

# **UNDERSTANDING YOUR BIBLE**

**James W. Garrett**

**An introductory course in  
Bible interpretation and application  
(2014 Revision)**

*For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. (1 Thessalonians 2:13 NAS)*

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## **SECTION ONE: ABOUT THE BIBLE**

### **THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE**

About forty men wrote the Bible over a period of 1500 years.

- The date of the Exodus was 1447 BC. (See *Excursus*)
- Israel entered the Promised Land in 1407 BC. The Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) was composed, chiefly by Moses, during the forty-year period between the Exodus and the entrance into the Promised Land.<sup>1</sup>
- Not long before his death, John the Apostle penned the final books of the New Testament (John died 99-100 AD).
- Thus, in round numbers, the Bible was written between 1400 BC and 100 AD = 1500 years.

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### **EXCURSUS: DATING THE EXODUS<sup>2</sup>**

Because the date of the Exodus is crucial to the dating of the Pentateuch, it is important that we establish that date.

The date of the Exodus is established by identifying a biblical event that also is recorded in solidly dated non-biblical literature. The earliest event that can be so identified is the Battle of Karkar. Two sources are involved in dating that event:

- The first source is the Assyrian Canon, which contains a chronological list of the civil officers designated as *limmi* or eponyms.
- The second source is provided by the Greek geographer, Ptolemaeus. Ptolemaeus listed the eclipses which occurred under the various Babylonian, Assyrian, and Persian rulers of Babylon. The exact dates of these eclipses can be determined astronomically.

Thus, by harmonizing these two sources, an exact chronology of late Assyrian history is possible.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers 32:13; Deuteronomy 2:7; 8:2,4; 29:5; Joshua 5:6; et. al.

<sup>2</sup>For a thorough discussion of the history of the period, including the conditions of surrounding nations, the Egyptian dynasties, and the biblical record, as these matters relate to the date of the Exodus (especially the Eshunna Epic c. 1900 BC; the Code of Hammurabi 1700 BC), see: Merrill F. Unger, *Archeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), pages 140-152

<sup>3</sup> See, Unger, page 244; J. McKee Adams, *Ancient Records and the Bible* (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1946) pp. 75-76, 168-174

**Battle of Karkar**

**854-53 B.C.**

Ahab, King of Israel, and Benhadad I, king of Syria, united their armies to oppose the Assyrian invader, Shalmaneser III (859-824 BC). The Assyrian historical record, contained on a monolith now housed in the British Museum, describes this battle and lists the participants, which includes Ahab and Benhadad I. The Assyrian record fits the situation described at the close of I Kings 20, which was the only time that Ahab and Benhadad I were at peace with one another.

**Solomon's death and the division of the Kingdom (854 + 77)**

**931 B.C.**

The date of Solomon's death and the division of the Kingdom can be established by adding together the years that each of Solomon's successors (culminating with the reign of Ahab) reigned over Israel prior to Karkar (see chart).

<b>Kings of Israel from the The Division of Kingdom to the Battle of Karkar</b>	
Jeroboam	I Kings 14:20 22 years
Nadab	I Kings 15:25 2 years
Baasha	I Kings 15:33 24 years
Elah	I Kings 16:8 2 years
Zimri	I Kings 16:15 7 days
Omri	I Kings 16:23 12 years
Ahab	I Kings 16:29 22 years*
<b>Total</b>	<b>84 years</b>
Omri and Ahab (father and son) were co-regents for 7 years (I Kings 16:23 and I Kings 16:29). Thus 7 years must be removed from the total: <b>84 – 7 = 77</b>	
*Ahab's death is generally considered to have been in 854 BC, or within a year following the Battle of Karkar. See Edward J. Young, <i>An Introduction to the Old Testament</i> (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1952. page 194	

Thus, the Battle of Karkar took place seventy-seven years after Solomon's death. Hence the formula 854 (Karkar) + 77 (years between Karkar and Solomon's death) = 931 BC (the date of Solomon's death and the division of the Kingdom).

**Beginning of Solomon's reign (931 + 40)**

**971 B.C.**

Solomon reigned 40 years (I Kings 11:42).

**Construction of the Temple began (971 – 4)**

**967 B.C.**

The construction of the Temple began in the fourth year of Solomon's reign (I Kings 6:1.)

**Date of Exodus (967 + 480)**

**1447 B.C.**

The construction of the Temple commenced 480 years after the Exodus (I Kings 6:1).

## THE WRITING AND COLLECTION OF SCRIPTURE

### Section One: The Writing of Scripture

The first portion of Scripture to be written was inscribed on tablets of stone. God was the engraver.

Exodus 31:18 *And when He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.*

Exodus 32:15-16 *Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one side and the other. And the tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets.*

When Moses came down from the mountain, he found the people worshipping before a golden calf; in his indignation, he threw down the tablets of stone, breaking them.

Exodus 32:19 *And it came about, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.*

Later, God instructed Moses to return to the mountain. However, before ascending the mountain, Moses was to hew out of the rock two tablets of stone identical to the ones he had broken. God had presented to Moses the first tablets, but this time Moses had to hew the stones and present them to God. God then inscribed the Ten Commandments on these tablets, which later were placed in the Ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 10:5; I Kings 8:9; II Chronicles 9:10).

Exodus 34:1 *Now the LORD said to Moses, "Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered.*

Exodus 34:28 *So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he (Yahweh - note verse 1) wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.*

Not only did God inscribe the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone, but He also dictated to Moses the terms and elements that were a part of the covenant. Parchment probably was the medium that Moses used to record this portion of Scripture.

Exodus 24:4, 7 *And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel... Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"*

Exodus 34:27 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.*

This is the account of the first writing of Holy Scripture:

- The Ten Commandments on tablets of stone, written by the finger of God, Himself;
- The terms and conditions of the covenant, dictated to Moses, who recorded them, probably on parchment.<sup>4</sup>

Over the next 1000 years, prophets, kings, and other men of God wrote the literature that comprises our Old Testament. They wrote on parchment (thin leather) and papyrus scrolls (an early form of paper, made from papyrus reeds). The last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, was written 460-430 BC.

### **The Creation of the Old Testament Canon**

The development of the Old Testament canon is not as forthright as that of the New Testament (discussed below). Josephus, writing in the last quarter of the First Century, declared that the writing of inspirational books ended during the reign of Artaxerxes. This would have been during the ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah. Consequently, it is the view of some scholars that Ezra and/or Nehemiah defined the Jewish canon, with Judas Maccabeaus being the one who put an official deposit of the sacred writings in the Temple.<sup>5</sup>

One early testimony to the corpus of the Jewish Canon is the Septuagint – the Greek version of the Old Testament, created in the mid-Third Century BC (the Septuagint is discussed more fully, in a later section). The Septuagint contains the books currently found in the Old Testament, plus some of the apocryphal books.

#### ***The Question of the Canonicity of The Old Testament Apocrypha***

During the four-century period between the close of the Old Testament and the birth of Christ, Jewish leaders wrote various books. Some of these are history, such as the books of Maccabees. Some are books of wisdom. Others are apocalyptic. Some are rather bizarre. None of these are inspired. Several early Jewish writers state that prophetic and inspirational activity was not present after the writing of Malachi.

*First Maccabees*, the most reliable history book of the Jews, written in this period, states that there was no inspired prophet among the people of God, at that time. The book also states that the Old Testament Scriptures were all that they needed for comfort; they did not need any further writings. Here are some excerpts:

1 Maccabees 4:46 *and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them.*

1 Maccabees 9:27 *Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.*

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<sup>4</sup> Note also Exodus 17:14; Deuteronomy 31:9

<sup>5</sup> John W. Miller, *he Origins of the Bible*, (New York, Paulist Press) 1994, 128,135; Sid Leiman, *The Cannonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence*. (New Haven, Transactions) 1996, 227-229

1 Maccabees 12:5 *This is a copy of the letter which Jonathan wrote to the Spartans: 6 "Jonathan the high priest, the senate of the nation, the priests, and the rest of the Jewish people to their brethren the Spartans, greeting. 7 Already in time past a letter was sent to Onias the high priest from Arius, who was king among you, stating that you are our brethren, as the appended copy shows. 8 Onias welcomed the envoy with honor, and received the letter, which contained a clear declaration of alliance and friendship. 9 Therefore, though we have no need of these things, since we have as encouragement the holy books which are in our hands,...*

1 Maccabees 14:41 *"And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise.*

As noted earlier, the Jewish historian, Josephus, writing at the close of the First Century stated that the writing of Jewish Scripture ended with the reign of Artaxerxes (reigned 465-424 BC)

*This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia,<sup>6</sup> who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time;<sup>7</sup>*

These and similar statements made by other authors indicate that the Jews did not consider the inter-testamental books to be Scripture – they were not a part of the Jewish canon.

Fourteen of these books comprise *The Apocrypha*. All Protestant Bibles published before 1827 contained the *Apocrypha*. These books were appended to the Old Testament but they were not regarded as being a part of the Protestant Canon.

***The Apocrypha consists of the following:*<sup>8</sup>**

- 1 Esdras\*
- 2 Esdras\*
- Tobit
- Judith
- The Rest of Esther
- The Wisdom of Solomon
- Ecclesiasticus (also called, "Sirach")
- Baruch, with the Epistle of Jeremiah
- The Song of the Three Holy Children<sup>9</sup>
- The History of Susanna<sup>10</sup>
- Bel and the Dragon<sup>11</sup>
- The Prayer of Manasses\*
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees

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<sup>6</sup> king of Persia from 465 to 424 BC

<sup>7</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Against Apion, Book I, Section 8 – See ADDENDUM A

<sup>8</sup> For a fuller discussion of the *Apocrypha* see ADDENDUM B

<sup>9</sup> Addition to Daniel

<sup>10</sup> Addition to Daniel

<sup>11</sup> Addition to Daniel

\*Not included in the Roman Catholic Canon

At the Council of Trent (1546 AD) the Church of Rome declared eleven portions the *Apocrypha* to be a part of the Canon. From that time forward these eleven documents have been included in Roman Catholic Bibles. These documents provide the basis for some Roman Catholic doctrines, such as prayers for the dead (II Maccabees 12:38-46). The Roman Catholic Church declared three *Apocryphal* books to be non-canonical: 1 & 2 Esdras, and the Prayer of Manassas.

One thing that might confuse Protestant readers of a Roman Catholic Bible is the names that some Roman Catholic Bibles use for the books of the Old Testament. For instance in some Catholic Bibles, I & II Chronicles are called I & II Paralipomenon (the name given to these books in the Greek version, i.e. the *Septuagint*).

In passing it is worth noting Jesus' statement in Luke 11:51

*from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation* (Luke 11:51 )

Chronologically, Zechariah, whose death is recorded in II Chronicles 24:20-22, was not the last martyr to die. The last martyr was Uriah, whose murder is recorded in Jeremiah 26:20-23).

- Zechariah was slain during the reign of Joash (843-803 BC)
- Uriah was slain during the reign of Josiah (608-597 BC)

Why did Jesus say, *from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God* ?

The answer is seen in the order of the books of the Jewish Old Testament. The traditional Jewish canon was divided into three sections: Law, Prophets, and Writings (also called, *Hagiographa*).

Curiously, the last section, The Writings, placed Chronicles out of historical order. The last book of the traditional Jewish canon is Chronicles. Thus, the first martyr in the Jewish Bible was Abel and the last martyr found in the Jewish Bible was Zechariah – although chronologically, he was not the last martyr recorded in the Old Testament.

The manner in which Jesus described these two martyrdoms reflected the Jewish canon, which closed with II Chronicles, not with the Apocryphal books which recorded later heroic martyrs who died during the Maccabean revolt (recorded in the Apocryphal Books of Maccabees).

Because the Apocryphal writings were known in Jesus' day, we assume that Jesus knew about them, yet on the basis of the Luke 11:51 quote He did not include them in the canon.

## The Creation of the New Testament Canon<sup>12</sup>

After the ascension of Christ, the Holy Spirit ended his 500 year hiatus on the production of Scripture. His renewed activity of inspiration and revelation, which ultimately resulted in the writing of the New Testament Scriptures, was in keeping with Jesus' promise to the Apostles.

John 14:26 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*

John 16:13 *But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.*

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, dated about 51 AD, usually is regarded as the first portion of the New Testament to be written.

By the end of the Second Century (about 175 AD), the principle books of the New Testament were in general use in the Church and acknowledged:

- to be apostolic (written by an apostle or by someone associated with an apostle),
- inspired by the Spirit of Christ,
- therefore authoritative and canonical.

The twenty New Testament books that from earliest times were beyond dispute were:

- The Four Gospels
- Acts
- The thirteen epistles of Paul
- The First Epistle of Peter
- The First Epistle of John

Early church testimony is ambiguous concerning the remaining seven books. Hebrews, The Second Epistle of Peter, Second and Third John, James, Jude, and Revelation, were included in some of the early lists but one or more of them were omitted in other lists (see ADDENDUM E, The Muratorian Fragment).

In an Easter letter, dated 367 AD, Athanasius of Alexandria listed the books of the New Testament as we have them today, indicating that the Eastern Church (Greek) had a clearly recognized canon. The Roman Synod of 382 AD, under Damasus, made a similar declaration, thus establishing that the Western Church (Latin) accepted the same canon.

Sometime in the Fourth Century, the Old Testament and the New Testament were collected into a single book, called, *Sacred Literature*.

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<sup>12</sup> For a more extensive treatment of the development of the New Testament Canon see Addendum C, Addendum D, and Addendum E



## INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

Although written over a period of fifteen centuries by approximately forty different men, in a variety of cultures, there is consistent harmony in the material.<sup>13</sup> This fact leads us to conclude that all of the writers were guided by a single supernatural mind, the Mind of God.

- Some writers simply wrote down what God told them, as when Moses wrote the Law (Deuteronomy 31:24).
- Others, such as Matthew wrote down what he had seen and heard during the years that he had been with Jesus.
- Luke who never saw Jesus upon the earth, wrote what he learned from diligent research (Luke 1:1-4).
- Some probably used earlier writings, as when the writer of 2 Samuel refers to the book of Jasher, (2 Samuel 1:18 and Joshua 10:13) a book that no longer exists.

The Holy Spirit guided all of them; they wrote what God wanted them to write. This is called, "inspiration." Describing the origin of Scripture, Paul wrote,

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; (2 Timothy 3:16)*

The Greek term in this verse, translated, "inspiration, is *theopneustos* [θεοπνεύστος] meaning, *God breathed*.

There are various theories of inspiration. Here are two that often are offered by those who have a strong view of the inspiration of Scripture:

1. **Dictation:** According to this theory, the Holy Spirit dictated every word, and the human author just wrote down what was dictated. The Holy Spirit protected the human author from making any mistakes in the dictation.
2. **Mechanical:** The human author was like a typewriter. He was hardly aware of what he was writing, but was just the instrument used.

Much of Scripture requires us to hold a view other than these two because the personality of the human agent that the Holy Spirit used is apparent in the writing style. For example, Luke, a physician, writes very differently from John, who wrote in a very passionate style. Luke is very

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<sup>13</sup> Often the statement is made that there are contradictions in the Bible. Usually, when this claim is investigated, the contradiction is not that at all, but rather different accounts' giving supplementary information – one account will leave out an element whereas another account will include that information. One of the most important scholarly works dealing with apparent discrepancies between the length of reigns of monarchs as reported in Kings on the one hand and Chronicles on the other, is that of Thiele. See Addendum F for a discussion of this issue and Thiele's solution. However, apart from the matter of the length of reigns of monarchs, there is another problem with the contradiction between these two books in their reporting of the numbers of troops who worked on the Temple, etc. Various explanations have been offered in an effort to resolve these inconsistencies.

deliberate and very detailed (which hand was healed, for example- Luke 6:6; Matthew 12:10; Mark 3:1). Luke and Acts (both written by Luke) are of the same style, and are quite different from the style of Matthew. Paul became very emotional in some of his writings, even leaving out words in his sentences.

We are on safe ground when we declare that Scripture is *plenary inspired* (meaning fully) and *verbally inspired* (meaning that the terms are influenced by and in some instances chosen by the Holy Spirit).

Here are important points to consider, concerning the inspiration of Scripture:

**I. Jesus quoted the Old Testament as if it were exactly what it claimed to be.**

A. The incidents were spoken of as being historical events and the people real people. Examples:

- God made male and female (Mark 10:6)
- Abel was murdered (Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:51)

B. Jesus also quoted the Old Testament as if it were the Word of God. Examples:

- "It is written... (Mark 11:17; Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4; etc.)
- "Have you not read" (Mark 2:25)
- "David himself said in the Holy Spirit" (Mark 12:36)
- "Until heaven and earth pass away, one *yodh* - the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet - or one corner of a letter shall not pass away from the Law" (Matthew 5:18; Luke 16:17)

**II. The New Testament writers considered the Old Testament to be inspired of God.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

Acts 28:25 *And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, (Acts 28:25 NAU)*

Peter 1:15-21 *And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you may be able to call these things to mind. For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"-- and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this*

*first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

The sense of this statement is that the Old Testament prophets were not merely good news analysts. They did not look at what was going on and then, relying on their ability to interpret events, predict what was going to happen, as an editor might do in a newspaper or magazine. Peter declared that the Holy Spirit was the author of their prophecies.

**III. Peter considered Paul's writings to be of the same nature as the Old Testament.**

*2 Peter 3:15-16 and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

**IV. Paul quoted Luke, just a few years after Luke was written.**

*For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (I Timothy 5:18).*

Note that the first half of this verse is a quote of Deuteronomy 25:34 *You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.* The latter portion of the verse, *The laborer is worthy of his wages,* is not an Old Testament quote, but a quote from Luke 10:7. Luke wrote,

*"And stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.*

*The laborer is worthy of his wages* may be inferred from some Old Testament passages, but there is no passage that contains the quote as recorded by Paul.

It is significant that Matthew 10:10 contains the same account as that described by Luke, but in Matthew's version, Jesus says, *the laborer is worthy of his food* (Greek - *trophe* [τροφή] "food"). Luke, on the other hand, used the Greek term for wages (Greek - *misthos*, [μισθός] "wages paid for work").

Thus, Paul quoted Luke, word for word, using the term, *wages* (*misthos* [μισθός]). The only reasonable explanation is that in I Timothy 5:18 Paul described Luke's Gospel as, "Scripture."

**V. John claimed Divine authority for what he wrote in Revelation.**

*Revelation 1:10-11 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."*

**VI. The Lord gave warning to any who would add or take away from the Book of Revelation**

*Revelation 22:18-19 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.*

**VII. To those in whom the Spirit of God dwells, or those who are being touched by the Spirit of God, the Bible has the "ring of truth."<sup>14</sup> John Calvin described the Bible as being, *auto pistis*, meaning, "self-authenticating."<sup>15</sup> <sup>16</sup>**

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<sup>14</sup> J. B. Phillips, wrote a small book by this title, *The Ring of Truth*, after spending most of his life as a scholar and translator of Scripture.(Chicago, Shaw Books) 2000

<sup>15</sup> *"Let this point therefore stand: that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit. Therefore, illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men."*John Calvin, [\*Institutes of the Christian Religion\*](#) I: VII: 5 (80).

<sup>16</sup> A "natural man" may not accept this. *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*( 1 Corinthians 2:14)

## THE HISTORY OF THE BIBLE

The two major decisions that have to be made about the contents of the Bible are

- (a) which books belong in the Bible;
- (b) which manuscripts of these books convey the original text.

As noted above, the general corpus of the New Testament canon (literally, *cane*, or *measuring rod*) was established by 200 AD and the Jewish canon was established with certainty much earlier.

Although God inspired those who wrote the **autographs** (the **original manuscripts**), He did not inspire those who copied or translated the Bible. It is evident that both copyists and translators could and did make errors.

Many ancient manuscripts and translations have been preserved. By comparing them, we usually can determine with strong certainty the language of the autograph. In a few cases, we cannot be certain, but none of the uncertain passages or terms have serious implications for our faith.

While we do not have any part of the Bible in the handwriting of the original author, we do have two kinds of sources from which we can learn what the autograph contained.

1. **Manuscripts:** these are **copies** of the original documents or copies of copies. We define manuscripts as copies, written by hand, in the language of the original document.
2. **Versions:** these are **translations** of the manuscripts into another language. Some of the ancient versions were translated from **copies** of the documents which were much older than any which we now possess.

### OLD TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS AND VERSIONS

1. The oldest extant Hebrew **manuscripts** are the Scripture portions that were found among the Dead Sea scrolls (found in caves near the Dead Sea in 1947 and years immediately following). Most of these manuscripts date from around 100 BC. They were copied from earlier copies and thus are significant witness as to the content of these earlier manuscripts. There are many extant Hebrew manuscripts that were copied in later centuries.

The oldest known **version** of the Old Testament is a Greek version, called the *Septuagint*. The name comes from the Latin word for "seventy." According to Jewish tradition, 72 Jewish scholars did the translation in 72 days in Alexandria, Egypt.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> According to the (pseudepigraphic) Letter of Aristeas, repeated with embellishments in Philo, Josephus and various later Jewish and Christian sources, Jewish scholars first translated the first five books of the Bible into Koine Greek in the 3rd century BC. The traditional explanation is that Ptolemy II sponsored the translation for use by the many Alexandrian Jews who were fluent in Koine Greek, but not in Hebrew. The Talmud perpetuates the story of the Letter of Aristeas: *King Ptolemy once gathered 72 Elders. He placed them in 72 chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were*

The truth is:

- The Pentateuch portion of the *Septuagint* was translated about 250 BC.
- Various individuals translated the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures over the next seventy-five years.

Because the Septuagint was translated from Hebrew manuscripts much older than any which we now possess, this version is very valuable in helping us to know what the original manuscripts contained.

The *Septuagint* was the version of the Old Testament read by most Jews during the time that Jesus was on the earth, and during the remaining years of the First Century. The *Septuagint* seems to have been translated from ancient manuscripts that were not identical to the family of manuscripts on which our present Old Testament Bibles are based. Thus, there are some slight differences between the *Septuagint* and our Old Testament. Since the *Septuagint* is the form of the Old Testament quoted most often in the New Testament, many Old Testament passages quoted in the New Testament are slightly different from those verses in our Old Testament.

In time, the Jews became very disturbed because the Christians pointed to Isaiah 7:14 as a prophecy of the Messiah's virgin birth. The Hebrew word in Isaiah 7:14 is *almah*, which can mean "nubile young woman," or "virgin." When the translators of the *Septuagint* came to this passage, they translated *almah* with the Greek term, *parthenos*, meaning, "virgin." This clearly demonstrates that the pre-Christian Jews of Alexandria understood the *almah* of Isaiah 7:14 to foretell a coming virgin birth (Some have argued that they understood this to refer to a young woman who had been a virgin up to the point of the time that she conceived. This doesn't make much sense, because the birth was to be a "sign." How could something be a sign, when a virgin bride's first conception and birth occurred every day of the year in every society?)

## 2. Additional important ancient versions of the Old Testament.

A very anti-Christian Jew named, Aquila, produced a Greek version of the Old Testament in the Second Century AD and chose Greek terms that Christians could not use to defend Christianity. Aquila's version replaced the *Septuagint* for many Greek-literate Jews because of the anti-Christian sentiments that had risen in the Jewish communities.

Other important Greek versions of the Old Testament also produced in the Second Century AD are those of Theodotion, and Symmachus. In addition to the Greek versions of the Old Testament, there also are ancient versions of the Old Testament in Syriac, Egyptian, Ethiopic, Armenian, and other languages.

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*summoned. He entered each one's room and said: "Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher." God put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did.'* (Tractate Magillah 9)

### **THE HISTORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CONSISTS OF FOUR PERIODS:**

1. *From the writing of the autographs to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.* In Ezra's era, the Old Testament canon was collected and inspiration ceased.
2. *The era of the Scribes.* Ezra (mid-Fifth Century BC) began a "race of scribes" who were devoted to the study of the Scriptures and were custodians of sacred truth. The scribes formalized the Old Testament canon. They described themselves as "putting a hedge around the Law," meaning that they were to ascertain, defend, perpetuate the true interpretation of Scripture, and to preserve it from error in transmission. They made it their special work to correct the faults that had crept into the text of the Old Testament during the Babylonian captivity, and to prevent, for the future, its being corrupted by any alteration.

The Scribes also began the *Talmud*, which is a laboriously minute interpretation of the Law.

3. *The Massorites succeeded the Scribes.* The *Massorites* continued and enlarged the work of the Scribes. The Massorites began the critical observation of the text known as *Massora* (meaning, "tradition"). Thus the term, *Massorites*, often is used to describe them. They functioned from c.500 AD until after c.1000 AD.

The *Massorites* first separated the apocryphal from the canonical books, and divided the latter into twenty-two books, being the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Then they divided each book into sections and verses.

When transcribing and copying, the Massorites counted the number of the letters, words, and verses; they noted the middle letter in a sentence and the middle letter in a document (these usually were signified by making the letter a bit smaller or larger). If the middle letter in the document they were producing were different from the middle letter of the document they were copying, they knew that they had made a mistake.

In time, Hebrew script evolved into the beautiful block letters currently used to write Hebrew. Calligraphy became important to the Massorites.

**.The Development of Hebrew Script<sup>18</sup>**

Letter Name	Trans-literation	Early	Middle	Late	Modern
Aleph	A				
Beyt	B				
Gimel	G				
Dalet	D				
Hey	H				
Vav	W				
Zayin	Z				
Chet	Hh				
Tet	Th				
Yud	Y				
Kaph	K				
Lamed	L				
Mem	M				
Nun	N				
Samech	S				
Ayin	Gh				
Pey	P				
Tsade	Ts				
Quph	Q				
Resh	R				
Shin	Sh				
Tav	T				

Hebrew originally had no vowels. It was a consonantal alphabet. Pronunciation was preserved through oral tradition. There was a difference between the pronunciation of the Hebrew by Egyptian Jews and Palestinian Jews.

It was during the period of the *Massorites* that “vowel points” were added. Because the words themselves were considered sacred, the vowels were not inserted between the consonants (as is done in most languages). Instead, they were added below or above the consonants. Thus, the words were not altered.

Example: consonant without vowel point ב (pronounced as the English letter "B")

Example: consonant with vowel point בֵּ (pronounced as the "BE" in the word, "bed")

<sup>18</sup> For an interesting recounting of the discovery of ancient Hebrew writing, see ADDENDUM G



Some manuscripts were prepared for reading in the synagogue by having the text in two columns. The first column was the sacred text, without vowel points. Beside it was the text with vowel points, to aid the reader.

4. *The modern era began about 1100 AD and extends to the present.* As the Jews migrated to various places, they carried the Masoretic Text with them, and they were not as careful in copying as the Massorites had been. There is some slight difference in the manuscripts that have their origin in Spain and France, from those that have their origin in Germany and Russia.

By the 15<sup>th</sup> Century AD, several editions of the Masoretic Text existed. The Rabbi-scholar, Jacob ben-chayim ibn Adonijah, collected all of the editions that he could find and carefully examined them. He then produced and published in 1524 AD what is considered to be the authoritative Masoretic Text.

Confidence in the accuracy of this text is bolstered by the fact that both the Septuagint (based on the text as it existed in the Second and Third Century BC), and the portions of the Old Testament found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, reveal an amazing consistency with the Masoretic Text produced by Jacob ben-chayim ibn Adonijah. As one scholar has written, this fact is...”, assuring us that God was indeed divinely and sovereignly protecting His Word through thousands of years of copying and translating.”<sup>19</sup>

## NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS AND VERSIONS

All of the books of the New Testament were written in Greek (with the possible exception of Matthew<sup>20</sup>), during the seventy years that followed the death of Christ. Since Jesus spoke Aramaic, occasionally the Aramaic term that Jesus used was transposed into Greek.<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup> S. Michael Houdmann. *What is the Masoretic Text*, GotQuestions.org

<sup>20</sup> The language in which Matthew was composed is a matter of controversy. In the Fourth Century, Eusebius quotes Papias who was bishop of Hierapolis in the first half of the Second Century: *Matthew therefore compiled the oracles in a Hebrew dialect, and each one translated as he was able.* (Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, Chapter 39). No writing of Papias exists today and all that we know of his writings are those that are found in Eusebius, written about 250 years after Papias had died. Many scholars point out that both internal and external evidence argues for Matthew’s Gospel being originally composed in Greek. Many argue that Papias was wrong, and some say that his citation of the “oracles “ could be understood as a writing other than the Gospel of Matthew. Be that as it may, the original language of Matthew’s Gospel is uncertain and a full discussion of the issues involved is too lengthy us to pursue in this document.

<sup>21</sup> An example being *Cephas* (John 1:42) – the Aramaic word for *rock* (correctly pronounced, *Kayphas* ). In his epistles, Paul frequently used this Aramaic name for Peter, rather than the Greek , *Petros* (1 Co. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal. 1:18; Gal. 2:9, 11, 14. The Greek term that we render as Peter (*petros*), also literally means, *rock*. If we were consistent in translating, we would not call this apostle, *Peter*, but rather we would call him, *Rock*.

originals and all of the early copies were written in Greek *uncials* (the term means, "inch," indicating that they were written in letters one inch high - an exaggeration, but the manuscripts are written in large capital letters).

The oldest New Testament manuscripts that we possess were copied about three hundred years after the ascension of Christ, around 350 AD.<sup>22</sup> Only two manuscripts are of this age:

- *Codex Sinaiticus* (so called because it was found in a monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai in 1844) now kept in the British Museum;<sup>23</sup>
- *Vaticanus* (so called because it was placed in the library of the Vatican, soon after that library was established in 1448 and still is kept there).

Another important manuscript is *Alexandrianus*, which was copied about 400 AD. The Patriarch of Constantinople brought the manuscript from Alexandria to England in 1628 and gave it as a gift to Charles I. It also is kept in the British Museum.

There are more than one hundred known *uncial* manuscripts dating from the Fifth to the Tenth Century.

In the Ninth and Tenth Centuries, a new style of writing Greek was developed, called, "cursive" or "running" (sometimes called miniscule). There are hundreds of cursive manuscripts dating from the Ninth Century to the invention of the printing press in the Fifteenth Century.

Example: Uncial Greek word for "son" (*huios*),  $\Upsilon\text{Ι}\text{Ο}\Sigma$

Example: Cursive Greek word for "son,"  $\upsilon\acute{\iota}\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$

- Note that the cursive Greek has a breathing mark (  $\text{ }^{\text{c}}$  ) over the second letter (*iota* -  $\iota$ ), indicating that the word should be pronounced as if it began with an "H."
- It also has an accent (  $\acute{\text{ '}}$  ) over the fourth letter (*omicron* -  $\omicron$ ), indicating that this is the syllable to emphasize in pronunciation.

Thus, the word is pronounced as if it were spelled in English as, *wheeos* (accenting the last syllable).

Even though Greek Uncials had vowels, the reader was supposed to know how to pronounce the words (smooth or rough breathing at the beginning of the word and which syllables to accent). In this way the written language made the same assumptions that written Hebrew made before vowel points were added to that language. It was assumed that readers knew the spoken language.

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<sup>22</sup> See Addendum H and Addendum I

<sup>23</sup> For a description of the discovery of this manuscript, see ADDENDUM K

In Uncial writing, there was no space between the words. Also, when a writer arrived at the edge of the page he just went to the next line without indicating that he was either in the middle of a word or at the end of a word.

- Here is John 3:16 in Greek cursive style:

Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν,  
ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

- Here is John 3:16 in Greek Uncial style:

ΟΥΤΩΣΓΑΡΗΓΑΠΗΣΕΝΟΘΕΟΣΤΟΚΟΣΜΟΝΩΣΤΕΤΟΝΥΙΟΝΤΟΝΜΟΝΟΓΕΝ  
ΗΕΔΟΚΕΝΙΝΑΠΑΣΟΠΙΣΤΕΥΩΝΕΙΣΑΥΤΟΝΜΕΑΠΟΛΗΤΑΙΑΙΑΛΛΕΞΗΖΩΗΝΑ  
ΙΩΝΙΟΝ

If the same procedure were used in English, here is how it would appear.

- Cursive style:

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. (NAS)

- Uncial style:

FORGODSOLOVEDTHEWORLDTHATHEGAVEHISONLYBEGOTTENSON  
THATWHOEVERBELIEVESINHIMSHOULDNOTPERISHBUTHAVEETERN  
ALIFE.

Reading Uncial manuscripts sometimes is difficult. Note, for example, the sentence,

GODISNOWHERE.

Two opposite meanings are possible.

- God is now here
- God is no where

This is the sort of challenge faced by those who work with Uncial manuscripts.

NOTE: If you buy a Greek New Testament, today, it will be written in cursive.

## **Families Of Manuscripts**

There are four major "text types" of New Testament Greek manuscripts (so identified because of the geographical areas from whence they originated):

1. Alexandrian
2. Western
3. Caesarean
4. Byzantine

### **The Majority Text and the *Textus Receptus***

As the Roman Church gained dominance in the western portion of the Empire, Latin began to replace Greek as the language of literature. Greek continued to prevail in the East, around Constantinople (Byzantium), until the Muslims conquered the Eastern Empire in the middle of the Fifteenth Century. This being true, Greek manuscripts gave way to Latin in all but Byzantium. This is why there are more Greek manuscripts of the Byzantine text type.

Since there are more Byzantine text type manuscripts in existence than other text types, the Byzantine text type is called *The Majority Text*.

- One sub-family of the Majority/Byzantine text is the *textus receptus*. The *textus receptus* is the result of the work of Erasmus (who died 1536), who assembled a Greek New Testament from the many manuscripts available to him (almost all of the texts available to him were Byzantine texts).
- After Erasmus' death, Stephanus (who died 1559) continued the work of Erasmus.
- Beza (who died 1605) continued the work.

The King James Version is based on the *textus receptus* (the text assembled by Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza).

Most English Language versions produced since the last half of the Twentieth Century (NAS, RSV, NIV, NASB, etc.) were the result of evaluating manuscripts of all of the four text types.

### **The Importance of Early Versions**

In the first half of the Second Century (before 150 AD) New Testament scriptures were being translated into Syriac, and not much later into Latin. Some of the oldest versions of the New Testament extant today are in the Peshito-Syriac language (meaning, "common" Syian). Several hundred Peshito-Syriac texts are extant).

A more careful Latin version was translated around 400 AD. This version is called the *Vulgate*, meaning, "popular." The Vulgate translation was done by Jerome, at the instruction of his church superiors. Jerome was an excellent scholar who sought to find the oldest manuscripts possible in producing his Latin version. It became the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church as well as Western Europe. From that time forward, all Roman Catholic versions had to be tested by how faithful they are to the Vulgate. The Vulgate and the King James Version of 1611 are the two most influential translations ever produced.

In the Third and Fourth Centuries, versions were made in Coptic (Egyptian), Gothic, Ethiopian, and Armenian. Since these versions are translations of very ancient manuscripts, or copies of ancient translations, they help to increase the certainty that our present Bible is based on reliable documents.

### The role of textual criticism in Bible study and exegesis

Textual criticism is not a ploy of theological liberals or those who would tamper with the Bible to downgrade its reliability. Manuscript differences are a reality of which a diligent Bible student must be aware. The Bible student/exegete must consider how these options will effect any conclusions concerning the meaning of a passage, and its resulting application. This especially is important in passages where important doctrines and practices are at stake.

An example is Matthew 17:21 and its parallel passages, Mark 9:14-29 and Luke 9:37-43.

- Matthew 17:21 in the King James Version reads,  
*But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.*

Mark 9:29 in the King James Version states,  
*This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.*

Luke 9:37-44 in the KJV makes no reference either to prayer or fasting. Luke's account concludes,

*And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.*

The NAS puts brackets around Matthew 17:21 and notes in a sidebar that some manuscripts do not contain this verse.

The NIV does not even contain Matthew 17:21, except in a footnote without comment.

- Mark 9:29 receives similar treatment in recent versions.

The NAS states, *by anything but prayer*, then notes, in a sidebar, that many manuscripts add *and fasting*.

The NIV reads, *only by prayer*, then states in a footnote, "some manuscripts, *prayer and fasting*."

Why is there this difference? Did Jesus say that *this kind comes out only by prayer and fasting*, or did He say, *this kind comes out only by prayer*?

Most manuscripts of the Byzantine family of manuscripts contain the expression, *and fasting*, at Mark 9:29. Most Alexandrian, Western, and Caesarean families of manuscripts testify to the absence of, *and fasting*.

The same thing can be said for Matthew 17:21. It tends to be present in Byzantine texts and absent in the other text types.

How can this be explained? One thing that quickly entered the life of the early church was an emphasis on asceticism. This began to influence the doctrines relating to salvation,

sanctification, etc. The following quote from Bruce Metzger illustrates how this tendency was reflected in copying and producing manuscripts.

"In view of the increasing emphasis on asceticism in the early Church and the corresponding insistence upon fasting as an obligation laid on all Christians it is not surprising that monks, in their work of transcribing manuscripts, should have introduced several references to fasting, particularly in connection with prayer. This has happened in numerous manuscripts at Mark 14: 29; Acts 10:30; and First Corinthians 7:5. In Romans 14:17, where the kingdom of God is said to be not eating and drinking, *but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*, codex 4 inserts after *righteousness* the words *and asceticism* (καὶ ἄσκησις). Such interpolations abound in chapter Seven of First Corinthians." (Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, page 203).

This presents a possibility for the explanation of how the reference to fasting entered the Mark passage. What about Matthew 17:21?

Indeed, there is strong manuscript evidence that this verse was added. This is called a, "gloss." Christian scribes often made notes on the side of the page, even as most of us do in the borders beside the text in our Bibles. In all probability, a Byzantine scribe producing a copy of Matthew, put a note on the border of his manuscript, quoting the parallel passage in Mark (which in his Byzantine manuscript contained the expression, "and fasting"). When a later manuscript was produced by copying the manuscript with the note, the note became incorporated in the text. Thus, the many copies that were made of his manuscript and the copies made of the copies began a Byzantine family of manuscripts with this gloss.

Consider how many people, on the basis of this verse, have begun a time of prolonged prayer and fasting in order to displace a demon, when the Gospel account provides an uncertain basis for such action. As a matter of note, in the episode recorded in Matthew 17 and Mark 9, Jesus did not pray before casting out the demon. What He was addressing, in the statement, by *anything but prayer*, was the flagging prayer life of his disciples. A constant, intense prayer life is required for spiritual power.

Another example is John 5:4 in the KJV, *For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.*

The Jews of Jesus' day believed that the water became turbulent at unpredictable times because an unseen angel descended and touched the water. When one examines the textual evidence for this explanation the evidence comes up lacking:

- This phrase is absent in the two oldest manuscripts of John.
- Other manuscripts put an asterisk before and after the phrase, indicating that the scribe who copied it realized that it was not present in all of the manuscripts available to him.
- So, the more recent versions of John 5 do not contain this phrase, or else bracket it, indicating that it does not enjoy manuscript integrity.

How did this phrase explaining the troubling the water become inserted into the text? In all probability, a scribe copying the text realized that some of his readers would be confused about the troubling of the water – what was the cause? So, he sought to explain the troubling of the water by writing the Jewish tradition in the margin of his manuscript, *an angel went down at a certain season and troubled the water*. A later scribe, copying the manuscript, included this marginal note in the text. Thus, this phrase entered one family of manuscripts.

## TRANSLATION AND TRANSMISSION STYLES

**Three styles of transmission are displayed in current English versions:**

- **Formal Equivalency** refers to the style of translation in which an effort is made to produce a word for word translation. Those who practice *Formal Equivalency* translation seek to produce as literal a translation as is possible. No Formal Equivalency version is totally a literal, word for word, translation. The differences between languages make it impossible to produce a readable, absolutely literal, word for word, translation.

The *King James Version*, the *New American Standard Version*, and the *English Standard Version*, are examples of this style of translation.

- **Dynamic Equivalency** or **Functional Equivalency**<sup>24</sup> refers to a style of translation in which the translator is more concerned with communicating the meaning of the text rather than a word for word literal translation i.e., thought for thought, rather than word for word. Eugene Nida was the one who developed the Dynamic Equivalence Theory of Bible translation. He was a founding charter member of Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the translators associated with this ministry follow their founder's Dynamic Equivalency/Functional Equivalency style of Scripture production. In the glossary of *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Nida wrote that dynamic equivalence is the "quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the *response* of the *receptor* is essentially like that of the original receptors."<sup>25</sup> In other words, the reader of the Dynamic Equivalency version will have the same intellectual and emotional response to the text that the original Greek-speaking readers had when they read the Greek text of the New Testament. Especially important to those who follow this procedure is the heart response of the reader.

The *New International Version*, the *New Living Translation*, and the *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (in a modified form), are examples of this style of translation.

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<sup>24</sup>*Dynamic/Formal Equivalency* is the brain child of Eugene Nida, who was a charter founding member of Wycliffe Bible Translators (which is a sister organization of the Summer Institute of Linguistics). Wycliffe translators follow the DE/FE style of translation.

<sup>25</sup> Nida, Eugene A., and Charles R. Taber. *The Theory and Practice of Translation, With Special Reference to Bible Translating*, (Leiden: Brill) 1969, p 200.

### **A Comparison and Interweaving of the Two Styles**

James R. White illustrates the difference in these two styles by calling attention to the French expression, "*j' ai le cafard.*" Literally, this means, "I have a cockroach." This is the *formal equivalency* translation. However, this is a French idiomatic expression that does not mean, literally, what the words say. The French use this expression to mean, "I am depressed," or "I have the blues." This is how the expression would be translated using *dynamic equivalency*.

Even though the translators of various versions commit themselves to one or the other of the above styles, all versions do slip over into the other style in some instances. Thus, the Dynamic Equivalency NIV translates by formal equivalency, in some instances. On the other hand, the Formal Equivalency NASB translates by dynamic equivalency in some passages.

In passages where there is more than one interpretation, the Dynamic Equivalency style requires the translator to choose one of the possible interpretations before he can produce his translation, whereas the Formal Equivalency translators do not interpret, but seek to produce what the original language says and allow the reader to determine the correct interpretation.

Thus, all Dynamic/Functional Equivalency versions, by the very nature of the process, are interpretations, since the process requires the translator to interpret the meaning before he can render the text into the receptor language. Usually, the interpretation is clear and beyond question, but not always so. Since the process usually is done by a committee of sincere linguists, there is accountability with reference to the interpretation.

In theory at least, Formal Equivalency versions seek to avoid interpretation, but render the text without interpretation – although in some instances, this cannot be done because the style of the Greek or Hebrew requires the translator to reach a conclusion as to the intent of the author.

### **Transmission Style other than Translation**

There is another type of Bible transmission, a *paraphrase*. A paraphrase is not a translation but an unhindered interpretation – in one sense, it is a commentary, rather than a translation. The more popular contemporary paraphrases are the work of an individual, rather than the work of a committee. Those who produce a paraphrase interpret what a passage means, then in their own words, communicate that meaning without any accountability to the original language (which is at variance with the method used by responsible Dynamic Equivalency translators, who, even though not tied to a literal word for word translation, do seek to remain constrained by the original text). Paraphrases reflect the theology and subjective inclinations of those doing the work and should not be used to determine Scriptural truth. The most popular example of a paraphrase is Ken Taylor's *The Living Bible*. A popular paraphrase of more recent origin is Eugene Peterson's *The Message*.

Genesis 6:1-2 is an example of the difference between a translation and a paraphrase.



The NAS **translates** these verses, *Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.*

The 1971 version of the Living Bible **paraphrases** these same verses, *Now a population explosion took place upon the earth. It was at this time that beings from the spirit world looked upon the beautiful earth women and took any they desired as wives.*

The NAS is a literal translation of the Hebrew. The Living Bible is a paraphraser's interpretation of what he thinks the Hebrew means (i.e. Hebrew: *Sons of God*; Taylor: *beings from the spirit world*) . As stated above, a paraphrase is not a translation in any sense, but, for all practical purposes, a combination of interpretation and commentary on Scripture..

### **An Example of Ambiguity in Translation Style and the Cause Thereof**

An illustration of the manner in which versions cross over from one style of translation to the other is demonstrated in how an assortment of versions have rendered I Timothy 3:11

#### **The Greek text reads:**

Γυναῖκας ὡσαύτως σεμνάς, μὴ διαβόλους, νηφαλίους, πιστάς ἐν πᾶσιν.  
Women similarly honorable not slanderers temperate faithful in all things  
(wives) (serious) (accusers) (sober)

In referring to husbands and wives, Greek expresses this in the manner that sometimes is done in colloquial English i.e., *she is his woman*, or, *he is her man*. The term rendered as *woman* or *wife*, is the noun, *gune* (γυνή). Depending on the context and modifying terms attached to the noun, one has to decide whether the noun is to be translated as *woman* or *wife*.

Paul used the term, *gune* (γυνή) sixty-one times in his letters (If Hebrews is considered to be authored by Paul – if not, then he used the term sixty times).

- In 36 of these instances, the term refers to wives and is so indicated by the presence of the term, *husband*, or a possessive pronoun such as, *autou* (αὐτοῦ), “his.”
- In 24 instances it is clear that the term is to be rendered, *woman*. This is evident because of the context as well as the absence of any modifying terms, such as *husband*, or *his* [*wife*].

This leaves I Timothy 3:11 as the one instance in which some decision must be made as to how the term should be rendered. The reason that a question concerning how the term is to be rendered in this verse is the context - it occurs in the list of requirements for overseers and deacons – otherwise it would be rendered in the usual manner, *woman*.

The Greek in this verse does not contain the term, *their*, nor is there any term for *husband* in the verse. Even so, some translators who have made the decision that the verse refers to the wives of deacons have inserted the term, *their* – thus it is rendered, *their wives*, or by some similar extended expression.

Those who have followed a strict Formal Equivalency pattern have rendered the term, *women*, because there is no grammatical reason to render it otherwise. This rendering forces the exegete to make a decision concerning which women Paul references:

- Is Paul referring to the wives of deacons,
- or is he referring to deaconesses, indicating that there are standards for women who occupy that role, even as there are standards for men who occupy the role of deacons?

The point being that Formal Equivalency leaves to the exegete the responsibility for making that decision, whereas those who follow the other pattern make the decision for the exegete.

**The following are examples of how some of the more popular versions render this verse:**

**Young's Literal Translation:** *Women -- in like manner grave, not false accusers, vigilant, faithful in all things.*

**New American Standard Version:** *Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.*

**Revised Standard Version:** *The women likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things.*

**King James Version:** *Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.*

**New King James Version:** *Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.*

**Holman Christian Standard Bible:** *Wives, too, must be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything.*

**English Standard Version:** *Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.*

**New International Version:** *In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*

**New Living Translation:** *In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do.*

NOTE: For further illustrations of the differing styles of translation, see ADDENDUM J, which displays how various versions have rendered John 3:16.

## Examples of Bibles Currently Available and the Style of Rendering

### Formal Equivalency Versions

King James Version (1611)	New King James Version (1982)
Douay-Rheims (1610)	Green's Literal Translation (1985)
Young's Literal Translation (1862)	New Revised Standard Version (1989)
Revised Version (1885)	New American Standard Bible (1995)
American Standard Version (1901)	English Standard Version (2001)
Revised Standard Version (1952)	Lexham English Bible (2011, 2012)

### Moderate use of dynamic equivalence

Holman Christian Standard Bible <sup>26</sup>	New English Translation
Modern Language Bible	New International Version
New American Bible	Today's New International Version

### Extensive use of dynamic equivalence

Complete Jewish Bible	New English Bible
Contemporary English Version	New Jerusalem Bible
God's Word Translation	New Living Translation
Good News Bible	Revised English Bible

### Extensive use of paraphrase

The Message (2002)	The Living Bible (1971)
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<sup>26</sup> Holman Bible Publishers describes HCSB as "optimal equivalence." The introduction to the *HCSB*® states, " *Optimal Equivalence*: This approach seeks to combine the best features of both formal and dynamic equivalence. In the many places throughout Scripture where a word for word rendering is clearly understandable, a literal translation is used. In places where a literal rendering might be unclear, then a more dynamic translation is given. The *HCSB*® has chosen to use the balance and beauty of optimal equivalence for a fresh translation of God's word that is both faithful to the words God inspired and 'user friendly' to modern readers." (biblegateway.com/HCSB)

## **Excursus: THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE**

1 The earliest form of Scripture in pre-English, of which there is any record, was in the Anglo-Saxon language (Old English/Northumbrian) and was in the form of poetry and song. According to tradition, the human instrument who produced these songs and poems, which were paraphrases of the Latin Scriptures, was Caedmon. Caedmon was an illiterate servant who cared for the animals in the British double monastery of Streonaesalch (Whitby Abbey) during the abbacy of Hilda (657-680). Caedmon always felt out of place in the evenings, when the monks, accompanied by a harp, would chant Scripture in Latin. He could not sing and Latin was foreign to him. One night he left the hall to go sleep with the animals, and while asleep, he had a dream in which someone approached him and told him to sing *principium creaturarum*, (the beginning of created things). After refusing to do so because of his inability to sing, Caedmon relented and began to sing, and in doing so, he produced a short eulogistic poem praising God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

The next morning, Caedmon remembered the song and even added some additional lines to the poem. Later in the day he told his foreman about what happened and the foreman quickly took him to the abbess. He sang his song to the abbesses and she then tested him by commissioning him to compose a poem/song based on a story from the Bible, which she recited to him. Caedmon returned the next day with the requested song. The abbess ordered the scholars to instruct Caedmon in doctrine and sacred history. Each night, he composed a song, not in Latin, but in beautiful Anglo-Saxon verse – the content of which was the material in which he had been instructed the previous day. The monks wrote down these beautiful songs. Although he was not involved in Bible translation per se, Caedmon's paraphrases are thought to be the first form of the Bible in English.

2 In the later years of his life, the beloved churchman/scholar known as, the Venerable Bede (who is the source of the information concerning Caedmon), undertook the translation of the Gospel of John into Anglo-Saxon. He finished the task in 735 AD, just moments before his death. Bede was a renowned highly educated, scholar who was concerned that the common people could not recite nor meditate on the scriptures in their language. He wrote to Bishop Egbert, who had just become the Archbishop of York, “Do you cause them [the scriptures] to be known and constantly repeated in their own tongue by those that are unlearned, that is, by them who have knowledge only of their proper tongue?” It was this deeply held concern that caused Bede to undertake the translation of the Gospel of John, which he finished on his deathbed. Here is the story:

Bede's scribe, Wilbert had been writing for hours, as the aged Bede, with the Greek text before him, dictated in Anglo-Saxon the sacred words of John's Gospel. Bede knew that death was not far from him and he wanted to finish the work before he breathed his last breath. Near sunset, Wilbert said, “There is only one sentence still unfinished, Master.”

"Then write quickly," replied the old man as he dictated the final words, which were followed by Wilbert's exclamation, "It is finished, Master." Thus, 700 years after Palestinian crowds had flocked to hear Jesus' words, those very words were translated into Anglo-Saxon, the forerunner of our English language.

Upon completing his task, the weary, weakened, Bede asked Wilbert to elevate his head so he could face the holy place where he usually prayed. Bede wished, one last time, to "sit and call on my Father." As he chanted "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son," his voice became weaker and weaker and then finally ceased altogether. Bede's life ended in the same manner he had lived it--praising God.

Bede's translation of the Gospel of John is the earliest known intentional effort to render the Scriptures into a form of English. No copy of his work is known to exist, but we know of it because of the writing of Cuthbert of Jarrow's account of Bede's death.<sup>27</sup>

3 The next effort to translate the Bible into a form of English was the work of King Alfred, who around 900 AD, had portions of the Bible translated into Anglo-Saxon. These included the Ten Commandments and portions of the Pentateuch, as well as the Book of Psalms. Many believe that the fifty Psalms in Old English that are found in today's *Paris Psalter* represent Alfred's translation work.

4 With William the Conqueror's victory at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 AD, the Norman-French language entered England and blended with the Anglo-Saxon, producing what is known as "Middle English."

Around 1380, Wycliffe and his co-workers translated the Bible into Middle English. These early translations were not translations of the Hebrew and Greek, but were translations of the Latin Vulgate, the official Bible of the Church.

5 Gutenberg's invention of the moveable type printing press in 1450 allowed the printing of sizeable books in an efficient manner. The first book of any size to be printed was Gutenberg's edition of the Vulgate.<sup>28</sup> It took six years to complete the printing of this book (the Gutenberg Vulgate was released in 1456)

6 Between 1522 and 1534 Martin Luther made the first translation in Western Europe that was based on the Greek and Hebrew texts, rather than the Vulgate. Although this was a German translation, it must be mentioned in a study of English translations, because it set the stage for future translations of the English Bible.

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<sup>27</sup> Dobbie, E. Van Kirk *The Manuscripts of Caedmon's Hymn and Bede's Death Song with a Critical Text of the Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae*, (New York: Columbia University Press 1937)

<sup>28</sup> The world's first known movable-type system for printing was created in [China](#) around 1040 AD by [Bi Sheng](#) (990–1051) during the [Song Dynasty](#). The first metal movable-type system for printing was made in [Korea](#) during the [Goryeo Dynasty](#) (around 1230). Neither movable-type system was widely used, probably because of the enormous amount of labor involved in manipulating the thousands of ceramic tablets, or in the case of [Korea](#), metal tablets. [Johannes Gutenberg](#)'s movable type press is generally regarded as an independent invention of movable type in Europe.

- 7 In 1525, William Tyndale began to produce the first printed English Bibles. Before Tyndale's work, there were only handwritten copies of Wycliffe's Bible. The Wycliffe Bible, by that time 150 years old, was in Chaucerian English, a language that could not be read by the common man in Tyndale's era. Tyndale followed Luther's path of translating the Greek and Hebrew, rather than translating the Latin Vulgate.  
The Church and the king opposed Tyndale. He fled to Germany where he did his translation work, smuggling copies of his Scriptures into England in bales of fur and sacks of grain. He was captured and burned at the stake on October 6, 1536. Before Tyndale's death, he and his associates translated and printed the New Testament and about half of the Old Testament (Pentateuch and Jonah were done first. Then he revised some of his former work and translated further through Chronicles).
- 8 In 1535, Miles Coverdale printed the first complete English Bible. Part of the New Testament was Tyndale's work. The rest was based on two Latin and two German versions, so it was not fully a translation of the original languages.
- 9 In 1537, Thomas Matthew printed the first English Bible to be promoted and licensed by the church. This Bible was the work of Tyndale's friend, John Rogers. Rogers accessed the work of his predecessors. Thus, Genesis through Second Chronicles, as well as the New Testament, was Tyndale's work. Coverdale's work was the rest of the Old Testament.
- 10 During the years of 1539-1541, *The Great Bible* was produced. King Henry VIII authorized Thomas Cromwell to supervise the production of a Bible that contained no controversial material. It was chained to the pulpit and the King proclaimed that the Bible should be read in the churches.
- 11 1560 saw the production of the *Geneva Bible*. This was the result of Mary Tudor's coming to the throne of England. She was a Roman Catholic who began her reign by killing all who were associated with the work of the Great Bible. Scholars fled to Geneva and produced a new Translation. This is the translation that was brought to America by the Pilgrims. It is called the "Britches Bible," because Genesis states that God made "britches" for Adam and Eve. This was a very popular translation.
- 12 The *Bishop's Bible* was produced in 1568, after Elizabeth came to the throne. The Church of England did not approve of the Geneva Bible. So the Queen authorized the Bishops to oversee the production of another Bible. The Church and government tried to force the *Bishop's Bible* on the people, but it never did gain popularity. The general public preferred the *Geneva Bible*.
- 13 The *Rheims-Douai Version* was produced in France in 1582-1609. This was the first Roman Catholic authorized English version of the Bible. Since the Vulgate is the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church, Rheims-Douai is an English translation of the Vulgate, not a translation of the Hebrew and Greek.

14 The *King James Version* was produced in 1611 AD, as a part of an effort to unite the people of England. When James came to the throne, he called a council to iron out problems that divided the nation. One problem was the loyalty that different groups had to different versions of the Bible. Someone in the council suggested that a new translation of the Bible be made without footnotes. Fifty-four scholars were appointed to do the work. The result was an accurate and beautiful translation (although the committee, for political reasons, chose to anglicize some terms, rather than translate them). This was the age of Spenser, Bacon, Sidney, Marlowe, and Shakespeare, the era in which the English language reached its peak in beauty of expression. The KJV reflects the beauty of the language spoken and written during this era.

15 1901 was the year that the *American Standard Version* was published. Many manuscripts had been discovered since 1611. The language also was changing. So, a committee of American and British scholars was formed to produce a Bible reflecting the findings of scholarship and the manuscripts that had been discovered. The American/British team produced and published *The English Standard Version* in 1885.

The Americans on the committee disagreed with the English on a few passages and so they published the *American Standard Version* in 1901. This is a very accurate translation of Hebrew and Greek. It did not gain popularity because it is such an excellent reproduction of Hebrew and Greek syntax that it is awkward English.

16 *The Revised Standard Version* was authorized in 1937 by the International Council of Religious Education, a subdivision of the theological liberal leaning, National Council of Churches. *The Revised Standard Version New Testament* was produced in 1946. The entire Bible was released in 1952. The forces behind the publication of this version were determined to make it the official Bible of the American church. Initially, \$250,000 was budgeted to promote this version and later estimates of the total spent in promoting this version exceeded one million dollars.. Those behind the production this Bible were theological liberals and they aggressively put forth this version as an instrument of their theology, hoping to displace those versions that displayed a respect for the divinity of Jesus. One spokesman made this pronouncement, “An advertising budget of \$250,000 has been set up to properly publicize the sale during the remainder of 1952. After we have spent that, you may be assured that nobody in the United States will remember that there was a King James Version of the Bible.”<sup>29</sup> A formal announcement of the version was made simultaneously in 3000 churches, throughout the United States.

One of the promotional stated reasons for undertaking this version was that many manuscripts that had been discovered and vetted since the King James Version, as well as

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<sup>29</sup> R. C. Foster, *The Battle of the Versions*, (Cincinnati, The Standard Publishing Company). This review first appeared in *The Christian Standard*, as installments in issues from January 10, 1953, through March 14, 1953. It was then issued as a book later in 1953. The quoted citation is found on page 4 of the booklet.

the challenge modern readers faced when they encountered the archaic language in the KJV. Privately, and even in some of their public statements, they acknowledged that these goals had been achieved in the *English Revised Version* of 1811 and the *American Standard Version* of 1901. However, both of those versions used language that affirmed the deity of Christ. One of the clear examples of the theological bias of the translators is seen in Isaiah 7:14.

- RSV: *a young woman shall conceive*
- KJV, ASV: *a virgin shall conceive*<sup>30</sup>

Many other examples could be cited.

The publication of the RSV resulted in a pitched battle between liberal scholars and conservative scholars. For example, R. C. Foster, an opponent of the RSV published a widely distributed publication, *The Battle of the Versions*. The title itself reflects the intensity of the debate.<sup>31</sup>

- 17 In the decade of 1950 – 1960, the Jehovah’s Witness organization, The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, produced a version in six volumes, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. This version, reflecting the theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, contained marginal references and footnotes expressing the JW theology. In later decades the six volumes were combined into a single volume. Initially, the one volume edition (1961) did not include the footnotes and marginal comments. These were reinstated in some later editions and revisions.
- 18 J.B. Phillips paraphrase in 1958, *The New Testament in Modern English*, was one of the first successful attempts to produce a Bible in contemporary English. Phillips’ work was and is very popular in some segments of the church, both in England and America.
- 19 *New English Bible* was produced by a committee of scholars appointed by an organization of English churches (Church of England, Church of Scotland, Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian Church of England, Society of Friends, Church of Wales, Churches of Ireland, British and Foreign Bible Society, and the National Bible Society of Scotland).

The New Testament was published in 1961, and the Old Testament in 1970. Initially, this version aroused a lot of controversy because the NEB displayed the same liberal bias as had the RSV, only more so. Among other things, the committee took great liberties in rearranging some of the texts and verbiage. The committee also chose to render portions

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<sup>30</sup> The Hebrew word, *almah*, can mean a young woman or a virgin. However, when the Jewish scholars translated Isaiah 7:14 into Greek (the Septuagint Version – Third Century BC), they chose the Greek term, *parthenos*, which means, “virgin.” Obviously, the Jews understood *almah* in this verse to refer to parthenogenesis. i.e., virgin birth. The liberal bias of the RSV translators is seen in their decision to ignore the Jewish understanding and render *almah* in a manner that did not convey supernatural activity.

<sup>31</sup> See footnote 29



of the creation account in Genesis in keeping with Near Eastern creation epics, such as the Babylonian, *Enuma Elish*. Criticism also was forthcoming over the manner in which the committee rendered a number of key passages, such as Luke 1:26-27, *In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, with a message for a girl betrothed to man named, Joseph, ... the girl's name was Mary.* Rendering the Greek term, **παρθένος** (*parthenos*) as *girl*, rather than, *virgin* betrays the liberal bias of the translators. The correct rendering of the term, **παρθένος**, is *virgin*, not *girl*.

In 1989 this version was significantly revised and published as the *Revised English Bible*.

- 20 *The New American Standard Bible* of is a revision of the 1901 ASV. Fifty-eight evangelical scholars did the work. The New Testament first was produced in the 1960's with the entire Bible was published in 1971. In the succeeding years, the NASB has undergone several printings with slight changes in format taking place in the various printings. It is a serious effort to produce a formal equivalency version of the Scriptures.
- 21 The American Bible Society, concerned about producing a Bible that could be read by anyone who could read English, sponsored the translation of *Today's English Version*. The New Testament was published in 1966 (the New Testament initially was released with the title, *Good News for Modern Man*), the entire Bible being released in 1976, under the title, *The Good News Bible* (later, *Today's English Version*). Dr. Robert G. Bratcher did most of the work. The language is generic English without any national characteristics (Anglo or American).
- 22 The Roman Catholics produced the *Jerusalem Bible* in 1966. This is a translation based on textual studies by the Roman Catholic School of Biblical Studies in Jerusalem. It is the English translation of the French Bible prepared under the editorship of Pere Roland deVaux, OP. Thus, it is an English translation of the French Bible, which is a translation of Hebrew and Greek texts.
- 23 Kenneth Taylor produced the *Living Bible Paraphrase* in 1971. Ken and Margaret Taylor had family devotions each evening after supper. As a part of those devotions, Ken often asked the children a few questions to make sure they had understood the day's Bible reading. When he asked this question, he was often met with blank stares. So Ken would restate the meaning of the passage in simpler terms. One evening after he had explained the meaning of one particular verse from the King James Version, Janet, then about eight, said, "But Daddy, if that's what it means, why doesn't it say so?"

One Saturday morning, while puzzling over how to communicate to his children the meaning of that evening's Scripture passage, Ken decided to write out a simpler version of the passage in advance. It worked, and he began doing that as the family read through the epistles.

He thought that other families might also find his paraphrase helpful, so he sent the manuscript to several publishers. When they all turned him down, he decided to publish it himself. The Taylors formed their own publishing company, which they named, Tyndale House Publishers in honor of William Tyndale. He called the book *Living Letters* and arranged for 2,000 copies to be printed.

*Living Letters* (the New Testament epistles) was published in 1962, and within a few years it was followed by a series of books containing other portions of Scripture paraphrased into modern English. The complete edition, *The Living Bible*, was published in 1971. Over the next twenty-five years, Tyndale House flourished, and more than 40 million copies of *The Living Bible* were sold in dozens of different formats. *The Living Letters* and *The Living Bible Paraphrase* were quite popular with many in the Jesus Movement of the 1960's and early 1970's. Special editions were published with cover art that appealed to the hippie culture.

- 24 *The New International Version New Testament* was published in 1972, followed by the entire Bible in 1978 with updated versions published in 1984 and 2011. 100 evangelical scholars did the work on the first edition.<sup>32</sup> This version follows the dynamic equivalency principle of translation.

The initial vision for the project was provided by a single individual – an engineer working with General Electric in Seattle by the name of Howard Long. Long was a lifelong devotee of the King James Version, but when he quoted the Bible to his friends he was distressed to find that they just couldn't relate to the terminology. Long saw the need for a translation that captured the truths he loved in the language that his contemporaries spoke.

For 10 years, Long and a growing group of like-minded supporters drove this idea. The passion of one man became the passion of a church, and ultimately the passion of a whole group of denominations. In 1965, after several years of preparatory study, a trans-denominational and international group of scholars met in Palos Heights, Illinois, and agreed to begin work on the project – determining not to simply adapt an existing English version of the Bible but to start from scratch with the best available manuscripts in the original languages. Their conclusion was endorsed by a large number of church leaders who met in Chicago in 1966.

A self-governing body of fifteen biblical scholars, the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) was formed and charged with responsibility. In 1968 the New York Bible Society (which subsequently became the International Bible Society and then Biblica) generously undertook the financial sponsorship of the project. The translation of each book was assigned to translation teams, each made up of two lead translators, two translation consultants, and a stylistic consultant where necessary. The initial translations produced

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<sup>32</sup> Two of the scholars who did this work are known to me (JWG): Dr. Roy Hayden, of Oral Roberts University, and Dr. Lewis Foster, of The Cincinnati Bible Seminary.

by these teams were carefully scrutinized and revised by intermediate editorial committees of five biblical scholars to check them against the source texts and assess them for comprehensibility. Each edited text was then submitted to a general committee of eight to twelve members before being distributed to a selected group of outside critics and to all members of the CBT in preparation for a final review. Samples of the translation were tested for clarity and ease of reading with pastors, students, scholars, and lay people across the full breadth of the intended audience. It is doubtful that any other translation has undergone a more thorough process of review and revision.

From the very start, the NIV sought to bring modern Bible readers as close as possible to the experience of the very first Bible readers: providing the best possible blend of transparency to the original documents and comprehension of the original meaning in every verse.

With this clarity of focus, came the realization that the work of translating the NIV would never be truly complete. As new discoveries were made about the biblical world and its languages, and as the norms of English usage developed and changed, the NIV would also need to change to hold true to its original vision. So, in the original NIV charter, provision was made not just to issue periodic updates to the text but to create a mechanism for constant monitoring of changes in biblical scholarship and English usage. The CBT was charged to meet every year to review, maintain, and strengthen the NIV's ability to accurately and faithfully render God's unchanging Word in constantly changing modern English.

The 2011 update is the latest version. Many conservative groups that readily received the original version of the NIV have rejected the 2011 revision because of some of the changes, especially the "gender neutral" stance displayed in the translation (see ADDENDUM M).

- 25 *The New Living Translation*, is the result of an effort by the publisher of *The Living Bible Paraphrase* to improve the reputation of that version. The publishers at Tyndale House were frustrated by the fact that *The Living Bible Paraphrase* had not been accepted by pastors and seminary professors. Most seminary professors spoke negatively of the *Living Bible Paraphrase*, and discouraged its use because it was a paraphrase, and because it contained Kenneth Taylor's theological slant (among other things, Taylor's Arminianism and some of the dispensationalism of the Scofield Reference Bible). As the Tyndale House Publishers pondered how to make the *Living Bible* more acceptable to seminary professors, and thus blunt their criticism, they decided to ask a committee of seminary professors to undertake a revision of the *Living Bible* – thinking that if seminary professors were involved in the revision, then this would quell the criticisms. Ultimately, with Kenneth Taylor's blessing a team of 90 scholars was assembled to undertake the project. As the task was undertaken, the team realized that the closest thing to this goal that they could achieve was to produce a dynamic equivalency version that

retained the language of *The Living Bible Paraphrase* where it was possible to do so. The first edition, published in 1996, did retain a large portion of *The Living Bible* paraphrases and in some quarters was criticized roundly for some of the problems that resulted from this diluted process.<sup>33</sup> The two later revisions (2004 and 2007) addressed and removed many of these legitimate criticisms.

26 *The New King James Version* translation has become one of the best-selling Bibles of all time. As of July 2012 (the latest figures that I could find – JWG) it is the third best-selling Bible in the United States, after the NIV and KJV.

Dr. Arthur Farstad, Greek professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, was the scholar who first envisioned producing a King James Version in more contemporary English. The NKJV translation project was inaugurated in 1975, when 130 biblical scholars, pastors, and theologians were invited to come together to consider the project. Two meetings

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<sup>33</sup> Craig Blomberg of Denver Seminary, one of the NLT “reviewers,” has served on the translation committee of four different recently published versions. In an article describing his work on the various versions, he wrote the following concerning the procedure followed by those who were on the NLT translation committee. Note the difference between the process followed in the production of the NIV (footnote 30) and Bloomberg’s description of the process followed in the production of the NLT::

“With the New Living Translation, the Bible was divided into sixths, with a scholar appointed general editor over each large chunk. Then individuals books of the Bible (or small collections of books) were parceled out to three experts (I worked on Matthew), who compiled long lists of suggestions for revising Ken Taylor’s original Living Bible Paraphrased. We ranked these in terms of priority, sent them to the general editor over our part of the Bible, who synthesized a selection of them, interacted with a Tyndale House stylist, and sent a draft back to us for us to repeat the process. Eventually the full translation emerged. Craig Blomberg, *Demystifying Bible Translation and Where Our Culture Is with Inclusive Language* <http://zondervan.typepad.com/koinonia/2008/08/demystifying-bi.html>

This leaves us with the impression that the "reviewers" did not meet to discuss the revision and vote on changes (the press release that accompanied the first publication of the NLT stated the process differently). According to the above quoted Bloomberg statement, the work done to produce the NLT essentially was a revision of the Living Bible Paraphrase, rather than a serious translation of the Hebrew and Greek

Blomberg further stated that the NLT is not suitable as a regular Bible for adults. Blomberg explained that in his view, the NLT is for "kids or very poor adult readers." He suggested that readers of the NLT should move on to a more accurate version when they are able. “I relished the chance to work on the NLT team to convert the LBP into a truly dynamic-equivalent translation, but I never recommend it to anyone except to supplement the reading of a more literal translation to generate freshness and new insights, unless they are kids or very poor adult readers.” Craig Blomberg, *review of The Word of God in English by Leland Ryken, Denver Journal: An Online Review of Current Biblical and Theological Studies*, volume 6 (July 2003).

There also were unresolved disagreements between some who worked on the translation. For example, one of the overseeing "reviewers," Robert Bergen, objected to the gender neutral stance displayed in the NLT. Bergen noted that in the Hebrew society, men were dominant, thus biblical writers employed male language. In Bergen's translation of the book of Exodus, he retained the original language. He stated, "I'm not going to recreate ancient Israel into a sexless society," As quoted in, Mark R. Norton, ed., *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1996.

were held (Nashville and Chicago). These men prepared the guidelines for the NKJV and became the translation committee.

The aim of its translators was to update the vocabulary and grammar of the King James Version, while preserving the classic style and literary beauty of the original 1611 King James Version. The translators were theologically conservative and were committed to unyielding faithfulness to the original Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew texts including the insights available in the Dead Sea Scrolls. They also planned for most of the New King James Bibles to be published with helpful study aids, such as event descriptions, a history of each book, and added dictionary and updated concordance. It took a total of seven years to complete the project.

Thomas Nelson, Inc. was to be the publisher. The New Testament was published in 1979, the Psalms in 1980, and the full Bible in 1982. In England the NKJV was published as the Revised Authorized Version, in order to link it to the KJV (the Authorized Version) in the minds of British Bible purchasers. Now, the title, the Revised Authorized Version, has been abandoned and the New King James Version is used universally.

According to the preface of the New King James Version (p. v-vi), the NKJV uses the 1967/1977 Stuttgart edition of the *Biblia Hebraica* for the Old Testament. This is carefully compared with the majority text that was used by the 1611 King James translators. i.e. the Ben Hayyim edition of the Mikraot Gedolot published by Bomberg in 1524–1525 AD; about a century before the production of the 1611 KJV.

Both the King James Version and the New King James Version use the Masoretic Majority Text – however, the NKJV uses a manuscript older than that which was available to the KJV translators in 1611. The 1967/1977 Stuttgart edition of *Biblia Hebraica*, used by the NKJV, is based on the older Leningrad Manuscript B19a.

The New King James Version uses the Textus Receptus ("Received Text") for the New Testament, just as the original King James Version had used. As explained in the NKJV preface, the NKJV contains notes in the center column which acknowledge variations from *Novum Testamentum Graece* (designated NU after Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies) and the Majority Text (designated M).<sup>34</sup>

The NKJV translators sought to produce a formal equivalence version, which they called, "complete equivalence" in contrast to "dynamic equivalence." The task of updating the English of the KJV involved significant changes in word order, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. One of the most significant features of the NKJV was its abandonment of

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<sup>34</sup> The Textus Receptus, is a version of the Majority Text that was produced by Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza – see page 20 in these notes.

the historic second person pronouns “thou”, “thee”, “ye”, “thy”, and “thine”. Verb forms were also modernized in the NKJV (for example, “speaks” rather than “speaketh”).<sup>35</sup>

27 *The English Standard Version*, first published in 2001, with later publications in 2007 and 2011, is a formal equivalency translation. The preface to the ESV states,

“The ESV is an ‘essentially literal’ translation that seeks as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer. As such, its emphasis is on ‘word-for-word’ correspondence, at the same time taking into account differences of grammar, syntax, and idiom between current literary English and the original languages. Thus it seeks to be transparent to the original text, letting the reader see as directly as possible the structure and meaning of the original.

...Therefore, to the extent that plain English permits and the meaning in each case allows, we have sought to use the same English word for important recurring words in the original; and, as far as grammar and syntax allow, we have rendered Old Testament passages cited in the New in ways that show their correspondence. Thus in each of these areas, as well as throughout the Bible as a whole, we have sought to capture the echoes and overtones of meaning that are so abundantly present in the original texts. As an essentially literal translation, then, the ESV seeks to carry over every possible nuance of meaning in the original words of Scripture into our own language.”

28 The publishers of *The Holman Christian Study Bible* present the following as the background for the version’s publication.<sup>36</sup>

“After several years of preliminary development, Holman Bible Publishers, the oldest Bible publisher in America, assembled an international, interdenominational team of 100 scholars, editors, stylists, and proofreaders, all of whom were committed to biblical inerrancy. Outside consultants and reviewers contributed valuable suggestions from their areas of expertise. An executive team then edited, polished, and reviewed the final manuscripts.

The publishers describe the HCSB translation style, as “Optimal Equivalence. Here is their description of the process.

“In practice, translations are seldom if ever purely formal or dynamic but favor one theory of Bible translation or the other to varying degrees. Optimal equivalence as a translation philosophy recognizes that form cannot be neatly separated from meaning and should not be changed (for example, nouns to verbs or third person “they” to second person “you”) unless comprehension demands it. The primary goal of translation is to convey the sense of the original with as much clarity as the original text and the

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<sup>35</sup> See ADDENDUM O for KJV loyalists’ reaction to the NKJV

<sup>36</sup> The quotes in this section are found in *Introduction to the Holman Christian Standard Bible*, Holman Publishers, 1999

translation language permit. Optimal equivalence appreciates the goals of formal equivalence but also recognizes its limitations.

Optimal equivalence starts with an exhaustive analysis of the text at every level (word, phrase, clause, sentence, discourse) in the original language to determine its original meaning and intention (or purpose). Then relying on the latest and best language tools and experts, the nearest corresponding semantic and linguistic equivalents are used to convey as much of the information and intention of the original text with as much clarity and readability as possible. This process assures the maximum transfer of both the words and thoughts contained in the original.

The HCSB uses optimal equivalence as its translation philosophy. When a literal translation meets these criteria, it is used. When clarity and readability demand an idiomatic translation, the reader can still access the form of the original text by means of a footnote with the abbreviation ‘Lit.’”

In explaining the HCSB gender language policy, the introduction states,

“Some people today ignore the Bible’s teachings on distinctive roles of men and women in family and church and have an agenda to eliminate those distinctions in every arena of life. These people have begun a program to engineer the removal of a perceived male bias in the English language. The targets of this program have been such traditional linguistic practices as the generic use of “man” or “men,” as well as “he,” “him,” and “his.”

A group of Bible scholars, translators, and other evangelical leaders met in 1997 to respond to this issue as it affects Bible translation. This group produced the “Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture” (adopted May 27, 1997 and revised Sept. 9, 1997). The HCSB was produced in accordance with these guidelines.

The goal of the translators has not been to promote a cultural ideology but to faithfully translate the Bible. While the HCSB avoids using “man” or “he” unnecessarily, the translation does not restructure sentences to avoid them when they are in the text. For example, the translators have not changed “him” to “you” or to “them,” neither have they avoided other masculine words such as “father” or “son” by translating them in generic terms such as “parent” or “child.”

- 29 *The New English Translation* (NET Bible) is a free, on-line Bible version. The NET Bible was initially conceived at an annual meeting in Philadelphia of the Society of Biblical Literature. The translation project originally started as an attempt to provide a digital version of a modern English translation over the Internet and on CD-ROM without cost for the user.<sup>37</sup> “The NET Bible project was commissioned to create a faithful Bible

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<sup>37</sup> The NET now is also available in printed form that can be purchased at Christian bookstores and other outlets.

translation that could be placed on the Internet, downloaded for free, and used around the world for ministry."<sup>38</sup>

Many of those involved in the project's initial discussions eventually became part of the translation team. The translation and extensive notes were undertaken by more than twenty biblical scholars who worked directly from the best currently available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. It is an original English translation, rather than a revision of an earlier version.<sup>39</sup>

The translators used a formal equivalent approach to their work, but did use dynamic equivalent language. W. Hall Harris, the NET Bible Project Director, in the preface to the first edition, wrote, "The translators and editors used the notes to give *a translation that was formally equivalent, while placing a somewhat more functionally [or dynamically] equivalent translation in the text itself to promote better readability and understandability.*

A real plus in this version is the inclusion of extensive notes<sup>40</sup> to which Harris refers in the above quote. Thus, the reader is able to "look over the shoulders" of the translator and see why a particular text was rendered as it was. Based on the inclusion of these extensive notes, Harris, in the above cited preface, states, "The longstanding tension between these two different approaches to Bible translation has thus been fundamentally solved." Perhaps a greater benefit provided by the notes is the reader's ability to evaluate the decision made by the translators, allowing the Bible student to agree or disagree with the translator's rendering of the text.

Of special note also is the motivation stated in the above quoted preface - to create a faithful Bible translation that could be placed on the Internet, downloaded for free, and used around the world for ministry. The reality of doing this has proven some challenges, but the philosophy has guided the copyright process.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Preface to the NET Bible First Edition"

<sup>39</sup> Now the NET Bible has both English and Chinese versions. The Chinese version is also called Chinese NET Bible.

<sup>40</sup> 60,932 translators' notes

<sup>41</sup> "The NET Bible's approach towards copyright comprises a full copyright license,<sup>41</sup> which is explained in its "Ministry First" statement,<sup>41</sup> both of which emphasize its openness and freedom. The publishers claim that "after 10 years, the NET Bible is still the only major modern translation that can be downloaded free in its entirety and used seamlessly in presentations and documents." However, as of October 2010, the NET Bible's copyright statement is over 1500 words long, and contains different conditions for generic copyright, diglots and bible quotations in multiple formats, including commercial and non-commercial publications.

The NET Bible's approach to copyright is self-summarized as:

The Bible is God's gift to humanity – it should be free. (see original preface)



30 *Today's New International Version New Testament* was published in 2002 followed by the entire Bible in 2005. Thirteen evangelical scholars worked on the translation.<sup>42</sup> Forty other scholars, many of them experts on specific books of the Bible, reviewed the translations teams' work. They came from a range of Evangelical denominational backgrounds.<sup>43</sup> Of interest is the style of changes that this version made in the NIV. In some instances it moved more toward a formal equivalency style.

The TNIV found acceptance in England but not in the United States. Some denominations and denominational bookstores refused to market it. One of the main problems was the gender neutral language.<sup>44</sup>

As a marketing move, when the 2011 edition of the NIV was released (see final paragraphs of 26 above) both the TNIV and the 1984 NIV were discontinued. Keith Danby, president and chief executive officer of Biblica (formerly, the International Bible Society), said that they erred in presenting past updates - failing to convince people that

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In "Copyright Innovations – Toward a New Model," the Ministry First position statement makes at least four additional important clarifications:

- We still don't fully like the copyright notice for the NET Bible, but in our litigious world it remains a challenge...
- We believe that 1 Tim 5:17-18 (the author has the right to be paid) and Lev 23:22 (allow the poor and foreigner free access) can be simultaneously satisfied far better with a new Internet model...
- We want all authors to know that the NET Bible is a safe choice.
- It is time for ministry to be more free – and for a Bible which puts ministry first....Let us know how we can better serve your needs.

However, these statements do not form part of the copyright notice itself, so their legal value is unclear.

<sup>42</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood, Kenneth L. Barker, John H. Stek, Donald H. Madvig, R. T. France, Gordon Fee, Karen H. Jobes, Walter Liefeld, Douglas J. Moo, Bruce K. Waltke, Larry L. Walker, Herbert M. Wolf and Martin Selman.

<sup>43</sup> *Preface to the TNIV Bible*

<sup>44</sup> Denominations supportive of the TNIV include the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), which officially endorsed the TNIV as an acceptable translation for use, the Evangelical Covenant Church and the Free Methodist Church of North America. Evangelical scholars and pastoral leaders supporting the project include Mark L. Strauss, Tremper Longman, John Ortberg, Adam Hamilton, Craig Blomberg, Darrell Bock, Don Carson, Peter Furler, Bill Hybels, Ben Witherington III, Lee Strobel, John Stott, Philip Yancey, Dan Kimball, Terri Blackstock, Erwin McManus, Ted Haggard and others.

Opposition to the TNIV was quite strong in some quarters. In June 2002, over 100 evangelical leaders signed a 'Statement of Concern' opposing the TNIV. The Presbyterian Church in America and the Southern Baptist Convention passed resolutions opposing the TNIV and other inclusive-language translations. Evangelical scholars and pastoral leaders critical of inclusive language translations and thus opposed to the TNIV include John F. MacArthur, J. I. Packer, Jack T. Chick, Gail Riplinger, James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, Texe Marrs, Wayne Grudem, Peter Ruckman, D. James Kennedy, Josh McDowell, R. Albert Mohler, Jr., John Piper, Pat Robertson, R.C. Sproul, and Joni Eareckson Tada.

revisions were needed and underestimating readers' loyalty to the 1984 NIV, thus the competition was removed by discontinuing the marketing of the earlier versions.<sup>45</sup>

**Earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, there were other versions that enjoyed wide use.**

- *The Scofield Reference Bible* is a KJV with a few archaic terms updated, and in some instances, verses expanded for clarity. The SRB contains footnotes based on J. Nelson Darby's pre-millennial Futurist view of Prophecy and the end-times.
- Moffet's, *The Bible A New Translation*, was the first modern language Bible published in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (originally published 1922). In some respects it displays the tendencies of liberal theology. After enjoying initial popularity, it quickly fell into disuse.
- *The Amplified Bible* is an attempt to make clear to people the meaning of obscure or difficult terms, by listing synonyms or expanding verses.
- Beck, Williams, Young, and others have produced private translations that have been popular in some quarters.

In recent years, there have been so many paraphrases and versions produced (many targeted toward special interests or groups) that it is almost impossible to keep a current list.

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<sup>45</sup> "TNIV discontinued". *USA Today*. 2009-09-01.

## SECTION TWO: INTRODUCTION TO HERMENUTICS

### GENERAL COMMENTS

#### A. There is a difference between Bible study and devotional reading of the Bible.

1. Devotional reading involves hearing from God for our own individual lives.

EXAMPLE: My reading of Acts and how God spoke to me from Acts 13:36

*For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers, and underwent decay;*

A number of years ago, I was going through a time in my life in which everything was falling apart. There were problems in the church, difficulties among family members, etc. It seemed that everything into which I had poured my life was labeled, "failure." One afternoon, as I sat at my desk, reading through Acts, I read the verse quoted above. Suddenly, I was arrested in my reading. I sensed the Holy Spirit say to me, "Do not concern yourself about building anything lasting. Allow me to use you to accomplish my purposes while you are on the earth, then die, be gone, be forgotten."

This is not an appropriate exegesis of this verse. David built something lasting. The Davidic Dynasty culminated in the birth of Jesus, the Messiah. David is remembered. The personal word that the Holy Spirit communicated to me from this verse was a personal word. It is not a truth that I can teach from this verse.

What we gain in devotional reading is not something to present in a teaching. It might be given in a testimony, but not as a truth that must be accepted by the Church.

2. Bible study, however, is the pursuit of truth.

#### B. The purpose of Bible study is four-fold:

1. First, to know God and to know about God.
  - a. We can learn much about God from observing His creation, but much misunderstanding of God can come from this source. We see things through our personal filters.
  - b. All over the world, throughout all ages, every race has come to an understanding of God through the experiences of life and an awareness of God in nature.

**Romans 1:18-23** *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but*

*they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.*

**Acts 17:23** *For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, "To an unknown God." What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.*

Note how the different nations of the world have viewed God:

- animism
  - the super-humans of the Greeks and Romans,
  - the Aztecs,
  - the Egyptians, etc.
- c. It is only by revelation that we know the true nature of God. Paul said to the Athenians, "What therefore, you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you."
- d. Thus, *nature* and *experience* are the *subjective revelation* of God, because from these sources one can reach only subjective conclusions about God.
- e. The Bible, however, is God's *objective revelation* of Himself. He has spoken. He has parted the curtain and asked us to look.

### **Excursus:**

#### **Greek terms referring to knowing God**

Three Greek terms employed in the New Testament with reference to knowing God:

- οἶδα (*oida*)
- γινώσκω (*ginosko*).
- ἐπίγνωσις (*epignosis*)

οἶδα is a form of εἶδω (*eido*), which has as its basic meaning, "to see." Generally the term is used to convey having full and accurate knowledge of something – objective knowledge about the identity, etc. This term is used in reference to knowing who God is and a correct understanding of His Character, His Will, and other facts about Him. Examples of such usage in the New Testament are I Thessalonians 4:5; II Thessalonians 1:8; II Timothy 1:12; Titus 1:16; Hebrews 10:30

γινώσκω tends to be used for experiential knowledge (although not exclusively so). An example using the term in this manner is in Greek Old Testament's (Septuagint) rendering of Genesis 4:1, *Adam knew his wife*. The Greek term, γινώσκω, is the term used to describe the sexual experience – Adam experienced his wife. Examples of the New Testament usage of the term to describe knowing God experientially, are Philippians 3:10 and I John 2:4. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit certainly produces experiential knowledge of God.

ἐπίγνωσις is used to convey full or accurate knowledge of a subject. The use of this term in the New Testament seems to combine both οἶδα and γινώσκω. Examples of the use of this term in the New Testament are I Corinthians 13:12; Ephesians 1:17; Philippians 1:9.

The purpose of Bible study – i.e. hermeneutics – is to gain οἶδα knowledge of God – that which He has revealed concerning Himself as encoded in Scripture.

2. The second purpose for Bible study is to know God's will. What He has predetermined (God's *unchanging* [immutable] will) and what are His wishes (God's *permissive* will).
3. A third purpose is to know the doctrinal truths concerning salvation, the Church, heaven & hell, and important matters concerning the Kingdom of God.
4. A fourth purpose is to saturate ourselves with God's Word to the degree that we begin to think and act in a manner that is well pleasing to God.

Psalm 119:11 *Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

It does little good to fill our heads with knowledge if no alteration of our inner character occurs.

Romans 12:1-2 urges us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we might learn what the will of God is.

Bernard L. Ramm wrote, "There must be no separation of exegesis and application. The twentieth century has witnessed too many instances in which exegesis was carried on without fulfilling itself in application. Christians could have had any number of cell Bible studies and never passed judgment on the Hitler regime. ... Application is not a second and dispensable activity after exegesis, but in the normal situation, exegesis leads inevitably to application (Bernard L. Ramm, in *Hermeneutics*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1983, p 10-11).

- C. There are four basic activities involved in Bible study:
1. OBSERVATION: What do I see. No detail is unimportant
  2. INTERPRETATION: What does it mean? "What does the author say and what did his original hearers understand him to say?"
  3. CORRELATION: How does this relate to what the rest of the Bible says? An accurate understanding of any passage must take into account all that the Bible says on a particular subject.
  4. APPLICATION: What does it mean to me (or those to whom I minister)? This is the goal of the other steps.
- D. Neither #3 nor #4 can occur without the correct interpretation. This is the business of hermeneutics.

E. DEFINITIONS:

1. *Hermeneutics*: the science of interpretation.

The term is a classical term, derived from the name, *Hermes*. The ancients believed that Hermes was the messenger of the god's and the interpreter of Zeus (The Romans called them Mercury [Hermes] and Jupiter [Zeus]). This is the background for the episode in Acts 14:8-13.

*And when the multitudes saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us." And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.<sup>46</sup>*

Every *hermeneus* (interpreter) was thought to inherit some of the mystic qualities of this god of philology. It is from this Greek mythology, that the term *hermeneutics* developed; i.e., someone who interprets literature.

*Sacred Hermeneutics* is the science of interpreting the Scriptures

2. *Exegesis* ἐκ ἡγήσθαι (*ek egeisthai*) "To lead out" or "to show the way"

Exegesis refers to looking into Scripture objectively and allowing what we discover to lead us to truth.

3. *Eisegesis* εἰς ἡγήσθαι (*eis egeisthai*) "To lead in"

This is a negative term. It refers to seeing in Scripture what we want to see. Eisegesis sees things in Scripture that are not there.

4. *Exposition* (Latin: *exponere*) "To set forth" or "To display"

This refers to accurately presenting to others the truth that we discover through exegesis.

### LITERARY GENRE IN THE BIBLE

It is important to recognize the different literary genre in Scripture. Each genre uses a particular technique to communicate its message. One of the preliminary tasks of the exegete is to recognize the type of literature with which he is dealing and interpret the document in accordance with the method of communication associated with that genre. Scripture contains nine types of literature:

Narrative	Poetry	Epistle
Precept and code	Figure of Speech	Apocalyptic
Wisdom	Parable	Prophetic

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<sup>46</sup> Note that in this passage the KJV uses the Latin names (Jupiter and Mercury), because of the influence of the Latin Church, whereas, the NAS translates the Greek literally, without interposing the Latin names.

## THE HISTORY OF HERMENEUTICS JEWISH INTERPRETATION

### A. Beginnings: The work of Ezra

Ezra was scribe and a priest:

- Ezra 7:6 (KJV a "ready scribe in the Law of Moses"; NIV a "teacher well versed in the Law of Moses"; NAS a "scribe skilled in the Law of Moses")
- Ezra 7:11, 12, 21 "Ezra the priest, the scribe" (NIV priest and teacher)
- Nehemiah 8:1 "Ezra the scribe"
  - 8:4 "Ezra the scribe"
  - 8:9 "Ezra the priest and scribe"
  - 8:13 "Ezra the scribe"
  - 12:26 "Ezra the priest and scribe"

Nehemiah 8:1-8 presents an interesting picture of Ezra. He was a very learned bi-lingual teacher. The post-exilic speech was Aramaic. In the scene described, he and his associates read the Hebrew and translated aloud into Aramaic.

### B. The Pairs

From Maccabean times to the end of the Herodian age (168 BC - 10 A.D) interpretation was highlighted by two sets of rabbis engaged in respectful debate.

During this period, the practice of substituting one letter for another and forming new words, as well as assigning numerical value to letters and words was in vogue. There was an obsession with trying to find some secret or hidden element in the words. An example of this technique is seen in Genesis 2:7.

*Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*

וַיִּצֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי  
הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

The rabbis saw a hidden truth in the opening words of this verse. Here is how they "discovered" a hidden truth. Hebrew is written right to left, rather than left to right.

- Genesis 2:7 begins with the expression, וַיִּצֶר, *and He formed*.
- The first letter of the verse is ׀ (*waw*) which indicates, *and*.
- Next is the word, *form*, יָצַר (*yatsar*).
- Note that the *yatsar* begins with a י (*yod*).

In order to say, “**He** formed,” a *yod* must be added to the beginning of the word and the vowel points must be changed.

- יָצַר (form)
- יִיצַר (he formed)

Thus, the verse (not including *and*) begins with a double *yod* (יִיצַר).

The word for "impulse" (*yetzer*) is a noun. It has the same consonants (יָעַר), as the verb, "form," but it has different vowel points.

- *yatsar* יָצַר (form)
- *yetzer* יִיצַר (impulse)

Since the first letter of the word "form" is a *yod*, and the first letter of "impulse" is a *yod*, and since there is a double *yod* in the expression, *and Jehovah God formed*, then, according to the rabbis, God created two impulses - a good impulse and a bad impulse.

This seems to be reaching very far to find a secret or hidden meaning in Scripture, but this is the sort of thing that men of all generations have done when they have tried to turn the Bible into a mystical book full of hidden messages.

This resulted in the practice of producing complex writings that were interpretations of interpretations. Thus, much of the rabbinical writings about Scripture came to be "Rabbi X says and Rabbi Y points out that Rabbi X meant..."<sup>47</sup>

### C. The Qumran Community

The Qumran Community was a group of Essene Jews who occupied an area near the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. This is the group responsible for the now famous Dead Sea scrolls. Members of the Qumran Community believed that they would be vindicated as the true priesthood and the true Israel. In the Qumran Community, interpretation was carried out without any regard to the context. When they read Scripture, the verse under consideration usually was explained as referring, in some way, to the Qumran sect itself. The Qumran interpreter forgot the principle of first finding out what the author was trying to convey to those who first read his writing.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Those who were Jesus' audience took notice that His teaching style was not that of the Pharisees and Scribes (Matthew 7:28-29; Mark 1:22)

<sup>48</sup> This is almost a universal tendency of sects. In our day, we have seen a number of sects which believe that the prophetic and apocalyptic portions of Scripture to refer to their group.



## EARLY CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

The earliest writings (commentaries) on Scripture date to within a few years after the close of the canon. Two approaches to Scripture interpretation developed quite early.

### A. The Alexandrians

Clement (155-215) and Origen (185 - 254) led the Alexandrians in Scripture studies. Origen is the leader chiefly responsible for the Alexandrian approach to Scripture interpretation. Three influences led the Alexandrians to adopt an allegorical hermeneutic:

- Origen was greatly influenced by the Alexandrian culture. The philosophical schools of Alexandria were enamored with allegories. Eager to be accepted, intellectually, the Christians in Alexandria also adopted the allegorical hermeneutic.
- The moralistic attacks made on Scripture by the Alexandrian philosophers was a second thing that influenced the Alexandrian church to turn to an allegorical hermeneutic. Influential speakers such as Celsus and Porphyry scoffed at the immorality of some of the main characters in Scripture. For example, Lot's incest, Noah's drunkenness, Jacob's wives and concubines, Judah's seduction of Tamar, etc. were reminiscent of the immoral exploits of the Roman and Greek gods. On the defensive, Alexandrian Christian teachers began to explain these accounts as allegories, rather than literal events.
- Origen stated that a third reason for moving to an allegorical hermeneutic was the fact that the church contained many "simple Christians." Not being trained in the study of literature, these folk did not understand literary metaphors, parables, and poetry. They insisted that every detail in Scripture is literally true. They believed that John's apocalyptic description of the heavenly Jerusalem was literal. Origen insisted that these passages did not describe anything real. They were stories with an allegorical meaning behind every element.

EXAMPLE OF ALLEGORICAL HERMENEUTIC: The two apostles brought two donkeys to Jesus, for him to ride in the Triumphal Entry.<sup>49</sup> These two donkeys represent the moral and the spiritual senses that bring people to Christ.

### B. The Antiochans

The Alexandrian allegorical hermeneutic encountered considerable opposition. Egyptian Church leader, Bishop Nepos, both geographically and chronologically close to Origen, wrote a treatise, *Refutation of the Allegorists*. Jerome, the most influential exegete of the early Latin Church (c. 400 AD), at first followed the allegorical method, then rejected it, arguing for the literal interpretation of Scripture.

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<sup>49</sup> Matthew 21:2-7

The church leaders in Antioch took a totally different approach from those in Alexandria. They insisted that the Bible must be approached historically and understood literally. So, Noah's drunkenness, Lot's incest, etc., things that offended the Alexandrians, really did happen. They are not allegories. Those following this approach would see consider Song of Solomon to be an ode to the passion of married love, which God gave as a blessing to His children, rather than a poem describing Christ's love for the Church or Christ's love for an individual Christian.

The Antioch leaders took the position that when the Bible did use either a figure or an allegory, the figure used was based upon real events (thus, an analogy or an illustration), and that the Bible always explained any allegory contained therein. Thus, according to the Antiochans an interpreter is not left to some fanciful imagination. Rather than being influenced by Greek philosophy, the Antioch exegetes were impacted in a greater way by the Jewish establishment in Antioch. One of the major leaders in Antioch, Dorotheus, studied Hebrew from the Jewish Rabbis.

For a number of reasons, the influence of the Alexandrian church was far greater and broader in reach than that of Antioch. One reason was the tremendous respect that Greek philosophers enjoyed in every nation. Origen, for example, wore the robe of a philosopher and was sought after as a philosophic lecturer. As a result, by 600 AD, Alexandria had won the day. From 600 - 1,200 AD, allegory reigned supreme in Bible interpretation. Ambrose,<sup>50</sup> who greatly influenced Augustine, wrote, concerning Bible interpretation, "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." Augustine<sup>51</sup> said that a literal approach is absurd in the Old Testament.

Churchmen began spending their time trying to think up as many meanings as possible for a single word. Little booklets of allegorical lists were circulated. Each scholar tried to create the longest list. The allegorical interpretation of Scripture is one of the things that contributed to the tragedy of the Middle Ages.

### C. The Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, the popular scheme of interpretation was "four-fold." According to this hermeneutic, every word, verse, and passage, had four meanings.

1. The LETTER shows what God did
2. ALLEGORY shows where our faith is hid
3. The MORAL MEANING gives us rules of daily life
4. The ANAGOGY shows us where we end our strife.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ambrose was the very influential Archbishop of Milan (died April 4, 397)

<sup>51</sup> Lived 354-430 AD

<sup>52</sup> *Anagogy* means, "heavenly" or "elevated"

Thus,

1. The literal is the plain meaning
2. The allegorical is what we are to believe
3. The moral is what we are to do
4. The anagogy is what we are to hope

Before Jerome came to reject the allegorical approach to Scripture, He interpreted "Jerusalem" in one passage, in the following "four-fold" manner:<sup>53</sup>

1. literal : a city in Palestine
2. allegory: the Church
3. morally: the Soul
4. anagogically :Heaven

At the close of the Middle Ages, many church leaders began to question the allegorical method. The Bible had become a mysterious book of confusion. The seeds of the Renaissance were being planted. Doubt and debate were becoming common. One Churchman who was prominent in these debates was Nicholas of Lyra (1299-1340). His teaching influenced the University of Erfurt, where Martin Luther studied.

D. Martin Luther (b. 11/10/1483 - d. 2/18/1546)

Martin Luther provided the first burst of responsible modern hermeneutics. Justification by faith, which he discovered while translating Romans, became the underlying principle of his teaching. He rejected the four-fold method of interpretation and insisted on there being a single, fundamental meaning to Scripture, i.e.: there are no hidden meanings in the words. There were six elements in Luther's hermeneutic:

1. *The Psychological Principle*: Faith and illumination were necessary. Seek the leading of the Holy Spirit in Bible interpretation.
2. *Authority*: The Bible is the supreme authority, above all ecclesiastical authority.
3. *The Literal Principle*: Every word should be allowed to stand in its natural meaning and that meaning should not be abandoned unless faith forces us to do it.
4. *The Sufficiency Principle*: Devout and competent Christians can understand the Bible.
5. *The Christological Principle*: The end of all interpretation is to bring us to Christ.
6. *The Law/Gospel Principle*: Law is to drive us to our knees about sin; the Gospel is God's grace and power to save. We must not confuse these two in our interpretation.

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<sup>53</sup> I heard a well known teacher speak at a meeting in St. Louis, a few years ago, in which he said that every verse of Scripture has ten levels of meaning. He proceeded to allegorize the Song of Solomon in a very bizarre fashion. I later read a printed form of this teaching in which he stated that every verse of Scripture has twelve levels of meaning – evidently, in the time between the time I heard him and the time that he wrote the article, he had found two more levels.

E. John Calvin (b. 7/10/1509 - d. 5/27/1564)

John Calvin, about 26 years younger than Luther, was the other great liberator of hermeneutics. Calvin had a greater emphasis on the entire Bible. Luther was somewhat selective in his Scripture studies.

Calvin was more of a literalist than Luther. Luther would read salvation into a passage when it wasn't there. Calvin never did this.

Calvin was very systematic and logical, compared to Luther, who was somewhat emotional and unsystematic.

Calvin viewed the very words of Scripture as having been dictated by the Holy Spirit. He insisted more strongly than any of his contemporaries that the witness of the Spirit is necessary for understanding the Holy Scriptures. He called this the *testamonium* - the inner witness.<sup>54</sup>

Important to Calvin was the principle of *autopistis*, which means that the Bible is self-authenticating. Rather than history or logical proof, he trusted in the Holy Spirit as the author of the Bible to bear testimony within the believer's heart, the authenticity of Word.

Calvin emphasized the *office of pastor/teacher*. In Calvin's view, this *office* was of primary importance to the Church.

F. The Anabaptists

Next on the scene came the Anabaptists. They sought to return to the New Testament Church. The name, "Anabaptist," means, "re-baptizers." They insisted on believer's baptism. Therefore, all who had been sprinkled or baptized as infants must be baptized when they make a profession of faith.

They taught that the Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice. They held to the view that the individual believer was illuminated by the Holy Spirit and could interpret for himself. However, it was proper to submit one's interpretation to the community for dialogue and consensus.

G. Rationalism

Rationalism came on the scene in the 1600's. Galileo (1564-1642 AD), a prime example of the age, said that one could not be deceived by natural processes, but that one might be deceived by Scripture. Rationalism emphasized the human intellect. According to the rationalist, the human intellect is capable of determining truth and error. What is not "reasonable" is rejected.

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<sup>54</sup> For an excellent discussion of the teaching of Calvin and Luther concerning the Holy Spirit's relationship to Scripture and to the reader of Scripture, see, Bernard Ramm, *The Witness of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1959

Thomas Jefferson was a rationalist. Using a razor, he cut out the passages of the New Testament that contained the moral teaching of Jesus and pasted them together to create what he considered to be the only authentic Bible. Jefferson did this twice during his lifetime. He considered the supernatural portions of Scripture to be the product of religious tradition, rather than inspired Scripture. For many years, this "Jefferson Bible" was presented as a gift to every freshman United States Congressman.

## H. Secularism

Secularism, which was the natural born child of rationalism, came on the scene in the 1800's. Biblical studies became separated from the Church and took place in secular universities. Germany became the intellectual center of secular Bible studies. Human reason became supreme. A closed view of history prevailed<sup>55</sup> (supernatural intervention in human affairs and the supernatural inspiration of Scripture, etc. were viewed as mere superstition). Out of this movement came the Graf-Wellhausen JEDP *documentary hypothesis*.<sup>56</sup> In general this hypothesis states that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, but many unknown authors produced it.

- Some of these used the personal name, *Jehovah*, for God.
- Others used the generic name for God, *Elohim*.
- The priests wrote liturgical sections.
- The "Deuteronomist" put it all together and presented it as if it were a book from a single author.

The secularists who first rejected the supernatural involvement in the writing of the Pentateuch had placed P (priestly) as the earliest source but Karl Heinrich Graf argued that the order of the sources should be understood as J-E-D-P. Julius Wellhausen accepted Graf's argument, changing the chronological order to fit Graf's conclusion. Thus, the hypothesis came to be known as the *Graf-Wellhausen Theory*, or the *Documentary Hypothesis*. Liberal denominational seminaries adopted this hypothesis. This is one of the things that gave a bad name to seminaries. A saying came about, "Young preachers go to seminaries to lose their faith."

## I. Progressive Theology

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century closed with hope and a progressive view of man. Most students of prophecy as well as the liberal/progressive main stream denominations became post-millennialists. Post-millennialism is the view that both the church and society will progress/evolve (an expression of Darwinism) so that when Christ comes He will come to a society and a church that has evolved into the Kingdom of God. Except for liberal

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<sup>55</sup> This philosophy came to be known as *uniformitarianism*.

<sup>56</sup> For a more complete discussion of the Documentary Hypothesis, see ADDENDUM L. For a rather thorough presentation and a discussion of the flaws of the hypothesis, see Alpha & Omega Ministries, *A Critical Assessment of the Graf-Wellhausen Documentary Hypothesis*  
<http://vintage.aomin.org/JEDP.html>

theologians, who continued to emphasize the intelligence of man, World War I destroyed the progressive movement among most thinking people. However, the progressive philosophy has been revived in recent decades.<sup>57</sup>

#### J. Neo-orthodoxy

Next on the scene came "Neo-orthodoxy." Neo-orthodoxy was a reaction against Rationalism, Secularism, and progressivism. It was an effort to reclaim the Reformation basis for theology. Advocates of Neo-orthodoxy do not turn to the Bible for theological truth as much as they turn to Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. In a way, Neo-orthodoxy is a return to the Jewish rabbinical method of interpreting rabbis, rather than directly interpreting the Word.

#### K. Existentialism

The next move, existentialism was led by men like Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich, and especially, Rudolph Bultman. In general these men held the view that the Bible is a record of revelation and a witness of revelation, rather than the inspired, objective, historical, propositional revelation in itself. A frequent statement spoken by existentialists is, "the Bible contains the Word of God," rather than saying the Bible is, "the Word of God." According to this view, the Holy Spirit may speak God's revelation to us, as we read the Bible.<sup>58</sup> If a text reaches out and grabs you, for you that is the Word of God. What you receive from this experience is revelation/insight. For some who hold this view, such revelation has little concern for what the text really says.<sup>59</sup> The Faith-Formula teachers express a type of existentialism in their use of the *rhema*

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<sup>57</sup> A version of this progressive view prevails today in the "Dominion Theology" of Rushdoony, North, Peacocke, *et al.*

<sup>58</sup> "Christian Existentialism often refers to what it calls the indirect style of Christ's teachings, which it considers to be a distinctive and important aspect of his ministry. Christ's point, it says, is often left unsaid in any particular parable or saying, to permit each individual to confront the truth on his own." Donald D. Palmer, *Kierkegaard For Beginners* (London, England: Writers And Readers Limited) 1996. p. 25. This is illustrated by the way that Jesus taught in parables, often closing with a question, allowing the hearer to make the application specific to his personal situation.

<sup>59</sup> Several years ago, I participated in a meeting in which Tulsa ministers from three streams met to discuss how we might be more accepting and supporting of one another. During a break in the sessions, I sat with three young Disciples of Christ ministers and we discussed our impressions of the meetings. One of them said, "I get tired of hearing people say, 'but the Bible says,'" I asked him what he meant, stating that in my view that when the Bible said something, to me that was the Word of God and that there was no reason for further discussion. He responded, "Oh yes, but what part of it is the Bible. I believe that if a verse reaches out and grabs me, that, for me is the Word of God. If it doesn't, it isn't." I asked the other two men if that is what they believed and they affirmed that this was their belief also. I asked them which seminary they had attended and all three had come from the same seminary, where the existentialist view of Scripture was taught.

principle. Also, some people who use Scripture “prophetically” demonstrate this expression of existentialism i.e., when a “prophetic interpretation” is given to a verse, without regard to the verses original intent.

#### L. Trajectory Hermeneutics

Trajectory Hermeneutics, also known as *A Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic* (RMH), has been popularized by William Webb in *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals* (Downers Grove, IL; Intervarsity, 2001). Trajectory Hermeneutics has been embraced by some evangelical progressives who have sought for ways to acknowledge cultural changes without rejecting Scripture. This is in contrast to most feminist egalitarians, who tend to reject Paul’s statements concerning the male/female roles as being misinterpretations of Scripture. Webb argues that the traditional view on these matters is exactly what Paul wrote, but that Paul’s writings are not the final answer.

Webb argues that the ancient world in which the Bible was written had deficient moral standards and that God, in His wisdom, knew that it was best to lead His people gradually from moral practices of the surrounding cultures to much higher standards for conduct.

Therefore, the moral commands that God gave in the Old Testament were an improvement over the moral standards of the surrounding culture, but they were not His highest ideal. God imparted higher moral standards in the New Testament (an improvement over the Old Testament)<sup>60</sup> but even these are not God’s ultimate ethic. Our task is to discover the trajectory of God’s improving revelation of moral standards and thus discover God’s “ultimate ethic.”

Webb uses an X - Y - Z formula. X is the ancient culture; Y is the scriptural improvement over culture; Z is God’s ultimate ethic which we discover using the Trajectory Hermeneutic principle. Webb focuses on these three (slaves, women, and homosexuals) as examples of how Christians should determine appropriate ethical standards for today.

He applies several tests (eighteen<sup>61</sup>) to guide in determining that trajectory, but the simplest summary of his view is that we can see how the filters of historical cultures have moved moral understanding in a particular direction. When he does that, he notes that culture increasingly has rejected slavery, increasingly given women equal status with men in every role, and that homosexuality in most cultures has become increasingly

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<sup>60</sup> A clear example of this is Jesus’ statements on marriage and divorce (Matthew 19:3-11)

<sup>61</sup> Webb’s eighteen filters are: (1) Preliminary Movement, (2) Seed Ideas (3) Breakouts, (4) Purpose/Intent Statements, (5) Basis in Fall or Curse (6) basis in Original Creation: Patterns, (7) Basis in Original Creation: Primogeniture, (8) Basis in New Creation, (9) Competing Options (10) Opposition to Original /Culture, (11) Closely Related Issues, (12) Penal Code, (13) Specific Instructions, (14) Basis in Theological Analogy, (15) Contextual Comparisons (16) Appeal to the Old Testament, (17) Pragmatic Basis Between Two Cultures, (18) Scientific and Social-Scientific Evidence.

restricted (the Western Nations have moved the opposite direction on homosexuality). Thus, according to Webb, the moral trajectory results in the rejection of slavery, the liberation of women, and the rejection of homosexuality.

Those biblical commands that are trans-cultural are expressions of God's ultimate ethic. Those that are not trans-cultural are temporary stops along the way to that ultimate ethic.

For example, Christians reading Ephesians 6:1, *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right*, conclude that children should obey their parents because the New Testament was written for Christians in the New Covenant age and that today we are in the New Covenant age. For Webb, however, the process is entirely different - the command is binding on us because these commands have survived his eighteen criteria.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, in Trajectory Hermeneutics, historically evolving culture, rather than biblical revelation, becomes the largest measure of God's ultimate ethic.

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NOTE: In recent years, some have written about the *Hermeneutical Circle* and the *Hermeneutical Spiral*. These are philosophical discussions, which, in my opinion, have more relevance for exposition and homiletics than for exegesis - JWG

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<sup>62</sup> Actually, he argues that the command meant that children should obey their parents, even after the children become adults, but that this aspect of the command was a cultural understanding which has not survived the filters and so need not be observed today.



## THE NEED FOR HERMENEUTICS

Anyone who reads a book, a newspaper article, or any other piece of literature, practices hermeneutics. As we read, we are interpreting the written statements and terms. The closer we are to the culture of the writer, the more accurately we understand what he is saying. This is called, "spontaneous hermeneutics."

When a gap exists between the interpreter and the materials to be interpreted, rules are set up to bridge the gap. For most of human history, the gulf between the New Testament life-style and the life-style of the reader was rather small. However, in the past century, the gulf has become very great. Several gaps exist between the contemporary Christian and Scripture. We are removed from the biblical authors by time, so there is an historical gap; by culture, so there is a cultural gap; by language, so there is a linguistic gap; by geography, so there is a geographical gap; and by flora and fauna, so there is a biological gap; etc. Therefore, we seek principles, whereby we might bridge this gap. This is the task of biblical hermeneutics.

1. Occasionally, the view is expressed that the emphasis upon the principles of interpretation ignores the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the illumination of the Holy Spirit is important.<sup>63</sup>

*1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.*

Even though there is justification for such fears, we cannot take I John 2:27 to mean that there is no need for expositors, or teachers. The New Testament contains many clear statements that God gave teachers as a gift to the Body.

*Acts 13:1 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

*Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,*

*1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.*

The exact meaning of I John 2:27 we will deal with later, but the point here is that teachers, expositors, are a part of God's provision for the Church.

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<sup>63</sup> See footnote 42

2. The Old Testament has many statements concerning the need for Bible study and exposition.

*Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.*

*Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*

*Nehemiah 8:1-8 And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it before the square, which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. And they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.*

*Psalm 1:1-2 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.*

*Psalm 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*

From the many statements in the Psalms (note Psalm 119:34-105), it is clear that David's idea of coming to the Lord's will is to read the Word, study it day and night, get all of its precepts in the minds, etc.

3. The New Testament also emphasizes the need for responsible Bible study, both by direct and indirect statements.

When the rich man in Hades asked for special messengers be sent to his family to warn them about Hades, Abraham responded by saying that the Bible was sufficient witness:

Luke 16:29-31 “...*But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'"*

Paul insisted that responsible handling of Scripture be a trait of his fellow workers:

2 Timothy 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.*

"Handling accurately," is a translation of the Greek term, (ὀρθοτομέω) *orthotomeo*, which means "to cut straight." This term is used in the LXX with reference to "cutting a path in a straight direction" (Proverbs 3:6; 11:5). In the New Testament, the term occurs only here and has a metaphorical meaning. We look at the context (verses 14 & 16) and conclude that the meaning here is to "guide the Word of God along a straight path, without being turned aside by wordy debates or impious talk."<sup>64</sup>

In his Second Corinthian Letter, Paul described his own reverent handling of the Word.

2 Corinthians 2:17 *For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.*

The Greek term Paul used, (*kaphleuo* [καφλεύω]), means, "to sell, or peddle at illegitimate profit." Paul thus says that he does not "merchandise" the Word of God. He is not doing what he is doing for profit. He does not tailor the word to appeal to his hearers, nor does he teach so as to get paid. Paul emphasizes the seriousness of exposition, "We speak in Christ in the sight of God." It is a very serious thing to represent God, and that is what one does when he is involved in exposition. James warned, *Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.* (James 3:1)

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<sup>64</sup> Some have sought to relate the term to a stone mason who cuts a stone accurately. There is no basis for this definition, either etymologically or in the use of the term in literature. See Bauer/ Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, the University of Chicago Press) 1979, page 580

### **EIGHT THINGS WHICH HINDER SOUND HERMENEUTICS**

1. A desire to please the audience
2. The belief that only clergy can understand the Bible, so our interpretation must agree with that of the preacher
3. Using the Bible to prove preconceived doctrines
4. Spiritualizing the Word
5. Reading thoughtlessly
6. Always looking for something new – for example, looking for some obscure meaning of a Greek or Hebrew term.
7. Ignorance
8. Dishonesty

### **THE BASIC OBJECTIVE OF THE INTERPRETER:**

1. To discover what the author meant by a statement (command, question, etc.);
2. what his first hearers or readers understood to be the meaning of the statement;
3. to transmit that meaning to modern hearers.

## SECTION THREE: THE CONTEXT

A common adage among Bible exegetes is, "A text without a context is a pretext." *Pretext* is pretending to be something that one is not. One of the main sources of false doctrine has been the practice of plucking an isolated verse out of the Bible and preaching a doctrine from it. In some instances, if the verse had been read in context, the meaning would be very different from the one received from the isolated verse.

### DEFINING CONTEXT

The context involves both the immediate and the remote. Exegesis concerns itself with the following contextual progression:

#### A. *The word within the sentence.*

##### 1. A word may have different meanings in different sentences.

- *leaven*, is used in Scripture to illustrate the pernicious growth of both good and evil.

**Matthew 13:33** *He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal..."*

**Matthew 16:6** *And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*

- In each of the following passages, *faith* (πίστις - *pistis*) has a different meaning.

**Galatians 1:23** *but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."*

In this passage, the term, *faith*, refers to the doctrine of the Gospel

**Romans 14:23** *But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.*

*Faith* in this context refers to a conviction concerning what is righteous and unrighteous behaviour.

**1 Timothy 5:11-12 KJV** *But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.*

*Faith* in this context is used for a pledge or a promise made to the Lord. The KJV translates the term, πίστις, literally. Both the NIV and the NAS render the term according to the *dynamic equivalency* translation style. The NAS uses the term, *pledge*; the NIV reads, *first pledge*.

- Another example is the word, *blood*. In each of the following passages, the word has a different meaning.

**Acts 17:24-26 (KJV)** *God ... hath made of **one blood** all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;*

In this passage, *blood* refers to a group of people. Both the NAS and the NIV employ *dynamic equivalency* at this point : NAS - *made of one*; NIV - *From one man*.

**Ephesians 1:7** *In Him we have redemption through His **blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.*

In this verse, *blood*, refers to the atoning death of Christ, which, of course, involved the shedding of His blood (Jesus could have bled, but not died; it is His death that redeems us, not His bleeding).

**Hebrews 9:6-7** *Now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship, but into the second only the high priest enters, once a year, not without taking **blood**, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.*

Here, *blood* refers to the fluid that flows through the veins.

## 2. A word may be used figuratively or in an idiomatic sense

Consider how Paul uses the term, *touch*, in I Corinthians 7:1, *Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.*

The KJV and the NAS both follow *formal equivalency* here and render the term literally, *not to touch*. Some holiness groups have built a doctrine on this verse, prohibiting a man from shaking hands with a woman, etc. However, in context it is clear that Paul is speaking of sexual contact. The NIV reads, *it is good for a man not to marry*.

### B. The sentence within the paragraph.

John 12:32 *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."*

"Lift Jesus Higher" is an exuberant worship song that is based on this verse:

Lift Jesus higher, lift Jesus higher,  
Lift Him up, so the world can see.  
He said, "If I be lifted up, from the earth,  
I will draw all men unto me."

The idea of this song is that we should exalt and elevate Jesus so that men will behold him and believe on him. Some who sing the song might even have the ascension and enthronement in mind. This is a wonderful thought and, as an isolated verse, John 12:32

lends itself to this meaning. However, when the verse is read in the context of its paragraph, we find a different meaning to Jesus' being "lifted up."

John 12: 32-36 *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. The multitude therefore answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" Jesus therefore said to them, "For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. "While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and He departed and hid Himself from them.*

NOTE: Other passages in which "lifted up" is used in this same sense: John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32, 34.

### **C. *The paragraph within the section (usually, the chapter).***

*Amos 5:21-24 "I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. "Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. "But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

On the basis of this passage, some have argued that God disapproves of ceremonies and liturgies. Such is not the case here. God Himself had commanded the festivals, solemn assemblies, burnt offerings, grain offerings, etc. This paragraph must be read in the context of the section of which it is a part.

The section begins at Chapter Four and continues through Chapter Six. The message of this three chapter section is that Israel has forsaken Jehovah. They did this by oppressing the poor, being unjust in the court system, bribery, oppression of the righteous who speak out against evil, worshipping other gods in addition to Jehovah, etc. They have kept up the Jehovistic religious ceremonies, but their lives did not express devotion to Jehovah.<sup>65</sup>

Therefore, their religious ceremonies have no meaning to Jehovah. He is going to bring judgment and their faithfulness to ceremony will not turn back that judgment. Only true repentance can turn away Jehovah's wrath.<sup>66</sup>

### **D. *A section within a book***

*Joel 2:1-11 Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations. A fire consumes before them,*

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<sup>65</sup> We cannot avoid the similarity with "Sunday only Christians."

<sup>66</sup> This is similar to the charge that Jesus leveled against the Pharisees in Matthew 23:3-4, 23

*And behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, But a desolate wilderness behind them, And nothing at all escapes them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like war horses, so they run. With a noise as of chariots They leap on the tops of the mountains, Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, Like a mighty people arranged for battle. Before them the people are in anguish; All faces turn pale. They run like mighty men; They climb the wall like soldiers; And they each march in line, Nor do they deviate from their paths. They do not crowd each other; They march everyone in his path. When they burst through the defenses, They do not break ranks. They rush on the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter through the windows like a thief. Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, The sun and the moon grow dark, And the stars lose their brightness. And the LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?*

From this section in Joel, has come the joyous worship song, "Blow a Trumpet in Zion." This song usually is sung with a sense of victory, often accompanied with abandoned dancing and joy, because the army of God is victorious.

A reading of the entire book of Joel reveals the exact opposite mood from the joyous mood displayed in the song, "Blow a Trumpet in Zion." The section is an occasion for sorrow; it is a dirge, not a victory song. The army of the Lord in this section of Joel is a plague of locusts that God is bringing on Israel as punishment for sin.

### **E. *A book within the bible***

The Epistle of James is an example of the importance of understanding a book within the context of the entire Bible. James emphasizes "works" in the life of the believer. Because of this, Martin Luther considered James to be a threat to the doctrine of salvation by grace. He called James "a straw epistle," and wished that it could be removed from the Bible. Indeed, James by itself might lead one to conclude that salvation is by works. On the other hand, within the context of the entire New Testament, James brings a balanced view of faith, grace, and works. *Faith without works is dead*, is truth, but it must be balanced by the truths concerning grace that are in the other portions of the New Testament.

## **THE CONTEXTUAL PROGRESSION**

**Word within the sentence → Sentence within the paragraph → Paragraph within the section → Section within the book → Book within the Bible**



## BASIC QUESTIONS ASKED OF THE CONTEXT

The objective, during this part of the interpretive process, is to place one's self into the setting of the times in which the book was written and to experience what the people in the account experienced.

### **Example: Paul's Letter to the Galatians.**

All of the early converts were Jews (by birth or proselytes). In Acts 10, Cornelius and those of his household (Gentiles) received the Gospel, but Gentile evangelism still was a secondary activity.

Until the time of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), Christianity was viewed as an evolution of Judaism. After the Jerusalem council, Christianity was viewed as a distinct faith, with a Jewish background.

Yet, even after the Jerusalem Council, some Jewish Christians just could not bring themselves to accept the view that Christianity was not an expression of Judaism. They continued to insist that the Mosaic Covenant had a place of authority in the New Covenant messages. After Paul had brought the Gospel to the Galatians, Judaizers from Jerusalem came to Galatia to promote the Jewish Law as a necessary part of salvation.

What could Paul do? How could he share the Good News with the Galatians who had been tainted by Judaizers? How could he undo the damage? He turned to the Old Testament Law and proved from the Law itself that the Law cannot justify. This is a form of *argumentum ad verecundiam* (appeal to authority). Understanding the problem and the process that Paul used to meet the problem, help us to understand the Letter to the Galatians.

**The following are the basic questions that the exegete asks in interrogating the context:**

### **1. Who is speaking?**

Frequently when preaching, Billy Graham would say, "The Bible says..." Even though this is a good statement in the manner that Billy used it, this concept sometimes is abused. Just because a statement is in the Bible, does not mean that it is true. The Bible quotes many different individuals and classes of individuals. God, Satan, good people, bad people, inspired people, uninspired people, angels, demons, a donkey, and uncounted others are quoted in the Bible. So, we need to ask, "Whose statement is this?"

#### **John 9:31 is an example.**

*We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him.*

This verse has been used by some as an argument that God will not hear the prayer of a sinner. Experience flies in the face of such a teaching. Most of us know of sinners who in a

time of crisis cried out to God and God responded, which usually led to the salvation of that desperate soul.

The key to solving the problem is to note the identity of the one making the statement in John 9:31 and the basis upon which it was made.

First, the Pharisees taught that God would not hear sinners. The Pharisees taught this not only because they believed it,<sup>67</sup> but also to motivate people to adhere to the Pharisees' teaching concerning the strict observance of the law. The Pharisees' constant presence had conditioned the general populace to accept this belief as true. So, when the Pharisees told the blind man to give God the praise for his healing, and to give Jesus no credit because they declared Jesus to be a sinner (John 9:24), the blind man responded by repeating to them their own doctrine.

John 9:30-31a *The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not hear sinners..."*

This is not a statement made by Jesus, an apostle, or by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is a statement made by a man whom Jesus had healed, who was repeating to the religious leaders the tradition that they had taught him. This is a debating technique known as *argumentum ad hominem* (appeal to the man – “since you believe this, then the following is true”).

**Sometimes it is not easy to determine who is speaking.** For example, John 3:16 may have been spoken by Jesus, or it may be the opening sentence of John's commentary on the salvation provided by God through Jesus Christ. Bible students are divided over who said John 3:16.

Clearly, the words of Christ are recorded through verse 15. However, verse 16 begins with a different tone. The conversation with Nicodemus occurred about three years before Christ's crucifixion. Thus, if John 3:16 refers to the crucifixion, one would expect the verbs to be future tense, i.e., *He will give his only begotten Son*. However, the key verb in verse 16 is past tense, *He gave His only begotten Son*. Since John wrote this account about seventy years after Jesus' crucifixion, the past tense, *He gave*, would be appropriate if verses 16-21 are John's commentary on Jesus' statement in verse 15, *that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life*.

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<sup>67</sup> They justified this doctrine by passages such as Isaiah 1:15; 59:1-2.

Two questions must be asked in order to attempt the resolution of this issue:

1. Does *gave* refer to the cross? (Could it refer to the incarnation, in line with Galatians 4:4 and Philippians 2:6-7?)
2. If the statement refers to the cross, is there any theological concept or linguistic form that would justify Jesus' speaking in the past tense?

If the answer to the first question is, "yes," and the answer to the second question is, "no," then we assume that John 3:16 is John's commentary, not a statement made by Jesus.

## 2. *To whom is it spoken?*

Matthew 10:8-9 *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give. "Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.*

During the Jesus Movement, this passage influenced some to travel about the country evangelizing, with no more than the clothes on their backs. Usually, they were critical of those who had homes, jobs, etc. However, within its context, this statement clearly is addressed to the Twelve for a special one-time ministry. This is not a dictum given to all missionaries, evangelists, and preachers for all generations.

Another passage that might be cited as an example is John 15:14-15

*"You are My friends, if you do what I command you. "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

To whom was this spoken? We go back to Chapter Thirteen where this section begins. The audience is the Eleven (Judas already had departed [see 13:26-30]). The context makes it clear that this was an emotional statement that Jesus made, describing the special relationship that He had with his apostles. Note the following statements, all past tense and all referring to the special relationship that Jesus had with His eleven disciples:

V9 *I have loved you*

V12 *I have loved you*

V15 *I have made Him known to you*

V16 *I have chosen you and ordained you*

V19 *I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you*

V20 *Remember the word that I said to you*

V27 *and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning*

When a statement is made to a very obvious audience, we cannot broaden its application unless there is authority to do so elsewhere in Scripture. The recent use of this verse to urge a sentimental relationship with Jesus (He is my friend, usually expressed in a very sanguine

manner) is not good exegesis.<sup>68</sup> For that matter, after the ascension, Jesus always is described or addressed in an elevated and reverent manner, not as our bosom buddy.

### **Statements made to a restricted audience that later are broadened in their application**

In some instances, a statement is made to an individual or to a restricted group, then it later is expanded to a larger group – or even to a universal application.

An example of a statement made to an obvious audience which later Scripture broadens is John 16:7:

*But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.*

The promise of the Holy Spirit, given here to the Apostles, is expanded to all believers of every generation in Act 2:38-39:

*And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."*

### **3. Why was it spoken?**

As noted above with reference to Amos 5:21-24, this can be an important question. Let's look at another example, Daniel 1:8-12.

*But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king." But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink..."*

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<sup>68</sup> It is of interest that as far as the biblical record goes, the Greek term, φίλος “friend,” is used only three times to record a statement of Jesus. In all three of these instances, they refer to intimate associates with whom Jesus had shared His earthly existence. The term is used twice to record Jesus’ words spoken to His disciples ((Twelve in Luke 12:4 and the Eleven in John 15:14). The only other time that the term is used to record a statement of Jesus is in John 11:11, when Jesus informed the apostles that Lazarus had died - “our friend Lazarus.” Those instances in which some English versions have Jesus saying, ”friend,” to someone, the version has rendered the Greek term for “man” as “friend”, (Luke 5:20). This seems to be an effort on the part of translators to make the conversation more intimate and conversational.

What is this all about? Why did Daniel refuse to ingest the food from the king's table, requesting instead a diet of vegetables and water? Some have used this passage as an argument for vegetarianism. Is this a valid use of this passage?

At first blush, we might think that the reason for refusing the king's food was because it wasn't kosher. Daniel did not want to violate the dietary code of the Mosaic Covenant. There may be something to that, but how do we explain his refusal of the wine? Wine was very present in the diet of pious Jews. Wine also would not violate the standards of a vegetarian diet, because it is "the fruit of the vine."

Kiel and Delitzsch present excellent commentary on this question:

"The partaking of the food brought to them from the king's table was to them contaminating, because forbidden by law; not so much because the food was not prepared according to the Levitical ordinance, or perhaps consisted of the flesh of animals which to the Israelites were unclean, for in this case the youths were not under the necessity of refraining from the wine, but the reason of their rejection of it was, that the heathen at their feasts offered up in sacrifice to their gods a part of the food and the drink, and thus consecrated their meals by a religious rite; whereby not only he who participated in such a meal participated in the worship of idols, but the meat and the partaking of which, according to the saying of the apostle (1 Cor. 10:20f), is the same as sacrificing to devils... Daniel's resolution to refrain from such unclean food flowed therefore from fidelity to the law, and from steadfastness to the faith that "man lives not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deut. 8:3), and that from the assurance that God would bless the humbler provision which he asks for himself, and would by means of it make him and his friends as strong and vigorous as the other youths who did eat the costly provision from the king's table."<sup>69</sup> "

Another interesting example is I John 4:2:

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God...*

When Jesus was upon the earth, He encountered evil spirits, demons, who confessed that he was Jesus Christ in the flesh. Matthew 8:28-32, Mark 5:1-13, and Luke 8:26-33, are three accounts of Jesus' encounter with a legion of demons who inhabited the demoniacs in Gadara. Note how Mark reports the exchange between Jesus and the demons:

*Mark 5:6-9 And seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" For He had been saying to him,*

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<sup>69</sup> Kiel & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 9, The Book of Daniel (Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers) 1989, page 80

*"Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he \*said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many."*

Even though the demon possessed man is the one who bowed down before Jesus, it is clear that it is the demons who are crying out and speaking to Jesus. Note that this legion of demons confessed that this flesh and blood Jesus was the Son of the Most High God. Other examples of demons making such a confession could be cited also. How does this jibe with First John 4:1-2? The answer is to be found in the situation faced by the Gentile Church at the close of the First Century.

I John was written expressly to address the false doctrine that prevailed in the Asian churches of his day: Gnosticism.

There were three major heresies that infected the First Century Church:

- Judaism
- Nicolaitanism (a form of Gnosticism)
- Gnosticism (especially that espoused by Cerinthus)

**Judaism** declared that in order to be a Christian, in order to be saved, one had to submit to the Law of Moses... in essence, to become a Jew. Paul spent his life contending that this was error. He emphasized that Christians are under a new covenant.

John the Apostle outlived all of the other Revelatory Apostles. He settled in Asia Minor and wrote his Gospel and three epistles in the middle of the last third of the First Century. By this time, Christianity had become predominately a Gentile movement. Instead of having to deal with Judaizing teachers, John dealt with the new heresies that were troubling the church, heresies that came from Greek culture, Nicolaitanism and Gnosticism.

**Nicolaitanism** (which, functionally, was a form of Gnosticism) became quite strong and plagued the church for almost 100 years.<sup>70</sup> Its adherents claimed to be followers of Nicholas, the proselyte, one of the seven deacons chosen in Act 6. They told this story about their founder. He had a very beautiful wife. After the ascension of Jesus, the apostles were jealous, and so, Nicolas brought his wife forth and said that anyone who wanted to marry her could have her.<sup>71</sup> He said that "we must abuse the flesh." He himself never had any woman other than his wife, his sons and daughters were honorable. However, his followers, taking the expression, "We must abuse the flesh," began to do just that. They became very immoral,

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<sup>70</sup> The Nicolaitans are mentioned frequently in early Christian documents. Here are some of the more prominent: Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* III, 4), Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* III, 29), Irenaeus (*Adversus* 26:3), Hippolytus (*Philos.* VII, 24), Epiphanius (*Haer.* I, 225)

<sup>71</sup> One version states that Nicholas was a jealous husband and that the apostles rebuked him for this. Thus, as an act of abusing the flesh, he surrendered his wife (see Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church*, [Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1996] Volume 2, page 464)

committed fornication without restraint and were described by Clement, one of the early Church leaders, as being "as dissolute as he-goats."

What this group did was take Paul's teaching that we are not under law, and pushed it to the extreme, stating that all moral obligation is something that pertained to the flesh, which is inappropriate for the spiritual man. Through debauchery they sought to destroy their bodies. To them, this was not sin, because it was a means of attaining a higher place, when the body was spent of its lustful forces.

This was a very popular movement. Huge numbers of Christians flocked to this sect. It is condemned in two of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation (Rev. 2:6; 2:16). Although not addressed as a sect, profligacy among clergy was known as "Nicolaitanism" even in the time of Urban II (reigned 1088-1099 AD).<sup>72</sup>

**Gnosticism**, a form of the Greek Gnostic Philosophy, was the most dangerous enemy of the church during the first 150 years of its history. It was built on the premise that the spirit is good and that matter is evil. This being true, matter and spirit cannot have any enduring relationship. Therefore, salvation consists of escape from the realm of matter into the realm of the Spirit. There were numerous means of escape, the chief one being knowledge. In this special knowledge, called, "gnosis," known only by those who were initiated into the inner secrets of the group, man can rise above the earthbound chains of matter into heavenly apprehension of truth.

One form of Gnosticism was quite close to Nicolaitanism. Concluding that since the body is matter it cannot do good, these Gnostics declared that fornication, gluttony, and all other activities of the flesh are routine, but they do not touch the spirit of a man because the spirit is inherently good.

Many Greek Gnostics entered the church. Others, wanting to make Christianity acceptable to the intellectuals of the day, sought to conform Christian doctrine to Gnostic understandings. There were two main views of Christ held by different Gnostic groups in the First Century:

- a. Docetic gnostics - Jesus did not really appear in the flesh, but only seemed to do so. (*dokeo* "to seem"). He was a divinely orchestrated illusion. He was a "hologram"... a "virtual reality" being.
- b. Cerinthian gnostics - Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary and was a human. The Christ-spirit inhabited the man, Jesus, at the time of his baptism, and left him before he went to the cross (this very heresy has been taught by some of the Word/Faith teachers in the last decade).

The Gospel of John and The First Epistle of John were written to combat these heresies. As one reads through First John, with the understanding of why John wrote it, the epistle

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<sup>72</sup> Among the many issues addressed by the Council of Piacenza, convened by Pope Urban II in March, 1095, was the condemnation of Nicolaitanism.

becomes a very polemical book. Galatians, Hebrews, and First John are the most polemical books in the New Testament.

Thus, the key to understanding I John 4:1-2 is to understand the audience to which it was written and what that audience was dealing with at the time that the letter was written. At the time that John wrote this letter, there were Gnostic teachers and prophets circulating among the churches and drawing disciples away from the established church. Clearly, the statement in I John 4:2 was for a particular situation and in a particular time. It is not a plenary test for all times and in every location, concerning whether or not a spirit or a teacher is a genuine servant of God. This we know because of two very obvious reasons:

- There have been false teachers who have confessed that Jesus came in the flesh, yet have taught heresy.
- As seen in the Gospels, there were demons who acknowledged that the flesh and blood Jesus was the Christ.

#### **4. *When was it spoken?***

The Bible is divided into two major divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The term, *testament*, means, "will" or "covenant." God set the terms whereby his graces are extended to mankind. The will contains the promises and conditions tied to receiving the promises.

Even though the Bible is divided into two testaments, the reality is that God has dealt with man in more than just the two covenants referred to by the terms, "old," and "new." Another term that is used to describe God's dealing with man is *dispensation*. In some ways, this is a better term. The conditions and promises given under one dispensation did not apply to those under another dispensation, unless the later dispensation was a fulfillment of promises made under the former. There are four major dispensations recorded in Scripture:

- ***Patriarchal Dispensation:*** From the Garden of Eden until the giving of the Mosaic Law.

Under the Patriarchal Dispensation, God related to and made covenants with various "patriarchs." Usually, the covenant made with a patriarch also extended to his family. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were the recipients of the most important patriarchal covenants. In each case, God set the terms.

- ***Mosaic Dispensation:*** From the giving of the Mosaic Law at Mt. Sinai, until the crucifixion of Jesus.

Under the Mosaic Dispensation, God made a covenant with the descendants of Jacob, the nation of Israel. The sacrifices, feast days, tabernacle, Ten Commandments, etc., all were a part of that dispensation. The major ordinance in the Abrahamic covenant was circumcision. Since the existence of the nation of Israel was an intermediate fulfillment of the promise associated with Abrahamic circumcision, God perpetuated this ordinance in the Mosaic covenant.



- ***The Life of Christ:*** From Jesus' baptism to His ascension.

This is an unusual dispensation in that it overlapped the Mosaic dispensation. Much confusion has occurred because this three and one-half year period of Living Grace has not been understood. The Law of Moses was not abrogated until the crucifixion of Jesus. However, when the Lord was present on earth, He had the authority to dispense grace apart from any covenant. This was because, as God, He was free to forgive, heal, etc., For example, note the following episode:

**Luke 5:18-26** *And behold, some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in, and to set him down in front of Him. And not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, right in the center, in front of Jesus. And seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? "But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"-- He said to the paralytic-- "I say to you, rise, and take up your stretcher and go home." And at once he rose up before them, and took up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. And they were all seized with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."*

When Jesus said, "your sins are forgiven you," He did so without following any of the elements of the then existing Mosaic covenant. In order to receive forgiveness of sins under the Mosaic covenant, sin offerings had to be made. So, it is not surprising that the scribes and Pharisees considered Jesus to be speaking blasphemies. His answer is interesting, *in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...*" This is similar to when Jesus was questioned as to why He and his disciples did not keep the Sabbath law, Jesus replied that He was the *Lord of the Sabbath* (Matthew 12:8; Luke 6:5).

**Related to this is the statement in Hebrews 9:16-17:**

Hebrews 9:16-17 *For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.*

While Jesus was on the earth, He dispensed his treasures as He wished. Since His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, the Church has been obligated to abide by the terms of the New Covenant, as elucidated by Peter on the Day of Pentecost,

*Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)*

- **Christian dispensation:** From the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) until the end of the age.

As we already have noted, early in the history of the Church, an effort was made to bring all Christians under the Old Testament. Christian leaders, guided by the Holy Spirit, rejected that attempt (Acts 15). This was one of the challenges that Paul continually faced. The New Testament epistles of Galatians and Hebrews are polemical documents arguing that the Old Testament is abrogated by the New. Sections of Romans and Colossians also argue this truth.

The tendency to infiltrate the New Covenant with the Old seems to be a problem in almost every age. It is difficult for many Christians to accept the absoluteness of the removal of the Old and the instituting of the New. For example, the Ten Commandments do not govern us today, except to the degree that they have been expressed in the tenets of the New Covenant. Indeed, at least in spirit, nine of the Ten Commandments are found (even intensified) in the New Covenant. Sabbath keeping is not (Romans 14).

**God's Scriptural revelation is progressive.** Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are essential parts of this revelation. They are a unit. Many people talk about how the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New Testament. The God of the Old Testament is portrayed as harsh and judgmental, while the God of the New Testament is portrayed as loving and accepting. This is not true. Jesus spoke more of hell and judgment than anyone else in the Bible.

Much of the New Testament cannot be understood without a knowledge of the Old Testament. For example, John 3:14, speaking of the serpent's being raised in the wilderness has no meaning, unless one knows the story of Numbers 21. Much of the New Testament is a commentary on the Old Testament. It explains the purpose of many of the events and the rationale behind the commandments that are recorded in the Old Testament.

**Example:** The Book of Hebrews is a document that explains the purpose and significance of the Old Testament forms of worship.

**Example:** Matthew 19:3-12 contains Jesus' explanation as to why God allowed divorce in the Old Testament and what God's will really is in this matter.

*When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband*

*who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)*

*They \*said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away? 8 He \*said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. (Matthew 19:7-8)*

## **5. Where was it spoken?**

This is a question that many inexperienced exegetes fail to ask. Sometimes the question is relevant and sometimes it is not, but it should be asked. For example, II Chronicles 7:14, which is repeated so often concerning the sins of America, is a passage in which the "where" is important. We quote the context:

*Chronicles 7:11-22 Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king's palace, and successfully completed all that he had planned on doing in the house of the LORD and in his palace. Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now My eyes shall be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that My name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. And as for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked even to do according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne as I covenanted with your father David, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to be ruler in Israel.' But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you and shall go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot you from My land which I have given you, and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. As for this house, which was exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' And they will say, 'Because they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who brought them from the land of Egypt, and they adopted other gods and worshipped them and served them, therefore He has brought all this adversity on them.'"*

The land was a holy land. All of the citizens, the good and the bad, were "His people." The Temple was a special place where the people would come together to pray, to seek the face of God, and to repent, if repentance were appropriate. Nothing like this exists today. The people of God are a segment of society, the minority in most societies. So, even if all of the Christians in a given land repent of sins, most of the inhabitants of the land probably will not repent. Therefore, the judgment of God may have to come on the land, in spite of the repenting of all of God's people in that country. Also, the land itself is a factor. Palestine was and is a special place with special promises attached to it.

So, even though it is appropriate for the people of God to repent, if they have done wrong, and God may respond by "healing their land," God cannot be held to 2 Chronicles 7:14 as a promise to us, today. It may be a hope, but it cannot be something that we can hold God to, as if it were a plenary promise.

## 6. *What was said?*

The answer to this question will involve many things.

- **The exegete should make certain that the English translation accurately conveys what the original language said.**

Note an example relating to the question about whether or not Jesus washed all of the disciple's feet and whether or not Judas partook of the Lord's supper. The King James Version translates John 13:2,

*KJV John 13:2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;*

If this translation, *and supper being ended*, is accurate, then Judas would have been present for all of the things that are described in John 13. The New American Standard Version translates the participle accurately,

*NAS John 13:2 And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,*

It was, *during supper*, that Judas' heart was given to Satan, and thus, the statements made concerning him, during supper, make sense (John 13:10-11, 21-30).

Any time a difficulty arises in trying to make sense of a passage, the first thing to do is to make certain that the translation is not misleading.

Even when a passage is not difficult, if one is reading a passage that deals with theology, matters of salvation, or other matters of serious eternal import, and one is reading from a version that is based on the Dynamic Equivalency principle, it is important to compare the passage with a version that is based on the Formal Equivalency principle. Dynamic Equivalency versions, in some passages, reflect the theological proclivities of those who

produce the version to a greater degree than those who produce Formal Equivalency versions.<sup>73</sup>

- **Small details are important.**

For example, note the different prepositions relating to prayer and the Holy Spirit (*in* and *with*).

It is important that we recognize the difference between *praying in the Spirit*, and *praying with the spirit*. First, we note Paul's language in I Corinthians 14:14-16.

*For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also.*

Notice that Paul speaks here of the human spirit and the human mind (i.e., *my spirit, my mind*). He states that when he prays in a tongue, that his human spirit is praying. When he prays in a language that his mind understands, his human mind is involved in the prayer.<sup>74</sup>

The key terminology here is, "with." Paul prays *with* his spirit and *with* his mind (Note that the next verse [16] states that Paul sings "in spirit." Since the definite article is missing, and this is in the context of the previous two verses, it is obvious that Paul is speaking of his human spirit's singing in tongues). Note that most translations in this passage correctly use a small "s" rather than a capital "S" in spelling *spirit*.

Next, we notice the terminology in Jude 17 -21.

*But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, "In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.*

Jude contrasts those who are devoid of the Holy Spirit and those are not devoid of the Holy Spirit. Jude then states that praying in the Holy Spirit is one of the

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<sup>73</sup> For example, Acts 2:38 in the NLT gives a very different role to baptism than do Formal Equivalency and other Dynamic Equivalency versions. For an excellent discussion of the preposition, εἰς (*eis*) in this passage see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House) 1996, pages 369-371

<sup>74</sup> Notice that there is no mention of the Holy Spirit in these verses but the longer context of the three chapters 12-14, would lead to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is the enabler who makes it possible for one to pray in tongues with his human spirit.

activities related to our remaining strong and faithful in the faith. The terminology here clearly refers to "praying *in* the Holy Spirit. The human spirit is not referenced here.

The third passage that is relevant to our study is Ephesians 6:18.

*With all prayer and petition pray at all times **in** the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,*

This is the concluding exhortation in Paul's discussion of the Christian armor. Paul states that all prayer and petition (all kinds of prayer) are to be prayed *in* the Spirit. This clearly refers to the Holy Spirit, because of the use of the definite article and the preposition, *in* (consistent with the exhortation of Jude).

Since all prayer at all times is to be prayed *in* the Holy Spirit, and since Spirit-led Paul spoke of his praying both with his human spirit (in tongues) and his praying with his human mind (known language), then,

- prayer **in the Spirit** may be in tongues (praying with/by the human spirit)  
or
- prayer **in the Spirit** in one's natural language (praying with/by the human mind).

The important thing is that whether in tongues or in our native language, our prayer should be **in the Holy Spirit**.

Some have elevated tongues, as if praying in a tongue were superior to praying in the language known to the speaker. They have pointed to I Corinthians 14:4,

*One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.*

The conclusion reached by many is that praying a tongue has some special edifying value that praying in a known language does not have. The point that Paul is making in this verse, however, is that uninterpreted tongue speaking has no value to the church. Only the tongue speaker is edified by this sort of activity.

Jude speaks of " *building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit,*" which, as we just demonstrated, can be either with tongues or a known language. The key to building up one's self is praying *in* the spirit, not praying *with* the spirit. So, either tongues or non-tongues will build up the praying believer, if such prayer is *in* the Holy Spirit.

It is clear that at Corinth, because of their divisive behavior, the tongues speakers, were praying *with* the spirit, but not *in* the spirit. The Holy Spirit never would motivate someone to use a spiritual endowment to elevate pride-filled individuals and to thus divide the local church.

The result of noting the presence of these two different prepositions is the realization that all of our prayers should be prayed in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, even to the point

of submitting to the Holy Spirit the decision as to whether in a given instance we should pray in tongues, or pray in English.

- **Does the context of the passage under consideration give a special definition to any terms?**

We already have considered this point, but a further example might be helpful. Note Paul's use of the term, *justification*, in Romans 5:18

*So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.*

The context makes it clear that *justification* in this verse refers to the resurrection, not spiritual salvation. The one transgression of Adam resulted in physical death's entrance into the human race. The righteous act, Christ's death, resulted in *justification*, i.e., the acquittal or release from that sentence. In this passage, the term refers to no more than this. To conclude otherwise is to accept the doctrine of Universalism, which many passages of Scripture reject.

Elsewhere, *justification* refers to the work of eternal salvation.

- **Are there any patterns of language in this passage that are consistent with patterns that the author displays throughout his writings?**

Usually, this is very helpful. For example, in I John 1:1, John stated,

*What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life--* <sup>75</sup>*(1 John 1:1 NAU)*

What does John mean by the statement concerning the Word of Life (λόγου τῆς ζωῆς)? How can someone see and touch <sup>76</sup>a word? The key to understanding this verse is John's use of the Greek term *logos* (λογός) in the preamble to his Gospel.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (John 1:1)

*In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.* (John 1:4)

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

From John's Gospel's preface, it becomes apparent to us that he sometimes uses *logos* (λόγος) to refer to the incarnate being who became carnate – Jesus the Christ.

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<sup>75</sup> Ὅ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ὃ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὃ ἐώρακαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὃ ἐθεασάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς

<sup>76</sup> The term that John uses here is ἐψηλάφησαν, which is the word used to describe a blind man's fumbling with and object to become familiar with it, or to identify it.

Thus, I John 1:1 is a verbal thrust into the heart of the Gnostic heresy that that was playing havoc in the Ephesian Church when John wrote this epistle.

Sometimes, however, even though some would make many claims about this facet of hermeneutics, the results are ambiguous.

For example, how should Romans 9:5 be punctuated? The interpretation of Romans 9:5 has probably been discussed [and written about] more than any other verse of the New Testament. The reason for the extensive discussion and in some cases, very vitriolic debate, has been the application of the Greek term θεός (*Theos* – i.e., “God”) in this verse. Does Paul here label Christ as *God*, or does the term in this verse apply to God the Father.

For some, this is a serious issue because they want to use this verse to demonstrate that Paul ascribed Divinity to Christ. Others argue that Paul did not make such an ascription and to use the verse for this purpose is to misuse it. How one punctuates the verse will be based on one or the other of these views.

The NAS punctuates the verse as follows:

*whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.*

Note that this version places a comma after *flesh* (*sarx* – σάρξ), thus treating the expression as a appositive and making the phrase, *who is over all, God blessed forever* refer to Christ.

One group of scholars assert that Paul did not intend to ascribe that term to Christ, but rather the phrase is a reference to God the Father. These argue that a period should follow *flesh*. By so doing, the verse would read,

*and from whom is Christ according to the flesh. Blessed forever be God, who is over all.*

The RSV, NEB, TEV, Moffatt, Berkley, and a number of other versions, punctuate the verse with a period after *flesh*, thus removing the term from being a reference to Christ.

The NIV, NAS, KJV, and a number of other versions, put a comma at that point, thus making the term refer to Christ.

One thing that influenced the punctuation of the verse in these versions was the theological posture of the translators. Those who put a period after the word, *flesh*, are on the more liberal theological end of the spectrum and thus, because they tend to downplay the Divinity of Jesus, we would expect them to present the verse in this fashion. Those who put a comma after *flesh* tend to be in the conservative end of the theological spectrum. Which punctuation is correct?

Those who argue for a period after *flesh* present the following reasoning:



- Paul consistently used terminology in Romans that made a distinction between God (the Father) and Jesus Christ.<sup>77</sup> For example:

Romans 1:7-8 *to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.*

Romans 5:1 *Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Romans 6:11 *Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

- Furthermore, Paul routinely restricted the term, *theos*, (God) to God the Father. There is no instance in which Paul, beyond question, applied the term, *theos*, to Christ.
- The result of this information leads to the conclusion that the term, *theos*, in this phrase applies to God the Father.
- Based on these facts, a period should be placed after *flesh*.

Having reached this conclusion, the flow of Paul's argument and his point in this section is understood in the following manner:

- Paul has been discussing the privileges of Israel, climaxing the discussion by mentioning Israel's greatest privilege, i.e., being the agent through which the Messiah came into the world.
- In the final phrase of 9:5, a marvelous doxology, Paul employs the Greek term, ὄν (*oon*)<sup>78</sup> - thus making the literal rendering of the phrase ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς (*ho oon epi pantoon theos*), "the being over all God." Thus, this doxology is emphasizing the fact that God the Father is the one who has been and is over all, suggesting that even the tragic apostasy of the Jews (resulting in the death of the Messiah) is in itself a part of the dispensation of Him who is God over all, Jew and Gentile, past and future.

This understanding of Paul's point in this passage is possible because we have been able to research Paul's use of the term, *theos*, and discover that he consistently uses the term to refer to God the Father, rather than God the Son.

**HOWEVER.....**The early Church Fathers, writing in the first eight centuries of the Christian era, consistently applied the term, *theos*, in this passage to Christ. Sanday and Headlam state, "about most of the Fathers however, there is no doubt. An immense

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<sup>77</sup> The possible exception being in those instances in which the Godhead may be referenced, such as Romans 3:23, *all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*

<sup>78</sup> The nominative, masculine, singular, present, active, participle of the state of being verb, εἶμι

preponderance of the Christian writers of the first eight centuries refer the word [*theos*] to Christ. This is certainly the case with.... “ then follows a lengthy list of some of the Church Fathers who applied the term to Christ.<sup>79</sup>

**HOWEVER....** Sanday and Headlam also cite some influential writers who held a differing view or admitted their uncertainty.

**HOWEVER....**There are two instances in which Paul refers to Christ as *Theos*.

The first is in Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesian elders, recorded by Luke in Acts 20:28

*“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

In this speech, Paul clearly applies the term, *Theos*, i.e., “God,” to the one who purchased the Church with His blood – an obvious reference to Christ.

**HOWEVER....** There is a manuscript difference in this verse. There is a large number of manuscripts to do not have the term, *Theos*, but rather have the term, *Kurios*, - The Greek term rendered, *Lord*. These manuscripts thus read, *shepherd the Church of the Lord, which He purchased with His own blood.*

Those who argue for the period, rather than the comma, thus discount Acts 20:28 as being an instance in which Paul applied the term, *Theos*, to Christ. They contend that a scribe, wanting to elevate Jesus to the status of God changed the wording.

What are we to conclude concerning the use of the term, *Theos*, in Acts 20:28?

Bruce M. Metzger has written *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, in which he records the reasoning of the United Bible Societies’ Editorial Committee’s decisions concerning the decisions made by the committee concerning the text of the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* (third edition). This text is the textual basis for most of the versions of the New Testament that have been published in recent years – it is considered to be the current most authoritative text of the New Testament.

Concerning Acts 20:28, Metzger wrote,

“The external evidence is singularly balanced between, “church of God” and “Church of the Lord” (the reading, *church of the Lord and God*, is obviously conflate, and therefore secondary – as are also the other variant readings).

Paleographically the difference concerns only a single letter:  $\theta\upsilon$  and  $\kappa\upsilon$ . In deciding between the two readings one must take into account internal probabilities.

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<sup>79</sup> W. Sanday & A. C. Headlam, *The International Critical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons) 1896, pg. 234

The expression ἐκκλησία κυρίου occurs seven times in the Septuagint but nowhere in the New Testament. On the other hand, ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ appears with moderate frequency (eleven times) in the Epistles traditionally ascribed to Paul, but nowhere else in the New Testament. (The phrase αἱ ἐκκλησίαι πάσαι τοῦ Χριστοῦ occurs once in Ro 16:16). It is possible, therefore, that a scribe, finding Θεοῦ in his exemplar, was influenced by Old Testament passages and altered it to κυρίου. On the other hand, it is also possible that a scribe, influenced by Pauline usage, changed κυρίου of his exemplar to Θεου. In support of the originality of κυρίου is the argument (urged by a number of scholars) that copyists were likely to substitute the more common phrase, ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ for the more rare phrase, ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ κυρίου. On the other hand, it is undeniable that θεοῦ is the more difficult reading. The following clause speaks of the church “which he obtained διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου.” If this is taken in its usual sense (“with his own blood”), a copyist might well raise the question, Does God have blood?, and thus be led to change θεοῦ to κυρίου. If however, κυρίου were the original reading, there is nothing unusual in the phrase to catch the mind of the Scribe and throw it off its balance. This and other considerations led the Committee (as well as a variety of other scholars) to regard θεοῦ as the original reading.<sup>80</sup>

Another verse in which Paul applies the term, *Theos*, to Christ is Titus 2:13 (another possibility, depending on interpretation is Titus 3:4).

*looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus...*

Those who contend for a period after, *flesh*, argue that Titus was not written by Paul, but is *Deutero Pauline*.

- The *Deutero Pauline* hypothesis is based, mainly, on the principle of Form Criticism. Those who hold this view have determined what sort of phrases Paul would have used and those that he would not use. They note the difference in terminology and form of expression in those documents from the ones that they have determined Paul clearly wrote and thus, the *Deutero Pauline* documents were written by someone close to Paul, decades after Paul died.<sup>81</sup>
- This argument is based:
  - (a) on the criteria the critics use to determine which documents Paul clearly wrote, so that this group of documents can be the bench mark by which the rest are measured;

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<sup>80</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies) 1971, page 480

<sup>81</sup> The so-called Deutero-Pauline epistles are Colossians, Ephesians, II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, and Titus.

(b) on the assumption that one always will use the same phrases and terminology in every document that he writes. The fallacy in this would be seen if someone compared a letter that Jim Garrett wrote to his brother in 1952 with one that he wrote to a fellow church leader in 2013. The language would be different because of the topic, which might be determined by the occasion for writing, and the fact that Jim Garrett's vocabulary has grown over the years, and also that his vocabulary is larger than that which he would use in a single letter, at whatever stage of life he might be writing a letter.

The concept of Form Criticism has been debunked so many times, that we need not give it any credence in this exploration.

Furthermore, the early church had no question about their authenticity. Gordon H. Clark responds to the critics in the following quote:

“The destructive critics surely ought to be embarrassed by the fact that the early church was fully assured of the Pauline authorship of these epistles. Eusebius (A.D. 325) sums up the judgment of the previous two centuries by saying that in his day all the Christian churches acknowledged them as “well known and undisputed.” This summary is based on the following data. Clement of Alexandria (c. 220) and Tertullian (c 200) quote these epistles as authentic. Irenaeus (c. 190) repeatedly quotes them. The Muratorian Canon, an attempt to list canonical books, includes them. Polycarp (c 150) evidently knew I Timothy 6;7, 10. Ignatius (c. 100) echoes I Timothy 1:4 and Titus 3:9. Then, finally Clement of Rome, who wrote about A.D. 100 or even a few years earlier echoes their wording, including a phrase in I Timothy 2:8. This selection from the early witnesses shows that the early church in the second century knew these epistles and accepted them as genuine letters of Paul.”<sup>82</sup>

A last consideration has to be the recognition of how this phrase routinely would be punctuated, if there were no reason to give it special punctuation. Were it not for the contention that Paul never applied the term, *Theos*, to Christ, the phrase would be punctuated with a comma. Such is the case because *Christ according to the flesh*, is the immediate antecedent of, *who is over all God*, thus applying the term *Theos* to Christ.

Given these considerations, we conclude that Paul does use the term, *theos*, in reference to Christ in Romans 9:5 (thus favoring the use of a comma, rather than a period), for the following reasons:

- we resonate with the reasoning of the scholars who produced the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament;
- we consider the concept of a Deutero Pauline origin of Titus to be flawed reasoning.

Here is a clear example of the possible ambiguity that can result from trying to exegete a passage on the basis of patterns of language.

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<sup>82</sup> Gordon H. Clark, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Jefferson, Maryland, The Trinity Foundation) 1983, page xi

## SECTION FOUR: LITERARY GENRE

The Bible consists of many different types of literature (*genre*). The generic approach to the literature of the Bible is necessary for a proper exegesis. There is a great difference, for example, in the methodology employed in interpreting the poetry of a psalm and that employed in interpreting an historical narrative. An exegete must understand the differences in *genre*, the purposes of each *genre*, and how truth is gleaned from each *genre*.

### LITERARY FIGURES AND FIGURES OF SPEECH

There are many literary figures and figures of speech used throughout Scripture, especially in the Gospels. Understanding such figures is a help in exegesis. We will note some of the better known figures. In all literary figures, the question must be asked, “What’s the point?”

#### I. Fable

A fable is literary figure in which human qualities are given to animate and inanimate objects. Fables are used to highlight some blunder made by men or human propensities and to present criticism in an amusing manner. Fables are not used to illustrate high moral truth.

**Example: *The Fable of the Thorn Bush and Cedar:***

*II Kings 14:8-10 Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us face each other." And Jehoash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, "The thorn bush which was in Lebanon sent to the cedar which was in Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son in marriage.' But there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trampled the thorn bush. "You have indeed defeated Edom, and your heart has become proud. Enjoy your glory and stay at home; for why should you provoke trouble so that you, even you, should fall, and Judah with you?"*

The background of this fable is found in II Chronicles 25:1-13. Amaziah, King of Judah, sought to create a large army in preparation for going to war against Edom. To this end, he not only conscripted 300,000 men from Judah, but he also employed 100,000 mercenaries from Israel. Jehovah sent a prophet to Amaziah, warning him not to use Israelites in the upcoming campaign. Israel had become an apostate nation and Jehovah, would not bless any army that contained men from Israel.

So, Amaziah paid off the Israelite mercenaries and sent them back home. The mercenaries were angered by this rejection and so they plundered the villages of Judah through which they passed on the way back to Israel.

Amaziah was successful in his battle against Edom and he became a proud man. Among other things, he took the captured Edomite idols back to Jerusalem and set them up as “his” gods. When a prophet came to him to rebuke him for this, Amaziah mocked the prophet.

Feeling somewhat invincible, he decided to settle the issues that existed between Judah and Israel. He challenged Jehoash, King of Israel to meet him in open combat.

This brought the reply of Jehoash in the form of the above fable.

The point is, “don’t get too proud of your success, Amaziah; leave well enough alone.”

A fable is not an allegory. Rather than seeking to find some meaning or message in each detail, the exegete’s goal is to discover the point that is being made by the use of the fable.

## II. Simile

In a simile, something is likened to something else in one or another of its aspects. The terms, *as* and *like*, are the distinguishing marks of a simile.

**Example: *The activity of God’s Word is illustrated by the activity of rain and snow***

Isaiah 55:10-11 *"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth, And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.*

The point here is that those who trust the Lord according to His word will not be disappointed.

## III. Similitude

A similitude is a drawn-out or extended simile. Often, a similitude contains several similes. A similitude does not consist of metaphors (to be defined below).

**Example: *Building upon the Word of God, likened to building upon a solid foundation***

Matthew 7:24-27 *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. "And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."*

The point is that building one's life on the words of Jesus is wise. Building on anything else is foolish.

## IV. Metaphor

A metaphor is a similitude reduced to a single word.

**Example: *Jesus’ term for Herod***

Luke 13:31-32 *Just at that time some Pharisees came up, saying to Him, "Go away and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You." 32 And He said to them, "Go and tell*

*that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.'*

*That fox* is a metaphor. Note that Jesus didn't say that Herod is *like a fox* - that would be a simile.

## V. Metonymy

A metonymy is the employment of one name for another.

**Example:** *The use of a parent's name for children or descendants*

Genesis 9:25-27 *So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers." He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant. "May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant."*

It is clear that the curse is spoken in reference to the descendants of these men. Enlarging Japheth did not mean that he was going to grow in bulk, but that his descendants would be numerous.

**Example:** *Frequently, God and Christ and the Holy Spirit are mentioned, whereas the result of their efforts in redemption is the topic.*

For example, when Paul wrote, *But you did not learn Christ in this way* (Ephesians 4:20), he was referring to the teaching of Christ regarding conduct. This is called the *Metonymy of Cause*.

**Example:** *A metonymy occurs when the names of authors are used for works that they have produced.*

Luke 24:27 *And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*

**Example:** *A metonymy occurs when the names of instruments are used for their effects.*

Matthew 18:16 *"But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.*

The mouth (the instrument) is used for the testimony spoken by the mouth.

**Example:** *Metonymy of effect occurs when the effect is put for the cause.*

Deuteronomy 30:15 *"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity;*

*Life and prosperity, and death and adversity*" are the result, "the effect," of serving God or refusing service. God presented to them a call to faithfulness. If they obeyed that call, *life and prosperity* would result. If they did not obey that call, *death and adversity* would be the result.

**Example: A metonymy occurs when the container is used for the contained.**

Genesis 6:11 *Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.*

Here, of course, it is not the physical earth that was corrupt, but the people that inhabited it.

There are many other types of metonymies, but these serve to illustrate the figure.

## **VI. Synecdoche**

A synecdoche refers to a figure of speech whereby we speak of the whole by referring to a part, or refer to a part to refer to the whole.

**Example: The Roman Empire and the whole world.**

Romans 1:8 *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.*

This is an example of the whole for a part. Certainly, this could not have embraced more than the Roman world.

A synecdoche was displayed in the verses concerning salvation noted earlier. All of the conditions, believing, repenting, calling upon the name of the Lord, baptism, are indicated by the use of one, usually the first one, faith. It is common to have one of these mentioned without any statement as to the presence of the other.

A synecdoche occurs when some expression of time in general is used to refer to a part of time.

**Example: This frequently occurs with the term, forever. This is an oriental form of expression that is found frequently in Scripture.**

Numbers 25:13 *and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the sons of Israel.*

Phinehas was promised an everlasting priesthood, yet it ended centuries ago. Some, not understanding figures of speech, have been staggered by statements like this in Scripture. Some have concluded that God didn't say it, and others have concluded that *forever* is of limited duration. Not understanding the significance of a *time-synecdoche* has caused some to deny everlasting hell, etc.

To declare that everlasting cannot mean unending, in every instance, will not do because it limits the years of God himself. He is the same and His years will not fail, from everlasting to everlasting He is God. The truth is that in a *time-synecdoche*, "forever" exhausts the period to which it belongs. If one says to a king, "Oh King, live forever," it means that the king is being wished a long life, yet the lifetime of a man.

If, we can know that the term, *forever*, relates to a period of time, we can know that it will exhaust the period. If we know from other passages of Scripture that the entity to



which it refers reaches beyond the precincts of time, then the term must have all of the meaning that we can attach to it.

Other common synecdoches are using the plural for the singular, the singular for the plural, the definite for an indefinite, a general name for a particular name, a special name or word for a general one.

## **VII. Irony**

In irony, one says one thing while meaning something else. It is a form of ridicule, which exposes the faults of others while seeming to adopt, approve, or defend them.

Irony can be detected

1. by a statement made by the author; he sometimes states that he said certain things in mockery, rather than in sincerity;
2. it is apparent from the tone or accent, or manner of the speaker;
3. it will be recognized by the character of the address;
4. the extravagance of praise, when we know both the subject and the author, or the circumstances;
5. Sometimes there is nothing in the form of the words to denote ironical speech. Thus, a printed quote of something spoken orally may not have any clues to the irony.

### **Example: *Elijah's statements about Baal***

1 Kings 18:27 *And it came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened."*

## **VIII. Sarcasm**

Sarcasm is so related to irony that the two frequently are confused. However, sarcasm differs from irony in its severity and evident spitefulness. It is only used for reproof and condemnation, when one is so angry that bitterness cannot be kept secret.

### **Example: *The sarcastic words of Jesus' tempters***

Matthew 27:29 *And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"*

## **IX. Hyperbole**

Hyperbole is an exaggeration to make a point. It is understood to be an exaggeration and so is not deception. For example, if I say, "Oh, everyone was there." That is an exaggeration. Everyone knows it. I am not lying. I am saying that everyone important to the speaker and hearer was present. Scripture is filled with hyperbole. This was a very common form of dramatic impact. Here are some familiar scriptural hyperboles:

*John 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they \*were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself \*would not contain the books which \*were written.*

*Psalm 6:6 I am weary with my sighing; Every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with my tears. 7 My eye has wasted away with grief; It has become old because of all my adversaries.*

*1 Samuel 13:5 Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance; and they came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven.*

## **X. Apostrophe**

This occurs when the speaker turns from his auditor and addresses an imaginary listener. Sometimes this is done with inanimate objects, but not always.

### **Example: Jeremiah's addressing the sword of Jehovah**

*Jeremiah 47:6-7 "Ah, sword of the LORD, How long will you not be quiet? Withdraw into your sheath; Be at rest and stay still. "How can it be quiet, When the LORD has given it an order? Against Ashkelon and against the seacoast-- There He has assigned it."*

One of the most interesting apostrophes in the Bible is Isaiah 14:9-20, in which the prophet is addressing the king of Babylon, then begins talking to a man who has not yet been born and whose end was 200 years in the future.

## **XI. Personification**

This is a figure of speech in which inanimate objects are spoken of as if animated or when animated non-human beings are given human characteristics.

*Matthew 6:34 "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Of course, "tomorrow," the day, will not take care of anything. We who are in tomorrow will take care of things.

There are other less important figures of speech, but these are the most common in Scripture.

## NARRATIVES

In this section, and those immediately following, we will rely heavily upon the Fee and Stuart text, *How to Read the Bible for all it's Worth*.<sup>83</sup>

The Bible contains more *narrative* literature than any other *genre*. 40% of the Old Testament is narrative. In the New Testament, large portions of the Gospels and most of Acts are narratives. Narratives are stories. Bible narratives contain God's story, as it relates to man. Biblical narratives primarily show God at work in creation and among His people. At the same time, they provide illustrations of many lessons important to our lives.

### The Special Nature of Old Testament Narratives

The Old Testament story is told on three levels:

**Top Level:** The universal plan of God, worked out through His creation.

Creation ⇨ Fall ⇨ Power of Sin ⇨ Need for Redemption ⇨ Jesus Christ

**Middle Level:** Centers on Israel (The call of Abraham, establishment of the Abrahamic lineage, enslaving of Israel, exodus, a conquered nation, disloyalty, God's pleading, captivity, deliverance)

**Bottom Level:** Individual narratives (Joseph, David, etc.)

Every individual Old Testament narrative (bottom level) is a part of the greater narrative of Israel's history (middle level), which is a part of God's universal plan (top level).

When Jesus said, *the Scriptures bear witness of me* (John 5:27-29), He obviously was not speaking about every individual passage. He was speaking about the ultimate (top level) of the narrative in which His atonement was the central act and the subjection of all creation to Him was its climax.

### What Narratives Are Not

Douglas Stuart makes four statements concerning Old Testament narratives<sup>84</sup>. We have summarized these and adjusted them so that they apply to all biblical narratives:

1. Bible narratives are not just stories about people. They are stories about what God did to and through these people.
2. Bible narratives are not allegories with hidden meanings. They are historical records of actual events. They rarely give us a record of all that God did and we must be satisfied with that. When one tries to "read between the lines," he usually reads into the story elements that just aren't there.

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<sup>83</sup> Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1981, 1993)

<sup>84</sup> Fee and Stuart, pgs 81-83

3. Bible narratives usually do not teach directly. More often than not, they illustrate truths that are explicitly taught elsewhere.<sup>85</sup>
4. Each individual narrative or episode does not necessarily have a moral all its own.
  - Some narratives are like parables, i.e., there is a single major point.
  - In some other narratives, there is no point; it is just a story that is a necessary part of the record.

### **Caveats Regarding the Interpretation of Narratives**

Stuart lists ten principles for interpreting Old Testament narratives.<sup>86</sup> We have adjusted these and express them as caveats. As expressed below, these caveats apply to all biblical narratives.

1. A Bible narrative usually does not teach a doctrine.
2. A Bible narrative may illustrate doctrines expressed propositionally elsewhere.
3. Narratives record what happened, not necessarily what should have happened. As already noted, not every narrative will have a, "moral of the story."
4. What people do in narratives may or may not be an example for us to follow. Many characters in the Bible are far from perfect. The Holy Spirit does not hide the imperfections of those through whom God worked.
5. Often, we are not told whether good or bad is illustrated by a narrative. We must judge the events and behavior of people on the basis of teaching elsewhere in Scripture.
6. All narratives are incomplete. Not all relevant details are given. What is included is what the Holy Spirit considered to be important for us to know.
7. Narratives are not written to answer every theological question that relates to the episodes on the story. The stories have a limited perspective and deal only with certain issues.
8. Narratives may teach explicitly, but usually their teaching is done implicitly.
9. Ultimately, God is the hero in biblical narratives.

### **The Value of Narratives in Clarifying Doctrine**

As noted above, "A Bible narrative usually does not teach a doctrine... A Bible narrative may illustrate doctrines expressed propositionally elsewhere." This is one of the most helpful uses of narratives. Narratives can help to clarify doctrine. The following example illustrates the process.

How does one answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Many statements are made in the New Testament concerning salvation.

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<sup>85</sup> For example, II Samuel 11 records the account of David's horrible double sin of adultery and murder. II Samuel 12:10-12 records God's curse upon David's family because of this sin. From chapter 13 onward, II Samuel is the historical record of turmoil, death, and conflict in Israel that was the outworking of the curse. Thus, the historical record is an illustration of the broad consequences of sin.

<sup>86</sup> Fee and Stuart, pgs 83-84

1. Some imply that "faith alone" is sufficient.

Romans 5:1 *Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Acts 10:43 *Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.*

Acts 16:30-31 *and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household."*

2. Romans states that hearing the Gospel is necessary, in order to have faith.

Romans 10:14, 17 *How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?... So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

3. Some verses speak of the importance of repentance.

Luke 24:47 *and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*

Luke 13:3 *"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*

Acts 2:37-38 *Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

4. Some verses state that confession of faith is what saves us.

Matthew 10:32 *"Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.*

Romans 10:10 *for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

5. Some verses state that baptism is involved in salvation

Mark 16:16 *"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.*

Acts 2:38 *And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 22:16 *'And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'*

Colossians 2:11-12 *and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

What are we to make of this? Is there a contradiction between these statements? One way to search for the answer is to read through *Acts*, the Early Church narrative. What was preached and practiced? There are nine salvation episodes recorded in Acts, in which sufficient detail is given to assist us in our search. We pursue our answer by preparing a chart.

	<b>PREACHING HEARING</b>	<b>BELIEF FAITH</b>	<b>REPENTANCE</b>	<b>CONFESSION</b>	<b>BAPTISM</b>
<b>Pentecost</b> Acts 2:1-41					
<b>Samaritans</b> Acts 8:4-24					
<b>Ethiopian</b> Acts 8:26-40					
<b>Saul</b> Acts 9:1-18 22:1-16					
<b>Cornelius</b> Acts 10:1-48					
<b>Lydia</b> Acts 16:25-34					
<b>Philippian Jailer</b> Acts 16:25-34					
<b>Corinthians</b> Acts 18:8					
<b>Disciples of John</b> Acts 19:1-5					

What happened in each case? The answer, as illustrated by the chart, will help us to know what we are to proclaim and practice.<sup>87</sup>

In the effort to learn from narratives, *inductive reasoning* is used. There are two broad categories of logic employed in this endeavor: *deductive reasoning* and *inductive reasoning*. A deductive argument claims that its premises provide *conclusive* evidence.

- A deductive argument is *valid* when its premises do provide conclusive evidence for its conclusion, i.e., it is absolutely impossible for the premises to be true without the conclusion's being true also.
- *Inductive reasoning* on the other hand does not claim that its premises give conclusive evidence for the truth of its conclusion, but they provide evidence for it. Inductive reasoning deals with *probabilities* not *absolutes*.

<sup>87</sup> There are seventeen additional accounts implying conversion in Acts. However, these do not contain details that are sufficient to be included in our study. The seventeen are: Acts:2:41-47; 3:1-44; 5:14; 6:1: 11:19-21; 11:22-24; 12:21-24; 13:9-12; 13:48-49; 14:1; 14:21; 16:5; 17:4; 17:12; 17:34; 19:18; 28:23ff

## 1. **deductive reasoning**

- Here is an example of a valid argument that contains true premises (propositions):<sup>88</sup>

All whales are mammals (*major premise*)  
All mammals have lungs (*minor premise*)  
Therefore, all whales have lungs (*conclusion*)

- Here is an example of a valid argument (because of its form), but the conclusion is false because the premises are not true:

All spiders have six legs  
All six legged creatures have wings (*false premise*)  
Therefore all spiders have wings

- Here is an example of an invalid argument (because of its form) even though the premises and conclusion are true.

If I owned all of the gold in Fort Knox, I would be wealthy  
I do not own all of the gold in Fort Knox  
Therefore, I am not wealthy

This would be a valid syllogism if the primary premise were, "only the man who owns all of the gold in Fort Knox is wealthy" or "one must own all of the gold in Fort Knox to be wealthy."

Doctrines legitimately determined by deductive logic are those that have as their primary premise an absolute plenary propositional statement of Scripture.

- For example: *Jesus \*said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. (John 14:6)*

This could be restated, "The only way to the Father is through Jesus." The following syllogism would be valid and the conclusion true:

The only way to the Father is through Jesus  
Jack sought to reach the Father through Buddha, instead of Jesus  
Jack did not reach the Father

- Another example: *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16)<sup>89</sup>*

Thus, the following syllogism is valid and true:

All who do not believe the preached Gospel message are condemned  
Jack heard the Gospel and did not believe  
Jack is condemned.

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<sup>88</sup> In logic, a premise is a proposition used in an argument to substantiate a conclusion. Thus, propositions may be premises or conclusions, depending on their role in the argument.

<sup>89</sup> Although this verse lacks solid manuscript integrity (see ADDENDUM N), we use it here merely as an illustration.

There are rules of logic that make a syllogism valid or invalid, but the most common error is what is called, *the illicit process of the major*. This is when the major premise is treated as if it were a distributed statement (applying to all members of the class) when the statement is not so distributed.

Example:       Some dogs have brown spots  
                  Jack is a dog  
                  Jack has brown spots

In this syllogism, *some* does not distribute the brown spots to *all dogs*. Technically, this is called an *illicit process of the major*.

Another common error is when the class in the second premise is not a part of the class of the major premise (an *illicit process of the minor*).

Example:       All dogs have four legs  
                  My cat has four legs  
                  Therefore, my cat is a dog

Such illicit logic is not rare among people who *interpret* the Bible. Other examples could be given, but this illustrates the sort of logical errors that are committed when deductive logic is the process being used.

A deductive argument is said to be *sound* or *unsound*. It is *sound* if all of the premises are true and the argument is valid (by the nature of its internal structure). It is *unsound* if any of the premises are not true or if the argument is invalid (by the nature of its internal structure).

## **2.     *Inductive reasoning***

Inductive reasoning refers to conclusions based upon experience with isolated cases. For example, if I bought Parrot Brand shoes from store X in 2010, 2011, & 2013, and all three pairs were very comfortable shoes, I conclude that if I buy a pair of Parrot Brand shoes from store X in 2014 that they will be very comfortable shoes. This is inductive reasoning, also known as *analogy*. It is like the child who burns his hand by touching the stove. Never again will he touch a stove, because he induced that touching a stove will result in a burned hand. This is the way that most of our everyday inferences are made.

Many conclusions reached in Bible study must be the result of inductive inference. The chart relating to the question, "What must I do to be saved," is an example of inductive inference. Inductive reasoning cannot prove anything with absolute certainty, but degrees of probability can be determined. The more examples of something that can be investigated, and the more agreement found in each of the cases, the greater the degree of probability. In the case of "What must I do to be saved," nine cases were studied. Faith and baptism were two elements that were present in all of them. Therefore, the degree of probability is extremely high that these are involved, somehow, in salvation.



Let's study another example. We frequently are told by certain teachers that the way to fight spiritual battles is through praise. Jehoshaphat's battle with Ammon, Moab, and Seir, recorded in II Chronicles 20:20-23, is cited as validation for this declaration:

*And they rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the LORD your God, and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed." And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, "Give thanks to the LORD, for His lovingkindness is everlasting." And when they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed. For the sons of Ammon and Moab rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir destroying them completely, and when they had finished with the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.*

The weakness of this argument is manifold.

- First, remember the caveats concerning narratives (opening paragraphs of this section).
- Second, this conclusion ignores the earlier context.
- Third, this is only one example, an insufficient number to establish truth.

Note the preceding context:

V3 When the enemy hordes began moving toward Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat turned his attention to Jehovah and declared a fast, throughout all Judah

V4 All Judah gathered together to seek help from the Lord

V5-6 They proclaimed who God is

V7-8 They declared their relationship with Jehovah

V9 They declared that they would rely on God

V12 They declared their absolute dependence

V13 They stood, silently

V14-17 Jehovah responded through a prophet, "Don't be afraid; the battle is mine not yours; you do not need to fight, but station yourselves, stand and watch Me; don't be afraid."

V18 In response to the prophetic word, all fell down in solemn worship.

V19 They transitioned to praising God

Note that the thing that drew God into the battle was not praise, but their plea, their supplication, their declaration of dependence and faith. So, to say that this episode teaches us that to achieve victory in battle is to use "the weapon of praise," simply is not true. The act of sending praisers in front of the army had nothing to do with the outcome. Praise was Judah's response to God's guaranteeing the victory, in advance of the battle.

In an effort to find the answer to the question, "How do we handle a crisis," we can employ inductive inference by looking at several Old Testament examples.

One example is the battle in which Judah, led by king Abijah was attacked by Israel, which was led by wicked king Jeroboam. The record is in II Chronicles 13:13-18:

*But Jeroboam had set an ambush to come from the rear, so that Israel was in front of Judah, and the ambush was behind them. When Judah turned around, behold, they were attacked both front and rear; so they cried to the LORD, and the priests blew the trumpets. Then the men of Judah raised a war cry, and when the men of Judah raised the war cry, then it was that God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. And when the sons of Israel fled before Judah, God gave them into their hand. And Abijah and his people defeated them with a great slaughter, so that 500,000 chosen men of Israel fell slain. Thus the sons of Israel were subdued at that time, and the sons of Judah conquered because they trusted in the LORD, the God of their fathers.*

What was the key to Judah's victory? It was neither the trumpets, nor the war cry. It was because Judah "trusted in Jehovah, the God of their fathers."

A second case study is 2 Samuel 5:17-25. David, who recently had been made king of all Israel, was challenged by the Philistines. Two battles are described:

#### FIRST BATTLE

*When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek out David; and when David heard of it, he went down to the stronghold. Now the Philistines came and spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim. Then David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Wilt Thou give them into my hand?" And the LORD said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand." So David came to Baal-perazim, and defeated them there; and he said, "The LORD has broken through my enemies before me like the breakthrough of waters." Therefore he named that place Baal-perazim. And they abandoned their idols there, so David and his men carried them away.*

#### SECOND BATTLE

*Now the Philistines came up once again and spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the LORD, He said, "You shall not go directly up; circle around behind them and come at them in front of the balsam trees. "And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then you shall act promptly, for then the LORD will have gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines." Then David did so, just as the LORD had commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer.*

Notice in the first instance, David inquired of Jehovah. Jehovah told him to go up to battle, and He would give the Philistines into David's hand. This was a frontal assault, in which the Philistines were defeated.

In the second battle, David again inquired of Jehovah. This time, Jehovah told David to not go up in a frontal assault, but to circle around behind the Philistines. They were to wait until the sound of marching was heard in the tops of the trees, then to attack. The sound of marching in the tops of the trees was the signal that Jehovah had gone out before them.

Is there a pattern here? In both instances, David inquired of God and did what God told him to do. He was obedient and reliant on God.

Many other examples could be examined. For example I Chronicles 14:8-17; Isaiah 37:36ff; I Kings 20:11ff; Deuteronomy 1:41ff; etc. In all of these, there is a pattern of obedience and reliance upon Jehovah. There is a sufficient number of cases with consistent elements for us to say that godly people in the Old Testament followed the following pattern when successfully fighting enemies:

1. Seek direction from God
2. Rely on God, totally
3. Obey

Since Romans 15:4 states, *For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope*, a legitimate case could be made that these Old Testament episodes are examples for us to follow.

## EPISTLES

Twenty-one New Testament documents are classed as *epistles*. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Adolph Deissmann, on the basis of vast papyrus studies, made a distinction between *letters* (which he called, "real letters") and *epistles*.<sup>90</sup>

- Letters were not intended for public distribution, or for posterity, but were intended only for the person or group to which they were addressed.
- In contrast to the letter, epistles were an artistic literary form that was intended for the public.

Papyrus finds revealed the following pattern for letters written in the Greek world in New Testament times:

1. First was a form of salutation, usually containing both the names of the sender and the recipient (some analysts would make the sender and recipient separate elements)
2. Second was a greeting that contained a prayer wish or thanksgiving for the recipient (some analysts would make the greeting and prayer wish two separate elements)
3. Third was the body of the letter
4. Finally, there was a closing greeting and farewell.

According to the scheme outlined above, therefore, there were four elements in an Hellenistic letter (some would divide into six, based on dividing #1 & #2 into two elements each).

Notice how this pattern is displayed in I Corinthians:

1. *Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1)*
2. *To the Church of God which is at Corinth... (1:2)*
3. Body of the letter
4. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you; My love be with you all in Christ Jesus, Amen. (15:23-24)*

Item #2 in Deissmann's scheme does have some variety in the papyri. Sometimes it is a prayer wish (as in III John 2, *Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers*). There are times in which it takes the form of thanksgiving and prayer. There are other times in which prayer and thanksgiving are missing from the greeting.

Deissmann, like most people who discover a truth, sought to press the truth upon New Testament literature, categorizing all New Testament epistles as true letters or epistles. Other scholars have argued that we should not reduce all of the New Testament epistles to one or the other of these categories. Gordon Fee, for example, states, "...in some instances, it seems to be a question of

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<sup>90</sup> G. Adolph Deissmann, *Bible Studies* (Peabody, Mass, Hendrickson Publishers, 1988, reprint of 1901 T & T Clark publication) pgs 1-59

more or less - the distinction is nevertheless a valid one."<sup>91</sup> Understanding this distinction is helpful in our understanding of New Testament epistles.<sup>92</sup>

### **The Epistles as Occasional Documents**

Whether a “real” letter or an epistle, there is one thing that all of them have in common: they are *occasional documents*. Occasional documents are those that are produced in response to and intended for a specific occasion. This is the most crucial thing to remember in dealing with epistles.

The epistles were occasioned by some circumstance from either the reader's side or the author's side. Most were occasioned by things from the reader's side. This is one reason why we have difficulty with some of the passages in the epistles. We do not know the questions or the problems that the author addressed. We have the answers, but not the questions. Some have compared this to listening to one end of a phone conversation. If we are eavesdropping on a phone conversation, we have to figure out what the person on the other end of the line is saying. Sometimes we can understand the answer without knowing the question. Unfortunately, there are New Testament passages which defy such resolution.

Another caution that must be emphasized is that epistles are not theological treatises. The theology in them is *task theology*. This means that theology was expressed because it applied to the task at hand. Thus, even though there is a lot of theology in the epistles, it rarely is a complete theology. The theology found in the passages relates to the topic being discussed and no more. This would be true even of Romans, which contains the theology related to Paul's special commission as the apostle to the Gentiles.

The first thing that must be done in exegeting an epistle is to become acquainted with the historical context (a crucial element is the fact that they were written in the First Century). This is necessary in order to increase the probability of our accurate reconstruction of the occasion that called forth the epistle. For most of us, this will require outside help. Bible dictionaries, introductions to commentaries, Bible handbooks, and surveys will provide this material.

The next thing to do is to read the epistle through in one sitting. The reason for doing this is to get the feel of the epistle. For all of Paul's epistles except I Corinthians and I Thessalonians 4-5, the epistle forms one continuous argument (often, the argument contains various sections and an occasional side comment). By reading the epistle at a single sitting, this is apparent and the argument can be followed. Even in I Corinthians and the section of I Thessalonians, where a succession of independent items are discussed, reading at a single sitting helps to get the feel for the setting that occasioned the letter.

After the first reading, read the epistle again and this time begin to formulate an outline of the sections or the flow of the argument of the epistle. By doing this, in I Corinthians, for example,

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<sup>91</sup> Fee and Stuart, p 46

<sup>92</sup> For a discussion of Deismann's studies and their relevance for hermeneutics, see ADDENDUM P

it is clear that I Corinthians 13, "The Love Chapter of the Bible," is a part of Paul's argument for proper conduct relating to the gifts of the Spirit.

It is important to think paragraphs, not isolated verses. The exegete must observe how the paragraphs relate to one another.

There always will be passages that we cannot understand or be certain about their meaning.

1. In many cases, the reason for the difficulty is because they were not written for us. The author assumes that his readers are in sync with his thinking. For example, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that he *used to tell them these things*. There is no possibility of knowing what all of *these things* might be. We must be content with not knowing every answer and be honest enough to admit it.
2. Even though we cannot understand the details, we often can grasp the point of the passage. For example, no honest exegete will claim that knows beyond doubt what Paul meant by *baptism for the dead* in I Corinthians 15:29. However, the point of the passage is that there will be a resurrection.
3. We must ask ourselves what can be said for certain about these passages and what is not certain. Again, we must content ourselves with this uncertainty and be honest about it.  
*"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law. (Deuteronomy 29:29 NAU)*
4. A good commentary is helpful with these passages. A good commentary will discuss all of the options, including the strengths and weaknesses of each.

### ***The biggest challenge in exegeting epistles***

In exegeting epistles, the constant question is, "how does this apply today?" The challenge for us is to determine what is cultural (thus something for that age and situation), versus what is abiding truth for all generations. For example, I Corinthians 11:14 says, *Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him*. Is this statement for all cultures, or is the *nature* mentioned something that arose out of culture?<sup>93</sup> Most who argue for this as an abiding truth have no problem with a woman's cutting her hair, in contradiction to the principle of the next verse, *but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering*. Thus, *nature* in these two examples came about by a visit or non-visit to the barber. Culture, to a large degree, dictates what is common sense or *nature* for most of us.

Gender roles, church order, caring for widows, and many other things must face the question, "Is the occasion that prompted this statement a cultural one, or is it an abiding principle?" Often, how the response is framed helps us, but not always. For example, the statement concerning

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<sup>93</sup> The Nazirite vow, whereby an Israelite dedicated himself to God, forbade the cutting of hair – for both men and women. Since long hair on a male Nazirite – fully dedicated to God, would not be a dishonor to him, we must conclude that Paul's statement in this passage is not a plenary truth.

women teachers in I Timothy 2:12-14 points to more than cultural circumstance. It points to the male/female relationship that began with the Garden of Eden:

*But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression.*

Prophesying with a covered head, on the other hand, may be cultural. In that day, a covered head meant submission. In our culture, a covered head means superiority (one takes his hat off in the presence of a superior).

*Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God. Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering. But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God. (I Corinthians 11:2-16)*

Honest and accomplished exegetes may argue about what, in this paragraph, is an expression of culture versus what is universally binding. This is an issue that each exegete and each church must resolve before applying statements in this passage to contemporary church life.

### ***Some basic rules***

1. A text cannot mean what it never meant to its author or to his hearers
2. When we share comparable particulars with the First Century Christians, God's Word to them is God's Word to us.
3. When there are comparable situations and particulars, God's Word to us must be limited to its original intent. "Extended application" cannot lead us to truth. For example, the statement in I Corinthians 3:16-17 is a warning against destroying a local church: *Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and*

*that is what you are.* Some have sought to make an extended application of this passage, i.e., the Christian's body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit, so if we drink tea, coffee, sunbathe and get cancer, God will "get us." This is not a legitimate use of this passage.

4. An abiding principle sometimes can be found in situations where there are no particulars that are similar to our situation. For example, participating in idol feasts has no clear parallel in our society (I Corinthians 10). However, the principle about not participating in anything demonic would apply to spiritism, astrology, etc., things that are prevalent in our age.
5. We must recognize that items of "indifference and opinion" are not abiding truth. The epistles themselves indicate that food, drink, observance of days, etc., are matters of indifference (Galatians, Romans 14, etc.). Such matters differ from culture to culture, even among strong committed Bible believers. On the other hand, the lists of sins in the epistles never include any of the above categories (Romans 1:29-30; I Corinthians 5:11; 6:9-10; II Timothy 3:2-4, etc.).
6. It is important that we make special note of items where the New Testament has a uniform and consistent witness and where the New Testament reflects differences.
7. We must exercise Christian love with one another in these areas. There will be differences of opinion about what is cultural and what is not.

The great caution, then, is for us to do our exegesis well, so that we will be certain that what we are binding upon ourselves is generated from situations and particulars that are both theirs and ours.



## THE GOSPELS

The Gospels are very unique. It is difficult to find another *genre* that is analogous to them. Although the Gospels record the Life of Christ, we know of nothing that Jesus Himself wrote, except for the message written in the sand, during the "woman taken in adultery" episode (recorded in John 8) and even that episode is based on a questionable text.

One of the unique things about the Gospels is that there are four of them and they don't always agree in every detail. Yet, they are inspired. Jesus' primary tongue was Aramaic. His teachings come to us through a Greek translation of his Aramaic statements. Many of his statements are found in two or three of the Gospels, and even though the thought is identical, seldom is the wording identical in each account. Also, episodes do not always occur in the same chronological order.

Some liberal theologians have tried to make an issue of this, arguing that these documents are totally human and full of errors. Other, theologians, equal in scholarship, have demonstrated the historical reliability of the material presented in the Gospels. In our day, we have a rather mechanical, tape recorder mentality, about how such things are recorded. However, this was not the way that such literature was produced in the time of Christ.

During the time of Christ, people did not take notes, as we do. They developed good memories and were able to quote, often verbatim, from speeches that they had heard. The first Gospel to be written (Mark) was written between 40 and 65 AD.<sup>94</sup> During the first decade of its existence, the Church relied on the verbal record of Christ's earthly sojourn. The early Church Fathers said that Mark wrote at Peter's instruction, while the two of them were in Rome. There also is strong evidence that Mark's Gospel was in circulation among the churches before the other three Gospels were written. Although written specifically for the Roman Christians, Mark's Gospel also had a larger distribution in view (See Mark 1:37; 10:45; 12:9; 13:10).

Each of the four Gospels was written for a particular audience. So, the writing of the Gospels was motivated by two concerns:

1. to present the record of (a) who Jesus was, (b) what He said and (c) what He did;
2. to present the Life of Christ to a world:
  - that did not speak Aramaic, but Greek,
  - increasingly not Jewish but Gentile,
  - not Palestinian rural, but urban and pagan (this especially is true of Luke and John).

The desire to communicate the Gospel to a particular audience is what guided in the choice of what was reported and the emphasis of the document.

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<sup>94</sup> Recently, conservative scholars are moving toward accepting the earlier portion of this period as the date of Mark's Gospel. If this view prevails, it will challenge the long held view that I Thessalonians was the first portion of the New Testament to be written.

The Gospels are not biographies. It is interesting that the Four Gospels were described by Justin Martyr (140 AD) as "the memoirs of the apostles." Memoirs are different from biographies.

In exegeting the Gospels, we seek to be aware of the historical setting of Jesus as well as the historical setting of the audience for which the Gospel was written. Thus, the Gospels are described as *two level documents*.

As with the epistles, the place to begin with the Gospels is to immerse ourselves in First Century Judaism. Again, as with the epistles, this will require outside reading. Among other things, the history of the region is very important to understanding the setting in which Our Lord taught. Some of His statements cannot be understood, fully, without this knowledge. Not only do the various religious and political parties need to be identified, but also it is important to know why they existed and believed what they believed.

Another thing that will be noticed is the form of Jesus' teaching. He followed the variety of forms that prevailed in His day: parable, hyperbole, proverbs, similes, metaphors, questions, irony, etc.

Many sayings of Jesus were repeated without the setting in which they were given. Paul for example, quotes Jesus three times without alluding to the setting in which they were given (I Corinthians 7:10; 9:14; Acts 20:35). The third of these, *it is more blessed to give than to receive* is not found in any of the Gospels, so we have this statement of Jesus, quoted by Paul, without an historical context.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel writers took these verbal statements and recorded them into their documents. How they organized the material and the audience for which they were writing determined other specifics. All of these are different. We already have referred to Mark, who sought to explain the nature of Jesus as Messiah. He presents Jesus as the strong Son of God who moved with compassion, but with miraculous power. *Immediately*, is the key word of Mark (*straightway* in the KJV), occurring 40 times in his Gospel (unfortunately, the NIV arbitrarily removed this word from Mark).

Matthew wrote for an audience that was more Jewish in its understanding. The language that he used is Jewish. He also grouped his material into topical sections, rather than writing with a chronological outline. He has five such collections, which end with, *and when Jesus had finished all of these sayings*, or something similar. His collections are

Life in the Kingdom (Chapters 5-7)

Instructions for Ministers in the Kingdom (10:5-42)

Parables of the Kingdom at work (13:1-52)

Relationships and Discipline in the Kingdom (18:1-35)

Eschatology of the Kingdom (Chapters 23-25)

Note that the first part (10:5-12) of the Instructions for Ministers in the Kingdom is for the Twelve (go only to the lost sheep of Israel), but the last part is for a later time, since it speaks of being brought before governors and kings, etc.

These nicely arranged sayings are found all over Luke's Gospel. Luke's Gospel is the most chronological of the four.

Jesus probably gave the same teaching and said the same thing at different times and in before different audiences. Therefore, the emphasis or point would be different, even though the same saying might be repeated. Luke wrote after investigating (probably interviewing people, researching the genealogical record in the Temple, etc.) and then sought to give an orderly record, which was coupled with his second book, *Acts of the Apostles*. In a way, Luke/Acts should be considered as one book (as they were during one period of the early Church).

None of the Gospel writers intended for their Gospel to be read in conjunction with the others, but this is the way that we need to study them. Since God provided four Gospels for the canon, we cannot study one of them in isolation. A great help is a "Gospel harmony." In a harmony, all four Gospels are printed in parallel columns that allow them to be compared and coalesced.

One thing that must be in our minds as we study the Gospels is the concept of the Kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus. The basic framework of the New Testament is eschatological. Most Jews were eschatological in their thinking. They thought that they lived on the brink of time and that God was about to step into history and bring about the age to come. This age was considered to be Satan's age, with sin, sickness, demon possession, and evil men triumphing. The *Age to Come* was the Time of God's Rule, characterized by the presence of the Spirit, righteousness, health, and peace. The Messianic Age was referred to as, *the Kingdom of God*. John the Baptist announced that it was at hand. Jesus announced that it was at hand with His ministry. All the people watched Him to see if he would bring about that age. His crucifixion did not fit their hopes. The resurrection brought that hope back alive to the apostles, and so they asked just before the ascension, if He would *restore the kingdom to Israel* (Acts 1:6)

The early Christians came to realize that the coming of Jesus had not been to usher in the final end, but to inaugurate the beginning of the end. Thus, the end had come, but not yet fully come. So, the early Christians understood that they and we live between the times (Matthew 24:1ff; Acts 2:17ff). This kind of tension is a key to understanding much in the New Testament.

## PARABLES

### *What is a parable?*

The term, *parable*, is an Anglicization of the Greek term, *parabole* (παράβολή), meaning, *something thrown alongside*. In literature, the term refers to something placed beside something else as a comparison or a parallel case cited in illustration. The parable was one of the most common tools of teaching used by the rabbis of the era in which Jesus ministered. Thus, following the teaching style of His day, Jesus employed parables to such an extent that both Matthew and Mark commented, hyperbolically,

*and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.* (Mark 4:34; Matthew 13:34)

Parables are simple stories that anyone can understand. Yet, because most modern Christians do not understand the nature of parables, they have suffered more misinterpretation than any other portion of Scripture (except perhaps, *The Revelation*).

One reason that parables are misunderstood is the result of the comment that Jesus made following the Parable of the Sower,

*And as soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables, in order that 'while seeing, they may see and not perceive; and while hearing they may hear and not understand lest they return and are forgiven.'" (Mark 4:10-12 [see also, Matthew 13:10-13; Luke 8:9-10]).*

In this dialogue, Jesus paraphrased several Old Testament passages that spoke of the hardening of hearts (Isaiah 6:9ff; 43:8; Jeremiah 5:21; Ezekiel 12:2).

Some Bible teachers who lean toward a mystical approach to Scripture have developed the *Hardening Theory* as a hermeneutical approach to parables. According to this theory,

- parables are simple stories that can be understood by both believers and unbelievers;
- however, the real meaning of a parable consists of "mysteries" that belong to the church and can be uncovered only by Spirit-led prophetic allegory.

Jesus' semi-allegorical explanation of the Parable of the Sower further encouraged those who put forth the *Hardening Theory*.

Since most of the parables clearly were not intended for an inner circle, the *Hardening Theory* is not a sound approach to parabolic interpretation. Note for example those instances in which the Gospels state that Jesus spoke parables *to* people. Here are three such examples from Luke:

Luke 15:3 *And He told them this parable, saying, (Greek- εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς He spoke to them)*

Luke 18:9 *And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:*

Obviously, Jesus' intent in telling this parable could not have been accomplished if his hearers had not understood the thrust of the parable.

Luke 9:11ff records a parable that Jesus spoke in order to correct his disciples' eschatological misunderstanding of His ministry,

*And while they were listening to these things, He went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately*

Jesus usually used parables to illustrate a point, and the parables were understood by His target audience. For example the Lawyer understood the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). The Pharisees and the chief priests conspired to kill Jesus because they understood the parable of the tenants (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-20).

Gordon Fee points out that one of the keys to understanding Jesus' statement, as recorded in Mark 4:10-12 (quoted above and the basis of the *Hardening Theory*), is the realization that Jesus spoke Aramaic. His words were translated into Greek by the writers of the Gospels.

“If the parables, then, are not allegorical mysteries for the church, what did Jesus mean in Mark 4:10-12 by the mystery of the kingdom and its relationship to parables? Most likely the clue to this saying lies in a play on words in Jesus' native Aramaic. The word, *methal* which was translated *parabole* in Greek was used for a whole range of figures of speech in the riddle, puzzle, parable category, not just of the story variety called “parables” in English. Probably verse 11 meant that the meaning of Jesus' ministry (the secret of the kingdom) could not be perceived by those on the outside; it was like a *methal*, a riddle, to them. Hence His speaking in *mathelin* (parables) was a part of the *methal* (riddle) of his whole ministry to them. They saw, but they failed to see; they heard – and even understood – the parables, but they failed to really appreciate the whole thrust of Jesus' ministry.... Jesus was not trying to be obtuse; he fully intended to be understood.”<sup>95</sup>

Our exegesis of the parables must begin by noting the audience to whom they were spoken. We exegete parables on the assumption that Jesus expected to be understood.

A *true parable* is a story. It has a plot, a beginning, and an ending. The Good Samaritan, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, the Prodigal Son, the Great Supper, are examples of true parables. Many sayings, which are sometimes called parables, are not parables, but other figures of speech.

A parable is not an allegory. In an allegory, every element in the story represents something, other than what it represented in the story. In most parables, the elements do not represent anything. They are scenery necessary for the point to be made. In some cases, a parable may come close to being an allegory, in which the elements of the story do represent something.<sup>96</sup> Yet, in such instances, it is obvious what the elements of the story represent and usually they are explained; there is no hidden meaning. Parables are not allegories and should not be treated as such.

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<sup>95</sup> Fee & Stuart, p. 137

<sup>96</sup> For example, the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1-11; Matthew 21:33-44; Luke 20:9-18)

### *The purpose of parables*

The purpose of parables is to call forth a response on the part of the hearer. In some ways, interpreting a parable destroys what it was originally. Parables are like jokes. The story is told in order to get to the punch line. In a joke, the punch line gets a response, hopefully, a laugh. When someone does not understand a joke, and it has to be explained, it no longer is funny, even though after the explanation one can understand why it was funny. A joke will not be funny if the audience does not have a relationship with the topic and elements in the story that lead up to a punch line. For example, from experience I can testify that telling an American joke in Russia frequently gets nothing but puzzled looks.

The same is true of parables. The audience understood the story; the elements were familiar to them. So, they were "caught" by the point at the end. In our era, it is difficult for us to capture the punch line of New Testament parables.

When one understands the elements of the story, his thinking is led down a path. Abruptly, as in a joke, there is an unexpected turn. The audience gets the point. The parable needs no interpretation. As a matter of fact, it would be ruined if interpreted.

### *Getting the point*

We must find the *reference points* in the story, in order to get the *point* of the story. Consider the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). There are only two points of reference: the man in the ditch and the Samaritan. The other details of the parable are used to build the effect. The story is told from the point of view of the man in the ditch (he watched the story play out).

First, we examine the context. The context is the section. The preceding verses explain **why** and **to whom** the parable was given. Here is the account.

*And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" And he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; Do this, and you will live." But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

We note the following:

- This parable was spoken to a lawyer, a Pharisee, who was testing Jesus.
- By outside reading, we can learn that the priestly types that passed by on the other side were of a religious order opposed by Pharisees. Thus when Jesus spoke of priests passing by without helping the man, the lawyer was thinking, "of course, what else would one expect from those priests."
- By reading elsewhere we also will learn that giving of alms was one of the Pharisees main traits. This is how they loved their neighbors as themselves. So, the lawyer

expected the next person to come down the road in the story would be a Pharisee who would help the man.

- However, the next man coming down the road was a Samaritan!
- When Jesus asked the lawyer who in the story was a neighbor to the man in the ditch, the lawyer could not bring himself to say, "Samaritan," but said, "the one who showed mercy."
- The Lawyer knew what Scripture said about loving one's neighbor. He was ready to justify himself by showing that he loved his neighbor by defining, "neighbor" in a way that would he would be justified.
- So, Jesus trapped him with a parable.

We can almost hear Jesus saying to himself, "Gotcha." For us to feel the impact of the story, we must substitute other individuals from our own milieu. Perhaps for us the Samaritan would be an atheist or someone else whom we might tend to detest.

**In interpreting parables, the first question that we ask, after we have completed our preliminary work, is, "What's the point?"**

We will miss the point of the parable if we fail to ask this question. For example, the so-called, Parable of the Prodigal Son is not about the prodigal son, but about the elder brother. That's the point.

The majority of the parables are *Parables of the Kingdom*. They tell us about the Kingdom of God. When they begin with, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like..." we must not take the individual elements as the point of the parable, but what is the point of the whole parable. Failing to do this has resulted in some rather bizarre views about the Kingdom.

## PSALMS: POETIC PRAYERS

The problem that most people have with interpreting the psalms is the result of failing to understand their nature. The Psalms are neither propositions nor instructional narratives. Psalms is a collection of inspired Hebrew prayers and hymns. Much of the material in the Psalms is not God's word to us, but words spoken by men to God or about God. Yet, these are God's word because the Holy Spirit has been involved in their production.

The Psalms are profitable to us when used the way that God intended for them to be used: (1) to express ourselves to God; (2) to consider His ways; (3) to proclaim him to one another.

The Psalms are of great benefit to the believer expressing joys and sorrows, successes and failures, hopes and regrets.<sup>97</sup> Even so, the Psalms often are falsely applied because they are misunderstood. For example, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is easy for us to understand, but what about Psalm 137:8-9, which expresses the desire that Babylonian infants be dashed against the rocks? In order to understand the Psalms, we must understand their *nature*, their *types*, their *forms*, and their *function*.

**The most important thing to remember about the Psalms is that they are poetry.** The mind is reached through the emotions. Therefore, we must not over-exegete the Psalms by finding some meaning in every phrase where the poet may have intended none.

Hebrew poetry has rhythm of thought, rather than the rhythm of rhyme. This is expressed through parallelism. The most common form is *synonymous parallelism*, in which the second line repeats or enforces the first line – often expressing the same thought in different words. This is the same pattern that is used in classic *blues*.

*Yeah, when you talk to me, baby,  
if it's just by the telephone  
Won't you please talk to me, baby,  
if it's just by the telephone*

*Just let me tell you how I miss you, baby  
And how it feels to be alone*

*So, fellah, if you've got a good woman,  
Man, you better take my advice  
Say, fellah, if you've got a good woman,  
You better take my advice*

*You better treat her like an angel  
And keep her home at any price-*  
(B.B. King, *Blue Shadows*, London, 1971)

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<sup>97</sup> Moments after my precious wife's last breath, grieving, I said to God, "Oh Lord, please take care of her, I can't anymore." That was a somewhat foolish prayer and perhaps meaningless, but it was my heart. Such is the nature of the Psalms – honest expressions of the heart, but perhaps not always good theology.



The same type of parallelism is one of the most common traits of Hebrew poetry. Consider Psalm 19:1-2

*The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.  
Day to day pours forth speech,  
And night to night reveals knowledge.*

Here in two sets of synonymous parallelisms the inspired poet glorifies God as Creator. In prose, the poet could have said, "God is revealed in His creation, especially in the heavenly bodies". However, plain prose is colorless compared to the magnificent poetry of the psalm. Note that the four lines are not trying to say four different things, the four lines speak of a glorious reality.

**A second thing that must be remembered is that the Psalms are not just poetry, they are musical poetry.** A musical poem cannot be read the same way that an epistle or a narrative is read.

- It is intended to evoke feelings, rather than propositional thinking.
- It is intended to stimulate a response beyond cognitive understanding of the facts.

**A third thing to remember is that the vocabulary of the Psalms is purposefully metaphorical.** Mountains skip like rams (Psalm 114:6), is a wonderful way to sing about the miracles of the Exodus. Enemies spew out swords from their lips (Psalm 59:7) is a very dramatic way to express what many have experienced when enemies have wounded them with words.

When reading the Psalms, it is important to listen to the metaphor and understand what they signify, but not press them too far nor take them literally. For example, in Psalm 23, we must not assume that God wants us to act like sheep.

There are several types of Psalms:

***Imprecatory Psalms*** are those in which bitterness or anger is expressed. To *imprecate* means to pronounce a curse or to pronounce evil upon someone. Imprecatory Psalms provide a vehicle for being honest with God about how we feel in these moments. Whether our feelings are right or wrong, Psalms provide a vehicle for catharsis. By addressing our feelings to God, and allowing Him to minister to them, we might "be angry, but sin not" (Ephesians 4:25-26).

***Laments*** constitute the largest group in the Psalter. They help us to express struggles, suffering, or disappointment. Some are corporate laments and some are personal

***Thanksgiving Psalms*** express joy to the Lord, when something has gone well. They always are in response to circumstances.

***Hymns of Praise*** without reference to any circumstances, past or present, center on the praise of God for who He is.

*Salvation History Psalms* review God's saving work among the people of Israel

*Psalms of Celebration and Affirmation* serve several purposes.

- One purpose is the renewal of covenants.
- One group of Psalms praises God for His choice of the Davidic lineage, which provided the background for the Messianic heritage.
- There are royal psalms, which deal with the kingship.
- There are enthronement psalms, which were used when the king was enthroned.
- There are songs of Zion. Jerusalem as God's choice receives special celebration in these psalms.

*Wisdom Psalms* praise the merits of wisdom and a wise life. Interestingly, Proverbs 8 is a wisdom psalm.

*Songs of Trust* center their attention on the fact that God can be trusted.

**Three of the various ways that Psalms can be used by Christians:**

1. As a guide to worship
2. An example in how to be honest to God about our feelings, whether mourning, angry, joyous, or full of gratitude – and as a vehicle for expressing these emotions
3. The importance of reflection and meditation upon things that God has done for us
4. As a liturgical element in a public service.

## THE LAW

The Old Testament contains over 600 commandments which the Israelites were expected to keep as evidence of their loyalty to God. Only four of the 39 books of the Old Testament contain these laws:

- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

Although Genesis does not contain any of the Law, it still is considered to be a part of the Israelite legal system. Thus, there are five books that are called, *books of the law*. The four that do contain the commandments also contain a lot of other material, mostly, narrative. These five books, known as the *Pentateuch*, also are sometimes referenced as if they were a single book, the Book of the Law (Joshua 1:8).

The New Testament occasionally refers to the entire Old Testament as *the Law* (Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 16:17; Titus 3:9). However, when the Bible uses the term, *the Law*, it usually is referring to the material contained in Exodus 20 (the giving of the Ten Commandments) through Deuteronomy 33.

For the most part, the law section of the Old Testament is easy to understand. For example, even though we don't know what the Urim and Thummin looked like (Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21, etc.), nor how inquiry was made of them, their purpose is clear – to discern the will of God. The hermeneutical problem for us is discerning the present day relevance of the law section of the Old Testament.

As we have noted, the Law is God's covenant with Israel. It is not a covenant with Christians. Some of the stipulations in the law were renewed in the New Covenant (all of the Ten Commandments except Sabbath keeping). Most were not renewed. Even so, the Old Testament Law is God's Word *for* us; it is not God's Word *to* us. By this, we mean that it contains all sorts of things that God wants us to know, but the laws are not binding upon us today.

Many elements in the Old Testament Law are found in the laws of other societies. Some of these predate Moses. Two well-known examples are the *Code of Hammurabi* (1726 BC) and the *Laws of Eshnunna* (1800 BC). This does not mean that Moses copied from these earlier well-known laws. It means that God had established certain things in the hearts of men and the history of nations. When these elements were made a part of the Mosaic Law, they became a part of the covenant between God and Israel.

Even though there are similar elements found in all of these codes, the tenor of the earlier codes and the one given to Moses are quite different. God gave Moses a code that expressed mercy and respect for every living human. The earlier codes lacked this. For example, consider the following passage from Deuteronomy 15:12-17:

*If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. And when you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. And it shall come about if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you; then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. And also you shall do likewise to your maidservant.*

Compare this with the *Laws of Eshnunna*

*If a free man has no claim against another free man, but seizes the other free man's slave girl, detains the one seized in his house and causes her death, he must give two slave girls to the owner of the slave girl as compensation. If he has no claim against him but seizes the wife or child of an upper class person and causes their death, it is a capital crime. The one who did the seizing must die.<sup>98</sup>*

and the *Law Code of Hammurabi*:

*If a free nobleman hit another free nobleman's daughter and caused her to have a miscarriage, he must pay ten shekels of silver for her fetus. If that woman died, they must put his daughter to death. If by a violent blow he caused a commoner's daughter to have a miscarriage, he must pay five shekels of silver. If that woman died, he must pay 1/2 mina of silver. If he hit a free nobleman's female slave and caused her to have a miscarriage, he must pay two shekels of silver. If that female slave died, he must pay 1/3 mina of silver<sup>99</sup>*

Notice the class distinctions built into the two secular codes, as contrasted with that of Moses. In the secular codes, slaves and women are treated as property. The Law of Moses regards every living person as a human being, a being that has worth. Note the egalitarian attitude in the Law of Moses statements on murder.

*You shall not murder (Exodus 20:13). Anyone who strikes someone and kills him shall surely be put to death (Exodus 21:12).*

Also, the status of slaves in the Mosaic Law was very different from that in the secular codes quoted above:

*And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth. (Exodus 21:27)*

*You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. He shall live with you in your midst, in the place which he shall choose in one of your towns where it pleases him; you shall not mistreat him. (Deuteronomy 23:15)*

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<sup>98</sup> J.B. Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition; Eshnunna, laws 23,24 cf. (Princeton: University Press) 1969, p 162

<sup>99</sup> J.B. Pritchard, Hammurabi, laws 209-14, p 175)

Furthermore, in contrast to the *Code of Hammurabi*, the Old Testament Law did not allow a child to be killed for the crimes of the father. The Mosaic Law states,

*Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin.* (Deuteronomy 24:16)

The *Code of Hammurabi*, quoted above, has a different standard.

*If a free nobleman hit another free nobleman's daughter and caused her to have a miscarriage, he must pay ten shekels of silver for her fetus. If that woman died, they must put his daughter to death.*

The Old Testament law was given as a blessing to Israel. It is an example of God's mercy to His people. The food laws, for example, protected Israel from many diseases that would tend to carry disease in that climate. Interestingly, the food laws also forbade foods that were uneconomical to raise in that setting, and these forbidden foods were those were associated with idol worship. For example, *Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk* (Deuteronomy 14:21) was a protection against the Canaanite fertility cult practices. The Canaanites believed in "sympathetic magic." They thought that boiling a kid in its mother's milk would guarantee fertility in the flock. The same was true about mixing seeds and mixing different kinds of material in weaving garments.

Most of the laws were given with a promise of blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience. The regular tithes and other special tithes guaranteed that there would be money to help the poor. The tithes were God's money and stealing it guaranteed a curse.

Douglas Stuart lists some dos and don'ts, related to Old Testament laws:<sup>100</sup>

1. **Do see** the Old Testament law as God's fully inspired Word *for* you.  
**Don't see** the Old Testament law as God's direct command *to* you
2. **Do see** the Old Testament law as the basis for the Old Covenant, and therefore Israel's history.  
**Don't see** the Old Testament law as binding on Christians in the New Covenant except where specifically renewed in the New Covenant.
3. **Do see** God's justice, love, and high standards revealed in the Old Testament law.  
**Don't forget to see** that God's mercy is made equal to the severity of the standards.
4. **Don't see** the Old Testament law as complete. It is not technically comprehensive.  
**Do see** the Old Testament law as a paradigm - providing examples for the full range of expected behavior.
5. **Don't expect** the Old Testament law to be cited frequently by the prophets or the New Testament.  
**Do remember** that the *essence* of the Law is repeated by the prophets and renewed in the New Testament.
6. **Do see** the Old Testament law as a generous gift to Israel, bringing much blessing when obeyed.  
**Don't see** the Old Testament law as a grouping of arbitrary, annoying regulations limiting people's freedom.

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<sup>100</sup> Fee and Stuart, p. 163-164

## PROPHETS

There are more books of the Bible that come under the general heading of, *prophecy*, than any other heading. In the Old Testament there are seventeen books of prophecy: Isaiah through Malachi. These documents were written between 760 and 460 BC (approximate). The first five are called, *major prophets*, and the last twelve are, *minor prophets*. These names apply to length of the books, not to their relative importance.

It is absolutely essential that the exegete become acquainted with the historical and cultural setting in which the prophets prophesied. Again, this will require outside reading. The reason that this is essential is because of the nature of prophecy.

In contemporary English, "to prophesy," means to predict. This is not the primary meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words that we translate, *prophet*, and *prophecy*. The Hebrew word that we translate, "prophet," is *nabhi* (נָבִיא). The term is derived from the Semitic word, *nabhu*, which means, *to call*. The prophets responded to a divine call. Almost every prophetic book and the narrative account of non-writing prophets, record the prophet's call to ministry. If someone decided to be a prophet, without first being called of God, he was a false prophet (Jeremiah 14:14; 23:21).

Prophets were God's spokesmen. Note that the most common form of their message is first person, since God spoke through them, i.e., *I (God) declare...* Often the prophets punctuated their prophecy with, *Thus says the Lord*. Peter wrote,

*But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (II Peter 1:20-21)*

Peter thus declares that the prophets were not good news analysts, who saw what was happening and accurately interpreted the events. They were men and women who spoke what God gave them to say.

The Greek term from which we get the English word, "prophet", is *prophetes* (προφήτης). The verb origin of the word is *profemi* (πρόφημι), which has as its basic meaning, "to speak forth, to speak out." Thus, neither the Hebrew term, *nabhi*, nor the Greek term, *prophetes*, have "foretelling" as an essential element in their definition.

- The role of the prophet was to declare the word of God to those to whom God sent them.
- In the Old Testament, their function was to be enforcers of the covenant by speaking forth God's word concerning the covenant.

This understanding of their role is essential to the interpretation of their writings. They spoke and wrote to a distinct people and to an existing situation. When their prophecy did include prediction, it was in the context of their mission of proclamation.

Sometimes, the word that they were given to proclaim was not one that they wanted to proclaim. Jeremiah is the prime example of this. He had the task of declaring to the people of Judah that they should submit to their enemy, Babylon, if they wished to be pleasing to God. Because of this, he was declared to be unpatriotic, and was mistreated in terrible fashion (Jeremiah 12:21-23; 20:1-11).

Sometimes, the prophets are portrayed as radical social reformers. This is an incorrect characterization. The messages that God gave them were the same message that God had given in the covenant. They called the people back to faithfulness to the covenant. They did, however, address serious social issues. Amos, for example, brought a message of doom to Israel because the nation had substituted a man-made worship center and liturgy in place of the Temple and liturgy which Jehovah had sanctioned and commanded. The nation was trusting in religious ceremonies to make them righteous, rather than living righteous lives. The nation was led by officials who took bribes, and oppressed the poor, while the officials themselves lived in opulent luxury. The average citizen pursued prosperity as his goal, rather than righteousness. They lived in violation of the terms of the covenant. The social evils thus produced are addressed by Amos. The various predictions, including a coming locust plague, are a part of Amos' addressing these conditions in Israel. A present-day reader of Amos cannot understand this book without some knowledge of what was going on at that time. Outside sources, such as commentaries and books on biblical introduction are helpful in learning these facts.

Even the Messianic prophecies are not new to the prophets. In the Law, God had promised, in a nascent way, the coming of Christ, *I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him* (Deuteronomy 18:18). The Jews understood this prophecy as having Messianic implications (John 1:21,25; 6:14; 4:25; Luke 24:44). So, when the prophets delivered Messianic prophecy, they were not injecting anything new.

In a longer book, such as Isaiah, there are a number of situations into which God spoke. Again, outside sources will inform us of what was happening at the time that each prophecy was spoken. In each instance, the Jews faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the covenant is the fulcrum on which the story turns.

In addition to the written prophets, there are Old Testament prophets that did not write a book. Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, and others were prominent prophets who were *oral prophets* but not *literary prophets*.

Some prophets spoke at a variety of places and in different situations. The literary prophets often record oracles spoken at different times without an obvious division marker in the text. This requires the exegete to ask, "Was this statement a part of what goes before or what follows?" Sometimes, it is a daunting task to sort out these things. Some prophetic books date their oracles (Isaiah, Haggai and the early chapters of Zechariah).

Since the isolation of individual oracles is important to our understanding the prophets, it is important to know some of the different forms that the prophets used when composing their oracles.

1. *The Lawsuit.* An example is Isaiah 3:13-26. The full lawsuit form contains a summons, a charge, evidence, and a verdict. Sometimes these are implied instead of implicit.
2. *The Woe.* "Woe" was the word that Israelites used at funerals or when facing disaster. God used this device when speaking through the prophets. No one could miss the gravity of a word from God that began with, *woe*.
3. *The Promise.* This form is recognizable when these elements are present:
  - reference to the future
  - mention of radical change
  - mention of blessing (Amos 9:11-15 is an example)

Another characteristic of the prophets is their use of poetry and poetic prose. This form helps the hearer to remember what he heard.

### ***The prophet as a foreteller***

Sometimes, in speaking the God-given word, prophets were used of God to predict the future. Most of the time this was to predict calamity and blessing. Also, many (perhaps most) of the events foretold by the prophets are now in the past. The division of the Kingdom, the destruction of the Temple, the various captivities, and the return from captivity, are the events most frequently foretold by the prophets. We can look back and see that they did indeed occur. There are, of course, predictions of the Church and the New Covenant age (Ezekiel 37:15-28), but strange results often are produced by too much zeal for identifying New Testament events and current events in prophetic oracles.

If we handle the Scripture responsibly, it usually will be apparent to us when a prophecy is something still in the future. Usually, the prophecies concerning things in the future are quite figurative. We should get the point of the overall truth, rather than trying to sort out details of exactly what will happen.

One of the problems faced in interpreting the prophets is the prophetic view. This might be illustrated by picturing ourselves 25 miles from the first mountains in a mountain range. As we look at the range, all of the peaks look close *together*. However, when we get to the first one, we realize that the next one may be 50 miles away. This is how many of the prophecies in the Old Testament are given. Thus, the first and second coming of Christ are presented in a way that they appear as one. Joel's prophecy as quoted by Peter on Pentecost is an example:

*'and it shall be in the last days,' god says, 'that I will pour forth of my spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in*



*those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy. 'and I will grant wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. 'the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. 'and it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'* (Acts 2:17-21)

Note that Joel saw the *last days* events as one unit, with the events that began the era and the events that closed the era as being simultaneous. However, the pouring forth of the Spirit and its result, have proven to be separated by several millennia from the end of the last days events (*wonders in the sky above etc.*).

Another example: Jesus launched His ministry in Nazareth by going to the synagogue and reading Isaiah 61:1-2. Notice that He did not read the entire prophecy. He stopped in the middle of verse 2:

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives, And freedom to prisoners; 2 To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn...* (Isaiah 61:1-2)

*And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD." He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."* (Luke 4:17-21)

Jesus stopped reading in the middle of verse 2 (*to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord*) because only this part of the prophecy was "fulfilled in your hearing." The last part of verse 2 (*And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn*) would occur at the end of the age. From Isaiah's point of view, however, the whole prophetic vision appeared as one.

A major thing that the prophets can do for us is to sensitize us to the fact that God is God. He keeps His word and expects us to keep faith with Him. God is interested in enforcing His covenant. For us who are under the New Covenant, that involves loving God and loving one's neighbor.

#### EXCURSUS

(Note that Luke 4:18-19 is not a word for word quote of Isaiah 61:1-2. The Isaiah passage, quoted above, is a translation from the Hebrew text. Luke, however, in writing his gospel account, would have quoted the Septuagint, which was the common version in use in his day, especially among Greek speaking people. The Septuagint, a Greek version of the Old Testament, was a free reproduction of the Hebrew and this quote in Luke is a free reproduction of the Septuagint. Some scholars consider the possibility that the version read by Jesus may have been an Aramaean version. It seems that Luke also imported one phrase from Isaiah 58:6, *To set free those who are downtrodden*, his purpose being to describe in all respects the work of Jesus. In any event, the quotation in Luke is equivalent to a Living Bible paraphrase of the Isaiah passage.)

## WISDOM LITERATURE

Three Old Testament books are commonly known as "wisdom literature": Ecclesiastes, Job, and Proverbs. Some of the Psalms also would fall under this category. Some would class the Song of Solomon in this realm. In this study, we will include the Song of Solomon in this category.

The biblical definition of wisdom is, "the ability to make godly choices in life." The operative term in this definition is, "godly choices." In the ancient secular world, wisdom literature was very common. The difference between the secular wisdom and biblical wisdom is the difference in the goal of wisdom.

- Non-Israelite wisdom literature had as its goal the making of the best choices that would enable one to achieve the best life.
- Biblical wisdom literature takes the point of view that the only good choices are godly choices. A basic theme of the biblical wisdom is "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. 1:7, 29;. 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26f; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; 29:25)

When one makes a concrete decision to present his life to God (*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*), then the general direction of his life will be correct, even while he is in the process of learning specific rules and perspectives. In the New Testament, James makes a contrast between godly wisdom and worldly wisdom. Godly wisdom, according to James, brings peace, whereas worldly wisdom involves the stress of ambition, jealousy and getting ahead of others.

*Who among you is wise and understanding? let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. but if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. this wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. for where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. but the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. and the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* (James 3:13-18)

In ancient Israel, there were wise men who were teachers and counselors. In time, they came to occupy a place in Israel that was similar to that of priest and prophet (Jeremiah 18:18). This special class of wise men was a part of the royal retinue.

Poetry, once again, is seen as a vehicle. This is because it is easy to remember. "A stitch in time, saves nine," is much easier to remember than, "anticipating a problem and dealing with it before it occurs will save time later on."

### *Ecclesiastes*

Ecclesiastes is "cynical wisdom." Most of the book, in the words of the "teacher," say that life is meaningless; therefore one should enjoy it while he can. Until the very last verses, the message is that life is meaningless and that the finality of death means that life has no value. This is the

very same message proclaimed by some modern philosophers (i.e., enjoy life while you can, because this life is all that God has provided for you). Even the good advice in Ecclesiastes (5:2-3; 5:11-15; 12:1-8) is given to help make one's meaningless life more pleasant and comfortable. Notice how the theme of meaninglessness flows through the book:

*1:2 Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*

*1:14 I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.*

*2:15 Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So I said to myself, "This too is vanity."*

*3:19 For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity.*

*5:16 And this also is a grievous evil-- exactly as a man is born, thus will he die. So, what is the advantage to him who toils for the wind?*

*8:14 There is futility which is done on the earth, that is, there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked. On the other hand, there are evil men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I say that this too is futility.*

*9:9-10 Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life, and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.*

*11:8 Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. Everything that is to come will be futility.*

This is a very common form of ancient wisdom literature. It exists as a foil for the balance of Scripture. When one relegates God to a position distant from us, Ecclesiastes is the result. The book thus drives us to look for further answers because the view of the "teacher" is so discouraging. The concluding verses point us away from the mood of Ecclesiastes to the rest of Scripture, especially, the Pentateuch.

*12:13-14 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.*

In one sense, the entire book of Ecclesiastes is like parable, with the ending verses being the "punch line," for which the rest of the book is the story leading to the punch line.

## *Job*

The literary giant, Victor Hugo, wrote, “The Book of Job is perhaps the Greatest Masterpiece of the Human Mind.”

The Scottish philosopher and historian, Thomas Carlyle wrote, “I call this book, apart from all theories about it, one of the Grandest things ever written. Our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem: Mans Destiny, and God’s Ways with him in the earth. There is nothing written, I think, of equal literary merit.”

The esteemed biblical scholar, Philip Schaff, wrote, “The Book of Job rises like a pyramid in the history of literature, without a predecessor and without a rival.”<sup>101</sup>

The story clearly is a description of life during the era of the patriarchs. Job belongs to the days before the priesthood and organized religion, or to a region where these things are not needed (note the matter of making offerings, etc in Job 1:5). Job is a wealthy and influential sheikh, - his wealth being in terms of flocks, herds, and a large number of children, rather than in cash. Part of the year he is a man of the city and part of the year he is on the move with his cattle – his life is reminiscent of that of Abraham.

No one knows who authored the Book of Job. Jewish tradition says that Moses wrote the story. According to this tradition, the story had been orally passed down among the Edomites. While in the wilderness of Midian, on the border of Edom,<sup>102</sup> Moses, heard the story of Job (possibly told by Job’s descendents). Realizing that Job was a descendent of Abraham and thus within the circle of God’s revelation, Moses wrote the Book of Job.

Many current scholars, for a variety of reasons, argue that it was written during the Davidic/Solomonic period, possibly by Solomon, but the truth is, no one knows who wrote the book.

Job, like Ecclesiastes, contains a lot of advice as a foil for God's truth. It contains all sorts of bad advice and wrong conclusions as Job's "comforters" give advice. Bildad, Zophar, Eliphaz, and Elihu seem to like to hear themselves talk. Unfortunately, some Bible readers, not realizing what they are reading, quote the bad advice of Job’s “comforters,” as if they were quoting truth (thus violating one of the primary tenets of exegesis – “Who said it?”)

The Book of Job is in the form of a highly structured dialogue. The goal of the book is to establish in the mind of the reader that what happens is not always because God desires it, nor because it is fair. The message of Job, from God's perspective, is, "Trust Me, don't try to understand Me."

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<sup>101</sup> These three quotes are from Henry H. Halley, *Halley Bible Handbook*, Twenty-fourth edition (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House) 1965

<sup>102</sup> Job 1:1 – many scholars believe that the Land of Uz was on the border between Palestine and Arabia, extending from Edom northerly and easterly toward the Euphrates River, skirting the caravan route between Babylon and Egypt

Job's comforters take the opposite view of the writer of Ecclesiastes. Instead of viewing God as a distant, uninvolved deity, Job's comforters insist that God is intimately involved and is imposing all of Job's troubles on him. They insist that God is doing this because Job is a sinner and is hiding his sin.

Job, a godly man, knew that he had done nothing to deserve the wrath of God. He declared his innocence and expressed bewilderment at the horrors that he is suffering. His comforters declared him to be guilty of blasphemy because of his declaration of innocence. "God is doing this because He sees your sin and God can't be wrong," was their attitude.

Finally, after Elihu, the final comforter, had spoken, God Himself spoke. He vindicated Job. God agreed that life is not fair; His allowing of suffering does not mean that He does not know what He is doing; His right to do what He does should not be questioned.

We reiterate – the message of Job is, **Trust Me, don't try to understand Me.**

### *Proverbs*

Proverbs is self-divided into five sections. Each section begins with a heading:

- *The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:* (Proverbs 1:1)
- *The proverbs of Solomon.* (Proverbs 10:1)
- *These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed.* (Proverbs 25:1)
- *The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle. The man declares to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal:* (Proverbs 30:1)
- *The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him:* (Proverbs 31:1)

Proverbs is a book of "prudential wisdom." It is a collection of principles that people can use to help themselves make responsible choices in life. It is a book of practical wisdom. Proverbs contrasts a life of wisdom with a life of folly.

In order to understand Proverbs, we must understand the nature of proverbial literature. In Hebrew, the proverbs are called, *meshallim*, which means, "figures of speech," or "contrived sayings." A proverb is a brief, particular expression of truth. The greater the brevity, the less likely is it to be universally applicable.

As was said above about poetry, the same is true of proverbs. Short catchy sayings are easier to remember. They are learnable guidelines for the shaping of selected behavior. Thus, a proverb should not be taken too literally or too universally if its message is to be helpful. For example, consider Proverbs 16:3:

*Commit your works to the LORD, And your plans will be established.*

Not realizing that proverbs tend to be inexact statements pointing to a general truth, someone might take this proverb literally, to be a promise from God, universally applicable. Thus, if someone dedicates his plans to God, they always must succeed. Of course, this is not true. Someone could dedicate a perfectly selfish act or idiotic scheme to God. A hasty marriage, a

rash business decision, could be dedicated to God and result in misery. "God didn't keep His word," might be the response.

A proverb is not a categorical, always applicable, ironclad promise, but a general truth. It is more advice than promise. A proverb is:

- a general truth, which, in most circumstances, all things being equal, tends to be correct.
- a proverb is not a precept.

A precept is an authoritative pronouncement from God. A proverb, on the other hand, is a wise saying that has come from the experience of living, which the Holy Spirit caused to be recorded.

- In the Law of Moses, precepts are expressed, "Thus says the Lord."
- In Proverbs, the same things are taught, but not as a command, but rather out of the experience of living.

We might paraphrase the theme of Proverbs as, "I have lived long upon the earth and I have seen," and a wise man is one who lives by God's precepts.

The difference between Ecclesiastes and Proverbs is the perspective of the seer. Proverbs sees life through the eyes of faith. Ecclesiastes sees life through the eyes of one who has no perspective beyond that which happens between the cradle and the grave. Both are inspired by the Holy Spirit to be used according to their design.

Even though proverbs are not a contract with heaven, they are good advice. The Holy Spirit oversaw the collection of Proverbs. A wise person is aware of the proverbs and follows their advice in making life-style decisions.

Here is a list of considerations for interpreting proverbs.

1. Proverbs often are like parables, pointing beyond themselves to a single truth
2. Proverbs are practical, rather than theological
3. Proverbs are stated in a way that makes them easy to remember, rather than being technically precise
4. Proverbs are not designed to support selfish behavior, but just the opposite
5. Proverbs reflect a culture different from ours and may need a "translation" (i.e. *dwelling in the corner of a roof* – Proverbs 21:9) in order to make sense to us
6. Proverbs are not guarantees from God, but poetic guidelines for good behavior
7. Proverbs may use specific language, exaggeration, or any other literary form to make their point
8. Proverbs give good advice for certain aspects of life, but are not exhaustive in their coverage
9. Wrongly used, proverbs might justify crass, materialistic lifestyle. Rightly used, they provide practical advice for daily living.

## *Song of Solomon*

The Song of Solomon (also called, *Song of Songs*) is a lengthy love song. It is an extended ballad about human romance, written in the style of an ancient Near-Eastern lyric poem. Why did God put eight chapters of love poetry in the Bible? Whom to love and how to love are the two issues with which the song is concerned and the ability to make godly choices with regard to these two crucial decisions is vitally important to every believer.

Because of the erotic language of *The Song*, various church leaders have advocated that younger Christians should not read the book. Both Origin and Jerome said that the book should not be studied by anyone under thirty years of age. Reading of the book was prohibited during those periods in Church History when sexual abstinence, even in marriage, was considered to be the way of holiness.<sup>103</sup>

Sex is a part of humanity. God created it and called it "good." Unfortunately, any good can be corrupted by ungodly choices. Any human desire can be employed in wrong ways. This especially is true with love and sex.

- Can a person choose to follow romance wherever it leads, regardless of the consequences? Absolutely.
- Can a person engage in sex in ways that dishonor God? Certainly.
- Can romance be manipulative and harmful? By all means.
- On the other hand, romance and sex can be employed for God's glory in accordance with His original design if the right choices are made.

The Song has a long history of misinterpretation, the result of two hermeneutical mistakes:

- totality transfer
- allegorizing

### **Totality Transfer**

Totality transfer refers to the view that a word or a concept has the same meaning every time it is used. For example, the statement, "God so loved the world," could totality transfer into a romantic statement (God is *in love* with the world), as if the word, "love," refers to romance every time it is used. The folly of totality transfer is seen in the following statements:

- I love peanut butter
- I love to sing
- I love to sleep
- I love my wife

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<sup>103</sup> David and Carole Hocking, *Romantic Lovers*, (Eugene, OR, Harvest House Publishers) 1986, pages 6-7.

In discussing the *Song of Solomon*, many teachers have made a totality transfer. When looking for something in the Bible, similar to the language of *The Song*, the closest thing that these teachers could find were some of the prophetic figurative analogies. In these figurative passages, God's love for Israel is cast in the form of a love song in Isaiah 5:1-7 and Hosea 2:2-15, and in longer prose form in Ezekiel 16 and 23. The key difference between these prophetic figures and *The Song* is that in the prophetic figures the text makes clear that God is addressing His people through a figure. No such indicator is present in the *Song of Solomon*. Furthermore, as noted below, nothing in these prophetic figures is even close to the style of language in *The Song*.

### **Allegorizing**

In the age when allegorizing was the rage (see Section Two), Origen and others came to the conclusion that the *Song of Songs* could be nothing other than an allegory of God's love for the Church. They argued that God certainly would not have included such an erotic poem in Scripture unless it had some meaning other than romance between a man and a woman. This was in an era in which celibacy was considered to be holier than a sexually active marriage.

The allegorical interpretation caught on and prevailed until recent years. Even on the surface, it is clear that this interpretation of *The Song* has no objective basis.. As stated above, it does not contain the "keys" that are present in the allegorical love songs. It does not contain the clues relating to Israel's history, nor is it laden with the national symbolism. Instead, it concentrates on love between two individuals. Nothing in the prophets reads like,

*How beautiful you are, my darling,  
How beautiful you are!  
Your eyes are like doves behind your veil;  
Your hair is like a flock of goats  
That have descended from Mount Gilead.  
Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn ewes  
Which have come up from their washing,  
All of which bear twins,  
And not one among them has lost her young.  
Your lips are like a scarlet thread,  
And your mouth is lovely.  
Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate Behind your veil.  
Your neck is like the tower of David Built with rows of stones,  
On which are hung a thousand shields,  
All the round shields of the mighty men.*  
(Song of Solomon 4:1-4)

This is the language of a man's adoration for his loved one. He compares her appearance to all sorts of beautiful images in life. He is not speaking of things that are similar in appearance in every case, but things that are similarly impressive, visually.



Nothing in the prophetic allegories compares to the account of a dream the woman had about how she was asleep and could not get out of bed and move fast enough to keep from missing the man she loved, when he called for her.

*I was asleep, but my heart was awake.  
A voice! My beloved was knocking:  
'Open to me, my sister, my darling,  
My dove, my perfect one!  
For my head is drenched with dew,  
My locks with the damp of the night.'  
I have taken off my dress,  
How can I put it on again?  
I have washed my feet,  
How can I dirty them again?  
My beloved extended his hand through the opening,  
And my feelings were aroused for him.  
I arose to open to my beloved;  
And my hands dripped with myrrh,  
And my fingers with liquid myrrh,  
On the handles of the bolt.  
I opened to my beloved,  
But my beloved had turned away and had gone!  
My heart went out to him as he spoke.  
I searched for him, but I did not find him;  
I called him, but he did not answer me.*

(Song 5:2-6)

There just isn't anything like this in the prophetic figures.

The Song presents an overall ethical context. Monogamous, heterosexual marriage is the proper context for sexual activity, according to God's revelation in the Old Testament. The attitude of *The Song* itself is the very antithesis of unfaithfulness, either before or after marriage. Marriage consummates and continues love between man and woman. That is what *The Song* points toward. Our culture emphasizes sex techniques, whereas *The Song* emphasizes virtuous romance. Our culture urges people to fulfill themselves, whatever their sexual tastes; the Song is concerned about how one responds faithfully to the attractiveness of his mate and how to fulfill the needs of another. In *The Song*, romance is something that should continue throughout and even characterize marriage.

## EXCURSUS

In identifying the characters in the Song of Solomon, various views are presented. The bridegroom either is Solomon or some unnamed shepherd lover who seems to get in the way of Solomon's plans. Most commentators consider the lover to be Solomon, presenting himself in the prime of life and involved in his first love, and his only divinely authorized wife.

There are three views presented concerning the identity of the bride:

1. She is one of Solomon's wives (not important to know her identity)
2. She is the daughter of Pharaoh (cf. I Kings 3:1; 7:8; 9:16 Song of Solomon 1:9)
3. She is Abishag (I Kings 1:1-4; 2:13-25)

The argument that bride is the daughter of Pharaoh, a Gentile, usually is supported by those who want to make *The Song* an allegory of the relationship between Christ and the Church, a Gentile bride. The marriage between Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter was a political link that guaranteed peace between Egypt and Israel – Pharaoh had been involved in military actions in Israel and this wedding was a guarantee of peace (I Kings 9:16). The circumstances of this marriage do not, on the surface, fit this love song.

In the view of many, the most probable identity of the bride is Abishag (argued strongly in *Romantic Lovers*, David and Caole Hocking, [Eugene, OR, Harvest House Publishers] 1986, pages 11-12). Abishag was a beautiful woman, a Shulammite, who had spent her time in the fields, working in vineyards (I Kings 1:1-4). As a result of a nation-wide search, she was chosen to minister to the needs of the aged, dying David. Her virginity was not taken from her when she ministered to David (I Kings 1:4); she ministered to his physical care, but not to sexual pleasure. Abishag was a country girl and a natural beauty. She was not accustomed to the beautiful clothes, expensive jewelry, and exotic perfumes of nobility. Those who argue for Abishag as the bride point out that she is described as a Shulammite in 6:12. In this view, Solomon observed this beautiful young woman, as she cared for his father. He became deeply attached to her. After David's death, Solomon's brother, Adonijah tried to get approval to take Abishag as his wife. Solomon, for complicated reasons, one of them possibly romantic, had Adonijah executed for making this request.

A weakness in this argument is that there is no evidence that Solomon married Abishag. David's wives are listed in 2 Samuel 3:2-5, but the list is missing two wives – David's first wife, Michal, and David's last wife, Bathsheba. David's wives, in the order of their marriage to David are: Michal, Ahinoam, Abigail, Maacah, Haggith, Abital, Eglah, and Bathsheba. II Samuel 5:13-15 states that David took more wives and concubines in Jerusalem, but doesn't list how many or give their names; only the names of the sons born to him there are listed.

## REVELATION: APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, as the book labels itself, is the best-known example of the genre known as *apocalyptic literature*. Portions of Daniel and Ezekiel, are other examples of apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic literature usually was produced in times of persecution and oppression, as a means of encouraging those who were suffering for their faith.

Apocalyptic literature is characterized by:

1. an intense despair of present circumstances and an equally intense hope of divine intervention in the future;
2. by the use of symbolic language, dreams, and visions;
3. by the introduction of celestial and demonic powers as messengers and agents in the progress of God's purpose;
4. by the prediction of catastrophic judgment of the wicked and of a supernatural deliverance for the righteous;
5. frequently, by the pseudonymous ascription of the writing to a prominent character of the past, such as Ezra (*II Esdras*) or Enoch (*The Book of Enoch*).

Apocalyptic literature expresses the view that the world is past saving and that there must be an escape from it or some drastic divine intervention to completely change it. The book of Revelation possesses all of the five characteristics listed above except for number 5 - the name of the author. In Revelation the author gives his name and assumes that he is known, rather than some past celebrity.

There are four schools of interpretation that dominate the study of Revelation:

1. *The Preterist View*. The Preterist asserts that Revelation was written to the First Century Church. Its message is confined, for the most part, to that generation. The Preterist points out that the name of Nero is found coded in the book. To those who hold this view, the book is about the war between the Roman Empire and the Church. The language is viewed as highly figurative:
  - The Seven Seals refer to the awful horrors that are about to fall on the empire and the Church's safety through it all.
  - The Seven Trumpets are further judgments on the empire and the continued safety of the Church.
  - The Beast is the Roman Empire (in particular the Emperor, Nero).
  - The False Prophet is the priesthood organized to enforce Emperor Worship;
  - Babylon is the City of Rome.

Preterists insist that Nero is identified as the Beast in Revelation 13:17 (see comments below)

2. *The Futurist View.* This view holds that the outline for the book is found in 1:19,

*Write therefore the*

- *things which you have seen,*
- *and the things which are,*
- *and the things which shall take place after these things.*

Using this outline,

- The things which John has seen, are those things that he is seeing at the time that Jesus is speaking to him.
- The things which are, refer to the era of Church History, which is described in the seven letters to the seven churches (Chapters 2-3), each of these churches represents one of the seven ages of Church History. The Church, according to this view, is raptured at the beginning of Chapter Four.
- The rest of the book, through Chapter 20, deals with a seven-year period immediately preceding the Lord's Second Coming.

The understanding of the figures during this seven year period are:

1. The Seven Seals contain an outline of the seven-year period. In this period, the Antichrist will reign. There will be evangelistic activity in which many Jews will be saved.
  2. The Seven Trumpets are the awful tortures to which the earth is subjected during the period. The descriptions are literal
  3. The Beast is the Antichrist, an international dictator, at the head of a ten-kingdom empire. Babylon is the seat of the Antichrist. It will be a literal World-city.
  4. The Seven Bowls are the catastrophes that will befall the earth during the reign of the Antichrist.
  5. The Millennium will be a real thousand years in which Christ, with his saints, will reign upon the earth.
3. *The Spiritualist View.* This view states that the book does not refer to any historical events. Instead, it is a pictorial representation of certain religious truths to be realized in the experience of the Church. Some of these would be
- Great principles in constant conflict
  - The moral forces that are working out the destiny of the world
  - An assurance of the unfailing justice of God
  - The conflict that ranges between good and evil, described in terms of the First Century. This is capable of infinite application
  - The ultimate supremacy of good over evil

4. *The Historical View.* This view considers Revelation to be a sublime panorama of Christ's march through history. Those who hold this view would describe the book by such terms, "The Vision of the Ages," "Pre-written History," "A Traveling Manual for the Church," etc. There is much variety of opinion as to what events and epochs are foreshadowed by the book. One point of disagreement among those who hold this view is whether the visions are parallel or in chronological succession. In general, those who hold this view are more confident in speaking of events of the past and their place in Revelation, than they are about speaking of events in the future.

Here is one of the most commonly held Historical interpretations, as displayed in B.W. Johnson's, *The Vision of the Ages*:<sup>104</sup>

- 1st seal: Era of prosperity within the Roman Empire 100-200 AD
- 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> seals: Disaster in the Roman Empire 200-300 AD
- 5<sup>th</sup> seal: Era of persecution 100-300 AD
- 6<sup>th</sup> seal: Revolution; Christianization of the Empire 313-400 AD
- 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpets: Fall of the Roman Empire 400-476 AD
- 5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet: Rise of Mohammedanism 637-786 AD
- 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet: Rise of Turkish Power 1057-1453 AD
- Little Book Open: Era of the Open Bible 1500- AD
- Measuring the Temple: Era of Church Reformation 1500- AD
- The Two Witnesses: Church and Bible 1500- AD
- The Beast: World-power vested in the Papacy 600-1800 AD
- False Prophet: Apostate Church in power 600-1800 AD
- Babylon: Papal Rome 600-1800 AD
- 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Bowls: Judgments that broke Papal power 1600-1900 AD
- 6<sup>th</sup> Bowl and After: yet in the future

NOTE: Most pre-millennialist eschatologies are based on the Futurist View. Most post-millennialist eschatologies fall within the Historical View.

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<sup>104</sup> B. W. Johnson, *The Vision of the Ages* (St. Louis, Christian Publishing Co.) 1881

### Who is the Beast of Revelation 13:17-18?

*and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six. (Revelation 13:17-18)*

Of interest to students of Revelation are the various ways that different schools of interpretation have sought to decode the 666. In ancient times, there were no numerals apart from the alphabet, and so letters were used to express numbers. For example, most of us are familiar with Roman numerals – i.e., the Roman numerals for 2012 are MMCXII.

First, we must note that the Greek text of verse 18 spells out the number (ἑξακόσιοι [six-hundred] ἑξήκοντα [sixty] ἕξ [six]), in the same manner that we would in English, if we wrote *six-hundred sixty six*, rather than 666 (Arabic numerals).

In an effort to find some message in this number and decode it, both the Historical School and the Preterist School have chosen to substitute numerals for ἑξακόσιοι ἑξήκοντα ἕξ (the spelled-out number six-hundred sixty-six) in the Greek text of verse 18.

#### Historical School’s method of Identifying the name represented by 666

Johnson, in *The Vision of the Ages*, identifies the beast as Roman Catholicism. He creates the following interpretation (he obviously had reached this conclusion before undertaking the following procedure and had cast about for some scheme to make the numbers work out as he needed them to do).

“And what is this name? The number of a man; the Greek method of spelling the name of Latinus, the reputed founder of the Latin race. But what more is it? Rome is the ancient capital of the Latins. The Romans were a Latin race and spoke the Latin language. The Romish Church is continually officially called the Latin Church, to distinguish it from the Greek Church. . . . That Church is the great Apostate Church. . . . Its name is the number of the beast, and that name, Lateinos, the name or number of a man is 666.”<sup>105</sup>

Note that Johnson substitutes the Greek spelling (*lateinos*) for Latin spelling (*latinus*) – an action necessary for his scheme to work)

L = 30  
A = 1  
T = 300  
E = 5  
I = 10  
N = 50  
O = 70  
S = 200

666 =====Lateinos.

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<sup>105</sup> Johnson, page 272

### Preterist School's method of identifying the name represented by 666<sup>106</sup>

Preterists take a different tack. They also choose to use the short-hand number of expressing 666, but they turn, first to the Hebrew, then transition that to the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew, and come up with a different identity. Here is how the Preterists arrive at their conclusion (for the benefit of English readers, the Greek and Hebrew are Anglicized).

Caesar Nero in Greek (*Kaiser Neron*) when alliterated into Hebrew results in the Hebrew letters (*qsr nrwn*). When these Hebrew letters function as numbers, they display the following values:

Q = 60  
S = 100  
R = 200  
N = 50  
R = 200  
W = 6  
N = 50

Thus, *qsr nrwn* becomes  $60 + 100 + 200 + 50 + 200 + 6 + 50 = 666$

Nero's name in Latin (*Neron*) represented by numerical letters produces the following result:

N = 50  
E = 6  
R = 500  
O = 60  
N = 50

Thus, *neron* becomes  $50 + 6 + 500 + 60 + 50 = 666$

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The study of The Revelation is not an easy study. Anyone approaching this book must do so with humility.

- One thing to notice is that this apocalyptic/prophetic book is presented in the form of a letter (normal manner of salutation in 1:4-7 and typical close of a letter in 22:21)
- Also, the readers are addressed in the first person/second person format.
- The Revelation, at least at one level, is a letter from Jesus, through John, to the seven churches of Asia Minor. It also, at least in part, was occasioned by the needs of these seven churches.

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<sup>106</sup> [www.thatreligiousstudieswebsite.com](http://www.thatreligiousstudieswebsite.com) , *The Origin and Meaning of 666*

The most difficult part of the exegetical task in Revelation is in understanding the images. Here are some helps:

1. The chief source of the images in Revelation is the Old Testament and ancient mythology. These were familiar to John's audience. The images do not necessarily mean what they meant in the sources from which they came. They have been broken and transformed by the Holy Spirit into this new prophecy.
2. Apocalyptic imagery is of several kinds.
  - Some imagery is set, like the donkey and elephant in American politics. It always means the same thing. A beast out of the sea seems always to refer to a world empire, not to an individual ruler.
  - Some imagery is fluid. For example the woman in Chapter 12 is a positive image, but the woman in Chapter 17 is evil. The "Lion of the tribe of Judah turns out to be a Lamb (5:5-6)
  - Some imagery refers to specific things. The seven lampstands in 1:12-20 are identified as the seven churches. The dragon in Chapter 12 is Satan.
3. When John interprets an image, this interpretation must be held to firmly and this is the starting point for further interpretation. There are six of this category:
  - The One like the Son of Man is Christ (1:17-18)
  - The golden lampstands are the seven churches (1:20)
  - The seven stars are the seven angels or messengers of the churches (1:20)
  - The great dragon is Satan (12:9)
  - The seven heads are the seven hills on which the woman sits (as well as seven kings, thus being a fluid image) (17:9)
  - The harlot is the great city, which appears to be indicating Rome (17:18)
4. The visions should be seen as wholes, rather than allegories in which every detail is pressed for meaning. In this way, the visions are like parables. For example, many exegetes believe that the sun turning black and the stars falling like figs (6:12-14) probably do not "mean" anything. They simply make the vision of the earthquake more impressive.
5. Many students of Revelation state that some visions, such as the locusts with crowns of gold, human faces, and women's long hair (9:7-11) fill out the picture in such a way that the readers instinctively would have identified these as the barbarian hordes at the outer edges of the Roman Empire.
6. All of the visions must be seen within the general message that God is in control of history and the Church.

The main themes of the book are clear:

- the Church and state are on a collision course;
- the state will win at first;



- suffering and death lie ahead for the church;
- it will get worse before it gets better;
- the Church should not surrender in times of suffering.
- God is in charge.
- Christ holds the churches in His hands, even in times of suffering.
- The Church triumphs, even in death.
- God, finally, will pour out wrath on those causing suffering to the Church and bring eternal rest to His people.

Two terms need to be identified:

- *Wrath* refers to judgment to be poured out on those who persecute the Church. The Church will not experience the consequences of this wrath.
- *Tribulation* refers to what the Church is suffering and will suffer throughout history. Whether or not the term refers to more than this, depends on how one interprets the book.

### **Another Style of Studying *The Revelation***

My own preference for studying this book is to avoid all of the concerns about what will happen, historically. Instead, I prefer to look into the book for truths that are unmistakable. For example, consider the title that the book claims for itself, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. If one uses this title as a theme for the book, then surveys the book to see how Jesus is revealed therein, here is what one discovers:

- Jesus is revealed to us as the glorified being (1:12-17a)
- Jesus is revealed as the one who holds the keys of death and hades (1:17-18)
- Jesus is revealed as the judge of the churches (Chapters 2-3)
- Jesus is revealed as being worthy of the same praise as God the Father (Chapters 4-5)
- Jesus is revealed as the one who releases upon the earth the forces of life and death - the seasons of history - the ebb and flow of nations: (Chapters 6-16)
- Jesus is revealed as the one who is at war with and ultimate victor over Satan (Chapters 17-19)
- The Lamb is revealed as the judge, when the curtain rings down on history (20:11-15)
- After Jesus reveals himself in these figures, he closes the book with a challenge: *behold I come quickly* - three times (22:7; 22:12; 22:20)

Approaching *The Revelation* in this manner can benefit all believers and avoid getting into disputable eschatology.

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## ADDENDUM A

### Josephus' Comments on the Jewish Canon

*Antiquities of the Jews: Against Apion*

Book I

Selection from Sections 7&8

7 ...every one is not permitted of his own accord to be a writer, nor is there any disagreement in what is written; they being only prophets that have written the original and earliest accounts of things as they learned them of God himself by inspiration; and others have written what hath happened in their own times, and that in a very distinct manner also.

8. For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia,<sup>107</sup> who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add any thing to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any change in them; but it is become natural to all Jews immediately, and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain Divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be willingly to die for them.

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COMMENT: The twenty-two book canon is based on how the various books were counted and placed together. In a typical Jewish printing of the Scriptures the arrangement is as follows:

- **The Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy: 5 books
- **The Prophets:** Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah-Lamentations, Ezekiel, The book of the twelve (Hosea to Malachi): 7 books

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<sup>107</sup> King of Persia from 465 to 424 BC. By citing this dates, Josephus was indicating that the Old Testament canon, as we have it today, was established during the era of Ezra and the Great Synagogue, c. 450 BC (some contend for a later date). It can safely be said that even before an authorized list was compiled, each of the individual books that constitute our Old Testament were regarded as being the Word of God as soon as they were produced.

• **The Writings:** Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth-Judges, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles: 10 books

In Protestant Bibles, many of the books are divided—Samuel becomes 1 and 2 Samuel, Chronicles becomes 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are separate books, as are Ruth and Judges.

The twenty-two book arrangement was the prevailing presentation of the Old Testament canon for many centuries. Later prominent witnesses to the twenty-two book arrangement are Audet's Hebrew-Aramaic list (c.AD 150), Origin (c.250), Hilary of Poitiers (c.254) Eusebius (c.320), Cyril of Jerusalem (c.350), Athanasius(c.360), the Council of Laodicea (360-364), Epiphanius.368), Gregory of Nazianzus (c.370), Jerome (c.380) and Rufinius (c.390)

## ADDENDUM B

### **The Apocryphal Books**

**Apocrypha** is a Greek word meaning *things hidden*, and in ancient times this word was applied to religious writings esteemed almost as scripture by some, but which were not read to the unlearned in public. In modern Protestant usage the word "apocrypha" refers to all those writings which have *wrongly* been regarded as scripture by many in the church.

#### **Brief Descriptions of the Apocryphal Books**

**First Esdras.** This book is someone's attempt to revise the canonical book of Ezra, supplementing it with material from the last two chapters of 2 Chronicles and the last two chapters of Nehemiah, and with an entertaining tale about three young courtiers who debate the question, "What is the strongest thing in the world?" The debate is held before the king of Persia, and the winner is to get a prize. The first maintains that it is wine; the second that it is the king himself; the third argues with some irony and humor that women are stronger than either wine or kings, but that "truth" and "the God of truth" are by far strongest. This last young man turns out to be none other than Zerubbabel, who for his prize receives generous help from the king in rebuilding Jerusalem.

**Second Esdras.** Also called the *Ezra Apocalypse*. This is a typical Jewish apocalypse, probably first written in Greek about A.D. 100. Some hold that it was originally written in Hebrew. It appears to be a composite work, compiled of two or three sources. Around A.D. 120 it was edited by an unknown Christian, and then translated into Latin. The Christian editor added some introductory and closing chapters in which reference is made to Christ, but the original Jewish composition was not changed in any important respect. This book was not included in Septuagint manuscripts, and so the Greek text has been lost. The most important witness to the original text is the Latin version, which was included in medieval manuscripts of the Vulgate. The book consists mostly of dialogues between Ezra and angels sent to him to answer his urgent theological questions about the problem of evil, and in particular the failures and afflictions of Israel. All of this is presented as if written long before by Ezra and hidden away. The book was obviously written as an encouragement to the Jews, who had recently suffered the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). It also includes some symbolical prophecies concerning the Roman empire, in which Rome is figured as a three-headed eagle that oppresses the world and is finally destroyed by a roaring lion (a figure of the Messiah). There is a fantastic story of how the Hebrew Scriptures were all destroyed in the Babylonian exile and then perfectly restored by the miraculous inspiration of Ezra as he dictated all of the books to five scribes over a period of forty days. Along with the canonical books, Ezra dictates 70 secret books that are to be reserved for the wise. Second Esdras is presented as being one of these secret books. Martin Luther omitted

First and Second Esdras from the Apocrypha of his German Bible in 1534, and both books were also rejected by the Roman Catholics at the Council of Trent in 1546. Nevertheless, they were included in the Apocrypha of the King James version.

**Tobit.** This is a didactic and romantic tale written in Aramaic probably around 200 B.C., and afterwards translated into Greek. Fragments of the Aramaic text were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The story is of a Jewish family taken to Nineveh during the Babylonian captivity. Tobit, the blind father, sends his son Tobias on a journey to collect a debt. On his way Tobias is led by an angel in disguise (Raphael) to the house of a virgin who had been married seven times, but whose husbands were all slain by a demon on their wedding night. Tobias marries the girl and drives away the demon by burning the heart of a certain fish in the bedroom, and with the help of Raphael. He returns home with the money and his bride, and then heals his father's eyes with the fish's gall. The story is sprinkled with pious observations and exhortations, and concludes with Tobias' departure from Nineveh, which, after the natural death of Tobit, is destroyed in judgment.

**Judith.** Written in Hebrew about 150 B.C., and soon translated into Greek. The Hebrew text is lost. It is a story about a beautiful young widow named Judith (meaning "Jewess") who saves her city from a military siege. She goes out to the enemy commander's camp, allures him, gets him drunk, and then cuts off his head while he sleeps in his tent. She returns with his head and shows it to her people, exhorting the men to go forth and rout the enemy, which they do. Throughout this story she is presented as a woman who is very keen to observe the Law of Moses.

**Additions to Esther.** These consist of six long paragraphs inserted in the Septuagint version of Esther in several places, and are thought to be the work of an Egyptian Jew writing around 170 B.C. They are designed to provide the book with a more religious tone, and to make it clear that it was for the sake of their piety that the Jews were delivered from the evil designs of the Gentiles related in the canonical book. These additions were put at the end of the book by Jerome when he made his Latin translation because he accepted only the Hebrew text as canonical.

**Wisdom of Solomon.** Sometimes called simply *Wisdom*. This book is a collection of theological and devotional essays first written in Greek by an Alexandrian Jew about 100 B.C., but presented in such a way that they seem to be discourses of king Solomon. The author compares Jewish religion with Greek philosophy, and shows faith to be the highest form of wisdom. The book is edifying and worthy of much respect. It has often been quoted by Christian writers in the past.

**Ecclesiasticus**, originally called *The Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach*, or simply *Sirach*. Written first in Hebrew about 200 B.C. by a wisdom teacher named Joshua Ben Sirach, and translated into Greek by his grandson around 135 B.C. The book consists mainly of proverbs and other wise sayings about common life, strung together in short discourses or organized in topical sections. It also contains longer discourses about religious life and faith, which are well worth reading. It came to be called *Ecclesiasticus* (the "churchly" book) because in early times it was often read in church services, being the most highly regarded of the apocryphal books. This book should not be confused with the canonical book of *Ecclesiastes*.

**Baruch.** A composite book of five chapters, in which there are exhortations against association with idolatry, celebration of the Law as God's "wisdom," and encouragements and promises to faithful Jews, collected together and edited probably about 150 B.C. The material is presented as if by Baruch, the disciple of Jeremiah, during the time of the Babylonian exile.

**Epistle of Jeremiah.** Often printed as chapter 6 of *Baruch*, this short work purports to be a letter from Jeremiah to the Jews in exile in Babylon, but this is generally regarded as an imposture, or a mere literary device used by an author writing around 200 B.C. It is essentially a short tract against pagan idolatry, and makes much use of ridicule and sarcasm.

**Song of the Three Holy Children** (including *The Prayer of Azariah*). An embellishment of the ordeal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego recorded in the canonical book of Daniel, designed to be added after verse 23 of the third chapter. It consists of prayers and hymns of the sort which might have been offered to God by the three while in the furnace.

**The Story of Susanna.** A short story about how two lecherous old men tried to compel a beautiful and pious young wife, Susanna, to lie with them, and then publicly accused her of adultery when she refused. At a trial they give false testimony and she is condemned by the council of elders. But Daniel the prophet is divinely inspired to know the facts of the case, and he exposes the two men in a second trial, after which they are put to death. This story was inserted between chapters 12 and 14 in the Septuagint version of Daniel, and at the beginning of the book in Theodotion's version.

**Bel and the Dragon.** This is a combination of two stories which were also attached to Daniel in the Septuagint, at the end of the book. The story of *Bel* concerns a Babylonian idol of that name, to which Daniel refused to give an offering. When he was challenged he told the Persian king that the vain idol had no need of offerings because it could not eat anything. The king then required the priests of Bel to prove otherwise or die. The priests tried to deceive the king by entering the temple of Bel at night through a secret entrance and eating the food-offerings themselves, but they were exposed by Daniel, who had spread ashes on the temple floor, revealing their footprints. The priests of Bel were then slain and their temple destroyed. In the story of *the Dragon* Daniel refuses to worship an actual living "dragon," and accepts a challenge to slay the dragon without sword or staff. He feeds the dragon a concoction of pitch, fat, and hair, which causes it to burst open and die. Daniel's enemies then cause him to be thrown into the lion's den again, but the hungry lions are fed with abundant food brought from Israel by the prophet Habakkuk, who is transported to Babylon with the food by angels. Both of these stories were evidently written around 150-100 B.C.

**The Prayer of Manasseh.** This is a psalm of repentance, composed to suit the situation of Manasseh, the king of Judah who was carried captive to Babylon (see 2 Chronicles 33:11-13, where the psalm was probably intended for insertion in the Septuagint). This book was rejected by the Roman Catholics at the Council of Trent in 1546 (met Dec 1545-Dec 1563).

**First Maccabees.** This book was written in Hebrew about 100 B.C., and soon afterwards translated into Greek. The Hebrew text was seen by Jerome, but is now lost. It is a sober but stirring historical account of Jewish history from 175 B.C. to 135 B.C., during which time the Jews of Palestine fought for and gained national independence from their Greek overlords. It is highly regarded by historians as a source of accurate information.

**Second Maccabees.** This is not a sequel to First Maccabees, but a different account of many of the same events related in that book down to 161 B.C., combined with many fanciful and legendary additions. The writer's interests are religious rather than historical, and he uses the history as a backdrop for advancing religious ideas current among the Jews of Alexandria during the first century B.C. It is generally thought to be later than First Maccabees, but earlier than A.D. 70. Some statements in this book support the Roman Catholic teachings on purgatory, prayers for the dead, and the intercessory work of glorified "saints."

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### Statements on the Apocrypha issued during the Reformation

**Luther Bible** (1534). Title to Apocrypha section: "APOCRYPHA, Das sind Bücher, so der heiligen Schrift nicht gleich gehalten, und doch nützlich und gut zu lesen sind" ("APOCRYPHA, that is, Books which are not to be esteemed like the Holy Scriptures, and yet which are useful and good to read.")

**Coverdale Bible** (1535). Title to Apocrypha: "APOCRYPHA: The books and treatises which among the Fathers of old are not reckoned to be of like authority with the other books of the Bible, neither are they found in the Canon of Hebrew."

**Geneva Bible** (1560). Preface: "The books that follow in order after the Prophets unto the New Testament, are called Apocrypha, that is, books which were not received by a common consent to be read and expounded publicly in the Church, neither yet served to prove any point of Christian religion save in so much as they had the consent of the other scriptures called canonical to confirm the same, or rather whereon they were grounded: but as books proceeding from godly men they were received to be read for the advancement and furtherance of the knowledge of history and for the instruction of godly manners: which books declare that at all times God had an especial care of His Church, and left them not utterly destitute of teachers and means to confirm them in the hope of the promised Messiah, and also witness that those calamities that God sent to his Church were according to his providence, who had both so threatened by his prophets, and so brought it to pass, for the destruction of their enemies and for the trial of his children."

**Decree of the Council of Trent** [Roman Catholic] (1546). "The holy ecumenical and general Council of Trent . . . following the example of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates all the books of the Old and New Testament . . . and also the traditions pertaining to faith and conduct . . . with an equal sense of devotion and reverence . . . If, however, any one receive not,



as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have by custom been read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate, and knowingly and deliberately rejects the aforesaid traditions, let him be accursed."

**Articles of Religion of the Church of England** (1563). Sixth Article: "In the name of Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church. . . And the other books (as Jerome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners: but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine."

**Westminster Confession** (1647). Chapter 1 § 3: "The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the Canon of Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings."

### **Variance in the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Canons**

The sixty-six books that Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Greek Orthodox Catholics all include their respective canons are called, *protocanonical*.

The books that Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox include in their canons, but are not included in Protestant Canons are called *apocryphal* by Protestants, *Deuterocanonical*, by Roman Catholics, and *Anagignoskomena*<sup>108</sup>, by the Greek Orthodox.

The following chart lists the apocryphal books that are included in the Roman Catholic Canon and those included in the Greek Orthodox Canon. Note that the Greek Orthodox Canon includes 5 or 6 books (depending on how one lists 1 & 2 Esdras) that are not included in the Roman Catholic Canon.

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<sup>108</sup> ἀναγιγνωσκόμενα, "things that are read"

	<b>Roman Catholic Bible</b>	<b>Greek Orthodox Bible</b>
<b>1&amp;2 Esdras<sup>109</sup></b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Tobit</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Judith</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Additions to Esther</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Wisdom of Solomon</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Ecclesiasticus</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Baruch</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Epistle of Jeremiah</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Song of the Three Children</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Story of Susanna</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Bel and the Dragon</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Prayer of Manasseh</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>1 Maccabees</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>2 Maccabees</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>3 Maccabees</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>4 Maccabees</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Psalms 151</b>		<b>X</b>

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<sup>109</sup> These are not the same 1 & 2 Esdras found in the Roman Catholic Canon. In the Roman Catholic Canon, Ezra is 1 Esdras and Nehemiah is 2 Esdras. The 1 & 2 Esdras referenced in the above chart are two other documents.

## ADDENDUM C

### A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

Not long after the close of the New Testament age, it is apparent that the writings of the Apostles were being read in the Sunday services, along with the Old Testament. For example, Justin Martyr, writing around 140 A.D., describes the typical Sunday service. He states that the “memoirs of the Apostles,” were read along with the “writings of the prophets,” before the church participated in weekly communion.<sup>110</sup> The memoirs were the Four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The available evidence would indicate that Paul’s letters were first gathered into a single collection, next were collected the Four Gospels, then the other New Testament documents. When a church received a letter from Paul, it often made a copy that was circulated to surrounding churches. Note that Paul gave the Colossians instructions to send a copy of his Colossian letter to Laodicea and that the Laodiceans would send them a copy of the one that he wrote to Laodicea (Colossians 4:16). Some of Paul’s letters were not written to a particular city, but to the churches of a geographical area (Galatians, for example), so they would have been distributed throughout the region.

Somewhat complete lists of the New Testament Scriptures did not appear until the last half of the Second Century. One of the earliest is “The Muratorian Fragment” (also called, “The Muratorian Canon), so called because it was discovered by L.A. Muratori in 1740 (see ADDENDUM E). Scholars are universally agreed that this list from the late Second Century. The list is mutilated at the first and possibly at the end, so it is not complete. The list begins with Mark, followed by Luke and John. However, it designates Luke as the third Gospel and John as the Fourth. The mention of Matthew obviously was in the mutilated section, since the list speaks of four Gospels and lists three in the same order as we have them in our Bibles. The Muratorian Fragment explains why certain documents are included and some are not. After the Gospels, follow Acts, thirteen letters of Paul, Jude, two letters of John, and Revelation. The only books of our New Testament not found in the list are Hebrews, James, I & 2 Peter, and possibly 3 John. The way that the list is composed, it is possible that 3 John is included in the two letters of John, already noted. Even with these omissions, the Muratorian Fragment provides a list very close to our New Testament. The fragment does include as Scripture one book that we do not have in our Bibles, The Wisdom of Solomon. It includes The Apocalypse of Peter in its list, but notes that “some of our people” do not accept it as being authentic Scripture. The list also mentions other writings, some of which are acceptable for private reading, but not to be read in the worship

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<sup>110</sup> Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Section 66 and 67; see also James Garrett, *The Meeting*, 1999 Conclave paper, page 27

service because they are not Scripture. Others are approved for reading, but not while reading Scripture. Some are listed as being popular among Christians, but they are to be outright rejected because of dubious origin.

Two lists composed by Origin (ca 185-254) are extant. Origin is reputed to have composed 6000 scrolls on biblical themes. In one of these he lists all of the books that we have in our New Testament, but expresses hesitation about some. He quotes from Hebrews several times, but says that some churches do not accept it. He says that Second Peter is possibly from Peter but that some dispute this. He says that John may have composed a second and third epistle, but that not everyone considers them genuine. In another of his works, *Homilies on Joshua*, Origin lists the same twenty-seven books that we have in our New Testament.

The list included in an Easter letter from Athanasius of Alexandria, written in 367 A.D., is identical to the twenty-seven books that we acknowledge today.

It is important for us to remember that these lists, prior to that of Athanasius, were not authoritative lists, setting down a precept for the churches. They were lists that recorded the general consensus of the churches in the area where the author lived.

## **ADDENDUM D**

### **THE EARLIEST EVIDENCE OF A NEW TESTAMENT CANON**

Peter's applying the designation, "Scripture," to the Epistles of Paul, presume that Paul's epistles already were distributed, collected to some degree, and given authority in the First Century Church (II Peter 3:15-16). Therefore, at least a canon of Paul's epistles was acknowledged before the death of all of the apostles.

Another piece of evidence is I Timothy 5:18, in which Paul quotes both Deuteronomy 25:4, *You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing*; AND Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7, *for the laborer is worthy of his wages*

Paul called both quotations, the one from Deuteronomy and the one from the Gospels, "Scripture." Paul wrote I Timothy between 64 and 67 AD.. Matthew and Luke both were written around 60 AD. So, between 4 and 7 years after their being written, these Gospel accounts were regarded as Scripture.

We have to conclude that as soon as the document left the pen of an apostle, the Church received it as Scripture.

There are many instances in the writings of the early Church that either quote or mention New Testament Scripture. In some documents, even though Scripture is not cited or overtly quoted, the language is so similar to scriptural language that it is obvious that Scripture is in the mind of the writer. These facts demonstrate that the Ante-Nicene Church considered the apostolic documents to be more than the product of spiritually superior individuals. To define something as "Scripture," is to declare it to be a product of the Mind of God, and thus authoritative in the Church. The following are examples of such incidences in the writings of the Ante-Nicene Church Fathers.

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#### **Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (95-96 AD)**

##### **CHAPTER 47**

Take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached? Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephias, and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you.

**This is a clear reference to I Corinthians**

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**Polycarp to the Philippians (c 125 AD)**

**CHAPTER 3**

For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter, which, if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you...

**This is a reference to Paul's letter to the Philippians**

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**Ignatius to the Ephesians (c110 AD)**

**CHAPTER 12**

I know both who I am, and to whom I write. I am a condemned man, ye have been the objects of mercy; I am subject to danger, ye are established in safety. Ye are the persons through whom those pass that are cut off for the sake of God. Ye are initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul, the holy, the martyred, the deservedly most happy, at whose feet may I be found, when I shall attain to God; who in all his Epistles makes mention of you in Christ Jesus.

**In five of Paul's epistles, Ephesus is mentioned.**

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**Ignatius to the Philadelphians (c110 AD)**

*Note: Ignatius' letters are so filled with Scripture quotations that it is difficult to list all of them. Here is an example of a section of Chapter 4 of his letter to the Philadelphians*

**CHAPTER 4<sup>111</sup>**

**These lines are filled with references to Ephesians 5-6**

(26) Wives, be ye subject to your husbands in the fear of God; [Eph. 5:22] (27) and ye virgins, to Christ in purity, not counting marriage an abomination, but desiring that which is better, not for the reproach of wedlock, but for the sake of meditating on the law [I Cor. 7:25ff]. Children, obey your parents, and have an affection for them, as workers together with God for your birth [Eph. 6:11]. Servants, be subject to your masters in God, that ye may be the freed-men of Christ [Eph. 6:5-8]. (28) Husbands, love your wives, as fellow-servants of God, as your own body, as the partners of your life, and your co-adjutors in the procreation of children [Eph. 5:28-29]. ...

(30) Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord [Eph. 6:4]...;

**Concerning Widows, Ignatius references I Timothy 5:11-13**

(34) Let not the widows be wanderers about, nor fond of dainties, nor gadders about from house to house;

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<sup>111</sup> Longer recension

## **JUSTIN MARTYR (c 150 AD)**

Justin was a prolific writer and defender of the faith who was executed for his faith in 165 AD. His extensive writings provide us with many evidences of the mid-Second Century Church's view of Scripture. The following quotations from Justin are examples of such quotations and references to Scripture.

### **Justin Martyr First Apology**

#### **CHAPTER 61**

For Christ also said, "Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mothers' wombs, is manifest to all..."

**This is a quote of John 3:5**

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### **Justin Martyr Dialogue with Trypho the Jew**

#### **CHAPTER 63**

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek,'

**This is a quote of Hebrews 5:6; 7:17; Psalm 110:4**

#### **CHAPTER 81**

For as Adam was told that in the day he ate of the tree he would die, we know that he did not complete a thousand years. We have perceived, moreover, that the expression, 'The day of the Lord is as a thousand years,' is connected with this subject. And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.

**This is a reference to the Book of Revelation**

#### **CHAPTER 100**

But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her: wherefore also the Holy Thing begotten of her is the Son of God; and she replied, 'Be it unto me according to thy word.'"

**This is a reference to Luke 1**

#### **CHAPTER 103**

And the expression, 'They opened their mouth upon me like a roaring lion,' designates him who was then king of the Jews, and was called Herod, a successor of the Herod who, when Christ was born, slew all the infants in Bethlehem born about the same time, because he imagined that amongst them He would assuredly be of whom the Magi from Arabia had spoken; for he was ignorant of the will of Him that is stronger than all, how He had commanded Joseph and Mary to take the Child and depart into Egypt, and there to remain until a revelation should again be made

to them to return into their own country. And there they did remain until Herod, who slew the infants in Bethlehem, was dead, and Archelaus had succeeded him.

**This references Matthew Chapter 1**

For this devil, when [Jesus] went up from the river Jordan, at the time when the voice spake to Him, ‘Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten Thee,’ is recorded in the memoirs of the apostles to have come to Him and tempted Him, even so far as to say to Him, ‘Worship me;’ and Christ answered him, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan: thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.’

**This refers to Matthew 4; Mark 1; Luke 4**

For in the memoirs which I say were drawn up by His apostles and those who followed them, [it is recorded] that His sweat fell down like drops of blood while He was praying, and saying, ‘If it be possible, let this cup pass:’

**This refers to Matthew 26:36ff; Mark 14:32ff; Luke 22:40ff**

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**JUSTIN MARTYR’S FREQUENT REFERENCE  
TO THE MEMOIRS OF THE APOSTLES**

Although in one instance Justin used the term, *Gospels*, to refer to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, his usual term for these four documents was the *Memoirs of the Apostles*. Other early writers (Papias and Eusebius, for example) used this term in the same manner. The following are instances in which Justin uses these terms.

**Justin Martyr Dialogue with Trypho the Jew**

**CHAPTER 100**

but also **in the Gospel it is written** that He said: ‘All things are delivered unto me by My Father;’ and, ‘No man knoweth the Father but the Son; nor the Son but the Father, and they to whom the Son will reveal Him.’

For [Christ] called one of His disciples — previously known by the name of Simon — Peter; since he recognized Him to be Christ the Son of God, by the revelation of His Father: and since we find it recorded **in the memoirs of His apostles** that He is the Son of God, and since we call Him the Son, we have understood that He proceeded before

all creatures from the Father by His power and will

**CHAPTER 101**

For they that saw Him crucified shook their heads each one of them, and distorted their lips, and twisting their noses to each other, they spake in mockery the words which are recorded in the **memoirs of His apostles**: ‘He said he was the Son of God: let him come down; let God save him.’

**CHAPTER 102**

in short, all your nation’s teachers that questioned Him, had a cessation like a plentiful and strong spring, the waters of which have been turned off, when He kept silence, and chose to



return no answer to any one in the presence of Pilate; as has been declared in the **memoirs of His apostles**, in order that what is recorded by Isaiah might have efficacious fruit,

#### CHAPTER 103

For this devil, when [Jesus] went up from the river Jordan, at the time when the voice spake to Him, ‘Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten Thee,’ is recorded in the **memoirs of the apostles** to have come to Him and tempted Him, even so far as to say to Him, ‘Worship me;’ and Christ answered him, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan: thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.’

**For in the memoirs which I say were drawn up by His apostles** and those who followed them, [it is recorded] that His sweat fell down like drops of blood while He was praying, and saying, ‘If it be possible, let this cup pass:’

#### CHAPTER 104

And this is recorded to have happened in the **memoirs of His apostles**. And I have shown that, after His crucifixion, they who crucified Him parted His garments among them.

#### CHAPTER 105

For I have already proved that He was the only-begotten of the Father of all things, being begotten in a peculiar manner Word and Power by Him, and having afterwards become man through the Virgin, as we have learned from **the memoirs**.

For when Christ was giving up His spirit on the cross, He said, ‘Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,’ as I have learned also **from the memoirs**. For He exhorted His disciples to surpass the pharisaic way of living, with the warning, that if they did not, they might be sure they could not be saved; and these words are recorded in the memoirs: ‘Unless your righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’

#### CHAPTER 106

He had mentioned to them that He must suffer these things, and that they were announced beforehand by the prophets), and when living with them sang praises to God, as is made evident in the **memoirs of the apostles**.

And when it is said that He changed the name of one of the apostles to Peter; and when it is written in the **memoirs of Him** that this so happened, as well as that He changed the names of other two brothers, the sons of Zebedee, to Boanerges, which means sons of thunder;

Accordingly, when a star rose in heaven at the time of His birth, as is recorded in the **memoirs of His apostles**, the Magi from Arabia, recognizing the sign by this, came and worshipped Him.

#### CHAPTER 107

‘And that He would rise again on the third day after the crucifixion, it is written in the **memoirs** that some of your nation, questioning Him, said, ‘Show us a sign;’ and He replied to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and no sign shall be given them, save the sign of Jonah.’

## CHAPTER 66

For the **apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels**, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, “This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;” and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, “This is My blood;” and gave it to them alone.

## CHAPTER 67

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the **memoirs of the apostles** or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then,

### PAPIAS' TESTIMONY AS TO THE ORIGIN OF NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE (died ca. 130 AD)

Papias was a young contemporary of John the Apostle. He was born about 70 AD and probably knew not only John but also Philip the evangelist and other early disciples who survived the destruction of Jerusalem. Papias' writings were extant as late as the Thirteenth Century, but they were lost shortly thereafter. We know his writings only from extensive quotes, chiefly from Irenaeus and Eusebius.

Eusebius was leader in the Palestinian Church from 315 until his death in 340 AD. His *Ecclesiastical History* was the first history of the church to be written. It is valuable for many reasons, one of which is the light that it sheds on the canon. The following are Eusebius' quotes from the writing of Papias that relate to the canon.

#### *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, Chapter 39*

#### THE WRITINGS OF PAPIAS

...This shows that the statement of those is true, who say that there were two persons in Asia that bore the same name, and that there were two tombs in Ephesus, each of which, even to the present day is called John's. It is important to notice this. For it is probable that it was the second, if one is not willing to admit that it was the first that saw the **Revelation, which is ascribed by name to John.**

...**The Book of Acts** records that the holy apostles after the ascension of the Savior, put forward this Justus, together with Matthias, and prayed that one might be chosen in place of the traitor Judas, to fill up their number. The account is as follows: “And they put forward two, Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias

But now we must add to the words of his which we have already quoted the tradition which he gives in regard to **Mark, the author of the Gospel**. It is in the following words: “This also the presbyter said: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things done or said by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he

remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely.” These things are related by Papias concerning Mark.

**But concerning Matthew he writes as follows:** “So then Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able.” And the same writer uses testimonies from the first Epistle of John and from that of Peter likewise.

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### EUSEBIUS’ COMMENTS ON THE CANON

Eusebius himself made extensive comment on the canon as was viewed in the early Church. Note that Eusebius lists four classes of literature that was abroad in the early Church:

- Writings clearly accepted as Scripture
- Writings that were accepted by some but not by others
- Writings that were valuable, but rejected as Scripture
- Absurd and impious writing, chiefly the product of heretics

#### *Ecclesiastical History, Chapter 25*

#### **THE DIVINE SCRIPTURES THAT ARE ACCEPTED AND THOSE THAT ARE NOT.**

Since we are dealing with this subject it is proper to sum up the writings of the New Testament which have been already mentioned. First then must be put the holy quaternion of the Gospels; following them the Acts of the Apostles. After this must be reckoned the epistles of Paul; next in order the extant former epistle of John, and likewise the epistle of Peter, must be maintained. After them is to be placed, if it really seem proper, the Apocalypse of John, concerning which we shall give the different opinions at the proper time. These then belong among the accepted writings.

Among the disputed writings, which are nevertheless recognized by many, are extant the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second epistle of Peter, and those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name.

Among the rejected writings must be reckoned also the Acts of Paul, and the so-called Shepherd, and the Apocalypse of Peter, and in addition to these the extant epistle of Barnabas, and the so-called Teachings of the Apostles; and besides, as I said, the Apocalypse of John, if it seem proper, which some, as I said, reject, but which others class with the accepted books. And among these some have placed also the Gospel according to the Hebrews, with which those of the Hebrews that have accepted Christ are especially delighted. And all these may be reckoned among the disputed books.

But we have nevertheless felt compelled to give a catalogue of these also, distinguishing those works which according to ecclesiastical tradition are true and genuine and commonly accepted, from those others which, although not canonical but disputed, are yet at the same time known to most ecclesiastical writers — we have felt compelled to give this catalogue in order that we might be able to know both these works and those that are cited by the heretics under the name of the apostles, including, for instance, such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of

Matthias, or of any others besides them, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles, which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings. And further, the character of the style is at variance with apostolic usage, and both the thoughts and the purpose of the things that are related in them are so completely out of accord with true orthodoxy that they clearly show themselves to be the fictions of heretics. Wherefore they are not to be placed even among the rejected writings, but are all of them to be cast aside as absurd and impious. Let us now proceed with our history.

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### ***THE MURATORIAN CANON*<sup>112</sup>**

**(170 AD)**

The oldest known document from the Roman Church is a fragment of a document, dated 170 AD, called *The Muratorian Canon*. It is so called because it was discovered and published by Muratori in 1740. It is in Latin and seems to be a translation of an older Greek document. Therefore, the age of the original document is not known, although the translation into Latin was around 170 AD. Because it is but a fragment of a document, we cannot know how much of the list is missing. The document begins with Mark, passes to Luke, which it lists as *the third Gospel*, then to John, Acts, *thirteen* Epistles of Paul, mentions *two* epistles of John, one of Jude, and the *Apocalypses* John and Peter; thus omitting James, Hebrews, Third John, First and Second Peter, mentioning an apocryphal Apocalypse of Peter, but adding that “some in our body will have it read in the church..”

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### ***MANUSCRIPTS***

The two oldest manuscripts of the Greek New Testament both date to the time of Eusebius and Constantine, c. 350 AD. Of these, Sinaiticus, contains all of the twenty-seven books of our present New Testament. The other, Vaticanus, in all probability contained the same twenty-seven books, but the final portions of this manuscript are lost. Thus, Vaticanus lacks the last chapters from Hebrews (11:15 – 13:25 are missing), the Pastoral Epistles (First & Second Timothy and Titus), Philemon, and Revelation.

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### ***MARCION***

Marcion was the son of an overseer in Sinope of Pontus. Early on, probably because of his heretical opinions and contempt of authority, he was excommunicated by his father. Marcion quickly drifted into a relationship with the Syrian Gnostic, Cerdo. In time, Marcion developed his own form of Gnosticism and formed his own canon of Scripture. He rejected many of the New Testament books. Marcion abridged and mutilated the Gospel of Luke, then included ten of Paul’s epistles as his canon, a total of eleven books. He rejected the pastoral epistles because

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<sup>112</sup> See ADDENDUM E

they condemned the forerunners of Gnosticism, the Epistle to Hebrews, Matthew, Mark, John, Acts, the pastoral epistles and Revelation. Much of this rejection was because he rejected the supernatural and sought to demonstrate that there was conflict between Paul and the other apostles.

Marcion is valuable in the study of the canon because his rejection of various books is evidence that they were viewed as Scripture by the Church, against which Marcion reacted.

## ADDENDUM E

### The Muratorian Fragment

#### (About AD 170)



The **Muratorian Fragment** is the oldest known extant list of New Testament books. It was discovered by Ludovico Antonio Muratori in a manuscript in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, and published by him in 1740.<sup>113</sup> It is called a fragment because the beginning pages of the document are missing. Although the manuscript was copied during the seventh century, the list itself is dated to about 170. Two statements in the fragment assign it to this date:

- Reference is made to the episcopate of Pius I of Rome (died 157) as being recent.
- The author mentions the heresy of Marcion of Sinope as being current. Marcion, in reaction to Gnosticism, developed a theology that emphasized the humanity of Jesus, to the de-emphasis of His divinity. In 144, he expounded his heresy before a council of elders in Rome and it was condemned by this council. The heresy continued to trouble the Western Church (the author of the Muratorian Fragment was in the Western Church) until early in the Fourth Century. It was more durable in the Eastern Church.

The New Testament books listed in the text are:

- The Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (Since he lists Luke as the third and John as the fourth, we assume that earlier in the missing portion of the document he had listed the first and second accounts [Matthew and Mark])
- Acts

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<sup>113</sup> Ludovico Antonio Muratori, ed., *Antiquitates Italicae Medii Aevi*, v. 3 (ex typographia Societatis palatinæ, Mediolani, 1740). Reprinted in Bologna, 1965.

- Paul's letters to churches: two letters to the Corinthians; Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians, two letters to the Thessalonians, and Romans
- Paul's letters to individuals: Philemon, Titus, and two letters to Timothy
- Jude, and two letters of John (no indication as to which of John's letters are the two)
- Apocalypse of John
- Apocalypse of Peter (a questionable book)
- Shepherd of Hermas is listed as a good book to read, but not to be read in the church (obvious not considered to be canonical).
- Wisdom of Solomon (The Wisdom of Solomon was one of the Apocryphal books that was widely read, but it predated the New Testament, so it is of passing interest that the fragment lists it with New Testament books)

The Apocalypse of Peter is a writing that describes in imaginative detail the torments of hell and the blessings of heaven. The Shepherd of Hermas is a moral allegory, similar to Pilgrim's Progress. Both of these books were widely read in early times, as exhortations to godly living.

Below is Bruce Metzger's English translation of a critically amended text of the Fragment. Metzger's footnotes follow. Owing to the wretched state of the Latin text (which apparently is a translation into Latin of an earlier Greek text), it is sometimes difficult to know what the writer intended; several phrases, therefore, are provided with alternative renderings (enclosed within parentheses). Translational expansions are enclosed within square brackets. The numerals indicate the lines of the original text.

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### The Text

. . . at which nevertheless he was present, and so he placed [them in his narrative]. <sup>[1]</sup> (2) The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke. (3) Luke, the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, (4-5) when Paul had taken with him as one zealous for the law, <sup>[2]</sup> (6) composed it in his own name, according to [the general] belief. <sup>[3]</sup> Yet he himself had not (7) seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain events, (8) so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John.

(9) The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, [one] of the disciples. (10) To his fellow disciples and bishops, who had been urging him [to write], (11) he said, 'Fast with me from today to three days, and what (12) will be revealed to each one (13) let us tell it to one another.' In the same night it was revealed (14) to Andrew, [one] of the apostles, (15-16) that John should write down all things in his own name while all of them should review it.

And so, though various (17) elements may be taught in the individual books of the Gospels, (18) nevertheless this makes no difference to the faith (19) of believers, since by the one sovereign Spirit all things (20) have been declared in all [the Gospels]: concerning the (21) nativity,

concerning the passion, concerning the resurrection, (22) concerning life with his disciples, (23) and concerning his twofold coming; (24) the first in lowliness when he was despised, which has taken place, (25) the second glorious in royal power, (26) which is still in the future.

What (27) marvel is it then, if John so consistently (28) mentions these particular points also in his Epistles, (29) saying about himself, 'What we have seen with our eyes (30) and heard with our ears and our hands (31) have handled, these things we have written to you?' <sup>[41]</sup> (32) For in this way he professes [himself] to be not only an eye-witness and hearer, (33) but also a writer of all the marvelous deeds of the Lord, in their order.

(34) Moreover, the acts of all the apostles (35) were written in one book. For 'most excellent Theophilus' <sup>[51]</sup> Luke compiled (36) the individual events that took place in his presence — (37) as he plainly shows by omitting the martyrdom of Peter (38) as well as the departure of Paul from the city [of Rome] (39) when he journeyed to Spain.

As for the Epistles of (40-1) Paul, they themselves make clear to those desiring to understand, which ones [they are], from what place, or for what reason they were sent. (42) First of all, to the Corinthians, prohibiting their heretical schisms; (43) next, <sup>[61]</sup> to the Galatians, against circumcision; (44-6) then to the Romans he wrote at length, explaining the order (or, plan) of the Scriptures, and also that Christ is their principle (or, main theme).

It is necessary (47) for us to discuss these one by one, since the blessed (48) apostle Paul himself, following the example of his predecessor (49-50) John, writes by name to only seven churches in the following sequence: To the Corinthians (51) first, to the Ephesians second, to the Philippians third, (52) to the Colossians fourth, to the Galatians fifth, (53) to the Thessalonians sixth, to the Romans (54-5) seventh. It is true that he writes once more to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians for the sake of admonition, (56-7) yet it is clearly recognizable that there is one Church spread throughout the whole extent of the earth. For John also in the (58) Apocalypse, though he writes to seven churches, (59-60) nevertheless speaks to all.

[Paul also wrote] out of affection and love one to Philemon, one to Titus, and two to Timothy; and these are held sacred (62-3) in the esteem of the Church catholic for the regulation of ecclesiastical discipline. There is current also [an epistle] to (64) the Laodiceans, [and] another to the Alexandrians, [both] forged in Paul's (65) name to [further] the heresy of Marcion, and several others (66) which cannot be received into the catholic Church (67)— for it is not fitting that gall be mixed with honey.

(68) Moreover, the epistle of Jude and two of the above-mentioned (or, bearing the name of) John are counted (or, used) in the catholic [Church]; <sup>[71]</sup> and [the book of] Wisdom, (70) written by the friends of Solomon in his honour. (71)



We receive only the apocalypses of John and Peter, (72) though some of us are not willing that the latter be read in church. (73) But Hermas wrote the *Shepherd* (74) very recently, in our times, in the city of Rome, (75) while bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the [episcopal] chair (76) of the church of the city of Rome. { *This would be Pius I, bishop of Rome from about 142 to 157. — M.D.M.* } (77) And therefore it ought indeed to be read; but (78) it cannot be read publicly to the people in church either among (79) the Prophets, whose number is complete,<sup>[8]</sup> or among (80) the Apostles, for it is after [their] time.

(81) But we accept nothing whatever of Arsinous or Valentinus or Miltiades, (82) who also composed (83) a new book of psalms for Marcion, (84-5) together with Basilides, the Asian founder of the Cataphrygians . . . **The few words that follow this are unintelligible in the fragment.**

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<sup>1</sup> Since he follows this statement by listing Luke as the third Gospel account and then moves to discuss John as the fourth, the natural assumption is that the fragment begins with the closing lines of his comments about Mark. The meaning may be that Mark arranged the material of his Gospel in the order indicated by Peter, who was participant in the events narrated.

<sup>2</sup> The reading of the Fragment, *quasi ut iuris studiosum*, 'as so to speak, one zealous for (or, learned in) the law,' has been variously interpreted and/or emended. For example, Routh took *iuris* as translating του δικαίου, i.e. Luke was studious of righteousness; Buchanan replaced *ut iuris* with *adiutorem*, 'assistant'; Bartlet supposed that the translator read νοσου as νομου (Luke was 'a student of disease'); Zahn replaced *ut iuris* with *itineris*, thereby referring to Luke's readiness to accompany Paul on his journeys; Lietzmann conjectured *litteris*, i.e. Luke was well versed as an author. Harnack (*Sitzungsberichte der königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* [1903], p. 213) and Ehrhardt (op. cit.), who retain *iuris studiosus* of the Fragment, have pointed out that in technical language of Roman law this could refer to an assessor or legal expert who served on the staff of a Roman official. Although this title was current prior to the time of Justinian's *Digest* (published in 533) and so was available to the translator of the Fragment, it is anybody's guess what Greek phrase it represented—assuming, of course, that the Canon was drawn up originally in Greek. [Leipzig, 1905]).

<sup>3</sup> Here *ex opinione* is taken as the equivalent of εξ ακοης. Others conjecture *ex ordine*, representing καθεξης ('orderly sequence.' Luke i.3).

<sup>4</sup> I John 1.1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 1.3. (Rome)

<sup>6</sup> The letter 'b' in the Latin text before 'Galatians' may belong to 'Corinthians' (προς Κορινθιους B').

<sup>7</sup> It may be, as Zahn (*Geschichte*, ii, 66) and others have supposed, that a negative has fallen out of the text here.

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the Fragmentist means that there are three major Prophets and twelve minor Prophets.

## ADDENDUM F

### **Alleged Discrepancies between the record in Chronicles and the record in Kings, concerning the length of the reigns of the Hebrew Kings**

In 1951, Edwin R. Thiele published a book that has become a classic, *The Mysterious Numbers of Hebrew Kings*.<sup>114</sup> The book was originally his doctoral dissertation and is widely regarded as the definitive work on the chronology of Hebrew kings, based on biblical and extra-biblical sources.

The chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah rests primarily on a series of reign lengths and cross references within the books of Kings and Chronicles. The accession of each king is dated in terms of the reign of his contemporary in the other kingdom.

A challenge faced by those who hold to the infallibility of Scripture was the seemingly inaccuracy of this reckoning. A reign which is said to have lasted for 20 years in one record, when cross referenced in the record of the king in the other kingdom, might result in perhaps a 19 or 21 year reign.

Thiele noticed that the cross references given during the long reign of King Asa of Judah strangely had a cumulative error of 1 year for each succeeding reign of the kings of Israel:

- the first cross-reference resulted in an error of 1 year,
- the second gave an error of 2 years,
- the third of 3 years and so on.

Thiele explained this pattern as a result of two different methods of reckoning regnal years: the *accession year* method in one and the *non-accession year* method in the other.

- Under the accession year method, if a king died in the middle of a year, the period to the end of that year would be called the "accession year" and Year 1 of the new king's reign would begin at the new year.
- Under the non-accession year method the period to the end of the year would be Year 1 of the new king and Year 2 would begin at the start of the new year.

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<sup>114</sup> Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan) 1951, 1983. Reprinted 1994, Grand Rapids, M. Kregel.

Israel appears to have used the non-accession method, while Judah used the accession method until Athaliah seized power in Judah, when Israel's non-accession method appears to have been adopted in Judah.

Thiele also concluded that Israel counted years using the ecclesiastical new year starting in the spring month of Nisan, while Judah counted years using the civil year starting in the autumn month of Tishrei. The cumulative impact of differing new years and different methods of calculating reigns explained most of the apparent inconsistencies in the cross references.

Unknown to Thiele when he first published his findings, these same conclusions that the northern kingdom used non-accession years and a spring New Year while the southern kingdom used accession years and a fall New Year had been discovered by Valerius Coucke of Belgium some years previously, a fact which Thiele acknowledged as soon as he became aware of the fact.

An example of the result of Thiele's discovery was the realization that the apparent 14 years between Ahab and Jehu were only 12 years. His process enabled him to date their reigns precisely in harmony with archaeological evidence. The Kurk Stele, which mentions Ahab as one of the combatants, records the Assyrian advance in Syria/Palestine at the Battle of Karkar (853-854 BC). Jehu, on the other hand, is mentioned on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, as paying tribute to the Assyrian monarch in 841 BC. As these two events are dated by Assyrian chronology as being 12 years apart, Ahab must have fought the Assyrians in his last year and Jehu paid tribute in his first year.

Thiele was able to reconcile the Biblical chronological data from the books of Kings and Chronicles with the exception of synchronisms between Hoshea of Israel and Hezekiah of Judah towards the end of the kingdom of Israel. He reluctantly concluded that the ancient authors had made a mistake. Others later pointed out that in this instance, Thiele had failed to realize that Hezekiah had a co-regency with his father Ahaz, which explains the Hoshea/Hezekiah synchronisms. This correction has been supplied by subsequent writers who built on Thiele's work.

## ADDENDUM G

### Discovery of 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC Hebrew Script

II Kings 18 - 20; II Chronicles 29-32; Isaiah 36-39

Hezekiah, Ahaz' son, reigned for 29 significant years. It is striking that such an honorable son could proceed from such an evil father. Hezekiah is the brightest spot in the Davidic dynasty.

*He did right in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that his father David had done. (I Kings 18:3)*

*He trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. For he clung to Jehovah; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which Jehovah had commanded Moses. (II Kings 18:5-6)*

Hezekiah began his reign with a great reformation. He reopened and cleansed the Temple (II Chronicles 31). He broke down the idols that Ahaz had set up. Especially significant was his breaking into pieces the bronze serpent that Jehovah had commanded Moses to make (II Kings 18: 4). This bronze serpent was the antidote to the bite of the poisonous serpents that struck the people during the Exodus.<sup>115</sup> Originally, during the crisis that caused its construction, the bronze serpent was a means whereby they could express their trust in Jehovah. Over the years, it had become an idol, an object of worship. One can only imagine the impression it made on the people when Hezekiah destroyed this precious 700 year-old artifact. Hezekiah's courage brings to mind the words of Jesus, spoken in the Sermon on the Mount, declaring that anything in our life that is a threat to our spiritual life should be cast out, regardless of how precious it might be (Matthew 5:29-30).

After the Temple had been cleansed, reopened, and rededicated, a grand Passover was planned. Because the priests had not had sufficient time to cleanse and purify themselves, and because the invitation could not be circulated among the cities in time to hold the Passover in Nisan, they decided that they would hold the Passover one month later. Jehovah recognized the rightness of their hearts and their sincere effort to bring revival to the land, therefore, He did not censure them for celebrating the Passover one month late. Messengers were sent to the cities of the northern tribes, inviting them to come and participate. Most the messengers were mocked, as they traveled about extending the invitation in Israel. However, some from the north did come to Jerusalem for the grand Passover (II Chronicles 30:1-12). Indeed this Passover was the greatest that had been celebrated since the days of Solomon.

Following the Passover, the citizens went out to the countryside and broke down all of the idols that they could find, even going north and destroying idols in many locations in Israel.

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<sup>115</sup> Numbers 21:8-9

### *The Assyrian Invasion*

(The following section is a harmony of the accounts in II Kings 18-19; II Chronicles 32:1-22, Isaiah 36-39, and information from Assyrian cuneiform tablets)

Sennacherib was the son of Sargon II<sup>116</sup>. He began his reign in Assyria in 714 BC and reigned for eighteen years. Judah had been a vassal of Assyria since the days of Ahaz. Hezekiah rebelled against the Assyrians and stopped sending the annual tribute to Sennacherib.

In 713 BC, Sennacherib embarked on a campaign to achieve the dream of every Assyrian monarch - the subjugation of Egypt. He planned to re-subjugate Judah, enroute to Egypt. Sennacherib began by attacking the fortified cities, planning to lay siege to Jerusalem after overcoming the smaller strongholds.

As soon as Hezekiah received word that the Assyrians were heading toward Egypt, via Judah, he began to prepare Jerusalem to withstand the Assyrians. He already had sent troops to conquer surrounding kingdoms that had refused to join him in the confederacy, mainly in the direction of Gaza and Edom (II Kings 18:8; I Chronicles 4:41-43). He built up the walls, gathered shields and arrows in abundance, and took in food supplies. He stopped the waters that flowed in the neighborhood of the city so that the Assyrians would not have any water. One of the most significant things that he did to prepare for the siege was to secure a water supply for Jerusalem.

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<sup>116</sup> Shalmaneser V was succeeded by one of his generals, Sharrukin, who assumed the ancient and venerable name of Sargon.

### Archaeological Excursus: Hezekiah's Tunnel

**2 Kings 20:20** *Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?*

**2 Chronicles 32:30** *It was Hezekiah who stopped the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all that he did.*

On the southern slopes of Jerusalem there is a small pool of water known biblically as the Pool of Siloam. In 1880, two Arab boys were playing at this pool when one of them fell into the pool. Paddling for all that he was worth, he landed on the other side, where a rock wall rose above the pool. He groped about anxiously, trying to find a way out and discovered a small passage. He reported his fearful experience to his teacher, Dr. Schick, who immediately investigated the site. He found a long underground tunnel that had been cut through the limestone. It was two feet wide and about five feet high. Knee-deep water rushed through the tunnel. The 1700 foot long tunnel gradually wound uphill from the Pool of Siloam, ending at the Virgin's Fountain (Fountain of Gihon) which had been Jerusalem's water supply since ancient times. The Arab boy had discovered Hezekiah's aqueduct.

The Jebusites who founded Jerusalem sunk a shaft down through the rock to the Fountain of Gihon. Records surviving from different ages indicate that from earliest times the flow from Gihon had been important to the inhabitants of the city. The natural flow from the upper water course was eastward into the Kidron Valley. Hezekiah stopped up the upper water course, re-directing the flow through the tunnel, south and west, creating the Pool of Siloam.

Inside the tunnel, only a few paces from the entrance to the pool, an inscription in old Hebrew letters was scratched on the rock wall. The inscription commemorates the completion of the difficult task of boring through the solid rock, the moment when workmen with wedge, hammer, and pickax, boring from opposite directions, finally met.

“The boring through is completed. And this is the story of the boring: while yet they plied the pick, each toward his fellow, and while yet there were three cubits to be bored through, there was heard the voice of one calling to the other that there was a hole in the rock on the right hand and on the left hand. And on the day of the boring through the workers in the tunnel stuck each his fellow, pick upon pick. Then the water poured from the source to the pool twelve hundred cubits, and a hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the heads of the workers in the tunnel.”

## ADDENDUM H

### Dating New Testament Manuscripts

(The following is an adaptation of material [under the above title] found in an article by Peter Van Minnen stored in the Duke University Special Collections Library)

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We are fortunate to possess a large number of ancient manuscripts of the Greek New Testament (more than 5000). All of these are copies, or copies of copies, of the original autographs.

Because even the most diligent humans make mistakes and in the process of copying, scribal errors are bound to occur. This is true of the copies of these ancient Greek manuscripts. There is not a single copy wholly free from mistakes. Even so, surprisingly these many manuscripts agree in 85% of their writing, and the remaining 15% usually are incidental, such as the spelling of a word or the word placement in a sentence – which has not effect on meaning. Very few, however, are significantly different.

Beginning the late Nineteenth Century, there developed a science called, *textual criticism*, which is committed to studying the ancient biblical Greek manuscripts with the goal of determining what the original document (the autograph) might have contained.<sup>117</sup> The most important tools for textual critics are the manuscripts themselves.

The Greek New Testament in printed form was first published in 1516. The great Dutch philologist Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam had assembled a Greek text from a handful of manuscripts dating from the later Middle Ages. Erasmus' intention was to provide a basis for a new Latin translation of the New Testament. Unfortunately, the manuscripts available to him were of inferior quality and, as already noted, no older than the Middle Ages. This forced him to make adjustments. For example, a few verses from the Apocalypse were lacking in the manuscripts at his disposal. To make up for this lack, he turned to the Latin Vulgate and translated from Latin into Greek those missing verses – which he promptly inserted into his Greek text. The Erasmus version is the text that the Protestant Reformers used it to produce vernacular translations of their own.

Until the Nineteenth Century New Testament scholars and translators stuck mainly to the manuscripts used by Erasmus – there were not many other options. Then, within a fairly short period, often through serendipitous events, a number of manuscripts of superior quality became available. These valuable manuscripts dated from the Fourth and Fifth Centuries and, because of

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<sup>117</sup> The ancient Greeks were the first to be engaged in textual criticism, in an effort to reclaim and preserve the original form of the epic Homeric poems. To the Greeks, Homer was more than a poet. However, because many had altered and adapted the poems to fit certain situations, in time there was a question as to what Homer originally had written. Thus, in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. Greek scholars began the classical textual criticism of the existing form of Homer's material, in an effort to rediscover the original.

their early date, they were free from the accretions found in those manuscripts of a later age.

Based upon the many texts that had been discovered in the Nineteenth Century, Tischendorf, on the one hand, and the British scholars Westcott and Hort, on the other, produced rival editions of the Greek text of the New Testament. These new coalitions were called, the Critical Text and are the textual basis for all recent editions of the Scriptures, with the exception of those produced by denominations that have a theological loyalty to the Majority Text (Textus Receptus) and the King James Version. Thousands more ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament have become known in the past 100 years. Monastery libraries in countries around the Mediterranean have yielded most of the manuscripts.

In the 1930's and 1960's a number of very important manuscripts became available through the efforts of two wealthy book collectors, Chester Beatty and Martin Bodmer. These manuscripts are of a special class for two reasons. They are written on papyrus and date from well before the fourth century. The earliest papyrus manuscripts come very close to the time when the New Testament was written. For almost all New Testament books we now have manuscripts earlier than the fourth century.

How do we know these manuscripts are so very early? How do we know their dates for certain? Scientific tests on the physical structure of the papyrus do not yield dates with the exactness needed to pinpoint the date of a manuscript. Manuscripts can be fairly accurately dated by studying the handwriting style used in the document. Handwriting is a product of human culture and as such it is always developing. Differences in handwriting are bound to appear within one generation. When someone compares his handwriting with that of his parents, there is a subtle difference - it is the same handwriting but an expert, a paleographer, can distinguish recognizable differences – some of which can even reveal the place that a person lived when he or she learned to write. A paleographer cannot establish the exact date but he can confidently place one handwriting in the 30's and another in the 80's. Historically, even printed texts can be dated and geographically located according to the outward appearance of the type or font used by the printer.

For such an ancient period as that between A.D. 100 and 300 it is of course much more difficult to be confident about the date of a manuscript. There is infinitely less comparative material. Nevertheless we are now in a fairly comfortable position to date papyrus manuscripts according to their handwriting. We do not have to rely on manuscripts of the New Testament only. We have hundreds of papyrus manuscripts of Greek pagan literary texts from this period and again hundreds of carefully written papyrus documents that show the same types of handwriting. These documents are very important for paleographers because these secular documents often are exactly dated. New Testament manuscripts on papyrus rarely have any sort of a date attached. Even so, a careful comparison of the papyrus documents and manuscripts of the second and third centuries has established beyond doubt that about forty Greek papyrus manuscripts of the New Testament date from this very period. Unfortunately only six of them are extensively preserved.



Even within the 100-300 A.D. period it is possible for paleographers to be more specific on the relative date of the papyrus manuscripts of the New Testament. For about sixty years now a tiny papyrus fragment of the Gospel of John has been the oldest "manuscript" of the New Testament. This manuscript (P52) has generally been dated to ca. A.D. 125. This fact alone has proven that the original Gospel of John was written earlier, viz. in the first century A.D., as had always been upheld by conservative scholars.

Here is a classified list of some of the more important manuscripts now known and studied and the portion of Scripture that they contain. Papyri are identified by a number, preceded by a P (P45 for example). Documents identified as B (Vaticanus), Sin (Siniaticus), and A (Alexandrinus), are parchment manuscripts.

Approx. Date	200	250	300	350	450	500
Matthew			P45	B	Sin.	
Mark			P45	B	Sin.	A
Luke			P4,P45,P75	B	Sin.	A
John	P52	P66	P45,P75	B	Sin.	A
Acts			P45	B	Sin.	A
Romans-Hebrews		P46		B	Sin.	A
James-Jude				P72,B	Sin.	A
Apocalypse			P47		Sin.	A

From the fourth century onwards the material base for establishing the text of the Greek New Testament is very good indeed. The manuscripts Sin. (Sinaiticus), A (Alexandrinus) and B (Vaticanus) are almost complete parchment manuscripts. With the help of the earlier papyrus manuscripts we have been able to establish that the text of these three great manuscripts is to a large extent reliable. The papyrus manuscript P75 was the latest to be published, but it showed a virtually identical text to manuscript B. This settled the vexed question whether we have in the parchment manuscripts of the fourth and fifth centuries a safe guide to the original text of the New Testament. Indeed, we do have such a safe guide.

Even so, the later manuscripts are important. With the exception of Siniaticus, the oldest manuscripts are not complete. Some contain evident scribal errors. One of the oldest, P46, is a case in point: it is the manuscript with the largest percentage of blunders on record! Most errors can be ascertained by comparing the readings of the oldest manuscripts. The remaining puzzles can only be solved by taking later manuscripts into account. Most of the work in textual criticism in the past forty years has been done by Kurt Aland in Münster and Bruce Metzger in Princeton. The latest translations of the New Testament are based on their work.

It is to be noticed that all the manuscripts listed above come from Egypt. The papyri were found there in the twentieth century. They are now in Dublin, Ann Arbor, Cologny (in Switzerland), the Vatican and Vienna. As already noted, Siniaticus originally was the property of the Tsar, but

now is in the British Museum. Alexandrinus was transferred from the patriarchal library at Alexandria in the seventeenth century and is now also in the British Library. Vaticanus has been in the Vatican since the Middle Ages. We owe the early Egyptian Christians an immense debt. Bibliography (all except the last two items contain illustrations of manuscripts):

E.G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (1987)

G. Cavallo & H. Maehler, *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period* (1987): a sequel to the preceding item

C.H. Roberts, *Greek Literary Hands* (1956): on the dating of manuscripts with the aid of contemporary documents

G. Cavallo, *Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica* (1967): on the style of writing of the great parchment manuscripts of the fourth and fifth centuries

K. Aland, *Der Text des Neuen Testaments* (1982) = *The Text of the New Testament* (1987)

J. Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts* (1974)

B.M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible* (1981)

W.H.P. Hatch, *The Principal Uncial Manuscripts of the New Testament* (1939)

H.J.M. Milne & T.C. Skeat, *Scribes and Correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus* (1938)

D.C. Parker, *Codex Bezae* (1992): on the idiosyncratic manuscript D

G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles* (1956): on P46

C.H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (1979)

((c) Peter van Minnen 1990)

## ADDENDUM I

### PAPYRUS FRAGMENT P527



This scrap, measuring about 3.5 by 2.5 inches, was among some papyri acquired in 1920 by Dr B P Grenfell for the John Rylands Library at Manchester, but remained unnoticed until Mr C H Roberts identified it as the oldest existing manuscript of any part of the New Testament. It contains John xviii.31-33, 37, 38 in a hand which can be confidently assigned to the period prior to 150 AD. The papyrus is a fragment of the page of a book, written on both sides. The document was first offered to public view when it was published by C. H. Roberts in 1935.

The Ryland's fragment proves that the Gospel of John not only was written no later than the first quarter of the Second Century, but that a copy had been carried to a provincial town in Egypt, by the middle of the second century. This manuscript is evidence confirming the traditional date ascribed to the Gospel of John, i.e., in the last years of the first century.

Description & picture from 'Our Bible & the Ancient Manuscripts' by Sir Frederick Kenyon (1895 - 4th Ed. 1939) Page 128, & plate XIV.

## ADDENDUM J

### A comparison of John 3:16 as rendered in several contemporary versions

For thus loved (the) God the world so as the son  
 οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπνσεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν

the only begotten He gave so that all the believing into Him not  
 τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὲ

may perish but have life eternal.<sup>118</sup>  
 ἀπόλνται ἀλλ' ἔχη ζώην αἰώνιον

The earliest versions of the New Testament in English influenced all later translations. Note how some of the wording of the Tyndale and Geneva Bibles are reflected in later translations.

#### Tyndale 1525 – first printed English Bibles

*For God so loveth the worlde that he hath geven his only sonne that none that beleve in him shuld perisse: but shuld have everlastinge lyfe. (John 3:16 TNT)*

#### Geneva Bible 1560 – The Bible carried to the American colonies by the Pilgrims

*God so loued the worlde, that hee hath giuen his onely begotten Sonne, that whosoever beleueeth in him, should not perish, but haue euerlasting life. (John 3:16 GNV)*

1. *" For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16 ASV)*
2. *For God had such love for the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever has faith in him may not come to destruction but have eternal life. (John 3:16 BBE)*
3. *"For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 CSB)*

<sup>118</sup>There is legitimate debate as to how the term, αἰώνιον, should be rendered. The idea behind the this adjective is a time the end of which is not known or set. Thus, terms such as, *eternal, unending, everlasting, age-during, etc.* have been used in an effort to render the term. The noun form of this word is, αἰών, which often is rendered *age* (examples: Matthew 12:32; 13:39; 28:20). At other places in Scripture the term is rendered *eternity, forever, etc.* (examples: Matthew 6:13; 21:19; II Peter 3:18).

4. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16 ERV)*
5. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 ESV)*
6. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16 KJV)*
7. *"This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.(John 3:16 MSG)*
8. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NAS)*
9. *For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NET)*
10. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NIB)*
11. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NIV)*
12. *"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NLT)*
13. *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 RSV)*
14. *For God loved the world so much that he gave his only son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16 TLB)*
15. *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 TNIV)*
16. *for God did so love the world, that His Son -- the only begotten -- He gave, that every one who is believing in him may not perish, but may have life age-during. (John 3:16 YLT)*

## ADDENDUM K

### A SERINDIPITOUS DISCOVERY

While a student at the University of Leipzig, Konstantin von Tischendorf ((born Jan. 18, 1815 , Lengefeld, Saxony [Germany]—died Dec. 7, 1874 , Leipzig) began his work on the recensions of the New Testament text, a task that he was to pursue for the rest of his life. In 1844 he went to the Middle East. While working in the library of the Monastery of St. Catherine in the Sinai Peninsula, he discovered, among some old parchments, leaves of what he was certain were among the oldest biblical manuscripts that he had ever seen. Years later, when Tischendorf told the story of this discovery, he said that he found these valuable documents in a trash basket, and that the monks were using them to start fires. He was permitted to take back to Leipzig, 43 of these leaves. In 1846 he published a facsimile edition, *Codex Frederico-Augustanus*, taking care to keep secret the place where he had obtained them. In 1853 he made a second journey to Sinai with the hope of recovering the other leaves he had seen on his first trip, but he found no trace of them.

He returned a third time in January 1859 under the patronage of Czar [Alexander II of Russia](#), hoping to find more of the *Codex Frederico-Augustanus* or similar ancient Biblical texts. On February 4, the last day of his visit, he was shown a text which he recognized as significant — a Greek manuscript of the complete New Testament and parts of the Old Testament dating to the 4th century. After intricate negotiations, and for a sum that has been estimated at about \$7,000, Tischendorf procured for Tsar Alexander II what is now known as the *Codex Sinaiticus*. The Tsar funded the publication of this Codex in 1862 (in four folio volumes). In 1933 the codex was purchased from the Soviet government by the British Museum for £100,000 (about \$500,000).

## ADDENDUM L

### **The Graf-Wellhausen Documentary Hypothesis**

In the Seventeenth Century, the prevailing influence of *Rationalism* and the emphasis on the centrality of man in history and nature, resulted in the increasing rejection of the supernatural explanation for morals and authority. The rejection of the supernatural was based on the assumption that all things happen as a result of natural phenomena, and therefore they could be assured of a natural explanation for everything. Such an emphasis on the importance of rationalistic thought and the preeminence of man could not tolerate a view of history that placed God in Sovereign control, and that allowed for His guidance and intervention in the affairs of men. In this setting, scholars began to question traditional views on the origin of Scripture, especially with respect to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (the Torah). This bore fruit in the Nineteenth Century when the Documentary Hypothesis became vogue in the university setting.

#### **The roots of the Documentary Hypothesis were first manifested in the Seventeenth Century**

In 1651 Thomas Hobbes, in chapter 33 of *Leviathan*, cited several passages that caused him to question the authorship of Moses. Examples of his citations are

- Deut 34:6 ("no man knoweth of his sepulchre to this day", implying an author living long after Moses' death)
- Num 21:14 (referring to a previous book of Moses' deeds)
- Gen 12:6 ("and the Canaanite was then in the land", implying an author living in a time when the Canaanite was no longer in the land)

Others, including Isaac de la Peyrère, Baruch Spinoza, Richard Simon, and John Hampden came to the same conclusion. These writings were condemned, several of these men were imprisoned and forced to recant. In one instance, an attempt was made on Spinoza's life.<sup>119</sup>

In 1753, the French Physician Jean Astruc printed (anonymously) *Conjectures sur les mémoires originaux, dont il paraît que Moïse s'est servi pour composer le livre de la Genèse* ("Conjectures on the original accounts of which it appears Moses availed himself in composing the Book of Genesis"). Astruc's motive was to refute Hobbes and Spinoza – "the sickness of the last century", as he called their work. To do this, he applied to Genesis the tools of literary analysis which scholars were already using with classical texts such as the *Iliad* to sift variant traditions and to

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<sup>119</sup> For a brief overview of the Enlightenment struggle between scholarship and authority, see Richard Elliott Friedman, "Who Wrote the Bible?", pp.20–21 (hardback original 1987, paperback HarperCollins edition 1989)

arrive at the most authentic text. He began using these techniques by identifying two markers which seemed to him to identify consistent variations:

- the use of *Elohim* (the generic name, *god*)
- the use of *YHWH* (Yahweh) as the name for God.

His next concern was the appearance of duplicated stories (doublets), such as the two accounts of the creation in the first and second chapters of Genesis and the two accounts of a foreign king's taking Sarah into his harem (Gen.12 and Gen.20). He created two ruled columns and put the *Elohim* verses in one column and the *YHWH* verses in another. He then put the doublets in their own columns beside these. As a result, he had two long narratives, each describing the same incidents.

Astruc proposed that Moses, either had some earlier documents before him, or else he wrote down the various oral traditions. He argued that Moses then composed Genesis in two parallel but independent accounts. Moses intended for these accounts to be read separately – as two independent documents describing the same events. According to Astruc, a later editor had combined the columns into a single narrative, creating the confusions and repetitions noted by Hobbes and Spinoza.

The tools adapted by Astruc for biblical source criticism were developed much further by scholars who followed him, most of them were from the German universities.

- From 1780 onwards Johann Gottfried Eichhorn extended Astruc's analysis beyond Genesis to the entire Pentateuch, and by 1823 he had concluded that Moses had had no part in writing any of it.
- In 1805 Wilhelm de Wette concluded that Deuteronomy represented a third independent source.
- About 1822 Friedrich Bleek identified Joshua as a continuation of the Pentateuch via Deuteronomy, while others identified signs of the Deuteronomist in Judges, Samuel, and Kings.
- In 1853 Hermann Hupfeld suggested that the Elohist was really two sources and should be split, thus isolating the Priestly source; Hupfeld also emphasized the importance of the Redactor, or final editor, in producing the Torah from the four sources. Not all the Pentateuch was traced to these four sources: numerous smaller sections were identified, such as the Holiness Code contained in Leviticus 17 to 26.

Scholars also attempted to identify the sequence and dates of the four sources, and to propose who might have produced them, and why the authors did so. De Wette had concluded in 1805 that none of the Pentateuch was composed before the time of David; from the time of Spinoza onward, these redacting scholars considered D to be connected with the priests of the Temple in Jerusalem during the reign of Josiah in 621 BC. There also were vigorous debates concerning the order of the compositions: PEJD, or EJDP, or JEDP: the subject was far from settled among them.



It was Karl Heinrich Graf who, through his own detailed study, concluded that the proper order was JEPD. Wellhausen, describing his struggle to resolve the proper order, wrote,

“At last, in the course of a casual visit in Gottingen in the summer of 1867, I learned through Ritschl that Karl Heinrich Graf placed the law later than the Prophets, and, almost without knowing his reasons for the hypothesis, I was prepared to accept it; I readily acknowledged to myself the possibility of understanding Hebrew antiquity without the book of the Torah.”<sup>120</sup>

### **The influence of Darwinian Evolution**

In the last half of the Nineteenth Century a new development influenced almost every scholarly discipline: Darwin’s speculations on evolution were infused into almost every area of study, including history. This Darwinian view of history propelled the speculations of Hobbes, Astruc, and their successors to produce ultimately the hypothesis proposed by Graf-Wellhausen.

By the time of Wellhausen, the conservative view that the people of Israel were always monotheistic was replaced with the idea of religion moving through an evolutionary process, starting with primitive man's belief in spirits, through ancestor worship, fetishism, totemism, magic, and then eventually to defined personifications of divinity as in polytheism, culminating in the elevating of one deity above the others in a precursor to monotheism. G. E. Wright has given a good summation of how this view of the development of religion was applied by Wellhausen and his followers:

“The Graf-Wellhausen reconstruction of the history of Israel's religion was, in effect, an assertion that within the pages of the Old Testament we have a perfect example of the evolution of religion from animism in patriarchal times through henotheism to monotheism. The last was first achieved in pure form during the sixth and fifth centuries. The patriarchs worshipped the spirits in trees, stones, springs, mountains, etc. The God of pre-prophetic Israel was a tribal deity, limited in power to the land of Palestine. Under the influence of Baalism, he even became a fertility god and sufficiently tolerant to allow the early religion of Israel to be distinguished little from that of Canaan. It was the prophets who were the true innovators and who produced most, if not all, of that which was truly distinctive in Israel, the grand culmination coming with the universalism of II Isaiah. Thus we have animism, or polydemonism, a

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<sup>120</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, (n.p. : n.d., 1878, 1883). From an e-text version available at Project Gutenberg <ftp://ftp.ibiblio.org/pub/docs/books/gutenberg/etext03/prole10.txt>. It appears that this book was called a "Prolegomena" since it was intended to be part one of a two-part History of Israel. The purpose of the first volume was to lay the philosophical foundation for the second.

limited tribal deity, implicit ethical monotheism, and finally, explicit and universal monotheism.”<sup>121</sup>

Wellhausen's criteria for distinguishing between sources were those developed by his predecessors over the previous century:

- style (including but not exclusively the choice of vocabulary);
- divine names;
- doublets and occasionally triplets.

J was identified with a rich narrative style, E was somewhat less eloquent, P's language was dry and legalistic. Vocabulary items such as the names of God, or the use of Horeb (E and D) or Sinai (J and P) for God's mountain; ritual objects such as the ark, mentioned frequently in J but never in E; the status of judges (never mentioned in P) and prophets (mentioned only in E and D); the means of communication between God and humanity (J's God meets in person with Adam and Abraham, E's God communicates through dreams, P's can only be approached through the priesthood). Wellhausen used these markers to determine the sources for various portions of the Pentateuch.

Thus was produced the Graf-Wellhausen JEPD Documentary Hypothesis – the result of viewing Scripture as the product of human composition and authorship, rather than its being the product of Divine inspiration.

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121 G. E. Wright, "The Present State of Biblical Archaeology," The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow, pp. 89-90. Quoted in Joseph P. Free, "Archaeology and Biblical Criticism: Part III: Archaeology and Liberalism," Bibliotheca Sacra 113, no. 452 (1956): 333-334.

## ADDENDUM M

### Gender-Neutral/Gender-Inclusive Versions

Gender-Neutral Versions, also called, Gender-Inclusive Versions, are versions of the Bible that to some degree remove male/female distinctions, except where the distinction is obvious and necessary.

Ostensibly, the motive behind these versions is the assumption that current popular speech does not use the term, “man,” to refer to humanity, and that this masculine term, even though it is the term in the original Hebrew and Greek, would not be understood by contemporary readers. Therefore, where possible, the Hebrew and Greek terms such as *man*, *he*, and *son*, are rendered by some other term, where the translators consider such a rendering to be appropriate.

For example, the literal English rendering of Genesis 1:27 is

*God created **man** in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

Gender-Neutral advocates argue that rendering the Hebrew *adam* (man) as “man” in this verse might confuse modern readers. So, here are examples of how some recent versions have displayed the Gender-Neutral philosophy of translation:

*God created **humankind** in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27 NET)*

*So God created **human beings** in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27 NLT)*

*So God created **humankind** in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27 NRS)*

*So God created **human beings** in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27 TNIV)*

Gender-Neutral translators legitimately point out that the last phrase of the verse states, *Male and female he created them.*<sup>122</sup> Thus, the Hebrew, *adam*, which normally would be rendered as, “man” should not be translated literally here, but should be rendered by substituting an all-encompassing term, such as *human beings*, or *humankind*.

Also, the term, *mankind*, should be avoided, according to Gender-Neutral advocates. The Hebrew and Greek terms rendered traditionally rendered as, *mankind*, occur 26 times in Scripture. Not wanting to use the term, *man*, Gender-Neutral advocates use one or another of substitute terms to avoid the male reference.

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<sup>122</sup> The Hebrew terms rendered, male and female (*zakar uneqeba*) are terms that make a distinction between male and female זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה

For example, note this Gender-Neutral rendering of Genesis 7:21:

*And all living things that moved on the earth died, including the birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all **humankind**.* (NET)

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the terms in Genesis 7:21, rendered as *humankind* וְכֹל הָאָדָם (wekol ha adam) literally would be rendered as *all the man*.

In the Septuagint Greek Old Testament, the term is πᾶς ἄνθρωπος (*pas anthropos*) meaning, *all man*.

An example of avoidance of the male term, *son(s)* is seen in Matthew 5:9. Literally translated, Matthew 5:9 reads,

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called **sons** of God.* (Matthew 5:9 ESV)

Although the Greek term in this verse, υἱός (*huios*), means *sons*, Gender-Neutral advocates have chosen to substitute *children* in place of the literal rendering, *sons*.<sup>123</sup>

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.* (Matthew 5:9 TNIV)

### The NIV Gender-Neutral Conflict

The conflict over Gender-Neutral versions became a major issue in the evangelical world when institutions associated with the New International Version announced plans to revise the NIV and that the revision would be a Gender-Neutral Version.<sup>124</sup> *The New Living Translation* had been released by Tyndale House, but even though it was Gender-Neutral in its translation policies, it caused little controversy because it was a new translation that was not popularly used, whereas the NIV was the most popular version among Evangelicals.

The NIVI, *Inclusive Language Edition*, was published in Great Britain in 1996. In the fall of 1996, *Priscilla Papers*, the journal of Christians for Biblical Equality (BBE) which is an egalitarian advocacy group<sup>125</sup>, published a lead article calling for Zondervan and the IBS to

<sup>123</sup> Interestingly, Matthew 5:9 in the 1611 KJV, which is a Formal Equivalency version, reads *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the **children** of God*, even though the Received Text, which is the text used by the KJV translators, contains the Greek term, υἱοί, i.e. *sons*,

<sup>124</sup> Three entities were/are involved with the NIV and any revisions: The Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) is the on-going translation committee and this committee and its members view themselves as the custodians of the text; The International Bible Society (IBS) owns the copyright; Zondervan Publishing has the exclusive rights to publish and distribute the NIV.

<sup>125</sup> Egalitarians argue that there are no roles in society or the church that are gender specific. Therefore, elders, pastors, priests, etc., may be either male or female and that considering some roles to be gender specific is a throw-back to the patriarchal societies of the past.

release and inclusive-language (Gender-Neutral) NIV in the US as had been done in Great Britain.

When it became apparent that Zondervan and the IBS intended to move forward with this project, the reaction to this announcement was immediate and impassioned.

*World Magazine* published a cover story, “The Stealth Bible: The Popular *New International Version* is Quietly going Gender-Neutral.” The article indicated that the CBT intended for the Gender-Neutral version to replace the 1984 NIV. The article met with a huge reaction – thousands of copies were requested and distributed (Jerry Falwell ordered 50,000 copies to be distributed to those on his mailing list).

Donald Wildmon’s newsletter from the American Family Association warned about Zondervan’s plans.

Page Patterson, President of Southeastern Seminary and a prominent Baptist leader, and Al Mohler, President of Southern Seminary issued strong statements against Gender-Neutral versions.

Throughout April and May of 1997, Zondervan and the IBS received strong protests from individual people and denominational groups in opposition Zondervan’s plans to produce an inclusive NIV in the US. Some local churches pulled all of the NIVs from their pew racks and sent them back to Zondervan or the IBS.

On May 19, 1997, Representatives from Zondervan and the International Bible Society met in Nashville with leaders of the Baptist Sunday School Board. Baptist leaders said that they would stop using the NIV in their Sunday School curricula and also not sell the NIV in Baptist Book Stores if Zondervan and the IBS persisted in their plans for an inclusive NIV in the US. Reportedly, the meeting ended abruptly when the Zondervan representatives said that they were going to go ahead and proceed with plans to produce a Gender-Neutral NIV.<sup>126</sup>

The General Council of the Presbyterian Church in America passed a resolution: “The PCA concurs with the decision....not to pursue their plans to publish a ‘gender-Inclusive’ version of the NIV in the United States, believing that such a version is inconsistent with the Biblical doctrine of Divine Inspiration.”<sup>127</sup>

Analyzing the reaction to Zondervan’s plans, Wayne Grudem wrote,

“I think that the strong reaction of the Christian public was due to a fairly accurate understanding of the central issues involved. Literally thousands of evangelical leaders perceived that there was a tampering with the Word of God that came, however, indirectly, as a result of feminist pressures in the general culture. I do not think that

<sup>126</sup><sup>126</sup> Vern Poythress & Wayne Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God’s Words* (Nashville, Broadman and Holman Publishers) 2000 page 39

<sup>127</sup> *Presbyterian and Reformed News*, Summer, 1997, page 7). The actual motion is found in “Minutes of the Twenty-fifth General Assembly,” Part Two: Journal 25-45. P. 193

Christians generally thought that people involved with the NIV were themselves feminists or egalitarians, but they did think that the changes made to produce a ‘gender-neutral’ Bible were (in actual fact, even if not from sinister motives) the result of an unnecessary capitulation to feminist pressures in the culture as a whole. I believe that is still the assessment of the great majority of the Christian public and it is still my assessment as well.”<sup>128</sup>

On May 23, 1997, succumbing to the pressure, the IBS issued a press release indicating that they were abandoning plans for a Gender-Neutral NIV in the U.S. The press release pledged that the 1984 NIV would continue to be available. A few years later, Zondervan and the IBS did proceed to release a Gender-Neutral NIV and ceased producing the 1984 version.

Christianity Today ran a poll in October, 1997, inviting readers to “Express your convictions on this issue by responding to a *CT* survey on the World Wide Web.” 904 individuals responded: 27% supported Gender-Inclusive revision; 68% opposed; 5% had no opinion.<sup>129</sup>

In summary, Gender-Neutral (Gender-Inclusive) versions use a Dynamic Equivalency approach to Scripture. When the translator understands the gender-specific term to refer to both men and women, a generic term – singular or plural – will be used, rather than the gender-specific term in the Hebrew or Greek text. Some of this may be agenda driven by those with an egalitarian slant but it also may be driven by a desire to produce a version that can be understood by a reading public that no longer uses masculine terms to refer to all humans (i.e. *God commands everyone everywhere to repent*, rather than the literal, *God commands all men everywhere to repent*). Whether or not translators should have the liberty to make these changes in biblical wording is a matter of one’s translation philosophy.

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<sup>128</sup> Poythress & Grudem, Pate 48

<sup>129</sup> Poythress & Grudem, page 45

## ADDENDUM N

### The ending to Mark's Gospel

The traditional ending of Mark (verses 9-20) is of questionable authenticity. However, the fact that these verses were added at some point in history, is testimony to the beliefs of the early church, and a record of what they experienced (the miracles, etc.), else, why would this material have been added.

How did Mark end his Gospel? Unfortunately, we do not know. To quote Metzger, “the most that can be said is that four different endings are current among the manuscripts, but that probably none of them represents what Mark originally intended to stand as the close of his Gospel. The four ends may be called the short ending, the intermediate ending, the long ending, and the long ending expanded.”<sup>130</sup>

Here are the four endings to the Gospel according to Mark in presently known manuscripts:

(1) The last twelve verses are missing from the two oldest Greek manuscripts (B and **Ν** – both fourth century manuscripts), from the Old Latin codex Bobienesis (Old Latin *k* – fifth century), the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript, about one hundred Armenian manuscripts, and the two oldest Georgian manuscripts (written about 897 and 913 AD). Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD), Origin (185-254 AD) and Ammonius (fifth century) show no knowledge of these verses. Other Church Fathers state that the text is absent from most of the Greek copies of Mark known to them (e.g. Jerome, *Epist. cxx. 3, ad Hedibiam*, “Almost all the Greek copies do not have this concluding portion”). The original form of the Eusebian Sections makes no provision for numbering sections after 16:8.<sup>131</sup> A number of later manuscripts that do contain these twelve

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<sup>130</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament, Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, third edition (New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press) 1992, page 226

<sup>131</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea (265-340) states in his letter to Carpianus (*Epistula ad Carpianum*), that he placed the parallel passages of the last three Gospels alongside the text of Matthew. The purpose was to create a sort of Gospels Harmony, but also to note agreements and seemingly disagreements between the different Gospel accounts. He drew up ten tables (*kanones*) in which the sections in question were so classified as to show at a glance where each Gospel agreed with or differed from the others. In the first nine tables he placed in parallel columns the numbers of the sections common to the four, or three, or two, evangelists:

- (1) Matt., Mark, Luke, John;
- (2) Matt., Mark, Luke;
- (3) Matt., Luke, John;
- (4) Matt., Mark, John;
- (5) Matt., Luke;
- (6) Matt., Mark;
- (7) Matt., John;
- (8) Luke, Mark;
- (9) Luke, John.

In the tenth he noted successively the sections special to each evangelist.

verses have marginal notes indicating that the copyist considered them to be spurious additions to the document (for example MSS. I, 20, 22, & c).

(2) Following verse 8, several Uncial manuscripts of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries as well as Old Latin *k* (fifth century), several Sahidic and Boharic manuscripts, some Ethiopic manuscripts and a marginal insertion in the Harclean Syriac, contain these lines:

*but they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told; and after this Jesus Himself sent out by means of them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.*

All but one of these sources then continue on with verses 9-20.

(3) The traditional ending of Mark, as displayed in the KJV, is found in the manuscripts that compose the Textus Receptus, from which the KJV was rendered. The Uncials of this group date from the fifth to the thirteenth century. It also is found in many post-eleventh century minuscules.

(4) In the fourth century, according to Jerome, there was a very expanded form of the verses, following verse 8. The only Greek manuscript currently in our possession that contains this expanded form is Codex Washingtonianus (Codex W). Following the reference to the appearance of the risen Christ, who upbraided the eleven, the text reads as follows:

*Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And they excused themselves, saying, 'this age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits.'<sup>132</sup> Therefore, reveal thy righteousness now' – thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, 'the term of years for Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was delivered over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more; that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness which is in heaven.*

For a variety of reasons, textual critics question each of these as being the ending of Mark's autograph. Metzger summarizes the conclusion of the UBS Editorial Committee responsible for the third edition of the *United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* with these words,

“Thus, on the basis of good external evidence and strong internal considerations it appears that the earliest ascertainable form of the Gospel of Mark ended with 16:8.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>132</sup> The Greek also could be rendered, *does not allow what lies under the unclean spirits to understand the truth and power of God.*

<sup>133</sup> Metzger comments: “Three possibilities are open: (a) the evangelist intended to close his Gospel at this place; or (b) the Gospel was never finished; or as seems most probable, (c) the Gospel accidentally lost its last leaf before it was multiplied by transcription. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies) 1971, footnote, page 126



At the same time, however, out of deference to the evident antiquity of the longer ending and its importance in the textual tradition of the Gospels, the Committee decided to include verses 9-20 as part of the text, but to enclose them within double square brackets to indicate that they are the work of an author other than the evangelist.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *ibid*, page 126

## ADDENDUM O

### Reaction to the NKJV by KJV Loyalists

*The following is excerpted from an article by Chick Publications and is an example of how a number of KJV loyalists reacted to the NKJV.*

#### Is Jesus "God's Son" or "God's Servant?"

**Do you see a difference between these two Bible versions?**

King James Version	New King James Version
<p><b>Acts 3:25</b> - Ye are the <b>children</b> of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.</p> <p><b>Acts 3:26</b> - Unto you first God, having raised up his <b>Son</b> Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.</p>	<p><b>Acts 3:25</b> - You are the <b>sons</b> of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.</p> <p><b>Acts 3:26</b> - To you first, God, having raised up His <b>Servant</b> Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning every one of you away from his iniquities.</p>

In the KJV, we find that Jesus is God's Son. In the NKJV, we find that He is God's servant. These are clearly not the same! The Greek word found in the text here is "pais". It can be used in Greek for either "son" or "servant." So which one is correct here?

The solution is simple: look at the context in which it is used. In English, we have many words that can have more than one meaning. If a translator, going from English to another language, came across the word "bear," he would have a choice of meanings. But it wouldn't take rocket science to figure out which one to use.

If the passage described a man with a heavy burden, the translator would understand that the man is going to "bear," or "carry" the burden. If, on the other hand, the passage described a hairy beast climbing a tree, the translator would understand the correct meaning here applies to a forest-dwelling animal that will eat nearly anything it finds. It's not really very hard.

Now look at the Bible passage above. What is being discussed?

- "children of the prophets"
- "covenant which God made with our fathers"
- "in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."

It's clear, isn't it? The passage is talking about "children," and "fathers" and "seed." The word "pais" means "son." But the New King James translators chose "servant." Why? They were not

alone. The New World Translation, created by the Jehovah's Witnesses who deny the deity of Jesus, translated this word "servant" also. So do the NIV, ASV, NASB and other modern Bible translations.

Could it be that these modern translators disagree that "pais" can be translated "son?" No, the NKJV committee translates this very word as "boy," "child" or "son" in Matthew 2:16; 17:18; 21:15; Luke 2:43; 9:42; and John 4:51. Yet they refused to translate the word as "son" in this powerful sermon where Peter presents Jesus as Messiah and Son of God.

One has to ask, why were these translators so determined to deny the deity of Jesus in this passage? Is this a Bible you can trust with your eternal destiny?<sup>135</sup>

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How should we respond to these charges? Were the translators of the NKJV seeking to downplay the divinity of Christ – have the "NIV, ASV, NASB and other modern Bible translations," ... somehow been guilty of denying or downgrading the Divinity of Christ? Have the NIV, ASV, NASB, and NKJV thrown in their lot with the Jehovah's Witnesses? How valid are the charges the above articles levels against the NKJV?

First note that the Greek word, *huios* (*huios*) which normally is rendered, *son*, is the term used in Acts 3:25. Further note that the KJV does not render this Greek term as, *sons*, but rather as, *children*. The NKJV, on the other hand, does accurately and literally render the term, *sons*.

Why did the KJV translators feel that they had the liberty to render the term by an English word other than one that translated literally, the term, *huios*? Could it not be that they thought that the English reading public would be more in tune with this "dynamic equivalency" rendering, *children* – paying attention to the audience, so to speak.

The critical article quoted above is correct in stating that *pais* (*pais*) can be rendered as *son* or *servant*. However, the matter is not that simple. The term does not necessarily mean, *son*, and one would have to determine the context to see if it should be so rendered. The term primarily means, *child*, either male or female – not *son* – unless surrounding context defines the person referred to as a *male child*. The term, as noted, also is used to refer to a *servant*, male or female; it also is used to describe a *devotee of a deity*.

Also, the analogy of the word, *bear*, meaning either to carry something or the name of an animal, is not an appropriate analogy for this discussion. That analogy is based on the spelling of a word – two words spelled the same way. However, the question concerning the best rendering of *pais* (*pais*) is a judgment call as to which rendering is most likely the sense or shade of meaning that the speaker sought to present to his audience. *Child* and *servant* do have a relationship – they are subject to a higher authority and a good servant has a child-like quality in his

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subservience. It is worth noting that slaves often are viewed as somewhat child-like in their dependency, powerlessness, and serving a master as a child would serve a parent.

If Peter wanted to emphasize that this one of whom he spoke was the “Son of God,” why did he not use the very clear term, *huios* (*huios*)? Perhaps it was because of the line of thought of which this verse is a link in the chain – the prophet like Moses that God would raise up and this one of whom Peter spoke was/is that one – thus, the term, *pais* (*pais*), which is appropriate to use for a prophet would be more fitting. For that matter, the audience to whom Peter spoke would be baffled and probably put off if he had used the term, *huios* (*huios*). That would have been an intellectual challenge to them – thinking of this one as the Son of God – which would have detracted from Peter’s argument. So, we might assume that Peter used the ambiguous, *pais* (*pais*), which would not have offended anyone and in an English translation of the Greek that sense of indefiniteness would be appropriate.

We might wish that the NKJV translators (as well as translators of other modern versions), had rendered *pais* (*pais*) as *child*, rather than, *servant*, but knowing the theologically conservative background of the translators and their commitment to the Divinity of Christ, it is inappropriate to accuse them of lessening the emphasis on the Divinity of Christ.

## ADDENDUM P

### **Deismann's Criteria For distinguishing between an *Epistle* and a *Real Letter* and an Examination of the Existence of that Pattern or the Lack Thereof in the New Testament Documents Normally Labeled, *Epistles*.**

Twenty-one New Testament documents are classed as *epistles*. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Adolph Deissmann, on the basis of vast papyrus studies, made a distinction between *letters* (which he called, "real letters") and *epistles*.<sup>136</sup>

- Letters were not intended for public distribution, or for posterity, but were intended only for the person or group to which they were addressed.
- In contrast to the letter, epistles were an artistic literary form that was intended for the public.

Papyrus finds revealed the following pattern for letters written in the Greek world in New Testament times:

5. First was a form of salutation, usually containing both the names of the sender and the recipient (some analysts would make the sender and recipient separate elements)
6. Second was a greeting that contained a prayer wish or thanksgiving for the recipient (some analysts would make the greeting and prayer wish two separate elements)
7. Third was the body of the letter
8. Finally, there was a closing greeting and farewell.

According to the scheme outlined above, therefore, there were four elements in an Hellenistic letter (some would divide into six, based on dividing #1 & #2 into two elements each).

The following is a display of the degree to which Deismann's categorization applies or does not apply to the New Testament Epistles.

At the end of the display is a discussion of the relevance of Deismann's studies.

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#### **Romans**

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ...<sup>7</sup> to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:1-7)*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. (Romans 16:20 )*

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<sup>136</sup> G. Adolph Deissmann, *Bible Studies* (Peabody, Mass, Hendrickson Publishers, 1988, reprint of 1901 T & T Clark publication) pgs 1-59

## I Corinthians

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,*<sup>2</sup> *To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:*<sup>3</sup> *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:1-3 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell** *Closing Greeting and Farewell: The greeting is in my own hand—Paul.*<sup>22</sup> *If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha.*<sup>23</sup> *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.*<sup>24</sup> *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen. (1 Corinthians 16:21-24 )*

## II Corinthians

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia:*<sup>2</sup> *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:1-2 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell** *Closing Greeting and Farewell: Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*<sup>12</sup> *Greet one another with a holy kiss.*<sup>13</sup> *All the saints greet you.*<sup>14</sup> *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:11-14 )*

## Galatians

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),<sup>2</sup> and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:*<sup>3</sup> *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,*<sup>4</sup> *who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, (Galatians 1:1-4 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell** *Closing Greeting and Farewell: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen. (Galatians 6:18 )*

## Ephesians

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:*<sup>2</sup> *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:1-2 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *Closing Greeting and Farewell: Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>24</sup> *Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love. (Ephesians 6:23-24 )*

## Philippians

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:*<sup>2</sup> *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:1-2 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. (Philippians 4:23 )*

## Colossians

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,*<sup>2</sup> *To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. (Colossians 1:1-2 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *Closing Greeting and Farewell: I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you. (Colossians 4:18 )*

## I Thessalonians

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. (1 Thessalonians 1:1 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *Closing Greeting and Farewell: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. (1 Thessalonians 5:28 )*

## II Thessalonians

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: (2 Thessalonians 1:1 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!*<sup>17</sup> *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.*<sup>18</sup> *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. (2 Thessalonians 3:16-18 )*

## I Timothy

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope,*<sup>2</sup> *To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (1 Timothy 1:1-2 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *Grace be with you. (1 Timothy 6:21 )*

## II Timothy

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,*<sup>2</sup> *To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (2 Timothy 1:1-2 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Timothy 4:22 )*

## Titus

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,*<sup>2</sup> *in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,*<sup>3</sup> *but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. (Titus 1:1-4 NAU)*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. (Titus 3:15 )*

## Philemon

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker,<sup>2</sup> and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:<sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philemon 1:1-3 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. (Philemon 1:25 )*

### Hebrews

- **Salutation and Greeting:** NONE
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,<sup>21</sup> equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.<sup>22</sup> But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.<sup>23</sup> Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you.<sup>24</sup> Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.<sup>25</sup> Grace be with you all. (Hebrews 13:20-25 )*

### James

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. (James 1:1 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** NONE

### I Peter

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen<sup>2</sup> according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. (1 Peter 1:1-2 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ. (1 Peter 5:14 )*

### II Peter

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; (2 Peter 1:1-2 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** NONE

### I John

- **Salutation and Greeting:** NONE
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** NONE



## II John

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,*<sup>2</sup> *for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:*<sup>3</sup> *Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. (2 John 1:1-3 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** NONE

## III John

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.*<sup>2</sup> *Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. (3 John 1:1-2 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. (3 John 1:14 )*

## Jude

- **Salutation and Greeting:** *Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ:*<sup>2</sup> *May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. (Jude 1:1-2 )*
- **Closing Greeting and Farewell:** *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,*<sup>25</sup> *to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25 )*

### COMMENTS ON DEISMANN'S STUDY

#### I. Contemporary correspondence patterns reflected in Hellenistic papyri help us to understand the relevance of Deismann's findings

There are elements of Deismann's discovery present in the proper style of contemporary correspondence.

1. Contemporary correspondence begins with a salutation, expressed with the word, *dear*.  
*Dear John* – personal  
*Dear Sir* – impersonal  
*Dear Sirs* – impersonal to a corporation of the identity of the recipient is unclear.

The term, *Dear*, is appropriate and standard even when the one addressed is not “dear” to the author of the letter. Custom is being followed.

2. Good wishes, such as, “I trust that all is well with you,” may follow the salutation but it is not required by good correspondence etiquette. The circumstances of the letter and the relationship between the author and the recipient, as well as the author's tendencies will dictate whether or not such is included.
3. The body of the letter.
4. The closing of a letter written according to correspondence etiquette still include terms such as:

*Sincerely,*  
*Sincerely Yours,*  
*Your Brother,*

Why is a term such as, “sincerely,” or, “sincerely yours,” used when these terms may not have any relevance to the content, nor the relationship between the correspondents, nor the heart of the writer? It is because form and/or custom require such a closing.

Deismann’s studies led him to conclude that the salutations and the prayer-wish that followed were polite and proper forms used in correspondence. That being true, one could conclude that the terms of the salutation and the prayer-wishes are mere proper form and not true expressions of the heart of the writer. The same could be said for the closing of Hellenistic letters.

Could this be said of the twenty-one documents of the New Testament that are labeled, *epistles*? When we read the often tender and very personal terms that Paul, for example, uses in his letters/epistles, it is difficult to conclude that he was using mere customary expressions. Paul wrote from the heart, not just from conformity with the literary style of his age.

**II. Deismann concluded that those documents that did not follow the customary correspondence form were not “real letters,” but were epistles. Real letters were not intended for public distribution but were intended only for the individual to whom they were addressed. How does this relate to the Epistles?**

If Deismann’s criteria stands, that means that all of the epistles except five must be real letters and not epistles:

- Hebrews: lacks a salutation and prayer
- James: lacks a closing greeting
- II Peter: lacks a closing greeting
- I John: lacks both a salutation and prayer and a closing greeting
- II John: lacks a closing greeting

According to Deismann’s criteria, only these five are epistles and intended for general reading and distribution. The rest are real letters and not intended for general distribution. If this criteria and its conclusion is accepted, then we cannot teach with certainty that the doctrines found in the epistles are plenary truth; we cannot with certainty turn to the epistles for guidance in standards of conduct, ecclesiological truth, Christology, nor any other measure of universal truth.

### **Evaluation**

Although Deismann’s conclusions are valuable, and do help us to see why each of the letter/epistles has the written form that it has, to relegate sixteen of these documents to the category of “real letters” and not intended for wide distribution does not pass the test of close examination. For example, in the “letter” to the Colossians (it meets all of Deismann’s criteria for a “real letter”), Paul wrote, *When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the*

*church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea. (Colossians 4:16).* Clearly, Paul intended for this *real letter* (as per Deismann's criteria) to be distributed among the churches of the Laconian Valley.

Furthermore, from the beginning, the early church considered the epistles that were admitted to the canon as documents for the entire church.