therefore, the possibility certainly exists that the terms "heavens and earth" might be a symbol for a state, order, or arrangement of things, as we concluded from Isaiah's prophecies. The problem here, however, is that Peter seems to clearly be referring to the literal heavens and earth when he says in 2 Peter 3:5, "For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God [the] heavens existed long ago and [the] earth was formed out of water and by water" (NAS).

There are a couple of things to consider which do not necessarily help to clear this matter. First, if this is to be a parallel of how the literal heavens and earth are to be destroyed, then we might conclude that the second destruction would not annihilate the present heavens and earth. Similarly, we might continue this line of reasoning by looking at the term translated "dissolved," or "destroyed," which refers to the end of the present heavens and earth. This is the Greek word *luo* (loo'-o), which means "to loosen" (literally or figuratively). It is translated in the KJV, "break up," "destroy," "dissolve," "unloose," "melt," or "put off." In John 2:19, "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." His body was "destroyed" by death and it certainly was not annihilated. Yet in I John 3:8, which says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil;" "destroy" seems to contain the meaning of annihilation, or non-existence.

Secondly, if the destruction is referring to the current state of things, and the promise is one of a new order, or arrangement, as we concluded in Isaiah, then we might look at the "passing away" of the present heavens and earth like we would the Mosaic Dispensation. It was abolished and taken out of the way. It ceased to exist as far as God's will or order was concerned. The phrase "pass away" is from the word **parerchomai** (par-er'-khom-ahee), which means "to come near or aside, i.e. to approach (arrive), go by (or away), (figuratively) perish or neglect, avert." It is translated in the KJV, "come" (forth), "go," "pass" (away, by, over), "past," and "transgress." The heavens will "pass away," or "disappear" (NIV, NEB), "vanish" (Moffatt). Consider Matthew 24:35 "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Also in Matthew 24:39, Jesus said, "And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." The contemporaries of Noah "passed away" by being destroyed, or removed from this earth. Revelation 20:11 says, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." Then in Revelation 21:1, we find, "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." This certainly suggests that Peter is describing an "annihilation" of the universe, and not simply a fiery purification of it. In this case we might conclude that the present, literal heavens and earth would be abolished, or annihilated.

Peter says the "elements," are to be burned up with intense heat. "Elements" is from the Greek word **stoicheion**, which refers to the elements from which all things have come, the material causes of the universe. It includes the heavenly bodies, either as parts of the heavens or (as others think) because in them the elements of man, life and destiny were supposed to reside. The word "burn" is from the Greek word **puroo**, which means, to burn with fire, to set on fire, or to kindle. One of Thayer's definitions is "melted by fire and purged of dross." Some of the passages which use this word are:

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will *burn up* the chaff with unquenchable fire (Mt. 3:12).

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to *burn* them: but gather the wheat into my barn . . . As therefore the tares are gathered and *burned* in the fire; so shall

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it be in the end of this world (Mt. 13:30, 40; see also I.k. 3:17; Acts 19:19; 1 Cor. 3:15; Heb. 13:11; Rev. 8:7; Rev. 17:16; 18:8).

The Greek term **teko** (tay'-ko), in this passage means to liquefy. This is the only occurrence of the word in Scripture. A similar term is found in 2 Peter 2:6, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." The word for "ashes" is **tephroo** (tef-ro'-o) which is from **tephra** (ashes), and means to incinerate, or consume.

Before we come to a conclusion let us consider a number of other related passages in Scripture:

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed (Ps. 102:25-26).

Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure; and all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing Thou wilt change them, and they will be changed (v. 26, NAS)

They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded (v. 26, NIV).

While it seems this verse teaches annihilation, notice the end of the verse is translated "changed" (KJV, NAS), yet the NIV says, "discarded." The Hebrew word is **chalaph** (khaw-laf'), a primitive root word which properly means, to slide by, to hasten away, pass on, spring up, pierce or change. The KJV translates the word "abolish," "alter," "change," "cut off," "go on forward," "grow up," "be over," "pass" (away, on, through), "renew," "sprout," "strike through."

Brown, Driver and Briggs says the word means: "to pass on or away, to pass through, to pass by, to go through, to grow up, to change, to go on." This passage is quoted in the book of Hebrews:

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail (Heb. 1:10-12; see also Job 9:25-26; 14:12; Is. 24:19; 34:4; 51:6; 54:10; Rev. 6:14; Mt. 5:18; 24:35; 1 Cor. 7:31; Rev. 20:11).

This world and everything therein is mutable. It has passed through many changes, and shall pass through more. All these changes are by the permission and under the direction of Christ, who made the world (Heb. 1:11-12): "They shall perish, they shall all wax old as doth a garment; as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed." The visible world (both the earth and visible heavens) is growing old. Not only men and beasts and trees grow old, but this world itself grows old, and is hastening to its dissolution. It changes like a garment. It has lost much of its beauty and strength through the fall, and it has been waxing older and growing weaker ever since. It bears the symptoms of a dying world.

But will its dissolution be its utter destruction, or its change? Christ will fold up this world as a garment not to be used any longer as it has been. Sin has made a great change in the world for the worse, and Christ will make a great change in it for the better. We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let the consideration of this wean us from the present world, and make us watchful, diligent, and desirous of that better world, and let us wait on Christ to change us into a meetness for that new world that is approaching; we cannot enter into it till we are new creatures. But as we have seen, both the immediate context ("pass away," "melt," "dissolve," in 2 Pet. 3) and the remote context ("pass away," "no place found for them," Rev. 20:11; 21:1) speaks strongly for annihilation. The "day of the Lord" will truly be a cataclysmic end to the earth and universe as we know it!

Some Thoughts on the Idea of Renewal

There are many who hold to the idea that the promise of a new heavens and earth refer to a renewed, or reconstituted heavens and earth. Some of the prominent arguments for this case will be considered:

"New"

The promise Peter alludes to is of a "new" (*kainos*) heavens and earth. The word is defined: a) as respects form: recently made, fresh, recent, unused, unworn b) as respects substance: of a new kind, unprecedented, novel, uncommon, unheard of. It is a different word for "new" than the one meaning new with respect to age or time. For example, in John 19:41, the Bible says, "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid." This "new" tomb, was not newly made, but was new in the sense that no one had ever used it. The argument is that this new heavens and earth will be "new" in

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the sense of a new kind, unprecedented, or novel. In other words this reconstruction and perfection of heaven and earth will be "new" to man's experience.

"Recreation"

"Rooted deep in Jewish thought was the dream of a new heaven and a new earth, a re-creation of the universe that would occur following the Day of the Lord (Is. 13:10-13; Joel 2:1-2, 30-31). The concept of a re-created universe is closely related to the biblical account of the Creation and the Fall (Gen. 1:1) and the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Because of their sin, "the creation was subjected to futility . . . [and] the bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8:19, 21). The need for a new heaven and a new earth arises from man's sin and God's judgment, not from some deficiency or evil in the universe (Gen. 3:17).

The apostle Peter referred to the Old Testament doctrine of the Day of the Lord and applied it to the events that will occur at the Second Coming of Christ (2 Pet. 3:10, 13). When Christ returns, this present evil age will give way to the age to come. The universe will be purified and cleansed by the power of God. This will be reminiscent of the purging of the earth in the days of Noah, but on a universal scale." (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary Copyright (C) 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

The end correspondent to the beginning is a principle worth our consideration. Scripture does not look forward to a repetition of the same process, but to a restoration of the primeval harmony on a higher plane such as precludes all further disturbance. In many of the passages above cited, there are clear reminiscences of the account of creation, "that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth" (Isa 51:16); "I create new heavens and a new earth" (65:17); the promise of the new heavens and earth (2 Pet 3:13); as well as John's vision of it (Rev 21:1; cf. images of Rev. 21-22). Besides this, there is at least the possibility of the renewal of earth in older prophecy, depicting the state of paradise (Isa. 11:6-9; Hos. 2:18-21). The "regeneration" (**palingenesis**) of Matthew 19:28 may also point back to the first genesis of the world.

Palingenesis: In Matthew 19:28, the term **palingenesis** marks the world-renewing as the renewal of an abnormal state of things. The term **palingenesis** points to renewal, not to creation *de novo*. The Talmud also teaches that the world will pass through a process of purification. The Scripture teaching, therefore, is that around the center of God's heaven, which is not subject to deterioration or renewal, a new cosmical heaven and

a new earth will be established to be the dwelling-place of the eschatological humanity. The light in which the promise thus appears reminds us that the renewed kosmos, earth as well as cosmical heavens, is destined to play a permanent (not merely provisional, on the principle of chiliasm) part in the future life of the people of God. This is in entire harmony with the prevailing Biblical representation, not only in the Old Testament but likewise in the New Testament (cf. Mt 5:5; Heb 2:5).

The World to Come—Hebrews 2 and Psalms 8

The "inhabited earth to come" (*oikoumene mellousa*) of Hebrews 2:5 occurs at the opening of a context throughout which the account of Genesis 1-3 evidently stood before the writer's mind. The passage in Hebrews 2 is a reference to Psalms 8:

For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings (Heb. 2:5-10).

The phrase "world to come" is from the Greek term *oikoumene*, which is not the usual word for earth *kosmos* or age *aion*. The latter term is used in Hebrews 6:5, which is translated the same in English, "And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the *world to come*."

Oikoumene means: "the inhabited earth . . . the universe, the world." The word is used in the following passages:

Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken (1.k. 21:26).

And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time (1.k. 4:5; see also Acts 11:28; 17:31; Rev. 12:9).

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Since the word is defined as the inhabited earth, this is said to prove that the earth will be renewed and not annihilated. Of more importance, is the meaning of the overall context. This passage in Hebrews 2 discusses the original purpose of man as God intended when He put man on the earth, as found in Genesis:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth . . . And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Gen. 1:26, 28; cf. Gen. 2:15; 9:2).

Psalms 8 is reference to these verses:

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; 8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas (Ps. 8:3-8).

The phrase "son of man" is usually used to refer to humanity, in spite of the fact that Jesus designated Himself as the Son of man (Mt. 8:20, et al.).

A parallel passage to Psalms 8 is Psalms 144:3-4, which says, "LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away." Clearly, the "son of man" here is a reference to man in general. Therefore, Hebrews 2 is speaking of God's initial purpose for man which man forfeited by virtue of the fall. Genesis 3:17-19, "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Also, Genesis 5:29, "And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our

work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed." Through Jesus Christ, man will finally and ultimately achieve this purpose by ruling and reigning over the new heavens and earth.

The Effect the Fall Has Had on All Creation

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5).

For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope (Rom. 8:20).

How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end (Jer. 12:4; see also Jer. 12:11; 14:5; Hos. 4:3; Joel 1:18).

"Heaven and earth shall pass away" (Mt. 24:35; Rev. 6:14), but this does not mean that God's eternal home in heaven and the eternal home—the earth—that He has ordained for mankind would be destroyed and thus leave no abiding place for Him and His creatures, for the literal heavens and earth abide forever (Eccl. 1:4). That just as "the old world" (the order of affairs among men before the Flood) "being overflowed with water perished" (2 Pet. 2:5; 3:6), but the literal earth remained, so "this present world" (or order of affairs, Gal. 1:4; 2 Tim. 4:10; Tit. 2:12), with its heavens and earth (its false secular and religious powers), is "reserved unto fire," is to "pass away with a great noise," and is to be "devoured with the fire of my [God's] jealousy [zeal]" (2 Pet. 3:7, 10-12; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8; Hag. 2:6, 7; Heb. 12:26-28), but the literal earth is to remain.

Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent (Zeph. 3:8-9).

In "the world to come" (the new order of affairs—Heb. 2:5), according to God's promise, there will be "new heavens [new religious ruling powers—Christ's kingdom] and a new earth [human society organized on a new basis], wherein dwelleth righteousness [justice, and love, not injustice, and hatred]" (2 Pet. 3:13; Is. 65:17; 66:22; Rev. 21:1).

The Truth on Hebrews 2

After much meditation, study and research, I believe the comments of F. F. Bruce in his commentary on the book of Hebrews best captures the true thoughts of the Holy Spirit in this passage:

Our author, however, applies these words not to the first Adam but to Christ as the last Adam, the head of the new creation and ruler of the world to come. Here is probably a tacit identification of "the son of man" in Psalms 8:4 with the "one like unto the son of man" in Daniel 7:3, who receives from the Ancient of Days "an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away". It is true that in the Psalm the "son of man" stands in a relation of synonyms parallelism with "man" in the preceding line; but then it is equally true that "one like unto a son of man" in Daniel 7:13 simply means "one like a human being". The fact remains that, ever since Jesus spoke of Himself as the Son of Man, this expression has had for Christians a connotation beyond its etymological force, and it had this connotation for writer to the Hebrews.

The conception of Christ as the last Adam is certainly no innovation on our authors part, and it may not even be original with Paul - especially if we can recognize in Phil. 2:6-11 a prePauline hymn in which the faithfulness of the second man is contrasted with the fall of the first man. God's man as the fulfiller of God's purpose meets us in the Old Testament; he is "the man of thy right hand . . . the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself" for whose triumph another psalmist praise to God (Ps. 80:17). When one man fails in the accomplishment of the divine purpose (as, in some degree, all did in O.T. times), God raises up another to take his place. But who could take the place of Adam? Only one who was capable of undoing the effects of Adam's fall and thus ushering in a new world order. It is unnecessary to look for the origins of this conception in the idea of a Heavenly Man belonging, perhaps, to the Zoroastrian realm of thought. The N. T. portrayal of Christ as the last Adam can be accounted for adequately on the basis of the O.T., interpreted in the light of the character and achievement of Christ.

The quotation from Psalms 8 is linked with what has gone before in that the clause with which the quotation ends—"Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet (echoes the earlier quotation from Ps. 110:1) till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet." Not His enemies only, but the whole creation, will ultimately be brought into manifest subjection to Him.

It is as the true representation of humanity that Christ is viewed as fulfilling the language of the Psalm, and as fulfilling therewith the declared purpose of the Creator when he brought man into being. As mankind's true representative, accordingly, he must share in the conditions inseparable from man's estate; only so could he blaze the trail of salvation for mankind and act effectively as His people's high priest in the presence of God. This means that He is not only the one in whom the sovereignty destined for man is realized, but also the one who, because of man's sin must realize that sovereignty by way of suffering and death. Therefore He who has already been introduced as "so much better than the angels" had to be "made a little lower than the angels," as the Psalmist said.

The new earth, then, refers to the perfected state of the created universe and the final dwelling place of the righteous. This explains Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:5, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

The Resurrection Body

Here is perhaps the most worthy argument for the renewed, reconstructed earth. It has to do with the fact that we are promised to have glorified, immortal bodies given to us at the resurrection. Paul discusses this concept at length in 1 Corinthians 15:

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:40-44, 49-54).

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The essence of the argument is that since God is going to essentially re-constitute our bodies into glorified, immortal bodies, so will He do the same with this earth. He will liquefy it by melting it down with intense heat, and then He will recreate it out of the same elements into a purified, glorious state. The final argument for this view will be discussed in the next section.

The New Jerusalem and Revelation 21

The final passage to consider in our study is found in Revelation 21. Once again we have a promise of the new heavens and earth, this time through the vision of the apostle John. The proponents of a literal new heavens and earth use this passage to teach that even a literal city called "New Jerusalem" will descend from heaven to this reconstituted earth. Some believe it will contain the throne of God and heaven itself, and others hold many varying views regarding the New Jerusalem and the millennium.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:1-2).

We have here a more general account of the happiness of the church of God in the future state, by which it seems most safe to understand the heavenly state. A new world now opens to our view (v. 1): I saw a new heaven and a new earth; that is, a new universe; for we suppose the world to be made up of heaven and earth. By the new earth we may understand a new state for the bodies of men, as well as a heaven for their souls. This world is not now newly created, but newly opened, and filled with all those who were the heirs of it. The new heaven and the new earth will not then be distinct; the very earth of the saints, their glorified bodies, will now be spiritual and heavenly, and suited to those pure and bright mansions. To make way for the commencement of this new world, the old world, with all its troubles and commotions, passed away. In this new world the apostle saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, not literally, but this new Jerusalem is the church of God in its new and perfect state, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, beautified with all perfection of wisdom and holiness, meet for the full fruition of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory.

Let us consider the statement "the sea was no more." There is much speculation as to what this means. Here are some other verses that may help us determine the meaning of this phrase:

In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea (Is. 27:1).

But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt (Is. 57:20).

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy (Rev. 13:1).

The inspired writer has expressly declared, "there will be no more sea." This expression most likely refers to the troubled, sinful state of the heathen peoples of this world who have rejected the gospel. There will be no more of that sinful, troubled, decadent state of affairs.

Now let's look at the city:

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name (Rev. 3:12).

For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10).

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels (Heb. 12:22; cf. Heb. 13:14).

These references in Hebrews find their fulfillment in Revelation 21-22. In Revelation, the "new Jerusalem" is not descriptive of any actual locality on earth, but allegorically depicts the final state of the church ("the bride," "the wife of the Lamb," Rev 21:2,9), when the new heaven and the new earth shall have come into being. It is the culmination of the historic process of redemption. In other New Testament passages, the anti-typical Jerusalem appears as having its seat in heaven instead of, as here, coming down from heaven to earth (Gal 4:26; Heb. 11:10; 12:22).

For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all (Gal. 4:25-26).

The Jerusalem that is from above is free and is the mother of us all. In the graces and comforts which believers have in and from Christ we are to

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look for this new heaven and new earth. It is in the gospel that old things have passed away and all things have become new, and by it that those who are in Christ are new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17).

The inhabitants of the city (besides its being the abode of the Triune God) consist of: (1) The bride, the Lamb's wife, the church, referred to as "the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven." (2) The redeemed saints of the O.T. These are referred to as "the spirits of righteous men made perfect." (3) "Myriads of angels," i.e., unfallen angels. Our Lord referred to this city in John 14:2-3 when He said He would go away and would come again and that He was preparing "a place" for His disciples.

Entrance to the city will be by translation (glorification) or resurrection, both in the case of the church saints and the saved Old Testament saints.

The city is called "the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (v. 9). This shows its connection with the church, the bride, being called "wife" here because the symbolism of marriage is viewed as consummated, indicating that Christ is joined gloriously with His redeemed people of this age from Pentecost to the translation. Just as the false bride, "Mystery Babylon the Great," was both a city (Rome), and a woman. We have seen how that one was destroyed for its evil. A bride speaks of intimacy, and a city speaks of community. So we have a picture here of the redeemed of God. We will live in close intimacy, not only with the Lord himself, but with each other as well.

Verse 3 reads, "The blessed presence of God with his people is here proclaimed and admired: I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men."

And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness (Is. 16:5).

Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken (Is. 33:20).

My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Ezek. 37:27).

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But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building (Heb. 9:11).

Observe that the presence of God with his church is the glory of the church. The presence of God with his people in heaven will not be interrupted as it is on earth, but he will dwell with them continually. The covenant, interest, and relation, that there are now between God and his people, will be filled up and perfected in heaven. They shall be his people; their souls shall be assimilated to him, filled with all the love, honor, and delight in God which their relation to him requires, and this will constitute their perfect holiness; and he will be their God: God himself will be their God; his immediate presence with them, his love fully manifested to them, and his glory put upon them, will be their perfect happiness.

All the causes of future sorrow shall be for ever removed: There shall be neither death nor pain; and therefore no sorrow nor crying; these are things incident to that state in which they were before, but now all former things have passed away.

Conclusion

Please consider the following passages in the light of our study: Matthew 28:18; Psalm 73:24; 110:1; 1 Corinthians 15:19, 24-27; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Ephesians 1:6, 14, 22; 2:7; 3:21; Hebrews 2:8; 1 Peter 3:22; 4:11; Daniel 7:14; Isaiah 43:7, 21; 35:10; 60:21; John 13:31; 14:3; 15:8; 17:24; Romans 9:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Philippians 1:23.

The truth and certainty of this blessed state are ratified by the word and promise of God, and ordered to be committed to writing, as matter of perpetual record, verses 5-6. The subject-matter of this vision is so great, and of such great importance to the church and people of God, that they have need of the fullest assurances of it; and God therefore from heaven repeats and ratifies the truth thereof. Besides, many ages must pass between the time when this vision was given forth and the accomplishment of it, and many great trials must intervene; and therefore God would have it committed to writing, for perpetual memory, and continual use to his people.

It was His glory that He gave the rise and beginning to the world and to His church, it will be His glory to finish the work begun, and not to leave it imperfect. As His power and will were the first cause of all things, His pleasure and glory are the last end, and He will not lose His design; for then He would no longer be the Alpha and Omega. Men may begin designs

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which they can never bring to perfection; but the counsel of God shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure.

The desires of His people towards this blessed state furnish another evidence of the truth and certainty of it. They thirst after a state of sinless perfection and the uninterrupted enjoyment of God, and God has wrought in them these longing desires, which cannot be satisfied with any thing else, and therefore would be the torment of the soul if they were disappointed but it would be inconsistent with the goodness of God, and His love to His people, to create in them holy and heavenly desires, and then deny them their proper satisfaction; and therefore they may be assured that, when they have overcome their present difficulties, He will give them of the fountain of the water of life freely. *16852 Timberidge, Tyler, TX 75703*

Current Religious Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls

by James Orten

The story of the Dead Sea Scrolls reads more like a spy novel than a search for God's truth. All the elements of a modern thriller are present; there is mystery, greed, danger, deception, politics, and a little heroism. The only element lacking is murder, and although that did not happen, so far as I know, it easily could have. I am surprised that Hollywood has not made a motion picture of it.

It all began by accident late one February afternoon in 1947. Three young Bedouin shepherds were searching for wandering goats in the ancient Judean wilderness. Their location was about thirty miles east of Jerusalem on the northwestern coast of the Dead Sea. ("Bedouin" means desert dweller, and because most are Arabs and shepherds, it is almost synonymous with those terms as well.) Although close to permanent settlements, as the crow flies, this desert is so rugged and hostile that it is not habitable in the normal sense of the word. One of these young men, named Muhammad Jum'a, followed a nimble animal out of a dry river bed, known as Wadi Qumran, and up the rocky wall of the narrow ravine. Discovering a cave, he threw a rock into its dark mouth. To his surprise, he heard something that sounded like glass breaking. It was too late to explore then, but hoping to find hidden treasure, he determined that he and his companions would come back. Two mornings later, one of his companions, a cousin named Muhammad Ahmed el Hamed, but nicknamed Edh Dhib which means the wolf, returned to the cave while the other two were sleeping. Working his way up the side of the cliff, he slithered into the narrow opening, setting off a mystery that is not completely resolved to this day.

What Jum'a's stone had broken was a large pottery jar, complete with lid, of the type used about the time of Christ to contain liquids. It was about two feet high and one foot wide; similar in size and shape, we can imagine, to those used by Jesus in his first miracle at the marriage in Cana described in John 2. That jar was empty, but there were others lining the wall of the cave. Inside one was a long leather scroll, in a remarkably good state of preservation, that turned out to be a copy of the book of Isaiah, a thousand years older than the biblical manuscripts from which our Bible

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was translated. Other jars, found by the young men then and later, yielded three more manuscripts.

The young shepherds were disappointed. They had hoped for gold, but found only musty old scrolls. From this point, the story of what happened and how the scrolls eventually made their ways into the hands of scholars, gets very confusing. Parts of the history are conflicted, as individual players tell their views of a complex drama, often attempting to aggrandize themselves and place opposing participants in a bad light. Thus the spirit of what I say about the rest of the discovery is right, but individual pieces of this information should be considered in context.

The Bedouins took the scrolls to their community in Bethlehem where, for a time at least, they hung in a bag on a tent pole. Curious members of the Ta'amirah tribe, the shepherds' people, examined the documents occasionally. Eventually, the bag and its under-valued treasures were taken into the main Bethlehem market where they were offered to a couple of antique dealers before landing in the hands of a shoe cobbler and would-be antique dealer who went by the name of Kando. The Bedouins wanted twenty British pounds, about \$35, for their find which Kando refused to pay. Instead, he agreed to give them five pounds and to sell the documents for them for one-third of the sale price.

Kando took one of the manuscripts to St. Marks Monastery in Jerusalem and showed it to the resident "Metropolitan" or archbishop of the Syrian Orthodox church, whom he knew because he was a member of the church. The Metropolitan recognized its potential value and agreed to buy it and the others. The process of actually obtaining the scrolls was complicated by the United Nations' vote to partition Palestine, which heightened tension between the British, Israelis, and Arabs, and made travel and commerce between all groups hazardous. It was months before the scrolls arrived at St. Marks and the money, less than a hundred U.S. dollars, changed hands. The Metropolitan, whose name was Samuel, appeared mainly interested in the commercial value of the scrolls. He wanted to sell them and use the money to repair Orthodox church buildings that were under his control. Later, Archbishop Samuel got doubtful of his purchase and, with the help of Kando, sent one of his monks to the cave site. He reported that the cave was indeed real, and that there were still many fragments of manuscripts scattered about.

Unknown to the Metropolitan, Bedouins had started searching other caves in the area and had discovered three additional scrolls. These had found their way into the hands of E. L. Sukenik, an aging and distinguished archaeologist at Hebrew University. How professor Sukenik acquired the scrolls for Hebrew University is still unclear, but his knowledge of the Dead Sea finds was significant for later developments. Sukenik had heard of the manuscripts that were now in the hands of the St. Marks monks and correctly surmised them to be of the same collection as those he had acquired.

The area where the scrolls were discovered was, at that time, under Jordanian control. By Jordanian law, such discoveries belong to the government. Although it was illegal for him to do so and he was declared an outlaw in Jordan for it, the Metropolitan brought the scrolls to New York, thinking he could better sell them there. This followed approximately six years of having the scrolls examined, photographed, dated, evaluated, and secretly offered for sale in Jordan. The manuscripts had now become famous, but so had their disputed ownership. After exhibiting the documents in a few cities and contacting several institutions of higher learning, including Yale and Duke Universities, with disappointing results, the Metropolitan placed an ad in the "Miscellaneous for Sale" section of the Wall Street Journal. The advertisement read: "The four Dead Sea Scrolls. Biblical manuscripts dating back to at least 200 B.C. are for sale. This would be an ideal gift to an educational or religious institution by an individual or a group." A Journal box number was given for communication.

The ad appeared on June 1, 1954. Fortunately, Dr. Yigael Yadin, a well-known Hebrew scholar was visiting in the U.S. at the time and was shown the ad. He knew the value of the scrolls from a trusted source, his father, professor E. L. Sukenik. Yadin immediately set about to buy the manuscripts for Israel, but he knew that no Jordanian would sell them to a Jew. So, using an intermediary, who assumed the name of Mr. Green, Yadin arranged for them to be examined and a sale price negotiated, which was reportedly \$250,000. The meeting took place at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Professor Yadin supposedly mortgaged his home to raise part of the money—one of the few pieces of heroism in the story. Yadin took the manuscripts to Israel where they are now displayed in a museum specially constructed for them, named the Shrine of the Book. Professor Sukenik died without knowing that his son had secured for Israel four more of the manuscripts he treasured so highly. Sukenik wrote in his diary that Israel had lost a great treasure. Ironically, the money the Archbishop got for the

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manuscripts was declared by the IRS to be personal income, so they took a part of it.

By this time, the nature and value of the scrolls was well known as was the site where they were discovered. Over the next several years, scholars and Bedouins competed to find more manuscripts with the shepherds generally getting the best of the struggle. Archaeologists from the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, the Ecole Biblique, a French Catholic monastery and institute of learning, Hebrew University, the Jordanian government, the Israeli government, and perhaps others were involved in the search in one way or another. At one point an official party set off to explore a new site only to find thirty-four Bedouins already on the spot. In all, eleven caves spanning a distance of several miles from the original Wadi Qumran discovery site, yielded manuscripts and fragments. Several other types of artifacts were also found, including a sizable cache of coins.

The Extent of the Discovery

The size of the discovery alone is amazing. All told, thousands and thousands of fragments were found—one cave alone, Cave 4, yielded approximately 15,000. From this material and that from the other sites, 800 plus separate documents have been identified. Many fragments are as large as a legal-size sheet of paper and contain significant information; many others are as small as a thumb-nail with all size variations in between. The task of matching these fragments into manuscripts is still ongoing with documents in all stages of completion, some of which will never be complete. In addition to the fragments, approximately twelve scrolls were found intact. I say "approximately" because the number depends on one's definition of "intact," but most parts of these twelve are readable with some filling in of blanks created by fragments breaking off, words being obliterated by breakage when the scrolls were unrolled, and areas of illegibility due to natural deterioration.

Most of the manuscripts were written on leather, but some were prepared on papyrus (writing material made from the pith of the papyrus plant which is cured and pressed), and one was made of copper.

There are four types of documents among the manuscripts. The first is biblical books. In various stages of completion, all of the books of the Old Testament have been identified except Esther. (I do not know that it is rele-

vant to this fact, but Esther is the only book in the Bible that does not contain the name of God.) Only small portions of some books have been identified. By contrast, multiple copies of some others were found (25 of Deuteronomy, for example, and 18 of Isaiah), and one copy of Isaiah is complete and was in a good state of preservation at its discovery. This was the first scroll found.

A second type of document is called *pseudepigrapha* by scholars, which means pseudo-biblical or Bible-like books. Some of these we know as parts of the "apocrypha" and others are not. These are books that sound like the Bible and are generally attributed to a well-known Bible character, but are of doubtful origin. Examples of such manuscripts found at Dead Sea sites are the books of Jubilees, Enoch, Noah, and The Testament of Levi.

A third type is called sectarian literature. "Sectarian" means the material was written by and for a distinct religious group. These documents give a particular group's interpretation and application of the Bible. For example, there are commentaries on parts or all of several Old Testament books, such as Psalms, Isaiah, Hosea, Habakkuk, Micah, Nahum, and Zephaniah. In addition, there is a scroll called the Manual of Discipline by scholars which describes rules of admission to and conduct within a monastic type of settlement occupied by the people who supposedly wrote the scrolls; a book describing an Armageddon-type war between the sons of light and the sons of darkness; and a document describing the new temple of Jerusalem after the sons of light are vindicated and the sons of darkness destroyed. And there are others.

Finally, there is a scroll that fits into none of the above categories. Without an introduction or any discussion of its purpose, it is a listing of many locations where treasures are supposedly stored. You could guess from the fact that you have not heard of the treasures being discovered that the locations have not yet been deciphered. But I feel certain this scroll has given several people sleepless nights as they worried about how to get their hands on these treasures.

Who Wrote the Scrolls?

In some respects, it should not matter who produced the Dead Sea documents—we should be able to evaluate them for the merit of their content. That is true for such pieces as the books of the Bible and even the commentaries. But for other reasons we need to know. One such reason is

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to refute false claims. As will be noted later, all sorts of wild and preposterous claims have been made for and about these documents. We can place these claims in their proper perspective more easily if we know who the writers were. Although scholars now pretty much agree on the identity of the people who produced and hid this library, the old claims and wild speculations still continue.

Here is a fairly complete list of proposed sources for the Dead Sea Scrolls: (1) They were a library from Jerusalem, probably the temple library, carried into the wilderness for safe keeping when the Roman destruction approached in A.D. 70. As such they represent the ideas and writings of all groups of Judaism and no particular group. (2) They were written by an early Christian faction, although probably a radical and minor one. (3) They were written by the Pharisees. (4) They were written by the Sadducees. (5) They were written by the Essenes.

Some of these suggestions are easy to refute. That the documents are not a library reflecting a cross section of Judaism should be clear to anyone who reads the material. For example, some documents describe the reason the sect broke with mainstream Judaism and retreated to the wilderness. They describe themselves as the sons of light and their enemies (the priests who control the temple in Jerusalem) as the sons of darkness. They describe their coming victory over the sons of darkness and what the temple will look like after its cleansing. Even the Bible commentaries give what we would see as highly unique interpretations of passages to make them apply to their particular situation. Furthermore, there are no documents that describe the prominent beliefs of their enemies in favorable fashion, such as the Sadducean denial of the resurrection and angels, as would be true if this were an impartial collection of religious literature from all facets of Judaism.

The second suggested source of the Dead Sea documents is even more preposterous than the first, in my view. The Metropolitan Samuel is probably the first to advance this position, and he did so before he or anyone had read the first document. We do not know whether he changed his mind after the contents of many documents were revealed. One fact alone would eliminate this position as far as most Christians are concerned—the name of Jesus is nowhere mentioned in the scrolls. There is not even a symbolic reference that can reasonably be interpreted as referring to Jesus of Nazareth. The sect did believe in a coming Messiah, or perhaps two of them. One is termed the Messiah of Israel. This one is a descendent of David and as such

would more likely be identified with Jesus. But the second, the Messiah of Aaron, is given a more prominent role in the projected new kingdom of Israel. It is he who will deliver salvation and pure doctrine. The Messiah of David is described as something like an administrator. Some people think the two descriptions refer to the same Messiah, but even if that is true, it does not help their case. The Messiah of Israel shall rule as the priests shall teach him.

I cannot conceive of any faction of Christianity that could accept these ideas. But another fact against this conclusion is that the dates, as we shall see in a moment, are not right. This community existed from about 200 years B.C. to 68 A.D. Although some of the documents may have been produced late in that period, those show no recognition that the Messiah had come.

One reason that some people want to call this a Christian group is that they think that John the Baptist was one of them, a conclusion based on slim and circumstantial evidence. The document find and the community that probably produced them, were in the Judean wilderness near the Jordan river and so was John. If modern maps are correct, however, the two were not near each other. Aenon near Salim where John lived and worked according to John 3:23 was not near the caves where the Dead Sea documents were found. In fact, they were about 50 miles apart, a formidable distance in the desert. The Qumran caves were located near the southern end of the Jordan River, where it empties into the Dead Sea, while Aenon was closer to the origin of the Jordan at the Lake of Galilee.

Another reason that John could not have been of the Dead Sea sect is that his preaching reflected none of the unusual beliefs of the group. John preached one Messiah, not two. He preached to prepare the way of the Lord, one Lord. He said, "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" (Mk. 1:7). This is only an example, although a large one, of several ways John's gospel was incompatible with the Qumran sect. I believe we can safely dismiss the idea that John the Baptist was a part of the Qumran sect, and the proposition that the Dead Sea Scrolls belonged to a Christian group.

The idea that the Dead Sea sect was Pharisee is also highly speculative. First the Pharisees had not abandoned Jerusalem for the wilderness. This is clear from Jesus' many encounters with them. They were temporarily out of the high priesthood, but they continually struggled to get it back—they

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had not rejected the priesthood or the temple as the documents indicate the Qumran group had done. The scrolls also reject the established leadership at Jerusalem, of which the Pharisees were a part. The manuscripts make it clear that the sect rejected any laws not directly based on the Scriptures. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for extending the law to their traditions. "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" (Mt. 15:3). The Talmud was a collection of these traditions that the Pharisees had made into religious laws.

Most of the arguments against the Pharisees being the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls also fit for the Sadducees. They held the high priesthood at the time of Christ, which would have identified them with the priests of Jerusalem that the manuscripts clearly describe as enemies, teachers of lies, and so forth. Some Sadducean doctrines may have agreed more with the doctrine taught in the scrolls, but others did not. An example here is the Sadducees' position on spirits, angels, and the resurrection, mentioned by Luke in Acts 23:8. The Qumran sect believed angels were spiritually present in their assemblies.

A Jewish scholar, named Lawrence Schiffman has labored strenuously to prove that the scrolls were authored by the Sadducees. His arguments are unconvincing and in addition, a careful reader will likely come to suspect his motives, as he seems interested in discrediting Jesus and Christianity by proving that Jesus borrowed his doctrine from the Qumran sect. He apparently wants the sect to be Sadducean, because there are clear records that Jesus knew about and had contact with the Sadducees, and thus could have learned their doctrine, but no indication that He had discussions with the Essenes. Schiffman is wrong on both counts. To one who reads the New Testament objectively, there is plenty of evidence that Jesus' doctrine differed from all groups of the day. Of course, those groups were not wrong on every interpretation of the Old Testament, so Jesus would not have disagreed with them on every point. And Schiffman is not the first scholar to point out that Jesus seemed to agree more with the Sadducees than the Pharisees. The reason is not difficult to find: the Sadducees believed that religious laws had to be based directly on the Scriptures; the Pharisees did not. If you want to know whether Jesus could and did take stands against the Sadducees, read Matthew 22:23-33. Professor Schiffman could more accurately be accused of plagiarizing earlier scholars, because he did not acknowledge the commentaries of the 18th century that noted these facts, than Jesus of copying the Sadducees.

I believe the evidence strongly points to the Essenes as the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This group is not named in the Bible, but Josephus, a Jewish historian, Pliny the Elder, a Roman historian, and Philo, an Egyptian sage, do discuss them. Josephus says that he visited the site of the group's desert retreat and locates it in the area of the Dead Sea discoveries. He further details the sect's doctrines and manner of living which fit those described in the scrolls. Here are a few examples. Josephus says the group had broken with organized religion in Jerusalem and retreated to the wilderness to prepare the way for the Lord. They lived a communal existence in a monastery-like structure. They gave up personal ownership of property and held all things in common, practicing a common meal and ritual washings. All of these and others, the scrolls describe in detail.

The strongest argument that opponents use to deny the Essenes as authors of the scrolls is that some points of doctrine and practice as described in the scrolls are claimed not to agree with the descriptions of Josephus and the other historians. This is not a large matter. First, the three writers do not perfectly agree. Second, none of the writers were members of the sect. When a group's doctrine is described by folks outside, they almost never get it completely right. (How often have we seen this fact illustrated when people described our beliefs?) The fact that they got it nearly right is the real wonder.

On the plateau above the cave where the first finds were made, archaeologists have unearthed a structure such as that described by Josephus. The excavation took place in the early 1950s, after most of the scrolls and fragments had been found. The structure was far too large to be a family home, aside from the fact that an ordinary family would not have a home in this area. There were meeting rooms which would hold hundreds of persons, and a dining hall next to which was unearthed a pantry that contained over a thousand pieces of pottery. Among the halls was a long narrow one with tables and ink wells, some of which still contained enough ink residue to allow an analysis of the type of ink used. This is believed to be the place where the scrolls were copied. There were two lavers in the room which are assumed to be for ritual washings before scribes began work on the scripts.

Some people who do not believe that these were the people of the scrolls argue that this was a Roman military post, but that seems unlikely. The wall of the enclosure was hardly thicker than the walls of the buildings themselves. What is likely is that the Roman 10th Legion destroyed the

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settlement on its march from Jericho to Jerusalem in A.D. 68. The ruins show clear signs of having met a violent end by fire.

The Qumran settlement had an aqueduct system that brought water from a spring below the settlement to its elaborate system of cisterns. The cisterns are believed to have been used for ritual washings, because they are much larger than needed for ordinary use. Some appear to have had divided steps, perhaps indicating that the unclean person went down one side and after cleansing came out the other.

Dates of Qumran and the Scrolls

The dates of the Qumran settlement are generally agreed to have been from about 200 years B.C. to 68 A.D., with an interruption of some years about 31 B.C. because of an earthquake that is known to have rocked the area. I think these dates are as close as can be determined with the evidence available, a conclusion that is based on the following factors. (1) The scholars are in general agreement. (2) The different methods of dating are in general agreement. These are based on analyses of predominate script styles, pottery styles, historical facts from other sources, and dates on coins found at the site. As noted earlier, many coins were discovered, over 700 in all, which provide an almost continuous dating throughout the period given above. Radio carbon dating, often the most controversial, agrees with the conclusions drawn from other sources in this case. Among all those 800 documents, not one is dated.

There is a group of writers, out of Dropsie College in Philadelphia, who differ widely from the general conclusions of other scholars. This group, led by Solomon Zeitlin, argues that the scrolls were not from the late Old Testament-early New Testament period at all, but rather from the medieval Christian era. Their ideas are based on the belief that some of the several script forms found in the scrolls were not used until later. This is extremely weak evidence and can be, I think, safely dismissed.

The dates when the scrolls were produced is a different matter from the dates of the settlement. The Bible books were, of course, all originally authored much earlier than the date the Qumran sect left Jerusalem for the wilderness. For example, the book of Isaiah was written sometime in the middle of the seventh century B.C., probably between 760-730. All good commentaries have discussions regarding the dates of each Bible book. Scholars worry about when the particular copies of the Bible books found

at the Dead Sea were produced. That does not seem an important matter for the ordinary devout Christian. What we can say is that among the Qumran documents there are some of all the families of texts that we know. One example is the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament that was produced by and for Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt. There are also copies of Samaritan texts, and Masoretic texts which were standardized and became the official version of the Old Testament for rabbinic Judaism. These are generally the manuscripts from which our Bibles were translated.

The dates of the pseudepigraphic books, such as Jubilees, Noah, Enoch, and the Testament of Levi, are harder to determine. There are sources that discuss them, but since these documents were not included in the canon of the Old Testament Scriptures for good reasons, it does not seem important to deal with them here.

The remaining manuscripts from the Qumran library deal with the sect itself, its interpretations of the Bible, its religious laws of admission to the community, daily living, worship, its expectations of what will happen in the "end of days" and the coming kingdom, and in one case, its storage of its treasures. While it is possible that the group brought some manuscripts with them when they fled Jerusalem, it seems probable that most of the scrolls were produced at Qumran in the two and a half centuries that it inhabited the site.

What Do the Scrolls Say?

Before I summarize the contents of some of the more famous scrolls, I want to discuss the sensational claims that have been made about them. These claims in general have come from popular writers such as newspaper and magazine columnists and pulp journalists. These journalists are not scholars. Most of the time they do not have access to the methods used by scholars nor the training to evaluate the methods if they had them. Often they do not even have access to a cross-section of the research; so they may read one scholar's report and give as fact his conclusions when other better-done research contradicts those conclusions. An example here is the long article on the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Thompson Chain Reference Bible. Apparently based on a single researcher's work, it gives as fact, conclusions that are highly questionable.

In addition to the caution one should exercise toward pop and pulp stories, professional research also should not be swallowed whole. A few of

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the scholars who have worked on the Dead Sea Scrolls seem victims of a peculiar fallacy that G. R. Driver of Oxford University called a "strange delusion." It is that being an agnostic confers absolute impartiality, while being committed to a religion renders one incapable of being objective. Thus the agnostic scholar's conclusions should not be questioned, while the believer's work is automatically suspect. The idea that being against something makes one any less subject to prejudice than being for it, is a delusion in the truest sense. Many agnostic scholars, however, subscribe to this self-serving proposition.

John M. Allegro is an example here. Early in the study of the scrolls, he broadcast fantastic claims such as that the scrolls would revolutionize the study of Christianity. "Revolutionize" meant relegate it to the category of myth. When all of his fellow researchers denied his claims, he simply went on to greater sensations. He eventually claimed he was being restricted from access to the scrolls because he alone was telling the truth and everyone else was trying to cover up. In the August 1966 issue of *Harpers* magazine Allegro spun a tale of distortion, deceit, and cover up that was intended for nothing but to discredit Jesus and Christianity. He begged for money so that a "new generation" of "uncommitted scholars" could be financed to investigate the scrolls. As a scholar, he was discredited, but his articles and books are still around.

Edmond Wilson was a popular writer of the sort described above. In the May 1955 issue of the *New Yorker*, Wilson made claims similar to Allegro's, charging that New Testament scholars were boycotting the scrolls because they were afraid of what they said. At the time Wilson made this assertion, another writer, W. S. LaSor, had produced a bibliography on the scrolls which listed articles by forty-three well-known New Testament Scholars. A. Powell Davies and Charles F. Potter are pulp writers on the scrolls who have even less claim to scholarship than Wilson. Davies' whole claim to scholarship seems to be in reading Wilson. Yet, Davies' book, chocked full of distortions, half truths, and assumptions given as facts, is one of the most widely read stories of the scrolls.

I have not given this information about Dead Sea writers to discredit all scholars who have worked on the scrolls. Many of them are excellent. Their excellence does not guarantee that the conclusions drawn from their scholarship are right. But it does say they are trying to let the scrolls speak for themselves rather than impose their views upon them.

Books of the Bible

Now, let us talk about the contents of some of the scrolls. This should begin with the copies of books of the Bible. In number, over half of all the manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts are copies of Books of the Old Testament. Not a single fragment of any New Testament manuscript was unearthed. The contents of these scrolls agree well with the Old Testament as we know it. There are small variations in reading, but these are no greater than the variations among the manuscripts we have already known, between the Masoretic texts and the Septuagint, for example. If you want to know the specific variations, watch the footnotes of newer versions of the Old Testament. The New International Version states on page vi of the Preface that its translators consulted the Dead Sea Scrolls and states how these readings are indicated in the text.

The agreement of Dead Sea copies of Old Testament books should be affirming to Christians. It shows that the Old Testament cannon was intact and virtually the same as we know it in manuscripts a thousand years older than any we had known before.

The Manual of Discipline

This is one of the first scrolls found and was among the four sold by the Metropolitan Samuel in New York. It was apparently intended for the leaders of the sect as a guide to their teaching of those who wanted to become members. It describes what new converts are to believe, how they must be committed wholeheartedly to the law of God. Details of the process of entry are given and a description of the daily life of participants.

Converts were required to reject the life of the wicked world, the teachings of the wicked priests in Jerusalem, and the temple they had defiled. They must be willing to pursue with all their heart and possessions the righteous life, loving and blessing the sons of light and hating and cursing the sons of darkness. (Those who claim Jesus copied the doctrine of the Essenes apparently have not read Mt. 5:43-44.) The process of admission took two years. The applicant was examined by the priest for his state of godliness on application and at the end of the first year. If he was found acceptable at the end of the first year he committed all his worldly goods to the community, but it was at the end of the second year that he was fully admitted. Every person in the community was examined each year for spiritual attainment and either advanced in the highly structured community or

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moved down. Specific violations of community rules were punished by being excluded from group functions for a time—up to a year for serious infractions—or permanently expelled. For example, speaking in anger to a priest could get you a year's exclusion from community functions, lying earned six months, speaking foolishly equaled three months, sleeping during a group meeting was punished with thirty days, and interrupting a companion while speaking earned ten days. They must have had very alert and orderly meetings.

The community was structured according to status, which was ordered on supposed spiritual attainment, with the priests at the top, Levites second, sons of Israel third, followed by proselytes. The group entered community meetings in this order, sat in it, ate in it, and even spoke up in meetings according to it. To act or speak out of order was a sin for which one was disciplined, because it showed a lack of submission to the sacred order and thus to God.

The group regularly ate a communal meal. Many people have compared this meal to the Lord's Supper. How similar the two meals are cannot be accurately known because of the ambiguity of the descriptions of it, a characteristic that is true of most doctrines and practices described in the scrolls. We do not know, for example, how often it was eaten. It was either a meal of bread and new wine eaten in the presence of the Messiahs, or as some interpret, in their spiritual presence, but with reference to their actual participation in the end of days. One could partake of the bread after his first year in the community, but not the wine until the end of his second year. My judgment is that those who compare this to the Lord's Supper are using a large measure of imagination.

The Temple Scroll

This manuscript has two distinctions. It is the longest of the Dead Sea Scrolls, somewhat over twenty-seven feet. And it was the last intact scroll acquired by the scholars, which was during the Six-Day War between Israel and the Arabs in 1967. Professor Yadin had heard about this scroll several years earlier and conducted negotiations to acquire it. The man Yadin negotiated with was known only as a mysterious "Mr. Z" until after Yadin's death in 1984. Yadin would not reveal his name because he believed there were other manuscripts and he wanted those who might have them to feel free to talk with him, knowing their confidences would be kept. But the

man turned out to be a Baptist television preacher from Virginia, named Joe Urhig, the person who gave Jerry Falwell his start in television.

Urhig was friends with an Israeli Christian who knew Kando, and through him Urhig met Kando and learned of the scroll. At this time, Urhig's television career was faltering and the mortgage on his church was getting increasingly hard to pay. He hoped to arrange the sale of the scroll and make enough profit to clear his church. The two men negotiated many months, during which Yadin claimed Urhig cheated him out of thousands of dollars, and Urhig claimed Yadin lied to him and ruined the deal. Eventually they broke off contact, each blaming the other, but in the process, Yadin correctly surmised that Kando had the scroll.

Among his many talents, Yadin was a military expert and an advisor to the then Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol. When the Six-Day War broke out in 1967, Israeli forces promptly captured the Old City of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Yadin, on authority of the Prime Minister, took an army officer and went to Kando's house demanding the scroll. Knowing the game was over, Kando lifted a floor board of his house and took out a pasteboard box containing the scroll. He had also hidden fragments of it behind pictures in his own house and those of relatives, apparently to negotiate for more money later.

The scroll describes a new temple, apparently to be built when the sons of light were victorious over the sons of darkness. Approximately half of the document is consumed with this description; the other half gives details of the laws relating to it. The temple is a huge structure, four times larger than the Second Temple built by Herod the Great, and almost as large as the city of Jerusalem in those days. It had three concentric square courts around the temple proper, the middle and outer of which had twelve gates, three on each side, named after the sons of Jacob.

If you recall from the Old Testament, there were detailed plans for the construction of the tabernacle, but there were no written plans for the temple. 1 Chronicles 29:10-12 says that God gave the plans to David by the Spirit and that David gave them to Solomon. The Rabbis believed that these plans had been written and passed down through the ages by prophets to David who gave them to Solomon. Apparently the Essenes believed that God had revealed these plans, and the laws relating to the temple, to their Teacher of Righteousness as he had done to David. The temple scroll indicates that God is personally speaking in it. For example, when quoting

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some of God's laws that were given to Moses and recorded by him in the Old Testament, the temple scroll often substitutes "I" or "Me" for Moses' "the Lord said . . ." There is debate about whether this picture of the temple is intended to be real, or whether it is a vision that serves another purpose. The reason for doubting its reality is that it would seem impossible to build then, and a staggering job even with modern machinery.

The laws relating to the new temple were as different from those of the Old Testament as the temple structure itself. Some of the old festivals were incorporated, such as the Feast of Booths (Lev. 23: 39-44), but others, such as the Passover, were omitted. Several additional ones, such as the Barley Festival, the New Wine Festival, the New Oil Festival, and even a Wood Festival, seem to have to do with celebrating blessings. More than anything else, the temple scroll is a book of laws relating to conduct of the righteous in Jerusalem when the sons of darkness have been destroyed and the true sons of Zadok are in control.

The philosophy of the laws of the new temple seemed to be toward getting back to those that governed the camps of God's people in the wilderness, in which the whole camp was looked upon as something of an extension of the temple and must be kept pure. In the new age envisioned by the temple document, all the city of Jerusalem was like this, and no person who was blemished, had a discharge, etc. could come into it. As was true of the camps in the wilderness (Deut. 23:12-14), one could not defecate within the new and cleansed Jerusalem. Besides that, the toilet area was to be 3,000 cubits, almost a mile, outside the city. This was well over a Sabbath days' journey, so no one would be able to relieve himself on the Sabbath day. Josephus speaks of an "Essene Gate" in the wall of Jerusalem, one that is not mentioned, so far as I know, anywhere else. Some scroll scholars speculate that the Essenes practiced this law before they deserted Jerusalem, and that the Essene Gate was just the gate they used to go out of the city to the toilet area. Or perhaps one might say, run out of the city.

I have given this example of the laws given in the temple scroll to show how they tried to strictly and literally interpret the laws of the Old Testament, even at the cost of great inconvenience. Their goals would have made sense to us in this respect.

The Treasure Map (aka Copper Scroll)

This manuscript is different from all others in two ways. First, the material it is written on is unique, two thin sheets of almost pure copper. Second, it is not a manuscript in the ordinary sense of the word, but a numbered listing of sixty-four locations where treasure is stored. There is no introduction and no narrative, just brief locations and descriptions of the types of treasures stored in them. The total amount of the treasure, much of it gold and silver, is so vast as to amount to truck loads.

The copper scroll was discovered in Cave 3 in 1952 by a party organized by the Jordanian government. There were other scrolls in the cave, but this one was not stored in jars on the floor as they were, and it was not in the same place. The copper scroll was in the back of the cave by itself on a ledge in the wall. These facts, and the extremely large amount of treasure portrayed, have made some copper scroll scholars doubt that it was put there by the Qumran community. They consider it improbable that the sect could have acquired that much treasure, even though its members gave the community all personal wealth.

If the treasure scroll was not part of the Qumran documents, who did put it there and whence did the treasure come? Many people believe it was the treasure from the temple in Jerusalem, hidden when the destruction of Jerusalem approached. There are two main arguments for this. One is that although much of the treasures are gold and silver bars and ingots, a significant amount is temple-type treasures, gold and silver vessels and so forth. There are even listings of some priestly garments. The second reason is that some of the names of persons on whose property treasure was hidden were known to be associated with the temple. An example here is the Hakkoz family. Location number thirty-two reads: "In the cave that is next to the fountain belonging to the House of Hakkoz, dig six cubits. There are six bars of gold."

The Hakkoz family (the KJV uses Koz but the RSV and NIV use Hakkoz) was among those who returned from Babylonian exile in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Nehemiah 3:4, 21 describe their industrious work on the restoration of the wall of Jerusalem. But Ezra 2:59-63 and Nehemiah 7:61-65 tell us that the Hakkoz family did not have records to prove their genealogy, so they were excluded from priestly service in the temple. However, the reading in Nehemiah 3:4 and Ezra 8:33 seems to indicate that this family was made treasurers of the temple.

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Here are some additional samples of treasure locations and amounts. Location number 1 reads: "In the ruin that is in the valley of Achor, beneath the steps that enter to the east, forty cubits west: a chest of silver and its articles. 17 talents." That would be 1,000 pounds of silver, more-or-less. Location number 2 was apparently connected to the first: "In the funerary shrine, in the third course of stone: 100 gold ingots." Who knows what that would be worth today. Number 3 reads: "In the large cistern that is within the court of the Peristylon, in a recess of its bottom, sealed in the entrenchment opposite the upper door: 900 talents." Although a talent varied in weight according to what was set at the time, it was usually between 50 and 100 pounds. If we were very conservative and took the lowest figure, that would still be 45,000 pounds.

You can see why some people concluded this treasure was not real. But there seem to be reasons for taking the document seriously. For one thing, it makes no effort to convince the reader the treasure is real, as it seemingly would do if it were a fake. Instead, it is just a boring list of one specific location after another. Second, someone went to a lot of trouble to make it, probably more than most people would do to perpetrate a hoax. And he knew something about the kind of metal that would last. Pure copper is not subject to deterioration in the same way as other metals commonly used for writing, such as bronze. Third, there appear to be secret codes throughout the document, that so far have not been broken. The document is written in an unusual type of Hebrew, but throughout are placed Greek letters that seem only for the initiated.

You can also imagine that lots of people want to know where these locations are, to see for themselves whether the treasure is real. You have already heard about one example, in the person of John M. Allegro, the agnostic scholar. Allegro was not assigned to work on the copper scroll, but he gained access to it, made himself a hasty translation, and proceeded to try to find the treasure. The Jordanian government heard of his activities and took a decidedly dim view. He seems to have a knack for getting everybody down his back at once. Of course, his display of greed was not the only one in the Dead Sea story; it is just one of the more obvious.

The Damascus Document

Only fragments of this document were found in the Qumran caves, but oddly, two copies were found 50 years earlier in Egypt. Solomon Schechter, a lecturer in Jewish Studies at Cambridge University in England, got wind

that the old Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo, an ancient center of Jewish learning, had many old manuscripts stored in its genizah. A genizah is a depository for worn out sacred documents, which may not be disposed of in ordinary ways, as it is considered disrespectful. Schechter went to Cairo in 1896, and after weeks of searching through the attic of the synagogue, carried back to England and Cambridge University 30 bags full of manuscripts and fragments. Within his load were two copies of a document he called "Zadokite Fragments."

From these frayed and brittle Zadokite documents, which had sections of the beginning and ending missing, Schechter wrote a description of the sect which agrees very well with that given by scholars of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Interestingly, the New York Times in its Christmas Day edition of 1910, carried a front page story claiming the sect Schechter had described was the forerunner of Christianity. Schechter did not write the story, and, in fact, denied it. It was done by a man named Margoliouth who had read Schechter's work. Margoliouth claimed the sect's Messiah of Aaron was John the Baptist, its Teacher of Righteousness was Jesus, and the Wicked Priest or Man of Scoffing was none other than Paul. The New York Times ran many stories on this, refusing to back down even when Schechter denied the claims. Wild claims about the Essene sect are much older than the Dead Sea Scrolls.

From Schechter's manuscripts and the many fragments discovered in the caves, scholars have been able to piece together the complete Damascus Document. It is called the "Damascus" scroll because it describes an exile that the sons of light will make in that city because of persecution by the sons of darkness.

The document consists of two main parts: (1) an exhortation to the sons of light to remain faithful, and (2) a list of religious laws. The exhortation contains many citations to show that faithfulness will always be rewarded and wickedness punished. We are familiar with the Scriptures used to buttress the exhortations, but the sect makes the passages apply to their particular situation, sometimes by highly unique interpretations. For example, we understand Amos 5:26-27 to be a threat to Israel of captivity "beyond Damascus" because of their idolatry and hypocritical worship of God. But the Damascus Document transforms this threat into a promise of salvation for themselves in Damascus, by changing certain key words and omitting others.

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This document gives a sketch of the sect's history, as they perceive it. After the Israelites returned from Babylonian captivity, a small group of this remnant confessed their sins and truly sought the Lord. They were blind and stumbling. But God saw their sincerity and, 390 years after He had delivered the people into the hands of Nebuchadnezer, He sent them a Teacher of Righteous to guide them. This Teacher of Righteousness was "gathered in," which presumably means died, in Damascus but was expected to come back as the Messiah if the people were faithful. This date for the arrival of the Teacher of Righteousness corresponds roughly with the dates assigned to the earliest of the Dead Sea Scrolls, about 200 B.C.

The statutes were supposedly given directly by God to the Teacher of Righteousness and by him to the people. In many cases, the laws given are just strict versions of Old Testament laws. For example, a man could have only one wife. Husbands could cancel wives' vows to God, but only if the vows would cause them to disobey God's covenant. They could not lift a beast out of a pit on the Sabbath day. Clean beasts could not be sold to Gentiles and on and on.

The War Scroll

The last manuscript I want to discuss is called the War Scroll. This is a description of a great battle against "the Kittim," supposedly all Gentiles, and other sons of darkness. In a sense it is like the battles mentioned in Revelation, but the latter are presented in very general terms, whereas the former are described in much detail, complete with battle plans. The inspiration seems to be drawn from Daniel 11-12 and perhaps Ezekiel 38-39. The war will last forty years and be a terrible trial on the true Israel, but in the end they will be victorious. To give a flavor of the narrative, here is a part of the introduction:

On the day when the Kittim fall, there shall be battle and terrible carnage before the God of Israel, for that shall be the day appointed from ancient times for the battle of destruction of the sons of darkness. At that time the assembly of gods and the hosts of men shall battle, causing great carnage; on the day of calamity, the sons of light shall battle with the company of darkness amid the shouts of the mighty multitude and the clamour of gods and men to make manifest the might of God. And it shall be a time of great tribulation for the people which God shall redeem; of all its afflictions none shall be as this, from its sudden beginning until its end in eternal redemption.

From here, the work goes on to set out the battle plans detailing everything from the actions of the priests, who, reminiscent of Joshua, will sound different types of trumpet alarms, to how the troops shall stand in formation. We are told how the troops will advance and when they will pull back and be replaced with fresh troops. There are even plans for what to do when battles are lost and the army must regroup, and plans for gathering back to the battlefield in formation to worship and praise God when the enemy lies slain at their feet. Each battle weapon and shield has a message written on it, such as "Shining Javelin of the Power of God," and "Bloody spikes to bring down the Slain by the Wrath of God."

There is extensive use of the figure seven: The companies of thousands shall form seven lines deep, the length of their spears shall be seven cubits, in the first attack they shall hurl seven javelins of war, and seven troops of seven hundred horsemen shall station themselves on either side of the foot soldiers, and on and on. There are regulations for the ages of soldiers, the layouts of camps, copies of battle songs and battle prayers.

Like the treasures, some scholars have thought this was a visionary description and not a real battle. That may be. The language of all the scrolls is quite visionary and vague, seemingly intentionally so. But in other ways this description is highly complete and detailed. I am inclined to think they believed this to be a direct revelation from God to their Teacher of Righteousness and thus believed it would happen just this way.

In summary, the scrolls paint a picture of an eccentric sect, dominated by priests, who withdrew from their fellow priests during a troubled and corrupt period of Jewish history. They believed that they alone were God's elect and sincerely sought true righteousness. They believed God had sent them a Teacher of Righteousness to lead them and reveal to them His plans for the future. They consoled themselves in persecution by a conviction that a final great war would vanquish their enemies and give them possession of a new and cleansed temple and a new and powerful nation. Unfortunately, the Romans cut short their hopes in A.D. 68 with a fiery destruction of their desert retreat.

Current Religious Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls

What is the significance of the information produced by millions of hours spent by scholars, thousands of articles and books (over 10,000, in

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fact), and the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls?

For those who wish to be scholars, there may be some advantages. (1) The Qumran documents show that the Old Testament Scriptures, as held by God-fearing people a thousand years earlier than the manuscripts from which our Bibles were translated, are essentially the same. Most of us never doubted that, but for those who need assurance, these documents may give it. (2) They enlighten us on the silent period from Malachi to John the Baptist. Malachi wrote approximately 400 years before Jesus. There is no Scripture and very little reliable history of events during that period. Dead Sea documents give more information about life and times in this period than all other available information together. (3) As noted earlier, minor revisions of Old Testament passages have been made based on Dead Sea documents. These revisions may be useful in studying some passages. However, if one acknowledged every revision as right and proper, which a good scholar would not likely do, his understanding of the Old Testament would not be materially changed. This is shown by the fact that newer versions that take account of the scrolls do not rewrite the Old Testament.

What is the significance of the scrolls for the ordinary devout disciple who wants to learn God's will and be saved? Not much. I gave up this expectation early in my study when I learned that the name of Jesus of Nazareth was nowhere mentioned in these documents. On the other side of the coin, fantastic claims that Dead Sea scholarship would expose Jesus as a fraud and undermine Christianity, have proven false and foolish. One of the earlier and better scholars of the scrolls, Millar Burrows, said: "As a liberal Protestant, I do not share all the beliefs of my more conservative brethren. It is my considered conclusion, however, that if one will go through any of the historic statements of the Christian faith he will find nothing that has been or can be disproved by the Dead Sea Scrolls." For a man who, himself, is not a believer as we would reckon believers, that is quite a statement, and one that should be kept in mind when one comes across fantastic claims for what the Dead Sea Scrolls will do. It should be comforting to reflect on the fact that in the last 50 years a major attack was mounted against the grand old book and the grand old faith, and they are still the book and the faith.

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How Do We Treat a Disfellowshipped Brother?

by Gerald Hill

The question, "How does one treat a disfellowshipped brother?" is answered rather easily. However, add the question, "How does the wife and or children treat a disfellowshipped brother?" makes the question more difficult to say the least. This is true, not because God's Word is vague in answering this question, but because of the emotional and physical bonds involved in these relationships.

I would like to be able to turn to the Scriptures and read an "exception clause." For example, if 1 Corinthians 5:11 read like this: "But now I have written unto you (except for wives and children) not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or and idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat," there would be no question. Of course this exception is not found in this passage. My hope is, that the emotional issues involved in these questions can be set aside as we search for God's answer.

Now, I want to consider the question: How did God deal with sin among His people during the Mosaic period of Bible History? But first, consider with me some basic truths that will be helpful in our study.

1. God has never tolerated sin among His people from Adam to the present time.
2. God's attitude toward sin has not changed.
3. His reason for administering discipline to the sinner has not changed (keep sin out). The exception to this statement is in the fact that under the "perfect law of liberty" the salvation of the sinner is an additional consideration, while under the old covenant it was not.

I believe that it will be helpful to consider some examples of three categories of sin and the disciplinary action God required in both Old and New Testament times.

How God Deals with Sins of Immorality

In the Old Testament

And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. And the

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man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man lie with his daughter in law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you (Lev. 20:10-14).

Please notice that the discipline God required in every case mentioned in these verses was the "death penalty." The stated purpose for this disciplinary action was "that there be no wickedness among you" (v. 14).

In the New Testament

Please consider the entirety of 1 Corinthians 5. In this chapter, we have a list of six "social sins," all of which are to be dealt with in the same way. The specific sin that I want to consider is mentioned in verse one. A brother in Christ had committed fornication "with his father's wife."

Paul's instruction to the church is: "not to keep company" (to be intimate with, Thayer, p. 601, #4874) with those who are brothers in Christ guilty of the sins listed, who will not repent of their sins. And furthermore, Paul declares, "with such an one no not to eat" (v. 11). In verse 13, he continues, "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

The apostle states two purposes for this act of discipline. Notice verses 5-7:

To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

Question: Can either or both of these objectives be accomplished if the entire congregation does not participate in the action outlined by the apostle? Can the wife and children of the man guilty of one or more of these sins continue to have the same relationship with him as before this disciplinary action was carried out? Are these family members exempt from the command "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked per-

son?" (v. 13). Remember, that under Old Testament law the guilty person was "put to death!"

Some will likely take the position that the marriage law takes precedence over this command by the apostle Paul. However, the welfare of the "Body of Christ" is the greater consideration. Others may point to the hardships placed on the family by a wife and children having to honor such action by the Lord's church. However, if a woman were to put away her husband for the cause of adultery, would not these same hardships confront her and her children? Please remember that the purpose of this disciplinary action required by the apostle is: (1) to save the sinner's soul, (2) to rid the body of Christ of this sin. Surely if a person living in sin can be touched, this action by the church (including his wife and children) will accomplish its intended purpose.

How God Deals with the Sin of "Walking Disorderly"

In the Old Testament

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear (Deut. 21:18-21).

This passage describes a problem in the home. A father and mother have a stubborn and rebellious son. He will not obey his parents (vv. 18-19). The discipline required by God was as follows. The father and mother were instructed to take hold of him and take him to the elders of his city. All of the men of the city were to stone him until he died (vv. 19, 21). The purpose: "So shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear (v. 21).

In the New Testament

Next, notice with me a case of one who "walks disorderly" in the New Testament recorded in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that

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walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for naught; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: "Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

This man will not work and is a busy body (v. 11). The action to be taken by the church is recorded in verses 6 and 14. The apostle told them, "withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly" and "note that man and have no company with him." He further instructed, "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (v. 15). What was the purpose of this action? "That he may be ashamed" (v. 14) and to cause him to realize that his is a bad example of a Christian. All members of the congregation are to honor this act of discipline in the Lord's church.

How God Deals with the Sins of the False Teacher and Those Who Otherwise Cause Division Among God's People

In the Old Testament

Deuteronomy 13:1-15 describes the case of the false prophet and one who would entice another to serve other gods.

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams,

shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee. If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you. If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you; thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword (Deut. 13:1-15).

Notice that the prophet said: "Let us go after other gods" (v. 2). The Lord said: the prophet "shall be put to death" (v. 5). The death penalty was required by God. The stated purpose was as follows: "So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee." Now if the prophet had a wife or children, the punishment for his crime would surely place a hardship on them. But God said, "put him to death."

In verses 6-11, we have recorded a case involving one individual enticing another to serve "other gods." Please notice the relationships considered in these verses. The Lord included a man's brother, son, daughter, wife, and best friend in this list of relationships. But notice the discipline the Lord required: "Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal

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him" (v. 8). Then in verse 10, "And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." The reason for the discipline is stated in verses 10-11, "Because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God . . . All Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this among you."

Can you think of a harsher punishment? Brethren, families would surely encounter hardships as a result of this drastic action. We must understand that in the mind of God, the welfare of the congregation of Israel was of higher consideration than the welfare of an individual or his family. This is an important consideration as we look at New Testament instruction as to how we must deal with the "false teacher" and others who may cause division in the Lord's church.

In the New Testament

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Tit. 1:10-11).

In these verses, Paul identified persons "whose mouths must be stopped." In Titus 3:10-11, he tells Titus how to accomplish this task. "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." The word "reject" in the KJV is translated "have nothing to do with him" in the NIV.

Remember, concerning the one who walks "disorderly" in 2 Thessalonians 3:15, Paul said, "Yet count him not as an enemy but admonish him as a brother." We can continue to admonish this brother. However, this is not the case with the heretic. We are permitted to admonish him two times, then we must have nothing to do with him. This man is an enemy of Christ. He is bent on taking faithful Christians away from the faith.

Furthermore, the heretic and others who cause division are influential in that "by good words and fair speeches he deceives the hearts of the simple." (Rom. 16:17-18). The word "simple" as used in this verse means: "fearing no evil from others, distrusting no one, Eng. Guileless" (Thayer p. 21, ref. 172). You will recognize this trusting attitude as being one of the characteristics of "agape" love as recorded in 1 Corinthians 13:5 where the apostle Paul declares that love "thinketh no evil." Love is guileless. Every mature Christian should have this quality of life as part of his or her charac-

ter. Therefore, it should be evident that any one of us can be taken in by such an influential enemy of the cause of Christ. Thus the admonition, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

Conclusion

Now to our question. Is it necessary for all members of the church, including family members, to "mark and avoid, reject, have nothing to do with" one who is a heretic or otherwise causes division in the Lord's church? Remember that under the law of Moses such characters were not to be "concealed, pitied nor any way spared." God said, "Thou shalt surely kill him." This disciplinary act of God stopped the mouth of the false prophet and anyone else who might attempt to lead God's people astray.

In the New Testament age, the "perfect law of liberty, the law of Christ," tells us that the heretic's mouth must be stopped by "marking, avoiding, having nothing to do with him." We are not required to "kill him," but rather to kill his influence!

Under the old law, the purpose of God's discipline was to keep sin out of the camp of Israel and to cause God's people to fear Him. In the Christian Age the purpose of God's discipline is to keep sin out of the church because "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6), and hopefully to bring our brother to repentance and restoration (v. 5).

In Acts 5:1-11, we have recorded the very first case of church discipline. The Great Head of the church carried out this case of discipline Himself. Both Ananias and Sapphira his wife were struck dead. The Lord Jesus Christ exercised discipline in His church to show those to whom it would afterward be entrusted, the promptness with which deplorable sins must be rebuked if the church is to please Him. The question is, shall we learn the lesson? Or shall we continue, as so many congregations have been doing, in keeping the ungodly in the church, all under the vain delusion that we are exercising forbearance and mercy toward our brother or sister. Or perhaps we have the impression that we have more hope of saving a wicked man in the church, than if we disfellowshipped him.

Surely God knows more about how to save wicked men than we do. Christ through the apostle Paul issued these solemn words: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not

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after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6). And again: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). Every member of the body of Christ is required to recognize and participate in every scriptural act of discipline. *127 W. Spring Circle, Red Oak, TX 75154*