Selected

Shorter Writings

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κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως

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Preface

These subjects and chapters have been selected from various lectures and articles which have been delivered or written over the years. Thus, except for those written as pamphlets or short published articles, the contents of these pages are essentially comprised of expanded lecture notes. It is hoped that the often abbreviated form of these writings will not detract from their argumentation or ease of reading.

Most of these chapters are either apologetic or polemic in nature, due to the circumstances under which they were delivered or written, and they also reflect the work of a professor and lecturer in a seminary context. It has never been our intention to be contentious, but always to declare the truth as we have seen it from the Word of God and from its witness in history.

May these chapters prove to be beneficial to the reader, thinker and student. May they provoke additional bibilical study and thought. That the Lord God Whom we seek to faithfully serve be gorified in these pages is the desire of the author.

—W. R. Downing

The Authority of Scripture
A Biblical–Theological Survey[1]
Preface

What is the Bible? Is it merely a volume of ancient sayings and legends, a collection of religious stories, or is it indeed the very Word of God in written form? If the former, then we possess no sure word from or about God, ourselves, reality, the universe about us or our destiny. All would then be relative, uncertain and there would not be any ultimate truth, knowledge or reality. But if the latter, then we do possess the very Word of God inscripturated, and so possess the truth, reality and revelation we need to know God aright, to know ourselves, to live in the world of reality, to understand the universe about us and to comprehend our destiny.[2] If we possess the very Word of God then the only rightful place it can have in our lives is necessarily that of absolute authority.

This article has been prepared to discuss the authority of Scripture. It seeks to demonstrate that our acknowledgement of the absolute authority of the Bible is not irrational, emotional or non–intelligent, but rather the only consistent approach of a God–ordered faith. This is the scriptural approach, for "by faith we understand…" (Heb. 11:3). The authority of Scripture provides the only basis with which to deal with any or all of the issues of life.

> All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.   2 Timothy 3:16–17

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[1] The substance of this material was originally given as a lecture at the first International Baptist Conference held at the Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto, Canada, October, 1982.

[2] Such an over–arching entity is termed a "world–and–life view." For man as the image–bearer of God, a revelational or "Christian Theistic World–and–Life View"—a philosophy of life and reality derived from Divine revelation—is the only coherent position.

We are Christians. We therefore believe the Bible to be the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God. We further believe it to be fully sufficient and authoritative in all matters of both faith and practice. We are neither Romish nor liberal, modernistic or neo–orthodox, and therefore we hold neither to the ultimacy of church and tradition nor to the supremacy of human reason nor subjective experience over the Scriptures.

We are Baptists. Therefore, although we might be considered confessional in our doctrinal expression, we are not creedal. Our confessions of faith identify us with historic Christianity; our distinctiveness, however, allows us no creed but the Word of God inscripturated. A creed is a personal affirmation of faith (derived from *credo*, "I believe"). This ultimate and exalted position we, as Baptists, reserve for the Word of God alone.

The primary Baptist distinctive is not that we practice the baptism of believers by immersion, but rather that we hold to *sola scriptura*, or the Scripture only as our rule of faith and practice. This is one of the distinctives which separate the Baptists and the Presbyterians and the *London Baptist Confession of 1689* from the *Westminster Confession of Faith (1646),* as seen in the following statements:

The *Westminster Confession*, Chapter I, Article VI: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is *either expressly set down in Scripture*, or by *good and necessary consequence* may be deduced from Scripture…"

Contrast this with the *Second London Baptist Confession* (1677, 1689), Chapter I, Article 6: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, *is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture*."

Note the alleged difference between the Reformed view of "good and necessary consequence" and the Baptist view of "either

expressly set down or necessarily contained in Scripture." While "good and necessary consequence" has its proper place in reasoning from the Scriptures and in the science of theology, it must never be confused with Scripture, or inevitably some consequences will be neither good nor necessary.

The purpose of this study is to survey the vital issue of the authority of Scripture—an essential truth assailed and undermined both from within and without the ranks of professing Christianity. It is our design to develop our subject as follows: first, the significance of biblical authority. We must understand what it is, its source, nature and implications. Second, the vital importance of biblical authority. This is clearly marked in its relationship to other essential truths, to a consistent biblical Christianity and epistemology. Finally, a defense of biblical authority. The biblical Christian must necessarily become the apologist. Both the traditional and a more scriptural approach must be examined.

The Significance of Biblical Authority

The Term "Authority" and Scripture

We must begin with a definition of biblical authority. The word "authority" [from the Latin *auctoriat–*, *auctoritas*, from *auctor*, originator, author] connotes the power to command, to require and receive submission or obedience. The term carries with it the status of ultimacy or finality.[3] When this term is applied to Scripture it implies that the Scripture is the ultimate or final standard beyond which there is no appeal, judge or criterion. The power or status to command and require submission or obedience derives from one central truth—the Bible is the very Word of God inscripturated.[4] The

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[3] *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 76; *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, I, p. 146.

[4] 2 Tim. 3:16, πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος... The wording is singular, referring to every word, every nuance and minutiae, every grammatical and syntactical construction. These are God–breathed—and this Divine spiration extends to the Scriptures themselves and to all the Scripture.

authority of Scripture is thus a Divine authority. The very text of Scripture is the very Word of God.

The Source of Biblical Authority

What is the source of biblical authority? Some have attempted to ground the authority of Scripture in its content (e.g., its "salvific message," the validity of its historical data, the uniqueness of its character, etc.). Others have held that the internal witness of the Holy Spirit forms the basis for authority. Still others have sought a basis in the genius of its human authors. There is a present trend to find in experience or "encounter" the ground for authority (i.e., neoorthodoxy).

Contrary to these, and simply stated, biblical authority derives from its source, its Author, the self–disclosing God of Scripture Who has spoken (Gen. 1:3; Heb. 1:1–2) and revealed Himself in time and history (Ex. 20: 1ff). Because God is absolute and ultimate, His Word is absolute and ultimate. Authority, therefore, is not based on the content of the message. For instance, God's command to Adam not to eat of the fruit of the tree (Gen. 2:16–17) was not authoritative because of its content (Adam did not fully comprehend the content or its implications), but rather it was authoritative because God Himself had commanded it.

Again, when our Lord taught, his listeners were astonished, not at the content of what he taught, nor even the elocution he demonstrated.[5] They were astonished at the authority that derived from His Person—Who he was (Matt. 7:28–29; Mk.l:22; Cf. also Jn.7:32, 44–46). J. A. Alexander (1809–1860) of Old Princeton Seminary observed this distinction and wrote:

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[5] In fact, our Lord's evident Galilean accent was an immediate impediment to many of His hearers. The Jewish leaders judged him as a Nazarene, a Galilean and therefore without any biblical authority, precedent or Divine commission (Cf. Matt. 26:73; Mk. 14:70; Jn. 1:45–46; 7:41–42, 52).

> The point of difference is indicated in the positive statement that he taught (or was teaching) them as (one) having authority. This cannot refer to a dogmatical authoritative manner, as to which the scribes most probably surpassed, all others. Nor does it mean powerfully....
>
> The only sense consistent with the usage of the terms and context is that he taught them, not as a mere expounder, but with the original authority belonging to the·author of the law expounded. This is not a description of mere outward manner, but that self–evidencing light and self–assertive force, which must accompany all direct Divine communications to the minds of creatures. Even those who were most accustomed and most submissive to the teachings of the scribes, must have felt, as soon as Jesus spoke, that he was speaking with authority, declaring His own will, and expounding his own law, not that of another.[26]

Neither is this authority based upon the witness of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit witnesses of this authority to the mind or heart of the believer, but such testimony is not in itself the basis for authority. Further, to seek authority in the genius of the human authors is to deny the reality of Divine inspiration and the possibility of ultimate authority. Finally, to place authority in an experience or "encounter" is to disassociate God from His inscripturated Word, and God is never "encountered" apart from Scripture.

Thus, to place authority in anyone or anything other than the Triune God, Who is absolute, ultimate and the source of all reality and authority, is to make the authority of Scripture subjective and relative and to rob it of its absoluteness and ultimacy.

The Nature of Biblical Authority

What is the nature of biblical authority as it derives from God? We may say that it is necessary, comprehensive. executive, legislative, judicial, perpetual and ultimate: first, it is necessary. God is revealed in nature (i.e., natural revelation, cf. Psa. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:18–20), but natural revelation in itself is inadequate, as it gives no

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[6] J. A. Alexander, *The Gospel According to Mark.* Banner of Truth, 1960, p. 20. Cf. also Norman Shepherd, "The Nature of Biblical Authority," unpublished classroom notes, pp. 2, 7.

knowledge of sin, grace and salvation as contained in the eternal redemptive purpose of God. Further, natural revelation was never intended to function apart from special revelation (i.e., God's direct word to man). Even unfallen Adam needed special revelation to understand God, creation, his own life and purpose.

Finally, direct special revelation subsequent to the Fall had to be inscripturated because the depraved mind of sinful man [the noetic effects of sin] would pervert its nature and content if it were left solely to oral transmission and memory (Rom. 8:7).

> Note: The term "noetic" derives from the Gk. νοέω, think, mind. It describes the effects of the Fall and sin upon the human mental state and mind–set. This is described in Scripture as a spiritual blindness and incapacity. Fallen, sinful man constantly suppresses what he does know concerning God and is utterly incapable in and of himself to come to spiritual truth. See Rom. 1:18–25; 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:14. He needs the quickening power of free and sovereign grace.

Second, biblical authority is comprehensive; i.e., it encompasses the whole life and reality. We may divide authority into three aspects: executive, legislative and judicial. The Word of God possesses an executive authority. It is original (derived from God the Source), active and effectual. Mark the creative word: "And God said…" (Gen.l:3ff) and also the invincible word of Isaiah 55:8–11:

> [8] For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the Lord. [9] For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. [10] For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: [11] So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

The inscripturated Word is likewise living, powerful and effectual (I Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12–13).

Third, the authority of Scripture is *legislative*. It is to be our sole rule of both faith and practice—what we are to believe and how we are to live (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Fourth, the authority of Scripture is *judicial*. It is the ultimate and absolute standard of what is right or wrong, revealing the moral self–consistency of God (Ex. 20:1–17; Matt. 22:36–40; Heb. 4:12–13).

Fifth, the authority of Scripture is *perpetual*. It is never "old fashioned" to believe and obey the Bible. "It is written" [γεγράπται], occurring seventy–one times in Scripture, in the perfect tense connotes "It stands written with full and undiminishing authority."

Finally, the authority of Scripture is ultimate. Because the Scriptures derive from God himself, there is no other criterion or authority to which they can be subjected or by which they may be judged. Heb. 4:12–13. The word "discerner" is κρίτικος, judge or "critic." The Word of God towers above the rationalistic, radical biblical critics who presume to sit in judgment upon God's truth. The Bible is the "Highest Critic."

Thus, using the facts of history, science or various arguments to credential Scripture is inherently to give such evidence more authority than the Scripture itself.

Thus, we have marked the significance of biblical authority. It is the Word of God inscripturated and its authority is neither abstract nor merely academic. It is rather inclusive of our entire lives. Inherent to its nature and authority are its implications. We are to believe, submit and cheerfully obey! There can be no selective compliance. To reject part is to reject the whole. The authoritative Word of God demands total compliance.

The Vital Importance of Biblical Authority

Because Christianity is built upon Divine truth, the issue of authority is most vital. This is clearly seen in its relation to other vital terms, to a consistent biblical Christianity and to a consistent Christian epistemology.

Inspiration, Infallibility, Inerrancy
and Biblical Authority

There are three basic and essential terms that are used to determine one's relationship to the authority of Scripture: The Three Great "Is:" Inspiration, Infallibility and Inerrancy. Depending on one's definition, dilution or denial of any of these terms, one is variously categorized as Fundamentalist, Orthodox, Liberal, Modernist or Neoorthodox, etc.

Inspiration is the first and primary term. The clear, definitive statement by B. B. Warfield (1851–1921) of Old Princeton Seminary is adequate to describe this doctrine:

> ...the Bible is the Word of God in such a sense that its words, though written by men and bearing indelibly impressed upon them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Ghost as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of His mind and will...this conception of co–authorship implies that the Spirit's superintendence extends to the choice of the words by the human authors (verbal inspiration), and preserves its product from everything inconsistent with a Divine authorship—thus securing, among other things, the entire truthfulness which is everywhere presupposed in and asserted for Scripture by the Biblical writers.[7]

Inspiration by its very nature must be both *verbal* (extending to the very words and therefore the grammar and syntax) and *plenary* (full, or extending to every part). The two outstanding passages dealing with this doctrine are 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and 2 Peter 1:20–21. The former declares that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The latter states that Scripture did not originate from within the writer himself, but rather from the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit upon him (the human spokesmen and writers were

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[7] B. B. Warfield, *Works*. Baker Book House, 1981, I, p. 173.

literally "borne along" by the Spirit).[8] The former passage deals with the writings; the latter with the writers.

What, then, is the relationship of authority to inspiration? It may be said that authority rests upon inspiration, in that inspiration has given us the very Word of God and so Scripture possesses, as such, full authority. To hold to the doctrine of inspiration is to necessarily hold to Scriptural authority. One cannot truly believe in inspiration and deny the implications of Scripture!

The second term, "Infallible," means incapable of error or deception. When we state that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, we mean it is incapable of leading astray or deceiving. Because God is fully self–conscious and has no hidden depths within himself that he either misunderstands or of which he remains in ignorance; because he is self–contained and not influenced outside of himself; because he is absolutely sovereign and sustains this universe by his fiat decree, his word is infallible. Hence, the Word of God will infallibly come to pass (Isa. 42:8–9; 55:8–11; Matt. 5:18). It was in the light of the infallible, inscripturated Word that our Lord challenged the Jews to "search the Scriptures," declaring that if they believed Moses, they would have believed Him (Jn. 5:39–47). The Scriptures could not lie concerning our Lord. What is the relationship between authority and infallibility? Infallibility is grounded in the authority of Scripture, and not the reverse, as some would teach. Because the Scripture is the inspired Word of God it is authoritative and because it is the authoritative Word of God it is infallible.

The third and final term is "Inerrancy," by which is meant that the Scriptures [precisely, the original manuscripts, or the autograph copies, as free from any subsequent possible scribal variations] are free from error arising from either mistake or deceit. Inerrancy is inherent in inspiration and infallibility. Because Scripture is the inspired, authoritative Word of God, it is both infallible and inerrant.

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[8] ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ Θεοῦ

An *errant* word would mean that either God did not or could not speak to men infallibly and preserve that word through the human authors. Either alternative would, of course, be blasphemous against the very God of truth and His omnipotence.

The authority of Scripture is thus inherently and essentially related to the validity and veracity of the Word of God—the very foundation of all truth upon which Christianity is built.

Biblical Authority and A Consistent Christianity

The authority of Scripture is absolutely vital to a consistent biblical Christianity. Without an absolute or infallible authority, religion must remain merely philosophical and speculative or subjective and merely emotional or even irrational. Christianity, however, claims to speak with an infallible authority.

An issue of some debate is that this alleged authority is derived from divergent sources which may be generally categorized as ecclesiastical, rationalistic, existential or evangelical. The first alleged source, ecclesiasticism, is Scripture as interpreted, modified and amplified by both church and tradition. The second, rationalistic, is that Scripture is subject to human reason. The third, existentialism, is Scripture as evaluated, interpreted by or subjected to human reason, emotion or experience. The final source, evangelicalism, is Scripture interpreted by itself [this final term is used very broadly at this point to denote historic biblical Christianity as held by both Evangelicals and Reformed Christians].[9]

Ecclesiasticism, although predominant in Romanism, Anglo–Catholicism and the Orthodox Churches, permeates much of Christianity. The incipient principle and effects of ecclesiasticism must be constantly checked by alignment to the Word of God. For instance, the paedobaptists have as much scriptural warrant for infant

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[9] For a concise statement on these sources and their relationship to the Scripture, see J. I. Packer, *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God*. Eerdmans, 1970, pp. 46–47

sprinkling as some Baptists do for their practice of "altar calls" and "rededication" in their evangelistic meetings! The pervading principle of Isaiah 8:20 must reign in both our faith and our practice: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them!"

Existentialism is characterized by the principle of subjective experience, and is a source of authority to much of contemporary Christianity, especially among the neoorthodox and Charismatic groups. Neoorthodoxy, holding Scripture as a mere fallible "record of revelation" rather than recorded revelation itself, separates Scripture from the "Word of God" and bases authority on a personal experience or "encounter" with the living God. It denies the infallibility of Scripture and derides it as God "imprisoned within the covers of the written word."[10] God, however, is neither known nor "encountered" apart from His inscripturated self–revelation.

The Charismatic movement essentially holds to a subjective infallibility of experience. We must take great care to interpret our experience by the Scripture and never the Scripture by our experience! Subjectivism, which denies, dilutes or seriously detracts from the objective authority of the Scripture, substitutes in its place the supposed infallibility of human reason (rationalism), emotion (irrationalism), or experience (pragmatism). It is in the Scripture alone that we find the truth of God's eternal redemptive purpose and virtually everything we need for a saving relationship to Him and a complete Christian experience.

Evangelicalism itself must be more than mere lip–service to the authority of Scripture. There must be vital, practical submission and obedience to Scripture as the very Word of God, for "authentic

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[10] Emil Brunner, as quoted by R. A. Finlayson, "Contemporary Ideas of Inspiration," *Revelation and the Bible*, Carl H. F. Henry, Ed, Baker Book House, 1958, p. 225.

Christianity is a religion of biblical authority."[11] Indeed, without such authority, true Christianity would be a virtual impossibility!

Biblical Authority and Epistemology

Biblical authority is absolutely vital to a truly Christian epistemology. Epistemology is the basic philosophical science—the theory of knowledge and the investigation of truth claims. It seeks to answer the most basic question: "Is true knowledge possible?"

> Note: There are three Greek terms for knowledge: γινώσκω, "come to know, become acquainted with, understand;" οἶδα, "perception, fullness of knowledge;" ἐπίσταμαι, "to understand, to fix one's thoughts upon, to be assured, know for certain." ἐπίστημη, [the noun form] is also used for both intellectual power, scientific knowledge and artistic skill. It is from this term that the word *epistemology* is derived. For Scriptural examples of this term, cf. Mk. 14:68; Acts 10:28; 15:7; 18:25; 19:15, 25; 20:18; 22:19; 24:10; 26:26; 1 Tim. 6:4; Heb. 11:8; Jas. 3:13; 4:14; Jude 10.

The Rationalists, such as Descarte, Spinoza and Leibniz, would answer that true knowledge is possible through the autonomy of human reason unaided by special revelation. The Empiricists, such as Locke, Berkeley and Hume would answer that true knowledge is possible through experience. Kant, with his phenomenal–noumenal approach, and most post–Kantian philosophers would have to answer that objective true knowledge is impossible.

The prerequisites for the attainment of true knowledge are two: the thinker with his mind and body in his given environment, and, second, a sufficient "universal" (an all—encompassing concept or ultimate point of reference sufficient to give meaning to all particulars). Although each school of philosophy has presupposed the first, no agreement can be reached regarding the second. The biblical Christian, however, possesses both. Not only has he been created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26–28), he has been regenerated (Jn. 3:3) and the image of God has been restored

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[11] J. I. Packer, *Op.cit.*, p. 20.

within him in principle (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10). Further, he possesses the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit to enable him to understand the inscripturated Word of God (1 Jn. 2:20–27). Through the Scripture he has a true knowledge of God, the "Concrete Universal," the One Ultimate Point of Reference Who gives meaning to all things. Without the inscripturated revelation of God, true knowledge would be utterly impossible![12]

The crux of the epistemological problem and the whole issue of the authority of the Scripture meet at this point. Creation was the realization of God's definitive act. God not only created the universe and every fact in it, he defined it, gave it meaning. God's knowledge of Himself, as fully self–conscious and self–contained, and of His creation, is thus analytical. God created man in His own image and likeness to reflect His thinking. Thus, man's knowledge of God, himself, and the universe is analogical, or reflective of God and Divine knowledge. In simple language, God created man to give the same meaning to everything that he had given to it—to define, comprehend and interpret himself and the world about him according to the Word of God.

In the temptation and Fall, man believed and sought to implement the lie of Satan (Gen. 3:1–7). He sought autonomy—to become his own "god" and determine for himself what was right and wrong (Gen. 3:5). He sought to give his own meaning to God, himself and every fact in the universe. Every attempt of man to gain true knowledge subsequent to the fall has been a futile, empirical exercise in sinful re–definition—a univocal reasoning that puts man himself as the ultimate—his own point of reference, his own "god."

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[12] A thorough discussion of epistemology and its vital importance to biblical Christianity and to the authority of Scripture is found in Cornelius Van Til, *A Defense of the Faith*. (den Dulk Foundation, 1969); *The Doctrine of Scripture.* (den Dulk Foundation, 1967); *A Survey of Christain Epistemology*. (den Dulk Foundations, 1969); Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge;* and R. J. Rushdoony*, The Word of Flux,* Thoburn Press, 1975.

This is the very essence of sin, which, scripturally and epistemologically, is lawlessness (1 Jn. 3:4), that is, to give any meaning to anything other than the meaning God has given to it. (cf. Rom. 1:18–23, 3:10–18; Eph. 4:17–19). Unregenerate man is thus doomed to the impossibility of true knowledge. Because he is depraved, he is by nature a rebel against God and His truth and seeks to pervert it in his thinking. Because of the effects of the Fall upon his mental capacity [the noetic effects of sin, Rom. 1:18–25], he is utterly incapable of receiving truth or possessing an affinity for it (Rom. 8:9; 3:9–12; 1 Cor. 1:18–2:14).

Only in the free and sovereign grace of God, as exercised in regeneration, the restoration of the image of God in righteousness, knowledge and the holiness of the truth (Eph.4:22–24; Co1.3:9–10) and the breaking of the dominating power of sin (Rom. 6:1–14), can man through the Scripture possess true knowledge. Apart from God and His inscripturated Word there is no true knowledge! A truly Christian epistemology with its corresponding World–and–Life view [concept of the world of reality under the power and providential control of the true God] must derive from the Scripture. Thus, the authority of Scripture is absolutely essential to a truly biblical Christianity.

A Defense of Biblical Authority

The authority of Scripture is inseparable from Apologetics. "Apologetic," from ἀπολογία (from ἀπό off, from, and λεγεῖν, to speak; hence, to speak from a certain position so as to defend that position), an apology. Technically and theologically, an apologetic is an intelligent or orderly defense of the Christian faith.

With the Apostle, we must be set for the defense of the Gospel (Cf. Phil. 1:7, 17). We are to be constantly ready and able to give an intelligent answer to the unsaved concerning our hope (1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3). We are to hold tenaciously to our confession of faith unwaveringly (Heb. 10:23). We are to be able with spiritual weaponry by the grace of God to defeat the unregenerate reasoning

of men against the true knowledge of God and bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3–5).

Biblical Authority and Apologetics

All this is utterly impossible unless we have an authoritative word from God. Thus, when we defend the faith we are defending the authority of Scripture and, conversely, when we defend the authority of Scripture, we are defending the faith, for the Christian faith rests solely on the authoritative, inscripturated Word of God. Biblical authority is the crucial issue of apologetics.

The Issue of Methodology:
Evidentialism vs Presuppositionalism

The crux of the matter is the question of methodology, a question that focuses directly on the authority of Scripture. This vital issue is clearly and simply stated by Robert L. Reymond, a contemporary theologian and writer:

> The most crucial question facing Christian apologetics is one of methodology: should the apologist in his effort to defend the faith and to persuade the unbeliever of Christian truth claims reason to or from special revelation?

> The traditional approach has been to reason to the Scripture as a special revelation from God. The more scriptural approach is to reason from the Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God.

> The traditional approach has been to demonstrate the validity of the existence of God, creation and miracles; the historicity of the Lord Jesus Christ, His supernatural birth, life, death and resurrection; with various historical, scientific and logical arguments, evidences and proofs. This form of defense is known as evidential or historical apologetics. It assumes that the supernatural origin and content of the Bible and the Christian religion are verifiable apart from the inspiration and authority of Scripture. It seeks to buttress the claims of Scripture with evidences that would logically and necessarily lead to the acceptance of the Bible as true and valid. This in turn should lead to the acceptance of biblical truths and, preeminently, to a

decision for the truth and for Christ. A refusal to make the logical decision would be intellectually dishonest.[13]

Evidentialism, which exalts the intellect of unregenerate man as autonomous and his reason as unimpaired, was derived from the Socratic system in ancient Greece. It characterized the thinking of the early Christian Apologists such as Justin Martyr and the later Scholastics, such as Thomas Aquinas. It is likewise a strong force in contemporary Christianity.[14] As a system, it may be reduced to a single statement: "I understand and I believe." Reason is made ultimate and antecedent to faith. It assumes that the unregenerate man is normal and autonomous in his thinking, and so is capable of true knowledge apart from God.

> Note: Evidentialism characterizes such works as E.J. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*; Wilbur M. Smith, *Therefore Stand*: John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity*: Clark Pinnock, *Set Forth Your Case*: and the popularized version of such thinking, Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict.*

Man's problem, according to this type of thinking, is ignorance. Once he is confronted with the evidence and weighs it with an unprejudiced mind, he must make the proper decision, if he is intellectually honest. It further assumes that saving faith is an inherent ability within human nature, only awaiting exercise in the right direction by the unregenerate individual. It is not then a matter of ability, but simply of decision and direction.

Evidentialism thus undermines the authority of the Scripture. It is further seen to be pagan in its origin and decidedly unscriptural in its basic presuppositions. The mind of the unregenerate man can never be the scriptural or logical starting point for Christian

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[13] Robert L. Reymond, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

[14] A valuable study of the history and methodology of Apologetics may be found in Greg Bahnsen, "The Reformation of Christian Apologetics," *Foundations of Christian Education*, Gary North, Ed., and Robert L. Reymond, *Op. cit.*

apologetics! Man's thinking is neither autonomous nor ultimate, nor yet neutral and unprejudiced; it is depraved and abnormal (Jn. 3:19–20; Rom. 1:18–32, 3:10–18, 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1–3; 4:17–19). His problem is not ignorance, but sinful rebellion in the suppression and perversion of truth both in the created universe and in his own heart (Rom. 1:18–23; 2:15).[15] He views the universe as anthropocentric with himself as the ultimate point of reference, thus dethroning God and enthroning himself in his own sinful thinking.

Every fact in the universe is a God–created fact and witnesses to the reality and power of God (Gen. 1:1; Psa. 19:1ff; Rom. 1:18–20). The problem lies not with the evidence, but with the mind and heart of fallen man who has both rejected this evidence and perverted it. By nature unregenerate man is highly offended by any attempt to dethrone his supposed autonomy or ultimacy. Apart from the free and sovereign grace of God, he has neither the affinity for Divine truth nor the ability to understand it. The faith he possesses apart from Divine grace is a humanistic faith, not the God–given faith that rests itself in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ through the Scripture.[16]

Although evidentialism is a strong force in contemporary Christianity (evidently because its basic assumptions find so great an affinity with the current trend in the Arminian and Pelagian

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[15] Rom. 1:18, "holding the truth in unrighteousness" "Holding" is κατεχόντων, pres. ptc., i.e., "habitually suppressing." v. 21, ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν, "futile in their reasonings." ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδία. "darkened became their incapacitated heart."

[16] Eph. 2:8–10 declares that true, saving faith, as distinct from temporary or mere human trust, is the gift of God, i.e., Divinely–wrought in the heart, mind and soul of man. Some object to this by arguing that the antecedent of the pron. "that" [τοῦτο] is neut. and "faith" [διὰ τῆς πίστεως] is fem. But all of salvation is by grace, which includes faith. The essential issue is understanding the biblical nature of grace, and then the instrumental nature of faith. Further, fem. abstract nouns may take a neut. pron.

philosophies and their humanistic doctrine of natural ability, the autonomy of man, or free will),[17] there is a method of apologetics which is scriptural. This involves reasoning from the Scripture rather than to it, and is theologically termed presuppositionalism.[18] As we do not intend to treat the whole range of apologetics, we will limit ourselves to three essential considerations, each inseparable from and focusing directly on the true authority of Scripture.

Scripture as Self–Authenticating

First, Scripture is self–authenticating or self–attesting. That is, as the very Word of God inscripturated, it possesses inherent authority and testifies to such (e.g., Gen. 1:3ff, 7:1; Lev. 1:1; 1 Sam. 4:21; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20– 21). As the inscripturated revelation of God, the absolute and ultimate standard and authority, it cannot be subjected to any human criterion with man as the ultimate judge. Rather, it is to be believed and obeyed because it claims to be the authoritative Word of God. To subject Scripture to the supposed autonomy of human reason would be to admit the ultimacy of the human mind and its supremacy over the Word of God! It may be objected that such reasoning is circular and therefore invalid. That it is circular is readily admitted, but that it is invalid, is categorically denied. The problem is put clearly by Thomas Rees:

> It is a problem involved in the difficulties of all ultimate problems, and all argument about it is apt to move in a circle. For the ultimate must bear witness of its own ultimacy, the absolute to its own absoluteness, and authority to its own sovereignty. If there were a court of appeal or a standard of reference to which anything called

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[17] Fallen, sinful man is a free moral agent, i.e., he is not a robot, but is fully responsible for his sinful behavior. But he does not possess "free will," i.e., the power of contrary choice. Biblically, the term "free will" is never used in a salvific context, but always in the context of voluntary offerings which were not commanded for specific sins.

[18] Scripture itself begins with a presuppositional statement in Gen. 1:1, presupposing the existence, nature and power of God. Scripture never seeks to "prove" the existence of God.

ultimate, absolute or supreme, could apply for its credentials, it would therefore become relative and subordinate to that other criterion.... No process of mediate reasoning can establish it, for no premise can be found from which it issues as a conclusion. It judges all things, but is judged by none. It is its own witness and judge.[19]

Scripture must, by virtue of its very nature, be self–authenticating. As to the charge of circular reasoning, we simply state that all intelligent human reasoning is presuppositional and therefore circular. The Christian Theist presupposes on the authority of Scripture, not only the existence of God, but that the God Who exists is the very God Who has revealed and identified Himself in Scripture. The atheist presupposes that there is no God. The believer presupposes the authority and infallibility of Scripture and so believes in creation. The evolutionist presupposes evolution and so denies creation. The Arminian or Pelagian presupposes the autonomy of the free will of man and so disbelieves the Scripture concerning the free and sovereign grace of God.

The real issue is that the presuppositions of man apart from the authority of Scripture are based upon his sinful prejudice, rebellious mind and depraved incapacity. The atheist is willfully blind to the universal witness of God in creation and constantly suppresses this truth in sinful thinking and behavior (Rom. 1: 18–20). He further sins against the knowledge of God that resides in his inner being (Rom. 2:15).[20] He cannot admit the implications of the existence of God, especially the God of the Bible; therefore, he must presuppose the alternative. The same is true concerning the evolutionist and those who degrade the grace of God. Man by nature must be ultimate and seeks to preserve his own word as infallible!

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[19] Thomas Rees, "Authority", *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. I, p. 334.

[20] No man is an atheist by nature; atheism is a learned position, as man is the image–bearer of God and has the law of God ontologically embedded in his nature rendering him a rational, morally–responsible being.

The Unity of the Scriptures

The self–authentication of Scripture is clearly seen in the unity of the Bible. Although written by various human authors over a millennium and a half, it witnesses overwhelmingly to its organic unity and singularity of authorship under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Scripture stands uniquely and infallibly as its own interpreter.

There are a variety of expressions that witness to the authority and self–attestation of Scripture. "Thus saith the Lord" and "And God said" both occur hundreds of times in the Old Testament to declare a direct revelation from God. In the New Testament our Lord and His Apostles use various terms that reflect the absolute authority of the Old Testament. "It is written" emphasizes the immutable authority or infallibility of Scripture, to which they gave their final appeal. Such expressions as: "It says," "Scripture says," or "God says," are used interchangeably by both our Lord and the Apostles as equivalent terms, virtually identifying the Word of God and Scripture as one and the same. The mention of "the oracles of God" [τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ] refer to nothing less than:

> …distinctively "oracular utterances", divinely authoritative communications, before which men stand in awe and to which they bow in humility: and this high meaning is not merely implicit, but is explicit in the term.[21]

The New Testament not only witnesses to the inspiration of the Old (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20–21), but also to its own inspiration (Jn. 14:26, 16:13; 2 Pet. 3:15–16). Scripture likewise bears witness to itself in fulfilled prophecy.

The Witness of Our Lord

The witness of our Lord is central to the self–authentication of Scripture. Not only did he use interchangeably the ideas of "It says,"

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[21] Cf. the extensive and valuable article by B. B. Warfield on these terms, *Op. cit.,* pp. 283–332, 387.

"Scripture says" and "God says," but he viewed Scripture as an authoritative, infallible, organic whole. He declared, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (Jn. 10:35). He lived "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). He made Scripture His final court of appeal (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Jn. 5:39–47) and directed His earthly life toward its fulfillment (Lk. 4:16–21; Matt. 8:16–17, 16:21–23, 26:45– 56, 27:46; Jn. 19:28). He declared that not the slightest particle of Scripture would fail to be completely fulfilled (Matt. 5: 18). The Scripture thus witnesses to itself that it is the authoritative Word of God. Only sinful unbelief prevents recognition of it as such.

Reasoning from the Scriptures

The second consideration is a biblical methodology that reasons *from* the Scripture rather than *to* it, a methodology that presupposes its full authority. In principle we find the graphic example of such in the Apostle Paul's sermon to the Athenian philosophers (Acts 17:16–34). We must carefully mark that before this address he had been preaching and expounding the Scripture for some time in the local synagogue and the marketplace.

Failure to properly digest this as to its full significance would lead to a complete misunderstanding of his sermon, for it was based on his previous ministry there (v. 16–20). Briefly, Paul did not begin by taking as his point of reference any form of natural theology or the supposed autonomy of human reason. In short, he was definitely not an evidentialist, but a thorough presuppositionalist. He rather began by pointing to their incidental, though admitted ignorance of the one true God (v. 23). He then proceeded with full authority to declare the nature of God and His absolute sovereignty over and all–encompassing providence throughout creation. Finally, after pointing to the error of idolatry, he declared the moral character of God and

universal necessity to repent in the face of certain resurrection to judgment (v. 24–31).[22]

At every point, Paul and his hearers were in total disagreement, yet we read that although some scorned and others put off the message with its implications, "certain men clave to him and believed" (v. 32–34). He spoke with all authority because he had an authoritative word from God. He did not undermine that authority by seeking a supposed common ground in reasoning to the truth of God. Not only must we hold to the true authority of Scripture, we must take great care not to weaken it by our methodology!

> See Van Til, The Defense of the Faith; Robert L. Reymond The Justification of Knowledge; Greg Bahnsen, Presuppositional Apologetics and Always Ready; John Frame, Apologetics for the Glory of God; and Scott Oliphant, The Battle Belongs to the Lord, Reasons for Faith and Revelation and Reason for a thorough presentation of Presuppositional Apologetics.

Faith and the Authority of Scripture

Finally, we must note the relationship of faith to the authority of Scripture. The sequence is not, "I understand and I believe," but rather, "I believe that I may understand," or in the language of Scripture, "Through faith we understand..." [Πίστει νοοῦμεν, Heb. 11:3]. The authority of Scripture is not believed because of logical arguments, evidence of proofs, but rather it is held by faith. We do not mean mere intellectual convincement, as one may become intellectually convinced of truth but utterly devoid of true faith. Decision and conversion are not necessarily synonymous.

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[22] It has been objected that Paul at Athens," sought to play the philospher and failed," thus he vowed never to do so again (1 Cor. 2:1–5). Nothing could be further from the truth! Paul was in his element at Athens. The address to the Areopagus [Athenian Philosophical Court] was a summary of his weeks of daily evangelism in the agora. He simply put "Jesus" and "the resurrection" in their historical–redemptive context.

By faith we mean that God–given belief, trust and reliance that is imparted to the individual in regenerating grace. As such, it is not a mere intellectual assent or an entirely subjective feeling or experience. It is a faith that possesses a definite character and quality that answers both to the authority and teaching of Scripture (Acts 18:27; Rom. 4:16, 8:14–16; 1 Cor. 2:1–5, 10–16; Eph. 2:8–10; 1 Thess. 1:4–10, 2:13; 1 In. 2:3–5).

We thus believe that our Bible is the very Word of God inscripturated. It reveals to us our God, our duty and our destiny. It is our only and all–sufficient rule of faith and practice. It is our final court of appeal. It is our necessary and sufficient spiritual food, our word of doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction, encouragement and comfort. It is our textbook of God, His universe and His eternal redemptive purpose. It is all this and more because it is the authoritative Word of God.

Sola Scriptura:
The Great Baptist Distinctive

Matthew 4:4 "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

John 17:17 "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

Romans 3:4 "…yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written…"

Romans 4:3 "For what saith the Scripture…?"

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 "…For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds…Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ…"

2 Timothy 3:16–17 "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

2 Timothy 4:2 "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

Titus 1:9 "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to make some general observations on the subject of *Sola Scriptura*. It will not deal in depth with the specific issues of logic and irrationalism in modern theology, or the issues of postmodernism, but will introduce the subject of "good and necessary consequence" as demanded by the main subject.

The outline of this paper discusses the three most basic questions concerning *Sola Scriptura*:

I. *Sola Scriptura*: The Essence of Baptist Doctrine and Practice. What is the significance of this one essential Baptist distinctive?

II. *Sola Scriptura* and the Use of Good and Necessary Consequence. Is it legitimate to logically deduce aspects of doctrinal and practical truth from the Scriptures?

III. *Sola Scriptura* and a Consistent Biblical Hermeneutic. What is the significance of a biblical hermeneutic that is consistent with the pervading principle of progressive revelation?

There are several great Baptist distinctives which characterize the biblical and historic Baptist position. These major distinctives include: first, the Scriptures as the only and all–sufficient rule of both faith and practice. This stands in contrast to other historic criteria such as religious tradition, ecclesiastical authority, creeds, church councils, rationalism and modern religious irrationalism which stresses subjective experience and emotionalism.

Second, salvation by grace alone. Salvation by grace implies: that salvation must be scripturally viewed in the context of the eternal, infallible redemptive purpose of God (Rom. 8:28–31; Eph. 1:3–14) and that grace is unmerited favor in the place or stead of merited wrath. Grace and works or human ability cannot be commingled (Rom. 9:6–24; 11:5–6; Eph. 2:4–5, 8–10).

Grace is more than a principle. It is at once *a principle*—as opposed to works or human ability, *a prerogative*—God freely and sovereignly bestows this grace on whom he will, according to his eternal, infallible purpose; and *a power*—which enables the sinner to freely and effectively lay hold of Christ by faith (Phil. 1:29); Regeneration or the "new birth" precedes faith and repentance (Jn. 3:3, 5–8; Acts 16:14; Jas. 1:18); Gospel holiness and righteousness are necessary characteristics of experimental salvation and Christian experience (Rom. 6:1–23; Eph. 1:3–6; 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10; 1 Thess. 1:3–5).

Third, believer's baptism by immersion. This Baptist distinctive derives from the truth of the New Testament as to both mode—immersion, and subjects—believers.

There is one term used in the New Testament for baptism: βαπτιζεῖν, which denotes to dip, plunge, immerse, or wash by dipping. It derives from the root βαφ, which connotes depth. Had the inspired writers of the New Testament desired to convey the idea of sprinkling, they would have used the common term in the New Testament for sprinkling, ῥαντιζεῖν. Further, baptism is clearly symbolic of the believer's union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection (see Rom. 6:3–5), thus it is for believers only and by immersion.

There is no record of the immersion or sprinkling of infants, or the intentional baptism of unbelievers in the New Testament. On this New Testament distinctive, the Baptists stand in opposition to both Western and Eastern Catholicism, and traditional Protestantism. We can change neither the mode nor the subjects without altogether changing the significance of the ordinance.

Fourth, a regenerate church membership. This is distinctive of a true New Testament or Gospel church, and necessarily implies:

- That church membership is voluntary. A church that practices the immersion or sprinkling of infants and considers the church to be composed of both believers and their children is largely involuntary in membership and alien to the New Testament.

- That the membership is bound by a common personal faith and saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Acts 2:41–42, 47).

Fifth, the priesthood of the individual believer. In the context of the New Covenant and New Testament, there is no priest–cult or sacerdotal mediator between the individual believer and his Lord. Every believer is a "king–priest," and has immediate access to God through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1–3; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:13–10:18; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6).

Note: Heb. 5:5–6; 6:20; 7:1–25 for the perpetuity or everlasting nature of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. esp. 7:23–25. "unchangeable" is ἀπαράβατον, lit: "inviolable, untrespassable." No

Romish, Mormon, Jewish or Protestant priest can trespass upon the priesthood which our Lord holds.

The priesthood of the individual believer stands in the closest relationship to soul–liberty or freedom of conscience.

Sixth, the autonomy of the local assembly under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The autonomy, or self–governing nature of each local body of Christ, presupposes four realities:

The terms *Pastor*, *Elder* and *Bishop* all designate the same office in the local assembly. There is no ecclesiastical hierarchy, or church office that exists apart from or beyond that of the local assembly. Cf. Heb. 5:5–6; 6:20; 7:1–25 for the perpetuity or everlasting nature of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. esp. 7:23–25.

> Note: "Pastor" (ποιμήν, shepherd) and "Bishop" (ἐπίκοπος, overseer, one who exercises oversight) both refer to the work of the Gospel ministry—that of pastoring or overseeing the local assembly or flock of Christ. "Elder" (πρεσβύτερος, has the primary connotation of "aged," then of maturity, seniority of rank, or a position of responsibility). These terms are all used interchangeably in the New Testament for the ministerial office within the local church (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). In addition, the two terms διάκονος [twice translated "deacon," but used more often of ministers or preachers in the New Testament] and οἰκονόμος, "servant," or "steward" are descriptive of the office and do not admit of any hierarchy.

• The New Testament does not teach an "Apostolic Succession," therefore Baptists do not recognize any authority above the local assembly, except that of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and his inscripturated Word. Matthias replaced Judas to fulfill the prophetic Scripture (Acts 1:15–26), but no one ever succeeded the original Apostles of the New Testament era into that office.

• There is no extra–biblical authority that rules beyond the local assembly, such as presbyteries, councils, synods, denominational conventions, national churches or associations.

• The so–called "First Church Council" held at Jerusalem in Acts 15, although attended by the inspired Apostles, was actually a *conference* between two local churches and possessed no authority beyond the agreement of the Apostles who attended—and it largely failed to halt the tendencies of the Judaizers, who continued to dog the steps of the Apostle Paul.

Seventh, **"Soul Liberty"** or freedom of conscience. Only the Word of God can command the conscience of the Believer. It is foreign to the teaching of the New Testament to bind the conscience by religious tradition, ecclesiastical decree, denominational standards; or attempt to enforce religious convictions by means of the civil authorities. Church discipline, or exclusion from membership and its privileges, is the extremity of church action. Further, this is not done by degrees, but by a definitive act of the membership.

All Baptist distinctives derive from the Scriptures, predominantly the New Testament. Any given church is therefore a New Testament or Gospel church to the extent that it conforms to the New Testament; conversely, to the extent that any given church departs from the New Testament, to that extent it ceases to be a New Testament or Gospel church.

Sola Scriptura: The Essence of Baptist Doctrine and Practice

The Meaning and Significance of Sola Scriptura

The Latin term *Sola Scriptura* was one of the distinctive features of the Protestant Reformation. It means "Scripture Alone," and signaled the Reformed departure from alleged Papal infallibility and the authority of Romish tradition contained in the writings of the Church Fathers and oral tradition. Both Reformed and Baptist theology claim the principle of *Sola Scriptura* or the all–sufficiency of Scripture as the only rule of both faith and practice.

This Truth is Foundational
to all other Baptist Distinctives

As Baptists, we derive our distinctiveness from the Scriptures, and particularly the New Testament, consistent with the principle of the progressive nature of Divine revelation. This principle holds to the necessary finality of the New Testament over the Old (Heb. 10:1).[23] The all–sufficiency of Scripture forms the foundation or inspired and authoritative context for all other distinctives that characterize our position. C. H. Spurgeon stated:

> I became a Baptist through reading the New Testament…especially in the Greek….

> If I thought it wrong to be a Baptist, I should give it up, and become what I believed to be right. The particular doctrine adhered to by Baptists is that they acknowledge no authority unless it comes from the Word of God.[24]

The Authority of Scripture

The authority of Scripture must necessarily be discussed in the context of both its sufficiency and our Baptist distinctives. If we hold to the all–sufficiency of Scripture as the only rule of both faith and practice, then we must do so intelligently and consistently, understanding the nature and significance of Scriptural authority.

First, the Source of Scriptural Authority. The Bible does not derive its authority from its content, the validity or accuracy of its historical data, the uniqueness of its character, or even the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (All of which are vital or necessary). The authority of Scripture derives from God Himself. He is the self–contained, self–disclosing God who has spoken (Gen. 1:1–3; Heb. 1:1–3). The Bible is therefore the very Word of God inscripturated.

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[23] The Law or Old Covenant was a "shadow" [Σκιὰν, a dim outline or sketch] of the future substance of the New or Gospel Covenant.

[24] C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography* I, pp. 148, 152.

Second, the Significance of Scriptural Authority. The word *authority* derives from the Latin *auctor*, which means author, originator, teacher. It connotes the power to command, to require and receive submission and obedience. This term carries the status of ultimacy and finality. The Bible as the inscripturated Word of God is the immutable and ultimate authority as much as the Word of God spoken. Note the phrase: *"It is written…"* γεγράπται, perf. *"It stands written* [with unchanging authority and force]…" As the very Word of God, the authority of Scripture is:

• Necessary. Natural revelation (God revealed in creation, history, and in the rational and moral nature of man) is insufficient for both unfallen and fallen mankind. Even unfallen Adam in the state of primeval righteousness needed special revelation or the word of God spoken directly to him for an adequate concept of reality and duty (Cf. the Creation Mandate, the commands concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and his duty to tend the Garden of Eden, Gen. 1:26–28; 2:15–25).

• Comprehensive. It necessarily encompasses all of life and reality. There is no sphere of life or activity where the Word of God is not to be our guide (Matt. 4:4; 1 Cor. 10:31).

• Ultimate. Because this Word derives from God himself, there is no higher authority by which it can be judged or standard to which it can be subjected. It is self–authenticating, intelligent and absolute. All other criteria or authorities are relative to the Scriptures. (Psa. 138:2; Isa. 46:9–11; Matt. 24:35; Heb. 1:1–3).

Third, there are five essential terms necessarily associated with the authority of Scripture:

• Revelation. God can only be known as he is pleased to reveal himself. He has revealed himself in creation, i.e., natural revelation (Psa. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:18–20), in the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:18; 14:9) and in his Word, i.e., special revelation (Psa. 19:7–14; Heb. 1:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21). This Word or self–revelation of God has been inscripturated, or put down in written

form. God is intelligent, non–contradictory and absolute; so is his Divine, special revelation, both spoken and written.

- Inspiration. (2 Tim. 3:16, θεοπνεύστός literally, *God–breathed*). Scriptural authority rests on inspiration in as much as Divine inspiration has given us the very Word of God in written form. The very writings themselves are Divinely inspired. Cf. Also 2 Pet. 1:20–21.

- Infallibility. "Incapable of error or deception." The Bible is self–consistent and non–contradictory. It reflects the intelligence or mind, and the nature and character of God himself. Because the Bible is the inspired Word of God, it is authoritative and so necessarily infallible.

- Inerrancy. "Free from error arising from either mistake or deception." Because the Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God, it is infallible and inerrant.

- Canonicity. The terms *canon*, *canonicity*, are derived from Gk. κανῶν, and mean a rule, measure or standard. Secondarily, these terms denote the body of Divinely inspired, authoritative Truth—the Word of God inscripturated—the Scriptures.

Early Christianity possessed the Jewish Scriptures, the writings of the Apostles and evangelists, a great body of oral tradition, and various writings styled as apocryphal and pseudographical. From these writings early Christianity, with great care and by a stringent standard (or *canon*), *recognized* [they did *not* establish or form] a given body of writings as the Holy Scriptures or the Word of God inscripturated. Canonicity, then, *recognizes* the body of revealed truth inscripturated and distinguishes the false from the true, the authoritative from the unauthoritative.

Conclusion

The doctrine of Scripture alone—*Sola Scriptura*—as the only and all–sufficient rule of both faith and practice is the one great

Baptist distinctive from which all others derive. This great truth stands as foundational to all other aspects of truth.

Sola Scriptura and the use of
Good and Necessary Consequences

Logic and Theology

The use of logic to deduce propositional truth from the Scriptures is as old as Christian theology itself. Most early Christian theologians and scholars had been educated as philosophers and assimilated their principles of formal reasoning into their theological methodology.

Some have occasionally protested the use of formal deductive logic, convinced that it results in a form of *eisagesis*, or rather *illegitimate exegesis*, i.e., either reading into or deriving from the text of Scripture a meaning that is foreign or forced in its conclusion. This attitude is known as *misology*, literally, a hatred of logic.

This misology is particularly evident in some aspects of modern theology and its tendency toward irrationalism. The modern emphasis is largely existential, or experience–oriented. This is not only true of the Charismatics, Fundamentalists, and the Neoorthodox; it has even made its entrance into modern Reformed thinking. We must consider that man has been created in the image God as a rational, morally–responsible being. As such, he has an instinct for order and both the necessity and ability to reason consistently. A discussion of *Sola Scriptura* would be incomplete without some reference to logical thinking from the Scriptures.

An Historical Distinction
between the Reformed Tradition and Baptists
in Statement and Practice

The first London Baptist Confession of Faith was written in 1644 and published in 1646. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* of the Presbyterians was first printed on December 7, 1646 and subsequently published in 1647. The First London Baptist Confession then antedated the Westminster Confession and was thus

unaffected by it. *The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* was written in 1677 and published in 1689. It is a "Baptist" version of the Westminster Confession. The major and most well–known subsequent Baptist confessions—*The Philadelphia Baptist Confession* (1742) and *The New Hampshire Baptist Confession* (1833)—were both affected to a significant degree by the Westminster Confession.[25]

Although the two major Baptist confessions subsequent to 1677 significantly reflect the Westminster Confession, they do not include its language respecting "good and necessary consequence," as noted below:

The *Westminster Confession*, Chapter I, Article VI:

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is *either expressly set down in Scripture*, or by *good and necessary consequence* may be deduced from Scripture…

Contrast this with the *Second London Baptist Confession* of 1689, Chapter I, Article 6:

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, *is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture*.

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[25] Cf. The following works for the Confessions, their doctrinal distinctives, their interdependence, and the dates of their respective publication, etc.: Edward B. Underhill, *Confessions of Faith and Other Public Documents Illustrative of the History of Baptists Churches of England in the 17th Century*, 1854; John A. Broadus, *Baptist Confessions, Covenants and Catechisms*, 1996; W. J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1912; William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1959; Alexander Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly: Its History and Standards*. Edmonton, Alb: Still Waters Revival Books, 1992; Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 3 Vols.; B. B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981.

Note the alleged difference between the Reformed view of "good and necessary consequence" and the Baptist view of "either expressly set down or necessarily contained in Scripture."

The Application of This Principle in Controversy

This alleged difference surfaced immediately in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the same century when these confessions were formulated. Note the words of Dr. Kenneth Good,[26] who quotes from the Baptist historian Thomas Crosby:

> That the above distinction has historical validity is borne out by an important passage from Thomas Crosby. Many public debates were held in England between Baptists and Paedo–Baptists in the latter part of the seventeenth century, and Crosby records some of these in detail. On one occasion (Feb. 22, 1699) such a disputation was conducted at Portsmouth, as he says, "between the Presbyterians and Baptists concerning baptism. In the course of the debate, the words of which are recorded, the Paedo–Baptists refer with monotonous repetition to "consequences drawn from Scripture," "good Scripture consequences," "by good consequence," "by consequence," "the consequence of the major," "at least consequential, it is sufficient," "It is the good consequences I insist upon," "good consequences from the commission are sufficient" "I am for consequences," and "the subjects are to be brought in by consequences." Meanwhile the Baptists continued to insist simply upon specific Scriptures to which they made their appeal and which they frequently quoted."[27]

This situation seems to point out a major difference of approach to Scripture between the Baptists and the Reformed tradition in the area of "good and necessary consequences," and implies that the Baptists were more scriptural at this point, holding to the all–sufficiency of Scripture, while the Reformed approach implicitly

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[26] Although we disagree with the late Dr. Kenneth Good in this matter of "good and necessary consequence," we esteemed him as a good friend and dear Brother in Christ with whom we had blessed fellowship and the greatest agreement in the areas of soteriology and ecclesiology.

[27] Dr. Kenneth H. Good, *Are Baptists Reformed?* p. 109. Dr. Good quotes from Thomas Crosby, *The History of the Baptists*, III, pp. 314–353.

denied this by the addition of human logic. Dr. Good writes: "*The Reformed speak of sufficiency, but they add the theory of 'necessary consequence'.*" (Italics his).[28]

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The Traditional Reformed Approach
to "Good and Necessary Consequence"

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What do Reformed theologians mean by "good and necessary consequence?" In commenting on these words in the Westminster Confession, the following Reformed writers reveal the essence of "good and necessary consequence."

William Cunningham: "*…inferences or deductions* from scriptural statements beyond what is contained in the mere words of Scripture…"[29]

A. A. Hodge: …nothing is to be regarded as an article of faith…which is *not explicitly or implicitly taught* in Scripture."[30]

B. B. Warfield: …either by literal assertion or by *necessary implication…*"[31]

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The Legitimacy of "Good and Necessary Consequence"
and the Point of Contention

Four Considerations

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First, the use of logic or formal consistent thinking to deduce distinct statements of truth from the Scriptures is absolutely essential for any consistent or systematic approach to theology, preaching or the application of Scripture to the varied situations of Christian experience.

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[29] William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, p. 526.

[30] A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith*, p. 39.

[31] B. B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*, p. 226.

Second, Abraham reasoned from the spoken Word of God [he reasoned theologically] and acted upon this reasoning–by–faith when he offered Isaac upon the altar (Heb. 11:17–19). God had told Abraham that his posterity and the fulfillment of the covenant promise would come through Isaac (Gen. 17:5–7, 15–19). Later God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:1–18). Heb. 11:17–19 states that Abraham reasoned (logically, intelligently) that God would raise Isaac from the dead to fulfill the promise (λογισάμενος ὅτι καὶ ἐκ νεκρων ἐγειρειν δύνατος ὁ θέος).

Mark how our Lord used "good and necessary consequences" and deductions from the Scripture to establish the principle of doing good on the Sabbath Day (Matt. 12:9–13; Mk. 3:1–5). Note the same inspired approach of the Apostle Paul in referring to the matter of financial support for Gospel ministers in the use of the ox that was used to tread out the corn and the farmer who partook of his harvest (1 Cor. 9:6–14). Thus we have inspired examples of "good and necessary consequences."

Third, the use of "good and necessary consequences" is not unique to the Reformed tradition. Baptists have historically acknowledged the use of deductive and inductive logic from the Scriptures. Note the eighteenth century Baptist theologian and scholar John Gill on the perspicuity of Scripture:

> Nor is every doctrine of the Scriptures expressed in so many words; as the doctrine of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead; the eternal generation of the Son of God; his incarnation, &c. but then the things themselves signified by them are clear and plain; and there are terms and phrases answerable to them; or they are to be deduced from thence by just and necessary consequences.[32]

J. P. Boyce, Baptist theologian and founder of the first Southern Baptist theological seminary stated:

> These constitute the sources of our knowledge of Theology, which are two, Reason and Revelation....Reason is that power in man, which enables him to have mental perceptions, to exercise thought,

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[32] John Gill, *Body of Divinity*, p. 21.

and reflection, to know facts, to inquire into their mutual relations, and to deduce logically, the conclusions which may be drawn from them....Reason may be used either with reference to the natural or supernatural means of knowledge conferred by God.[33]

A. H. Strong, another Baptist theologian, whose *Systematic Theology* remains a standard work, wrote:

The Scriptures [and]...their teachings, when taken together, in no way contradict a reason conditioned in its activity by a holy affection and enlightened by the Spirit of God. The proper office of reason, in this large sense is to estimate and reduce to system the facts of revelation, when these have been found properly attested. To deduce from these facts their natural and logical conclusions..."[34]

Fourth, the Baptist position of "*either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture*" necessarily and inescapably implies the deduction of "necessary consequences" as the truth of Scripture is appropriated in theology and applied to experience.

The Basic Issue

Some have objected to the principle of "good and necessary consequence" because it has been prominent in the polemics between the Reformed and Baptist positions on baptism. The issue is actually hermeneutical and concerns one's fundamental approach to Scripture.

The true point of contention is not specifically "good and necessary consequence," but the general hermeneutical approach of Reformed tradition. The objections of Baptists and others against the persecution of Baptists and other Independents by religious and civil authorities, and the sprinkling of infants are neither "good" nor "necessary consequences" deduced from Scripture. They are rather the deductions of an "Old Testament mentality" which largely views

[33] J. P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, p. 46.

[34] A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 29.

the New Testament as a mere continuation of the Old. This issue will be considered in the next section.

Conclusion

Consistent reasoning from the Scriptures is essential for all consistent application. The proper use of "good and necessary consequence" is not a Reformed characteristic that militates against the Baptist position of *Sola Scriptura*, but is a necessity for the application of scriptural truth in theology, preaching and Christian experience. The basic issue is not "good and necessary consequence," but an "Old Testament mentality" which, while maintaining the unity of Scripture, does not fully recognize either its progressive nature or the finality of the New Testament.

Sola Scriptura
and a Consistent Biblical Hermeneutic

The Meaning and Significance
of Biblical Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics ἑρμηνέτικος, from ἑρμηνεύειν, "to interpret," is the science of interpretation and is the culmination of Exegetical Theology.

Note: Historically, theology has inherited its vocabulary largely from the Greek and Latin. `Ερμενεύτικος is derived from *Hermes*, the god of Greek mythology who served as a herald and messenger to the other gods.

There are two basic questions that Exegetical Theology seeks to answer:

First, *what does the Bible say?*—a matter of the reading of the text. This question is concerned with such issues as textual criticism, parallel passages, the larger and more immediate context. It takes into consideration an exegesis of the text in the original language, which includes the lexical, historical, cultural and syntactical significance of words and their relationships.

Second, *what does the Bible mean?*—a matter of interpretation. Hermeneutics is based on the first question and deals with this

second question. There is only one possible and consistent interpretation, although there may be several avenues of application.[35]

Approaches to Biblical Interpretation

There must be an attempt to formulate a consistent hermeneutic, i.e., a system of interpretation.

> For a full discussion of the history of interpretation and the various approaches, cf. The following works: Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969, pp. 19–39; F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961. 553 pp.; A. Berkley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966, pp. 20–53; Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969. pp. 23–84; Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964. pp. 163–174.

The history of Christianity reveals the following attempts: first, the Allegorical or Spiritual. This approach seeks a deeper meaning than the literal or common and ordinary usage of the language (the *usus loquendi*). Any method or system is only in the mind of the interpreter. Such allegorizing of Scripture is necessarily arbitrary, fanciful, and often irrational.

This approach began with the Greeks and their ancient writings. It entered into early Christianity through Alexandrian Judaism, and especially in the writings of Philo the Jew. He sought to synthesize Greek philosophy and the Hebrew religion by allegorizing the Old Testament Scriptures to make them acceptable to the Greek mind. This approach became the predominant method of interpretation until the Protestant Reformation. It was largely an attempt by the early Church Fathers to make the Old Testament a "Christian Book"

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[35] It seems to be a rather common fault of the pulpit that little or no distinction is made between interpretation and application. Thus, many are often led into thinking that the application is the interpretation, either confusing the two or omitting the distinction.

by spiritualization, and so confused Old Testament typology with allegory.

F. W. Farrar points to the first instance in the Patristic writings:

…Clement of Rome [c.90–100]. This ancient bishop…is the first…who endows Rahab with the gift of prophecy, because by the scarlet cord hung out of her window she made it manifest that redemption should flow by the blood of the Lord to all them that believe and hope in God. As the pictoral fancy of a preacher, such an illustration would be harmless; but when it is offered as the explanation of an actual prophecy it is the earliest instance of the overstrained Allegory, which was afterwards to affect the whole life of Christian exegesis.[36]

The development of the allegorical approach may be noted in examples taken from the Church Fathers, who finally applied it to the New Testament as well:

Clement of Alexandria (c. 155–220) taught at least five possible meanings in any given passage: (1) The *historical* sense, or actual and literal. (2) The *doctrinal* sense, or moral, religious and theological. (3) The *prophetic* sense, or prophetic and typological. (4) The *philosophical* sense, or finding meaning in natural objects and historical persons, following the psychological method of the Stoics. (5) The *mystical* sense, or the symbolism of deeper truths. An example of Clement's approach to Scripture is noted in the following:

…[Clement] commenting on the Mosaic prohibition of eating the swine, the hawk, the eagle, and the raven, observes: "The sow is the emblem of voluptuous and unclean lust of food…The eagle indicates robbery, the hawk injustice, and the raven greed.". . . Clement of Alexandria maintained that the laws of Moses contain a four–fold significance, the natural, the mystical, the moral, and the prophetical.[37]

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[36] F. W. Farrar, *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

[37] Milton S. Terry, *Op. cit.*, pp. 163–164.

Origen (c. 155–254) held that, as the nature of man is composed of body, soul and spirit, so the Scriptures possess a corresponding three–fold sense: the literal, the moral and the spiritual.

Augustine (354–430) "justified the allegorical interpretation by a 'gross misinterpretation' of 2 Cor. 3:6. He made it mean that the *spiritual* or *allegorical* interpretation was the real meaning of the Bible; the *literal* interpretation kills."[38] He was forced into such an approach by his polemic encounters with the Manichaeans and the Donatists. Thus, he justified the use of force by the civil authorities to "compel" dissenters to return to the Catholic Church by interpreting the parable of the great supper to the "Church" (Cf. Lk. 14:16–24, esp. v. 23). Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274) typifies the Medieval approach:

> The author of Holy Writ is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man can also do), but also by things themselves. So…that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. Therefore that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it. Now this spiritual sense has a threefold division…the allegorical sense…the moral sense…the anagogical sense. Since the literal sense is that which the author intends, and since the author of Holy Writ is God, Who by one act comprehends all things by His intellect, it is not unfitting, as Augustine says (*Confess*. XII), if, even according to the literal sense, one word in Holy Writ should have several senses.[39]

Second, the Mystical. "Manifold depths and shades of meaning are sought in every word of Scripture."[40] This approach not only characterized the Jewish Kabbalists and most of the allegorists, but

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[38] Bernard Ramm, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

[39] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part 1, Question 1, Article 10.

[40] Milton S. Terry, *Loc. cit.*

included the Medieval mystics and such later heretical writers as Jakob Boehme (1575–1624) and Immanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) with his three–fold sense of Scripture: the natural or literal, the spiritual and the celestial.

Third, the Pietistic or Devotional. Pietism was a reaction against the neo–scholasticism and cold theological dogmatism that followed the Protestant Reformation. It approached the Scripture in a very practical and subjective way for personal edification. Such an approach characterized the ministry and writings of such men as Philip James Spener, A. H. Francke of Halle, and such groups as the Moravians and Quakers. Some Pietists and the Quakers claimed to be guided by an "inner light" in their interpretation of Scripture—an extreme view of 1 Jn. 2:20. Such an approach tended toward confusion, irrationalism and a mystical approach to Scripture.

Much modern so–called "devotional" use of Scripture violates basic and consistent hermeneutical principles, such as a complete disregard for the grammar or context of Scripture. E.g., Gen. 31:49 is used as a benediction, when it was actually a covenant between two deceivers who did not trust each other, and so called upon God to watch the other! E.g., In Psa. 118:24 the indicative "rejoice" is changed to the imperative mode and given as an exhortation.

If one changes the grammar of the Scripture, he necessarily changes the meaning, and so speaks or writes without scriptural authority. E.g., Psa. 2:8 has been used as a missionary text, but the context (v. 6–9) refers this to the reign of the Messiah–King, who shall judge the nations! Care must be taken to make the absolutely necessary distinction between *interpretation* and *application*.

Fourth, the Liberal or Modernistic. This approach, which denies the inspiration of Scripture, and reconstructs the contents and teachings of the Bible on a mere naturalistic foundation, includes the *Rationalistic* (The Scriptures approached by unaided human reason, with a denial of the supernatural).

Destructive, rationalistic criticism of such men as F. C. Baur and the Tubingen school, Julius Wellhausen, and K. H. Graf, *et. al*., and

the "Documentary Hypothesis" of the Old Testament), *Moral* (The approach of Immanuel Kant, who held that the Scriptures were given for their practical and moral value only), *Mythical* (The historical truth of the Scripture must be freed from the alleged myths and legends, i.e., its supernatural element. This is characteristic of such rationalist–critical scholars as David Friedrich Strauss and Rudolf Bultmann.), and the *Accommodation Theory* (the supernatural element was actually an accommodation to the primitive or superstitious nature of the peoples and cultures of that time. The originator of this type of rationalistic approach was J. S. Semler).

Note: For a discussion of the subject of Biblical Criticism and the influence and principles of so–called rationalistic or "Destructive Higher Criticism," See: Wick Broomall, *Biblical Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957; Jerry Wayne Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America 1800–1870: The New England Scholars*. Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1969; Louis Gaussen, *Theopneustia, or The Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures*. Grand Rapids: Kregel reprint of the 1841 ed.; R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957; Carl. F. H. Henry, Ed., *Revelation and the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958.

Further study can be done in the various *General Introductions to the Bible*, such as H. S. Miller, Geisler and Nix, and the multi–volume work by Thomas Hartwell Horne. Much valuable information can also be obtained from the many critical introductions to the Old and New Testaments. Cf. the *Old Testament Introductions* by such scholars as Gleason L. Archer, Jr., William Henry Green, R. K. Harrison, Merrill F. Unger, and Edward J. Young; and the New Testament Introductions by such scholars as Everett F. Harrison, Donald Guthrie, J. Gresham Machen, Henry C. Thiessen, and Theodor Zahn.

Fifth, the Apologetic, Polemic, or Dogmatic. This is generally synonymous with the "proof–text" method of interpretation, by which various passages are asserted to teach or buttress a given opinion or theological position. Such an approach can be readily noted in any religious dispute concerning Christianity. It is historically prominent in such controversies as the Romanist–

"heretical" debates of the Middle Ages, the Romanist–Protestant disputes of the sixteenth century, the Calvinist–Arminian debates, the polemical disputes between paedobaptists and Baptists over the mode and subjects of baptism, and the disputes between Reformed and Evangelicals over the "invitation" or "altar call" system, revival and "revivalism," etc.

Sixth, the Neoorthodox. The Scriptures are viewed as a *record* or a *witness* to Divine revelation and *not* the very revelation or Word of God. God is *encountered* in or through the Scriptures in a crisis experience. According to this approach, the Scriptures are neither the inspired Word of God nor is there propositional revelation in Scripture; God allegedly reveals Himself in an existential or completely subjective way.[41]

Seventh, the Grammatico–Historical. This is the only valid, consistent and reasonable method of biblical interpretation. It is such an interpretation that is necessitated by and in accordance with the rules of grammar and the facts of history. It is common–sense interpretation (i.e., adhering to the principle of the *usus loquendi*). It seeks no spiritual or hidden meaning unless necessary in the normal figurative, symbolic, idiomatic or typical expression of the given language, culture, or historical context of a given passage. It presupposes that God has given His revelation in an intelligent and understandable form.

General Hermeneutical Issues

Within the proper, consistent, grammatical and historical approach there are general principles of interpretation:

• The perspicuity of Scripture or the Analogy of Faith, i.e., Scripture interprets Scripture. The more obscure passages are understood by clearer passages, presupposing that the Scriptures, as the very Word of God inscripturated, are not self–contradictory, but complementary.

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[41] Cf. the works by R. Laird Harris and Carl F. H. Henry in the previous textual note.

• The textual, historical, theological, cultural and psychological context must be determined for an accurate interpretation of any given passage.

• Within any given passage, the words must be studied both lexically (as to their basic and subsequently–derived meanings) and syntactically (i.e., as they occur in a given context). Words are to be taken in their literal or common sense and usage (*usus loquendi*) unless they bear some figurative or idiomatic connotation.

• The use of figurative language—types, symbols, figures of speech, poetic, parabolic and prophetic references—must be considered in the immediate context and in the larger context of the whole of Scripture, culture and history.

Even within the historico–grammatical method, there are certain tendencies to be avoided: e.g., that of traditional, Reformed Covenant theology which tends to obliterate the distinctions between the Old Testament or covenant and the New; and that of a Dispensational hermeneutic which tends to divorce the Old Testament or Covenant from the New without proper regard for their unity. Our hermeneutic, therefore, determines our whole approach to understanding the Bible.

Note: Baptists have historically made what we believe to be necessary distinctions in both the unity and diversity of the biblical covenants (plural). Theologically and historically, we have held to the eternal covenant of redemption and grace or the eternal Divine redemptive purpose in Divine election and predestination. Reformed Covenant Theology holds to the unity of the Abrahamic Covenant (singular) to such an extent that it largely denies the diversity. Dispensationalism, by stringently making the Old Testament determinative of the New, and utterly divorcing the New Testament and New Covenant from the Old, is characterized by an inherent antinomianism with its denial of the relevance of the law of God as the expression of His moral Self–consistency.

The Hermeneutics of Roman Catholicism
and The Orthodox Church[42]

Roman Catholicism

The Church of Rome has three sources of authority rather than a clear *sola scriptura* position: the Scriptures, tradition and the Church. Romanism considers the apocryphal books (The Old Testament Apocrypha contains 14–15 books) to be part of the inspired canon of Scripture, resting on some passages therein to buttress its peculiar teachings. Tradition consists of the writings of the Church Fathers, Church Councils and various papal decrees. The authority of the Church rests in its claim of papal infallibility in all matters of faith and practice. It is the Church alone which reserves the sole right to interpret Scripture in the context of its own peculiar dogmas and tradition.

The Orthodox Church

This refers to the Eastern Catholic or Greek Orthodox Church. There is no clear position of *sola scriptura*. While the Scriptures are held in high regard, they are necessarily interpreted in the context of *the mind of the Church*, rather than the individual adherent. Great authority is given to the Greek Church Fathers and to *Spiritual Fathers*, or priests and bishops for the interpretation of Scripture and its application to life.[43]

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[42] The statement of 2 Pet. 1:20–21 that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" does not mean that the individual has no right to interpret the Scriptures for himself, as the Romish and Orthodox Churches suppose. The force of the text and context is that the Word of God did not originate within the personality or will of the prophet, but came from the Holy Spirit.

[43] Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, Crestwood, NJ: St. Valdimir's Seminary Press, 1993, pp. 130, 146–149, 162.

The Reformed Protestant Tradition
and an "Old Testament Mentality"

One's hermeneutical presuppositions—for Protestants and Baptist alike with the very same Scriptures—determine one's entire approach to the Christian religion from the doctrine of God to eschatology and from salvation to Christian experience. It is vital that our hermeneutical presuppositions are wholly consistent with the inscripturated Word of God and the analogy of faith.[44]

There are two basic perspectives or approaches to the Scriptures within evangelical and Reformed Christianity: An "Old Testament perspective" that positions itself in the Old Testament as the norm and views the New Testament through "Old Testament eyes." There is likewise a "New Testament perspective" that positions itself in the New Testament as the norm and views the Old Testament through "New Testament eyes." The given perspective largely determines the interpretation of Scripture and its subsequent application to the life; the nature and character of the church as to government, its role in society, membership, ordinances, discipline, worship and even architecture; and even the very nature of salvation and Christian experience.

The Reformed tradition possesses an Old Testament perspective, or an "Old Testament mentality" in its approach to Scripture. The unity of the covenant is held to such an extent that the New Testament is largely seen as a mere continuation of the Old Testament.

The Reformed concept of the church is largely that of the Old Testament covenant people of Israel. The tendency has been toward state or national churches. There has historically been a reliance upon the civil authorities to enforce the discipline of the church with

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[44] The term "analogy of faith" refers to the perspicuity or clearness of Scripture, that "Scripture interprets Scripture," that Scripture is thoroughly self–consistent or coherent as it touches on any one given point of truth.

corporal and capital punishment. It was this "Old Testament mentality" that formed the basis of the infamous "Salem Witch Trials" (1691–1692) in which thirty–two people were executed for being "witches," according to Ex. 22:18. Congregations are comprised of both believers and their children. The rites and rituals of the Old Testament are simply replaced by the rites and rituals of the New, e.g., circumcision is replaced by infant sprinkling, and the Passover by the Lord's Supper.

This "Old Testament mentality" is the source of the argument for infant sprinkling and other like–issues, not "necessary consequence," for infant sprinkling is neither a "good" nor a "necessary consequence" deduced from Scripture! It is rather a traditional idea imported into Scripture from Roman tradition and a process of arguing "from the covenant" in the context of an "Old Testament mentality."

The Biblical and Historic Baptist Approach to the Scriptures

The Baptist position is that of a New Testament perspective or a "New Testament mentality." We stand in the New Testament and view the Old Testament through "New Testament eyes," giving the proper place to the progressive principle in Divine revelation and making the necessary distinctions between the preparatory nature of the Old Covenant and the finality of the New. We hold to both the necessary unity and diversity of the covenants, neither obliterating necessary distinctions, nor unnecessarily separating the New Testament from the Old.

We see salvation as strictly personal, wholly by free and sovereign grace alone, as the out–working of the Divine, eternal redemptive purpose (Rom. 8:28–31; Eph. 1:3–14). It is not related to any natural descent, or church and covenant relationship established by natural relationship or infant sprinkling. It is an individual matter in which there is a Spirit–wrought conviction of sin, a conscious, personal God–given faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and a

conscious turning from sin in repentance (Jn. 1:12–13; 3:16; Acts 2: 36–42; 17:30–31; Rom. 3:21–26; Eph. 2:1–10).

The covenant–sign of circumcision has been replaced, not by "baptism" of any type, but by a sovereign act of God, a spiritual "circumcision of the heart," i.e., regeneration (Rom. 2:28–29; Col. 2:10–13). As circumcision was the covenant–sign of the Old covenant for physical or national Israel, so "spiritual circumcision," or regeneration is the covenant–sign of the New or Gospel Covenant for believers, or "Spiritual Israel." Baptism is distinctly a New Testament ordinance. Its mode is immersion and its subjects are those who manifest a credible profession of faith, after the pattern of the New Testament.

The traditional Reformed argument from Rom. 4:9–12 that, as circumcision was a "sign or seal of the covenant," so is infant sprinkling, actually disregards both the statement of Rom. 4:9–12 and the context of Gen. 17, which describes the institution of circumcision as a token or sign of the covenant. In Rom. 4:9–12, the subject is Abraham, who was circumcised *as a believer*. Circumcision was to *him, and to him alone*, "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he [already] had yet being uncircumcised." In Gen. 17 Abraham is commanded to circumcise every male as a "token" of the covenant. This covenant had to do with the possession of the land of Canaan, and *not* with the eternal promises of salvation (cf. v. 7–10). Further, Abraham circumcised Ishmael (v. 25–27), *whom he already knew was not included in the covenant of promise* (v. 15–21). The covenant of promise (Gen. 12:1–3), as enlarged in Rom. 4:13–25, 9:1–11:32; Gal. 3:1–29 was made to Abraham's *spiritual children* (τέκνα Ἀβραάμ, Jn. 8:39) the covenant of circumcision, having to do with the land of Canaan, was made to Abraham's *physical seed* (σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ, Jn. 8:33, 37).

Note: The whole issue of immersion or sprinkling, infants or believers, can be further studied in the following works: Alexander Carson, *Baptism: Its Mode and Its Subjects*. Evansville, IN: The Sovereign Grace Book Club, n.d., 237 pp.; T. J. Conant, *The*

Meaning and Use of Baptizein. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977. 192 pp.; R. B. C. Howell, *The Evils of Infant Baptism*. Watertown, WI: Baptist Heritage Press, 1988. 310 pp.; W. A. Jarrell, *Baptizo–Dip–Only*. Splendora, TX: V. C. Mayes, 1978. 113 pp.; Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980. 254 pp.; and T. E. Watson, *Should Infants be Baptized*? Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1976, 108 pp.

The Lord's Supper is not the fulfillment of the Passover. The Feast of Passover has found its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 5:7). The Lord's Supper is a distinctly New Testament ordinance that centers on the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to be observed "in remembrance of" Him. The elements are unleavened bread and wine. Wine is a symbol of joy (Psa. 104:15). The "bitter herbs" of the Passover, which were to cause the Israelites to remember their bitter bondage in Egypt have no place in the remembrance of our Redeemer and His glorious accomplishment.

We view the church as a distinctly new entity established as the God–ordained institution for the New or Gospel covenant, not an Old Testament institution carried over into the New (Eph. 3:5–10). The New Testament church is a local assembly, independent and autonomous under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, a professedly regenerate body in the midst of a composite society, not a monolithic institution in which there is one religion for the community. Further, the church exercises its own discipline apart from the civil authority, and the extent of such discipline is removal from membership, not corporal or capital punishment inflicted by the civil authorities.

It is from this New Testament perspective, that "good and necessary consequence" or what is "necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture" may be consistently deduced.

Conclusion

The only proper method of Biblical interpretation is the one that deals consistently with the ordinary rules of grammar and the facts of history. In an inclusive sense, the only consistent approach is one

that takes into account the principle of progressive revelation, properly comprehending the preparatory nature of the Old Testament and the finality of the New.

The biblical and historic Baptist position may be characterized as a "New Testament mentality" that properly and consistently comprehends the principle of progressive revelation.

While we are ready to maintain our biblical convictions and uphold our New Testament distinctives as Baptists, we recognize our Reformed Brethren as believers and fellow–heirs of the covenants of promise. We seek to possess a catholicity of spirit toward all true believers in the common bond of the Gospel and the glorious redemption that is in Christ Jesus, yet our convictions derive from the Scriptures after the New Testament pattern of our Lord and the inspired Apostles, and we understand that the closest fellowship flourishes in the context of truth.

An Additional Note:
Sola Scriptura—Homo Mensura—Scriptura Mensura

The term *homo mensura* [Gk: ἄνθρωπος μέτρον], or "man the measure [of all things]" was first put forth as a sophism by Protagoras (c. 490–420 BC), a pre–Socratic philosopher. Biblically, this idea describes the original sin of Adam and Eve, who sought autonomy in their empirical act of disobedience, both believing the lie of the serpent and disbelieving and thus disobeying the revealed Word of God (Gen. 2:16–17; 3:1–20). They sought to become their own gods and determine for themselves what was right or wrong. This idea became prominent in ancient Greco–Roman Empire and again in the Renaissance and Enlightenment Eras as fallen, sinful man sought to find and promulgate meaning and significance apart from God, breaking with the religious and Christian heritage of the past. This idea underlies modern thinking with its secular humanism, materialism, relativism and existentialism.

As believers, we espouse a Christian Theistic World–and–Life View which derives from the self–disclosing triune God of Scripture.

Thus, we view every fact as a created fact (Gen. 1:1) and grasp the awesome reality that this created universe and everything and everyone in it exists by and for the mere good pleasure of God (Rev. 4:11), who has destined a Day of Judgment. Further, we believe the revealed truth of God's inspired Word that he has acted in love, mercy and grace to redeem a people to himself through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. By the free and sovereign grace of God, we have been turned from *homo mensura* to *scriptura mensura*—from "man the measure [of all things]" to "Scripture the measure [of all things]."

To the Reader

Christianity is not merely a religion of the intellect, the emotions, or the will. *Christianity is Revealed Religion*. God has spoken, not only in nature [general revelation] (Psa. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:18–20), but intelligently and infallibly through men whom he inspired [special revelation], and finally in his Son (Heb. 1:1–3), Who is God incarnate, the very "Exegesis of God" [ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός, ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο, Jn. 1:18], the only Mediator and Redeemer (1 Tim. 1:15; 2:5).

The Word of God has been inscripturated—written down—and we possess it as the Bible. In this inspired [θεόπνευστος, "God–breathed," 2 Tim. 3:16] volume we possess the revealed will, word, and mandate of God. It is to be our guide to salvation from sin and reconciliation to Him through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to be our one objective standard that gives form, meaning, and direction to our lives and worship.

The central message of the Bible is the redemption of sinners through the blood of the cross for the glory of God. Set your heart to seek the Lord. Search the Scriptures and find the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn. 14:6). Turn from your sin in true repentance (Acts 17:31) and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). Saving faith lays hold of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ—a perfect righteousness wrought by and through His active and passive

obedience—for justification and reconciliation to God (Rom. 3:21–26).

Why Study the Original Languages
of Scripture?

Introduction

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting[45] may appear to all.   1 Timothy 4:13–15

Study[46] to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman[47] that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15[48]

All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God,[49] and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.[50]   2 Timothy 3:16–17

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[45] The words translated "thy profiting," σου ἡ προκοπη, are literally "your progress." The Apostle knew that there must be academic, intellectual and spiritual progression in the ministry.

[46] σπούδασον, aor. imp. "Give the utmost diligence!"

[47] ἐργάτην, a laborer, one who toils at hard labor. Cf. 1 Tim. 5:17, "…labor in word and doctrine." The term "labor" here is κοπιῶντες, working to the point of exhaustion.

[48] ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, literally, cutting straight, i.e., carefully cutting a straight line. The Apostle Paul, as a worker of *cilicium*, the dark goat's hair fabric, knew the necessity of cutting a straight line. This means exactness in exegesis, interpretation and exposition.

[49] πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος, "Every Scripture is God–breathed…" The wording is sing., not pl., referring to every aspect or nuance of the inspired language.

[50] ἵνα ἄρτιος ᾖ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπός a purp. cl. ἄρτιος, "fully–limbed," i.e., symmetrically developed. Mark the equipage of Scripture: ἄρτιοςἐξηρτισμένος, i.e., symmetrically developed and completely outfitted."

Possessing the Bible

Possessing the Word of God in one's own language is the greatest of all privileges afforded to man. Its study will dispel all superstitious ignorance, enable one to truly know God, himself and the world about him, the present, the future and the past in terms of a Christian Theistic World–and Life View. The Bible will give him the key to understand himself as the image–bearer of God living at a given point in history. It reveals God in all His Divine attributes, man in his sinfulness, and the Lord Jesus Christ in all His redemptive work and glory. The Bible makes perfectly clear the blessed truth of redemption and salvation. All this awesome truth is given in one volume in understandable language and meant to be our sole rule of both faith and practice (Psa. 1:2; 119:11, 105).

Ad Fontes
and a Second–Hand Knowledge of Scripture

Christian experience and practice are to be grounded in biblical doctrine. Biblical doctrine derives from and depends on Divine revelation. Divine revelation depends on language. As in every thorough or scientific approach to any given subject, we must go back to the originals—*ad fontes*—to be certain of our correct and adequate grasp of the truth. Language depends on words, grammar, syntax, idioms and figurative expressions, and the grammar and syntax of the very Word of God are properly and adequately considered only by a careful exegesis in the original language. Behind a mastery of our English Bible, which is a version of a translation, stands the intricacies, grammatical constructions, syntax and nuances of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Behind exposition must be exegesis, and an exegesis of the text can only be obtained from the original languages. This is the necessary and logical manifestation of belief in verbal, plenary inspiration.

Striving for a practical working knowledge or even a basic acquaintance with the original languages of Scripture may indeed be the single most important and significant effort of your Christian life

and experience. This is particularly true of and necessary for the minister of the gospel!

Such knowledge will open to you the very Word of God, and not merely a version of a translation. It will enable you to meet with the triune God in his Word without a translator or an interpreter. It will enable you to experience the very conviction, fervency, emotion and force of the truth that the very first readers experienced. It will determine your whole approach to the study of the Scriptures. It will give consistency, depth, maturity and discernment to your perspective of doctrine, theology and Christian experience.

It will also largely determine what books you will purchase, and what you will read. It will necessarily change your life in the context of its truth. It will make you a stronger, and a more intelligent and consistent Christian because the vital force of the truth you study will necessarily transform your life through the Spirit and grace of God.

Let it never be forgotten that being limited to a version of a translation—two steps removed from the very truth of God in all its original fullness and glory—is at best to have a mere second–hand knowledge of the Word of God.

This is a tragic situation for one who professes to be a man of God, seeks to proclaim the truth and feed his people from the Scriptures. Further, our Lord himself evidently spoke and taught in Aramaic, but all was derived from or based upon the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures! From The Lord Jesus Christ to the inspired Apostles, and up to the present, every great man of God has entrenched himself in the original languages of Scripture.

There is simply no substitute for a working knowledge of the Bible in its original tongues. Those who denigrate the study of the Scriptures in the Hebrew and Greek set themselves in opposition to the whole history of the Christian ministry from our Lord and the inspired Apostles to the present, including all the greatly–used men of God, who have grounded their ministries in the fountainhead of all Divine truth.

The awful truth is that men in their ignorance and presumption consider it either too difficult or simply lack the interest and discipline to thoroughly study and open the Scriptures and exact their treasures from the original languages.

The Prejudice of Modern Religion

Most Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christians see no reason for taking the time, making the effort, or disciplining themselves to study the Scriptures in their original languages. Such study, we are often told, is too time–consuming. Our time and efforts could be better spent in some evangelistic, ecclesiastical or church–related social activity. After all, we are to be interested in *souls* and *people*. Some simply believe that serious language or Bible study is unnecessary.

Many strongly hold that the *King James Version* is completely adequate for any Christian, evangelist, preacher or pastor. A few actually believe that the King James Versions has *corrected* the original languages—meaning—if this can be called such—that we had no reliable Bible until 1611! Others think that with all the modern translations and versions in the English language, the study of Greek or Hebrew is simply unnecessary. Still others think that it is wasting time that ought to be spent "soul–winning," reducing the calling and task of the believer to personal evangelism. Some among the traditionally Reformed groups also deprecate the necessity for a working knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. These believe that, as we possess the great Creeds and Confessions, which are based on scriptural exegesis and sound theology, we do not need to carefully examine the Scriptures through an exegesis of the original languages. These tend toward the neo–scholasticism which characterized some of the post–Reformation Era.

Such thinking—or rather, non–thinking—has helped to produce the relatively weak, ignorant, inconsistent and worldly state of present Christianity. Evangelicalism, which prides itself in being identified with the Bible, is relatively ignorant of the very Bible

which is supposed to characterize its very existence and distinctives. Modern Fundamentalism, which prides itself in "believing in the whole Bible and not a Bible full of holes," suffers, at times, from an astounding ignorance of the truth of Scripture and a failure to consistently apply it. Reformed tradition has a tendency at certain points to resort to the Creeds and Confessions rather than directly to the Scriptures, and thus suffers by erecting a barrier between itself and the Holy Word of God.

It needs to be stated at the outset that we do not deprecate the English Bible. It is rather the inadequacies of the English language—or any secondary language—that is our concern. No version of a translation—however close it seeks to equate the original—will suffice. It is simply impossible. And in this impossibility lies the critical area which makes a study of the original languages not only a perpetual necessity, but a glorious and reverent task of true worship.

The Original Languages and Divine Inspiration

It is common for beginning or relatively uneducated Bible students to believe that a study of the original languages of Scriptures is unnecessary. The truth is, that the nuances, intricacies and emphases of the original languages can never be adequately transferred through a translation or version, and to the extent that such elements of the language, words, synonyms, grammar, syntax and idiomatic expressions are not transferred or in some way obscured, they are lost to the student limited to his English Bible.

There is a direct relationship from verbal, plenary inspiration, to a study of the original language, biblical exegesis and interpretation. Divine inspiration presupposes the inspiration of the very words, grammar, syntax, nuances and idioms of the original language. To discount biblical exegesis of the Greek and Hebrew is to necessarily, though, perhaps inadvertently, deprecate Divine inspiration itself. The words, grammar, syntax and peculiarities of any secondary language are not inspired.

The Necessity of and Basis
for An Accurate Study of the Bible

Why should Christians, study the Scriptures in the original languages? We suggest the following reasons: first, God evidently had his reasons for giving and inscripturating his Divine revelation in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. These reasons have not changed with time. To deprecate the study of these languages as an essential part of biblical studies is to corrupt the reality and force of Divine inspiration, disregard the most essential elements of Divine revelation, neglect the very language and text in which God has revealed himself, and fail to maintain a proper basis for interpretation and application.

Second, every human being, converted or unconverted, is a sinner, and as such suffers to a given degree from the noetic effects of sin. "Noetic" derives from the noun νοῦς "mind" [the seat of reflective consciousness, perception, understanding, judging or determining], and the corresponding verb νοέω "to think, understand, perceive, judge, intelligently determine." The noetic effects of sin refer to the effects of the Fall [apostasy] upon the mind or intellectual ability of man as a sinner. Cf. Mk. 12:24; Rom. 1:18–20; 8:7–8, 26; 1 Cor. 2:14; 8:2; Eph. 4:17–19; Heb. 5:11–14.

Access to and some knowledge of the original languages help to offset one's natural misunderstanding of the inscripturated Word of God.

Third, spiritual illumination—the possession of every true believer (1 Cor. 2:9–16; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27)—is not infallible, i.e., is not equivalent to inspiration. Neither is such spiritual illumination static. It may regress through refusal to believe certain aspects of truth or apply such to the life (Heb. 5:11–14).

Note: the perf. γεγόνατε…γεγόνατε… "ye have become and continue to be dull of hearing…and have become and continue to be such…" Both verbs (v. 11 and 12) are perf., and evidently emph. a regression to a lesser state of spiritual perception.

Great and godly Christians have been greatly mistaken because of their ignorance, presuppositions, bias, traditional teaching, or limitation to the English Bible.

Fourth, the Bible is our exclusive and inclusive textbook for both faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16–17). As most Confessions of Faith state or strongly infer, the Scriptures are our sole rule of both faith and practice. They are our one objective standard and touchstone for doctrinal truth and for practical application. Everything else—our presuppositions, experience, tradition, speculation, emotions—is ultimately subjective and relative.

Fifth, according to the Scriptures, we are to give the utmost diligence to be approved or well–pleasing to God as hard workers who are able to correctly and skillfully handle [exposit, interpret and expound] the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15). Our primary obligation in the study, interpretation and exposition of the Scriptures is God–ward. Consistent hermeneutics, or the interpretation of the Word of God, is seriously crippled, if not outright impossible, to any given degree without and apart from the original languages.

Sixth, there is absolutely no substitute for a knowledge of the original languages. No translation or version can equal the constructions, emphases and nuances of the original languages of Scripture. A translation or version is necessarily in the grammar and idiom of the secondary language, and thus loses the inspired grammatical and syntactical constructions, nuances and emphases of the original language—and both doctrinal and practical truth often hinge on such.

One must realize and remember that the grammar and syntax of the text of the original languages are Divinely inspired[51] (Matt. 5:17–

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[51] The orthodox doctrine of Divine inspiration is technically concerned only with the "autograph manuscripts," or the original copies of Scripture. Thus the Scriptures in the original languages, as they have been providentially [Divinely] preserved, are in the form [language, grammar, syntax] given by God.

18; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:21)—that of any secondary language is not. Unless a translation or version is framed on the often inexplicable and ever foreign constructions and idioms of the original, it is necessarily to a given degree a paraphrase at best. Even the so–called "word–for–word translation" found in a Greek or Hebrew interlinear miserably fails to convey the grammar, syntax, nuances, emphases and idioms of the original. The English language by comparison is relatively bankrupt of expression as compared to either the Greek or the Hebrew. Thus, one may give an exegesis of the text in the original language, but only an exposition of the text in a translation or version.[52]

Our English Bible is not a translation, but a version of a translation, and so adheres much more to the secondary language with its peculiarities and limitations than to the original. This accounts for the continued publications of various "versions" of the Bible in the English language. Were any one of these versions the full, final word, others would not be necessary. Translation necessarily involves a given amount of interpretation and accommodation, and these are unavoidably colored by some degree of subjective misunderstanding, and also cultural, historical and doctrinal presuppositions.

Seventh, even great and godly men have erred greatly in their attempts to understand the Scriptures, largely because they did not have access to the Scriptures in the original languages. This is evident in the writings of the later Church Fathers and other early Christian writers who were largely limited to the Old Latin translation and the later and more influential Latin Vulgate

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[52] Exegesis means to bring out of the text the meaning, nuances, idioms of the original language. An exposition is akin to an analysis of the text either grammatically or doctrinally. An exegesis in a secondary language tends to misunderstanding and error, as it ignorantly or knowingly assumes the inspiration of the grammar and syntax of the secondary language.

Version.[53] An absence of the knowledge of the original languages ultimately became a void filled with speculation, superstition, tradition, allegorization—and thus a corrupt theology, church, worship, religion and society. Such error is sadly evident today in many of the devotional works and commentaries for readers limited to the English language.

Eighth, the Church of Rome grievously erred for over a millennium in giving a unique, divinely–inspired status to the *Latin Vulgate*—a version of a translation. Many modern Fundamentalists and Evangelicals are little different—a mentality which we may refer to as "the infallibility of ignorance." The idea that the exclusive use of the *King James Version*—a version of a translation—is sufficient, is relatively recent among evangelical Christians.[54] This attitude, based largely on emotions and prejudice—not rational, historical or linguistic arguments, or an orthodox view of Divine inspiration— arose in the late 1800s and early 1900s as an anti–intellectual reaction to Rationalistic Biblical Criticism and "Modernism." This was accompanied by a disdain for the ancient, so–called "dead" languages and the rise of modern humanistic or secularized, "progressive" education which emphasized experience over educational discipline and rote learning.

Further, the "Bible School" movement was designed to replace theological seminaries with their required study of the original languages. Because corruption had entered through Rationalistic Biblical Criticism, it was believed that men could be adequately prepared for the gospel ministry and kept from the influence of error through the study of the English Bible alone. All biblical scholarship became suspect. Before this era, a study of the original languages was considered vital to the ministry, and any lack in this area was thought to be a serious hindrance.

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[53] An example of misinterpretation: the *Latin Vulgate* by Jerome (c. 406 AD) interpreted "repentance" by "penance."

[54] The Church of Rome has held the *Latin Vulgate* (c. 406 AD)—a version of a translation—to be Divinely and fully inspired for centuries.

Ninth, men called to the gospel ministry, above all others, need to be well–versed in the Scriptures and must progress in their knowledge and its application—and there is no substitute for the ability to work through the text in the very languages given by God. The minister who is bereft of such skill is seriously crippled in his Divine calling, indeed, such is inexcusable in this day and age when an abundance of tools and opportunities are available for such study.[55] Being limited to a version of a translation necessarily means at best a second–hand acquaintance with God's Word.

Tenth, Hermeneutics and Theology are sacred sciences; they are organized areas of study which rest upon certain principles and strive for certain conclusions. As sacred sciences, they must, as any science, rest upon original sources for their authority, data and materials. For Christianity, for Christian Theology, for the Christian ministry, for the individual believer, the ultimate source is the inscripturated Word of God, and to delve into the Word of God fully and accurately, one needs a knowledge of the original languages.

Eleventh, not only has the text of the English Bible at times furthered misunderstanding, but many professing Christians fail even to come to terms with the truth clearly taught in the Scriptures, in whatever language it is taught. Eisegesis[56] is a viral infection of the religious mind. Such is the natural opposition of man to biblical truth that even the clear, consistent teaching of Scripture is often denied, circumvented or modified, and humanistic assumptions are read into the Scriptures. This is certainly true of such glorious truths as the sovereignty of God, Divine election, predestination, the covenant nature of the atonement and kindred truths. A study of the original

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[55] Computer language programs put the Greek and Hebrew within the reach of the average pastor, enabling him with minimal skill to exegete the text in either Greek or Hebrew.

[56] *Eisegesis* [εἰσεγήσις] means to read into [εἰς + ἀγεῖν] the text something that is not there. It is the opposite of exegesis.

languages emphasizes the relation between the text and its doctrine, and so enforces truth as no translation or version can.

Twelfth, not only heretical teachers and cults, but many others—including well–meaning evangelical Christians—often err in basing their theological assumptions, doctrinal teaching and practical application on the text of the English Bible. No doctrine or practice can be made to stand upon the grammar or syntax of a secondary language alone, i.e., upon a translation or a version of a translation, without departing from the Word of God to a given extent and at times falling into error and even outright heresy. Divine inspiration only pertains to the text of the original. Yet many base their beliefs on the grammar of the English Bible, or ignorantly seek to apply the rules of English grammar to the original languages.[57]

Examples of Inadequate Translation

Translations and versions in any secondary language necessarily contain inadequate translations or interpretations of the original. This derives from several sources, including such things as the necessity of keeping the wording as brief as possible to avoid becoming a general paraphrase of the original; using various additional words of explanation, which are often necessary to transfer the full connotation; word–order, idiomatic expressions and other devices lacking in a secondary language. The following are taken by way of very general example:

The Hebrew concept of time, as expressed in its two "tenses"— perfect and imperfect—is that of either completed or incomplete action. An example may be taken from Psa. 1:1. The Hebrew, reads, "Oh (Interjection) the [complete, utter] blessedness [Heb. pl. of intensity] of the man who has never walked (perf.) in the counsel of the ungodly, nor in the way of sinners (emph. pos.) has ever stood (perf.), nor in the assembly of the scornful (emph. pos.) has ever

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[57] Applying the rules of English grammar to such passages as John 1:1 as do the Russellites, or to Acts 2:38 as do the Campbellites are prime examples of error. These passages will be considered later in this work.

sat!" (perf.) The use of the perfect tense (completed action) and the emphatic position of words give this statement much greater force.

The Greek has the idea of a punctiliar [an event: The aorist or punctiliar tense, views something without reference to its progress or time, i.e., usually, as an event or as an action considered as a whole] or linear [a process] action, or a combination of both. Often such concepts are not or cannot adequately be transferred to a secondary language.

E.g., Jn. 2:19–21. The Jews' retort to our Lord's claim that he would raise this temple [of his body] in three days was that "forty and six years was this temple in the building!" Exactly what was emphasized in their retort? Note the Greek: τεσσεράκοντα καὶ ἓξ ἔτεσιν οἰκοδομήθη ὁ ναὸς οὗτος. The words "forty and six years was in building" are emphatic by position, before the subject, "this temple." One would expect the imperf. tense to be used, stressing the length of time as process, or, perhaps a periphrastic construction. to emphasize duration, but the ptc. is aor. pass., which signifies punctiliar action, an event, or views the whole time of forty–six years as a single block of time. The Jews' retort was to take the whole long duration of the temple's construction and push it in our Lord's face as one huge, ponderous fact or block of time.

The Hebrew language has seven verbal "stems," *Qal* and *Niph'al* or simple active and passive (or reflexive), *Pi'el* and *Pu'al*, intensive active and passive, *Hiph'il* and *Hoph'al*, causative active and passive, and *Hithpael*, the intensive reflexive. The nuances and force of these various verbal distinctions are often necessarily omitted in translation. E.g., Ex. 32:19, "…and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount." The word "brake" is *Pi'el* [active intensive], and is literally, "utterly dashed them to pieces!"[58] The full force of Moses'

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[58] וַיְשַׁבֵּר. *Pi'el* imperf. with Waw consec.

intense action as expressed in the Hebrew is lacking in the English language and therefore in the bare translation of the facts.

Another example may be taken from 2 Sam. 11:4, "And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house." The sense is probably that "she cleansed herself" (*Hithpa'el*, intens. reflex. ptc.) after their illicit sexual act, which had made them ceremonially unclean until evening (Lev. 15:16–18). They kept the "letter of the Law," but blatantly committed adultery [2 Sam. 11:4, וְהִיא מִתְקַדֶּשֶׁת מִטֻּמְאָתָהּ. This probably referred to the law of the "seed of copulation," i.e., male sperm and not to menstrual uncleanness.].

In Gen. 3:8, the *Hithpa'el* ptc. is used of the thunderous voice of God in a wind storm [לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם], pacing back and forth in the garden [מִתְהַלֵּךְ, *Hithpa'el* ptc.].[59] He was not coming down to commune and fellowship with Adam in the "cool of the day;" he had come down in anger, violently sweeping back and forth through the trees of the garden.[60] At times, participles are translated as verbs and verbs as participles, shifting the force of a given statement in the secondary language, e.g., Matt. 28:19 and the command of the "Great Commission" to "Go…"—a "command" which is simply not there.[61] Quite often through brevity of language compound words are

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[61] The Heb. ptc. is used to express a constant or uninterrupted activity.

[60] There are eight terms in Heb. for windstorm, gale, storm, etc. יוֹם, the word for "day" refers to a storm of wind several times in the OT. The idea of the "cool of the day" derived from the LXX and continued to the *Latin Vulgate* and thus into the English Bible. Cf. Gary Pratico and Miles van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 397–399; William A. Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the OT*, p. 131.

[61] See Exegesis of Matt. 28:18–20. The same is true of Mk. 16:15, πορευθέντες [aor. pass. ptc.] εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἅπαντα κηρύξατε [aor, imp. vb.] τὸ εὐαγγέλιον πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει. Lit: "Having gone into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature!" The force is on the verb "preach." That Christians are to "go" is presupposed by the ptc.

inadequately translated, e.g., Rom. 1:18, "holding [habitually suppressing] the truth in unrighteousness."[62]

The Greek of the New Testament has four past tenses—aorist, imperfect, perfect and pluperfect—each distinctly used in conveying Divine truth, e.g., Jn. 8:7. The Jews who brought the woman taken in adultery kept taunting our Lord repeatedly with, "But you—what do you say?! "But you—what do you say?!," σὺ οὖν τί λέγεις; Note the emph. pers. pron. "you." Jn. 8:7, "they continued asking him." ἐπέμενον ἐρωτῶντες αὐτόν, (a periphrastic const. comprised of an imperf. vb. and a pres. ptc.), i.e., "they persisted in [repeatedly] asking him." Further note that if she were taken in the very act, then the man also, according to Mosaic law, would have been brought. Perhaps they themselves were guilty of this very sin (as the context implies), as this was clearly a set–up intended to publicly embarrass our Lord.

Another example from Jn. 19:30, "It is finished!" τετέλεσται. perf., stressing in the fullest sense the fulfillment of the promises, types and shadow, and the completion of our Lord's redemptive work, which would then stand forever. The perfect tense denotes something that is done in an event and then continues on in a finished state. The culminative perfect denotes that which comes to culmination and then exists in a completed state. Both culminative and extended senses are applicable here. How could anyone think that this was a cry of defeat and not of victory?

The publican in the parable of Lk. 18:9–14 continually smote his breast, repeating the words, "God be propitious to me the

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[62] τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων, "the truth in unrighteousness [emphatically] habitually suppressing." κατεχόντων is a pres. ptc., from ἔχω, to hold and κατὰ, down, and so "to constantly hold down or habitually suppress."

sinner!" [63] In Gal. 3:24, the verb is in the perfect tense, and ought to be translated, "…the law 'has become and continues to be' our pedagogue unto Christ…" [64] In Acts 17:23, Paul makes reference to "an ancient altar with its 'faded inscription,'" which had long stood as a witness to their sense of the Divine nature.[65]

The Greek also uses periphrastic expressions to emphasize various actions. These are usually a verb and a participle combined for giving a certain emphasis.[66] Cf. Matt. 16:19, and the use of the periphrastic fut. perf., "…whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall have been already bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall have already been loosed in heaven."[67] Such characteristic linguistic nuances are all but missing in the English language, or omitted through brevity, and therefore often missing in an English translation or version of the Scriptures. Such misunderstanding gave Peter papal power in the teaching of the Romish Church.

The original languages have an abundance of synonyms which are often brought into the English Bible without their necessary distinctions, lessening the force and clarity of the text in the secondary language. For example, the Hebrew has several words for "man," each emphasizing some aspect of humanity in its strength,

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[63] …ἀλλ' ἔτυπτεν τὸ στῆθος αὐτοῦ λέγων... An imperf. verb with a pres. temporal ptc., connoting a repetitive or continual action.

[64] …ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν...

[65] Acts 17:23, ͺευρον καὶ βωμὸν ἐν ᾧ ἐπεγέγραπτο· Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ. the pluperf. tense denotes a period of time in the past.

[66] E.g., Acts 2:42, ῏Ησαν δὲ προσκαρτεροῦντες... The combination of an imperf. verb and pres. ptc, "And they were continuing steadfastly [obstinately, without slacking]…"

[67] Matt. 16:19, καὶ ὃ ἐὰν δήσῃς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται δεδεμένον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, καὶ ὃ ἐὰν λύσῃς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται λελυμένον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

weakness, mortality, relationship with others, etc. The Greek New Testament has two different terms for "love," seven for "servant," six for "power," three for "knowledge" and at least two for "form." These all have both doctrinal and practical nuances and often hermeneutical implications which are somewhat nebulous without recourse to the original language.

An example of the failure to mark distinctions between synonyms is the statement of Paul in the English version of Gal. 1:6–7, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." Some have lessened Paul's very stringent warning, saying that "It really wasn't 'another' gospel," taking the words "which is not another" as a diminutive comment. The very opposite is true, as not only noted by the context, which imprecates damnation upon those who preach "another gospel," but in the very terms used, i.e., "…another gospel [of an altogether different kind], which is not [at all] another [gospel of the same kind]…!"[68]

The Hebrew and Greek languages have various devices for expressing emphasis. Both, as inflected languages, use word–order as a basic means of expressing emphatic words, phrases or clauses. The Hebrew, for instance, reserves a special place for the emphatic imperative, e.g., Gen. 39:7, "…his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, 'Lie with me!'" The verb "lie" (a euphemism for sexual intercourse) is in the emphatic imperative. Both the Hebrew text and the Septuagint show the full emphasis, as they do Joseph's inherent moral recoil and emphatic response:

Potipher's wife's attempted seduction: שִׁכְבָה עִמִּי Qal. emph. imp. "Lie with me!" The LXX reads: …κοιμήθητι μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ. κοιμήθητι is aor. imp. ἐμοῦ (emph. pron.) "Sleep with me!" Both the

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[68] Gal. 1:6–7, …εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο…

Heb. and Gk. are in the imp.; the Heb. in the emph. imp., and the Gk. in the aor. imp., both connoting a determined and urgent entreaty.

Joseph's reply: "…how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

וְאֵיךְ אֶעֱשֶׂה הָרָעָה הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֹּאת וְחָטָאתִי לֵאלֹהִים

"…how then can I do [the] evil [the] great [the] this and sin against God?!" LXX, πῶς ποιήσω τὸ ῥῆμα τὸ πονηρὸν τοῦτο [this thing, this evil—this!] καὶ ἁμαρτήσομαι ἐναντίον [contrary, opposed to] τοῦ θεοῦ.

The Hebrew infinitive absolute is usually reserved for intensifying the verb or making it emphatic. Mark Ex. 20:8, the Fourth Commandment: The first command, "Remember," is an inf. absol.; the second, "to keep it holy," is a *Pi'el* inf. const. This is grammatically the strongest Commandment of the Decalogue. The Fifth Commandment, to honor one's parents, the other positive command, is in the *Pi'el* imp., and the eight negative Commandments are all framed in the imperf. with the neg. לֹא, giving the force of a perpetual prohibition. This use is of great significance in the temptation and Fall in Gen. 3, the beginning of the abdication of headship, feminism, God as an abstraction, religious tradition, lust, empiricism and victimization.

The participle in Hebrew is reserved for continuity of action without intermission, making it more continuous than the imperfect. The Hebrew makes great use of independent [emphatic pers.] pronouns. E.g., Gen. 3:7, Eve became fixated with the fruit as a means of obtaining wisdom. The Hebrew attaches an independent [emph.] pronoun to the noun "something to be desired [greatly coveted]…"[69]

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[69] Gen. 3:6, וְכִי תַאֲוָה־הוּא, The emph. pers. pron הוּא attached by Maqqeph to the word for emph., implying that Eve was completely absorbed with the fruit as a means to wisdom. הוּא a common pron. in Books of Moses. Fem. form occ. only 11 times.

The Greek possesses two imperatives, present and aorist. The English does not differentiate and so the English Bible almost always fails to give the full connotation.

> Note: The pres. imp. commands "keep on doing something" (Matt. 7:7, Αἰτεῖτε…ζητεῖτε…κρούετε… "Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking…") that has already been reality. The aorist imperative commands the commencement of an action with a sense of urgency and determination. 2 Tim. 2:15, "Study," σπούδασον, aor. imp. i.e., give the utmost diligence!"

Consider the present imperative of prohibition, which usually commands the cessation of an action in progress, and is to be translated, "Stop…!" E.g., Eph. 4:30, "Stop grieving the Spirit of God…!" E.g., for the positive pres. imp. Matt. 7:7, "Keep on asking…keep on seeking…keep on knocking…"[70] E.g., Matt. 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations…" The command to "Go" is non–existent, being a participle and neither a verb of command nor an "imperatival ptc." The very nature of Christianity implies a missionary imperative. The command is rather "with a sense of urgency and with all determination, make disciples!"[71]

Mark the aorist imperatives in 2 Tim. 4:2, 5. There are eight aor. imps., each denoting an urgent, determinate action. The only pres. imp. in this list is "watch thou in all things…" The same holds true for the present and aorist prohibitions. The present imperative of prohibition means to stop an action already in progress, e.g., Phil. 4:6, "Be careful for nothing…" This denotes "About even one thing [emph. pos.] stop being anxious!"[72] The aorist subjunctive of

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[70] Matt. 7:7, Αἰτεῖτε καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν, ζητεῖτε καὶ εὑρήσετε, κρούετε καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν·

[71] πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε, "Having gone, make disciples…!" This is *not* an imperatival ptc.

[72] μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε… Lit: "About even one thing, stop being anxious!"

prohibition means "do not even begin to," e.g., Matt. 3:9, "And think not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham to our father…'" The force of John the Baptist's argument is, "Do not even let it enter your mind!" or "Do not even begin to think to say…!"[73]

The Hebrew often uses repetition for emphasis, e.g., Isa. 26:3, where "perfect peace" is the interpretation of the repetitive word for "peace."[74] It also uses the plural for emphasis, the "plural of intensity," as in "Vanity of Vanities."[75]

In Hebrew, the infinite absolute, derives from the same root as the finite verb, and occurring before it, serves to intensify the verbal idea, Gen. 2:17, which is literally "dying thou shalt die!"[76] Cf. also Gen. 3:4, Satan's vehement denial of the Divine, perpetual prohibition, "you shall absolutely not die!"[77] This was the exact negative counterpart to God's original positive statement, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

There are various forms of emphatic particles and other constructions in both Hebrew and Greek, which are often not translated, and thus their force is lost to the reader of a secondary language.

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[73] καὶ μὴ δόξητε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς· πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. Lit: "And do not even begin to think to say within yourselves, a Father [emphatically] we have in Abraham!"

[74] שָׁלוֹם שָׁלוֹם, or lit: "peace, peace."

[75] Eccl. 1:2, הֲבֵל הֲבָלִים, [LXX: ματαιότης ματαιοτήτων]. There are two terms in both Heb. and Gk. for "Vanity." These terms do not mean "empty," but rather "frail, futile, failing to achieve the desired result."

[76] E.g., Gen. 2:17, "…in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." מוֹת תָּמוּת, "dying thou shalt die!" מוֹת, the inf. absol. of the same root as the vb., and occurring immediately before תָּמוּת is used for emph.

[77] Gen. 3:4, לֹא־אמֹת תְּמֻתוּן, the inf. absol. is used as in God's positive statement, but made even more emph. by the use of the neg. לֹא before the inf.

Cf. Psa. 1:2, 4, both of which contain a "but if" or exceptive const. כִּי אָם. V. 2, "But if he has any delight at all, it is in the law of the LORD…" V. 4, "But if the wicked are like anything at all, they are like the chaff which the wind driveth away!" Cf. also the many μὲν…δὲ consts. in Greek, "one the one hand, but on the other…" E.g., the emph. part. נָא, which occurs twice as "beseech" in Jonah 1:14, "And they said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life!"[78]

English is not an inflected language,[79] and therefore is limited in and by its word–order. In an inflected language (such as Hebrew and Greek), word–order is usually reserved for emphasis.

> Note: An inflected language is formed on root words or word stems to which are added a pattern of endings [suffixes or sufformatives] or preformatives [prefixes] to denote various grammatical elements and constructions. Thus, words may occur in different order for emphasis without affecting the essential meaning.

In Hebrew, a Semitic language, the verb (in a verbal sentence) usually occurs first. If a word or phrase is placed before the verb, it is emphatic. E.g., Job. 1:21, "…The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." In each statement, the name of Jehovah [Yahweh], or the "LORD" is placed first for emphasis. This is then a profound statement of Job's faith.[80] E.g., Gen. 3:10, Note the emphatic position of the direct object, "voice":

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[78] Jonah 1:14, אָנָּה יְהוָה אַל־נָא נֹאבְדָה בְּנֶפֶשׁ הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וַיֹּאמְרוּ

[79] יְהוָה נָתַן וַיהוָה לָקָח יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ , lit: "Jehovah hath given, Jehovah hath taken, Jehovah's name be blessed!"

[80] יְהוָה נָתַן וַיהוָה לָקָח יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ , lit: "Jehovah hath given, Jehovah hath taken, Jehovah's name be blessed!"

"And he said, Thy voice I heard in the garden…"[81] E.g., Gen. 3:10–11. Note the present sense of Adam's sinful consciousness of being naked before God, emphasized by the word–order and emphatic personal pron., "…because naked I am!" And God's question, "Who has announced to you that 'naked you are'?!"[82]

The Greek also uses word–order for emphasis. The usual word–order, however, is Subject–Verb–Object. E.g., Jn. 3:16, which places emphasis on the verb, "For so loved God the world…"[83] Another example from the Greek is found in Jn. 8:33–37. That there was an exchange of words between our Lord and the Jews which must have been emotional is without doubt. The word–order and emphasis of v. 33 and 37 reveals it clearly in the original language and Greek text, "'Seed of Abraham' are we!" To which our Lord retorted, "I know that 'Seed of Abraham' are ye!" [84]

E.g., 2 Tim. 4:7, Paul's epitaph: "The good fight I have fought [unfaltering right up to the very end], the course I have finished [unfaltering right up to the very end], the faith I have kept [unfaltering right up to the very end]!" [85] A final example may be taken from 2 Cor. 9:7, "…for God loveth a cheerful giver." Even this seemingly simple statement and truth cannot be adequately expressed in English! The word–order makes almost every part of

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[81] Gen. 3:10, וַיֹּאמֶר אֶתקֹלְךָ שָׁמַעְתִּי בַגָּן, "Voice" a def. dir. obj, placed before the verb for emphasis.

[82] Gen. 3:10–11, ...מִי הִגִּיד לְךָ כִּי עֵירֹם אַתָּה הֲכִי עֵירֹם אָנֹכִי

[83] Jn. 3:16, οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον…

[84] σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ ἐσμεν….Οἶδα ὅτι σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ ἐστε. The whole passage is highly charged with emotion which the English language largely fails to communicate.

[85] 2 Tim. 4:7. τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἠγώνισμαι, τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα, τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα. In each clause, the dir. obj. is place first for emph. Each vb. is perf., connoting a culminative action which leads up to a given point.

this statement emphatic, with the adjective modifying the direct object placed first, the direct object next, and then the verb placed before the subject.[86]

Repeatedly, some slight nuance is necessarily left out of translation because of the inadequacy of the English language and idiom, and therefore the English version of the Bible. This means that various shades of expression are totally lacking for the English reader. For example, the personalities of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, are contrasted in one being too busy with serving to listen, and the other sitting at our Lord's feet intently listening (Lk. 10:38–42).

Mary evidently had a more sensitive nature than Martha, who was more practical and active. This same distinction is preserved in the Greek text when the English reads the same in the statement from both sisters after the death of their beloved brother, Lazarus, "Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (Jn. 11:21, 32). Although identical in the English, they are different in the original, revealing the grief of both but the heightened degree of sensitiveness and loss of Mary.[87]

Phraseology and clauses, such as contained in the various conditional sentences are vital to the understanding, and often fail in translation. There are four types of conditional sentences in Greek, each one containing an "if" clause [protasis] and a conclusion

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[86] ἱλαρὸν [cheerful, hilarious] γὰρ [for] δότην [giver] ἀγαπᾷ [loves] ὁ θεός [God].

[87] Martha said, κύριε, εἰ ἦς ὧδε οὐκ ἂν ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός μου. "Lord if you had been here *had not died* my brother!" The verb "had not died" is in the emph. pos. Mary said, κύριε, εἰ ἦς ὧδε οὐκ ἄν μου ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός. "Lord, if you had been here, *my would not have died* [the] brother." The word–order is awkward in English. Martha put the words "had not died" emphatically forward; Mary not only does the same, but puts the possessive "my" even before the emphatic position of the verb, revealing much more than Martha her personal sense of loss.

[apodosis]. The first assumes something to be true, the second, something to be false, the third is contingent [probable future action], and the fourth, less probable action. Each of these has a definite grammatical construction.

Note the subtlety of Satan in the wilderness temptation, "Since you are the Son of God, command these stones to bread to become!" (Matt. 4:4).[88] The temptation was not to prove to Satan that Jesus was the Son of God, that was already assumed. The temptation was to act independently, to fulfill a legitimate appetite or need, as our Lord had the power and prerogative to do so. This was, in principle, the same temptation that caused the fall of the First Adam—to act independently of God and his Word (Gen. 3:1–7).

Both Hebrew and Greek have two negatives, which are used in specific constructions.[89] The English has but one. In the New Testament, these negatives imply either a positive or negative answer in rhetorical questions,[90] and when used together [double negative], are emphatic.

> Note: E.g., Heb. 13:5, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." οὐ μή σε ἀνῶ οὐδ' οὐ μή σε ἐγκαταλίπω. There are five negs. here in the occurrences of both οὐ and μὴ and the term οὐδ', and also an emph. word–order, and so, lit: "Never ever [by no means] you [emph.] will I ever [never] [I mean never by any means] leave you!"

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[88] Matt. 4:3, εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰπὲ ἵνα οἱ λίθοι οὗτοι ἄρτοι γένωνται. A first class cond. sent. assumes the condition to be true, and so ought to be translated "since you are…"

[89] When used in commands, the Heb. negs. are לֹא with the imperf. to denote an absolute, abiding or perpetual command (see eight of the Ten Commandments), and אַל to denote a command with immediate, but not necessarily abiding implications.

[90] Nicodemus actually said, "A man cannot be born the second time old [emph.] being…he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb can he and be born? Of course not! πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος γεννηθῆναι γέρων ὤν; μὴ δύναται εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ δεύτερον εἰσελθεῖν καὶ γεννηθῆναι; The neg. μὴ implies a "No" answer.

This statement is taken from several Old Testament statements (Deut. 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:5; 1 Kgs. 8:57; 1 Chron. 28:20; Psa. 27:9) and here given in its strongest form.

Such seemingly simple things, as use of the definite article in both Hebrew and Greek, may be filled with nuances which are highly significant, yet untranslatable. The presence of the definite article in Greek stresses identity; its absence stresses quality or character, thus the English may insert the definite article when the Greek would omit it. E.g., Rom. 1:17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed…" This is *anarthrous* [absence of the definite article] in the Greek text, stressing the quality or character of Divine righteousness. It is inexplicable that some modern translations and versions insert the indefinite article "a," completely obscuring the thought. By omitting the definite article, the stress is given to the truth that the focal–point of the gospel is on that very righteousness which God demands.

Note: δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται· ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται. Note further that the word "righteousness" is emphatic by position, the verb is in the pres. tense, denoting "is constantly revealed," evk pi,stewj eivj pi,stin means" by faith from start to finish," and in the quotation from the Old Testament, ἐκ πίστεως is emphatic by position.

The anarthrous use of the definite article with the emphatic word–order is significant in Jn. 4:24, there the correct translation would be "God is spirit," referring to the nature or essence of God. Lit: "Spirit God is [as to his essence or nature]!"[91]

One or more words may occur between the definite article and its antecedent, marking them out in a descriptive manner which is

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[91] Jn. 4:24, πνεῦμα ὁ θεός... Our Lord emphasized the essence of God and then drew a good and necessary consequence that true worship derives from and corresponds to the essence of God, i.e., it must also be in spirit and in truth.

untranslatable, but greatly significant. E.g., Jude 3, "…the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

Note: τῇ ἅπαξ παραδοθείσῃ τοῖς ἁγίοις πίστει. The def art. τῇ is construed with πίστει. The words gathered between are emphatically descriptive of this kind of faith. It is the faith [doctrinal content] unique to Christianity, which was one time (ἅπαξ, once–for–all) delivered to Christians. In English we would hyphenate all into one word as a single grammatical unit or term, i.e., "the–'once–for–all–delivered–unto–the–saints'–faith."

E.g., Rom. 10:3, 6, "…God's righteousness….the righteousness which is of faith…" Here the terms are held between the definite article and the noun [its antecedent] in a close syntactical unit which is more definite and forceful than the English can convey.[92]

The Greek has some idioms or figures of speech which bear close scrutiny. One is *Chiasmus* [cross], in which the first and third phrases correspond and the second and fourth, e.g., 1 Pet. 3:7, which construes knowledge and weaker vessel, and giving honor with being heirs together: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, as unto the weaker vessel, and giving honour unto the wife, as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

Note: 1 Pet. 3:7 Οἱ ἄνδρες ὁμοίως, συνοικοῦντες κατὰ γνῶσιν ὡς ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει τῷ γυναικείῳ, ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν ὡς καὶ συγκληρονόμοις χάριτος ζωῆς εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐγκόπτεσθαι τὰς προσευχὰς ὑμῶν.

There are a host of nuances denoted by participles, the use of case, number and gender, word–order, phraseology, conditional sentences, etc., which can never be reproduced in translation. These have been termed "untranslatable riches," and as such are a wealth of linguistic meaning which must remain with the original languages.

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[92] Rom. 10:3, τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην, "the 'of–God' righteousness." Rom. 10:6, ἡ…ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη, "the 'out–of–faith' righteousness."

Some may be rather insignificant, but many are very significant, and failure to understand such may have great hermeneutical and doctrinal consequences.

Take, for example, "number," i.e., singular or plural. These may well change the significance and thus the interpretation of a given statement: such seemingly minor issues as number [singular or plural] often have great significance,

E.g., Lk. 14:16–24, and the Parable of the Great Supper. The context has the Lord of the supper speaking to his servant to go out and compel people to come to the feast, then he states in v. 24, "For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." But the word "you" is plural.[93] It is no longer the Lord who made the Great Supper speaking to his servant, but our Lord applying his parable to those who were sitting and listening at that moment.

E.g., Lk. 22:31, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not…" The first "you" is plural; the second is singular. Satan desired to have all the disciples to sift them as wheat, but he had to single out Simon Peter, and our Lord specifically prays for him.[94]

Examples of Mistranslation and Misinterpretation
Based on the Latin Language

The early centuries of Christianity witnessed the transition from Greek to Latin as the language of Christianity and of Christian writings and theology (c. 200–). Many of the Church Fathers were deficient in their knowledge of Greek and relied solely on the Latin

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[93] Lk. 14:24, λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν...

[94] Lk. 22:31–32, Σίμων Σίμων, ἰδοὺ ὁ σατανᾶς ἐξῃτήσατο ὑμᾶς (pl.)...Satan has desired to have all of you... ἐγὼ δὲ ἐδεήθην περὶ σοῦ (sing.), but I have prayed concerning you…

Versions [*Old Latin Version, Latin Vulgate*]. Only a very few of the Church Fathers and other early Christian writers had any knowledge of Hebrew at all. This meant the ascendancy of a secondary language, Latin, in the place of the original Hebrew and Greek, and also the universal use of a version of a translation for faith and practice. From this transition to the Latin came a variety of misunderstandings and mistranslations.

Two will suffice for examples: first, the biblical word and doctrine of "adoption," which occurs fives times in our English Bible.[95] The theological meaning of this term has been based on the Latin, *adoptio*, not the Greek. The doctrine of adoption, we are told, is that declarative act of God as our spiritual Father, simultaneous with justification, whereby he brings us into his family and constitutes us as his children or sons.

Thus, the *ordo salutis* [order of salvation] is Effectual Calling, Regeneration, Conversion, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification and Glorification. The Greco–Roman significance of adoption, however, dealt with legal status, and included not only those brought into the family, but also true, natural sons as well. The Greek is literally "placing as a son," i.e., recognizing one as the legal heir to an estate and to the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship. This alone adequately explains Rom. 8:23, where our adoption is the future glorification of the body and final restoration of creation.[96]

Second, the biblical and theological idea of justification. The Hebrew terms mean "to pronounce just or right." The Latin terms can both mean either "to make righteous" or "to declare righteous."

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[95] Rom. 8:15, υἱοθεσίας 8:23 υἱοθεσίαν 9:4 ἡ υἱοθεσία Gal. 4:5 τὴν υἱοθεσίαν and Eph. 1:5, υἱοθεσίαν.

[96] At the time of his majority, a young man was presented to the city dignitaries and was dressed in his *toga virilis*, or manly garment. He was then given full citizenship rights and assumed full responsibility as the heir to the estate. This finds its parallel in our future glorification.

Note: The Heb. root צדק is used in the *Hiph'il* (causative) הִצְדִּיק in the sense of declaring or pronouncing a person just or righteous, e.g., Dt. 25:1; Prov. 17:15. The LXX follows suit with δικαιώσωσιν in Dt. 25:1 and ὃς δίκαιον κρίνει τὸν ἄδικον ἄδικον δὲ τὸν δίκαιον ἀκάθαρτος in Prov. 17:15. The New Testament terms are: δικαιόω, "justify," used forensically 30 times, e.g., Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:24, 28; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9. δίκαιος, "just" or "righteous," used forensically some 43 times, e.g., Matt. 9:13; Rom. 1:17; 3:10; 8:30; Jas. 5:16. δικαιωσύνη, "righteousness," used forensically over 40 times, e.g., Rom. 1:17; 4:3, 5–6, 9, 11, 13; 10:3–4, 10; 1 Cor. 1:30. δικαίωσις, "justification," occ. twice, Rom. 4:25; 5:18. δικαιόω is used both in the LXX and in the New Testament. Leon Morris notes that Gk. "verbs ending in –όω and referring to moral qualities have a declarative sense; they do not mean 'to make–.'" He then gives a series of examples.[97]

The Latin terms are *justificare* and *justificatio,* and may mean either "to *pronounce* just or righteous" or "to *make* just or righteous." This ambiguity has resulted in the false teaching that justification is an infused righteousness [*justitia infusa*] rather than an imputed righteousness [*justitia imputata*]. This error began with the Latin Church Fathers, who missed the forensic nature of the biblical texts and usage, and this became the Romish doctrine which has combined and confused justification with sanctification. Because of this ambiguity, the meaning of justification must derive from the use of the biblical terms themselves, and not simply their etymology. Exegesis, Hermeneutics and Theology are inseparably linked—and all begins with the reading of the text—its words, grammar and syntax.

Note: Failure in this area has entered into such recent controversies as the "New Perspective on Paul" and the "Federal Vision" Theology which has turned to an infused righteousness and justification by both faith and faithfulness, i.e., a mixture of grace and works. This is a radical break with Evangelical and Reformed Christianity and a return to Rome.

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[97] Leon Morris, *New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1986, p. 70.

Examples of Mistranslation and Misinterpretation
Based on the English Language

The following examples are taken from varying degrees of misunderstanding or mistranslation of the Greek. The Old Testament Hebrew and the Septuagint [LXX, or the Greek Old Testament] are not referred to, although they form a distinct body of study in mistranslation and misinterpretation.[98] Some are examples of grave doctrinal departures, others are less important, and some are simply illustrative of grammatical issues. The common element is that they rely on either the English language in general or the English grammar in particular.

The Roman Catholics hold the *Latin Vulgate* of Jerome (406 AD)—the version of a translation of the Old Latin, which was itself a translation—to be inspired, as though it were the original language. The Mormons ["Latter–Day Saints"] publicly promote the *King James Version* of the Bible—and hold it—a version of a translation—to be inspired as the final authority. They have no concept of the nature or importance of the original languages of Scripture. Some hold the *King James Version* of the Bible to be Divinely inspired as though it were the original language—a view which is utterly irrational—and thus see no need for a study of the original languages.

Whatever one's views are on textual "families," the Byzantine or Majority Text, or the eclectic, Critical Text, it should be well–thought through and ought to take into account textual, historical and theological issues. Often all the truth is not necessarily in one view

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[98] We take but one example from the Heb. of Ruth 3:15, "and she went into the city," the English Bible referring to Ruth. The Heb. text reads וַיָּבֹא הָעִיר, 3 pers. masc. sing. referring to Boaz, i.e., "He went into the city." The LXX is nebulous (καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὴν πόλιν), perhaps taking "her" as the nearer possible antecedent? Boaz was in love and acted immediately, arriving before the elders had assembled at the city gate to sit in judgment on any transaction (Cf. Ruth 4:1–2ff).

or another. Presuppositions, pride, prejudice and irrationality make their way even into scholarly circles.

The Russelites ["Jehovah's Witnesses"] mistranslate the final clause of John 1:1 as, "…and the word was a god," denying the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

> Note: the wording of the three independent clauses in John 1:1 are in reality, arguments for His eternity, equality and Deity. The final clause reads, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. The absence of the definite article before θεὸς, called the "anarthrous use," in the Greek idiom stresses quality or character. The words are emphatic by position. The clause ought to be translated, "and the word as to his essence was [existed as] [emphatically] God."

The rules of Greek grammar are misunderstood and thus misapplied, and the English rules of grammar are followed, inserting the indefinite article "a" and thus obscuring the opposite meaning of the Greek idiom [anarth. use of the def. art.], which actually emphasizes the Deity of our Lord.

The Campbellites ["Church of Christ" Church] teach that water baptism is essential to salvation from Acts 2:38, "…repent and be baptized…" The two verbs are taken as equal or compound verbs according to the rules of English grammar, giving the argument that "repentance plus baptism equals salvation." But the verbs are not equal in the Greek.

> The Eng. [KJV] of Acts 2:38 grammatically makes "Repent" and "be baptized" compound verbs and thus equal—the classic argument of the Campbellites, but the Greek reads Μετανοήσατε, καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν... "Repent" is aor. imp. act. pl. "be baptized" is aor. pass imp. sing.,i.e., "All of you with a sense of urgency and all determination, Repent!…and [then] let each one of you be baptized." The former receives the emphasis and the latter is much lesser, with the sense of permission.

The Pentecostal or Charismatic idea that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is expressed by speaking in "unknown tongues," i.e., ecstatic utterances, is based on a word added by the English translators and so italicized. The idea is that of foreign languages, not an ecstatic

non–linguistic, non–intelligent flow of syllables. It is not only dangerous, but irrational to base one's doctrine on italicized words added by translators!

> Note: "Pentecostalism" is itself a misnomer, as Pentecost witnessed Spirit–filled men speaking distinctly in other, previously unlearned languages, which the hearers clearly understood. The Corinthian tongues were dubious in nature, and may have been ecstatic utterances. They were, of course, the least of the gifts in that era of temporary spiritual revelation. Those who do not make the necessary distinction between the tongues of Pentecost and Corinth greatly err.

Italicized words are those added to the English text for clarification. However, sometimes added words, not in the Greek text, have been added in the English through a faulty interpretation—and *not* italicized, implying that they do occur in the original language. E.g., Hebrews 2:9, "…should taste death for every man."[99] The word "man" does *not* occur in the Greek—in any text or manuscript. The words "every one" [ὑπὲρ παντὸς] must be interpreted by the context, and necessarily refer to the "many sons" of v. 10, "they who are sanctified" and the "brethren" of v. 11, "my brethren" of v. 12, "the children which God hath given me" of v. 12. Yet this has become a proof–text for arguing the universality of the atonement, an argument largely based on a non–existent word.

An example of misunderstood gender in Ruth 3:15. After Ruth and Boaz meet on the threshing floor, and she is laden down with grain, the KJV reads, "and she went into the city," referring to Ruth. The verb, however, is masculine, referring to Boaz.

Temporal participles are subservient to the main verb. The English may translate a verb as a participle and a participle as a verb, thus shifting the whole force of a given statement, or fail to properly carry the relationship between a participle and a verb.

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[99] Hebrew 2:9, ὑπὲρ παντὸς γεύσηται θανάτου. Lit: on behalf of every one [sing.] he might taste [experience] death.

The Gk. of the New Testament abounds in the use of ptcs. A ptc. is a verbal adjective, and so, if used with a temporal significance, is always subordinate to the main verb. Note in Heb. 1:1–2, "God…spake…hath spoken…in [his] son…" The first vb. in Eng., however is a ptc. in Gk., putting the stress upon the main vb. which occurs in v. 2, emph. the progressive nature, finality and uniqueness of the Divine revelation in the Lord Jesus Christ, (ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας…ἐλάλησεν…ἐν υἱῷ) i.e., "God…having spoken…spoke…in [his] son…" Note that the words "in son" use the loc. sense, and "son" is anarth., i.e., God spoke *through* the prophets, but in a unique and final way *in* the Lord Jesus Christ who is his "Son." Our Lord was and *is* the unique revelation of God. It was an "in son" kind of revelation—a subtlety completely lost in the Eng.

E.g., Matt. 28:19 (πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε), "having gone, therefore, make disciples!." Lk. 18:11 (σταθεὶς…προσηύχετο), "having taken his stance…began [and continued] to pray." Acts 17:22 (Σταθεὶς δὲ [ὁ] Παῦλος…ἔφη), "then Paul, having taken his stand [assumed the stance of an orator with his hand outstretched, palm upward, to address the court]…said."

E.g., Acts 19:2, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" This is a proof text for a "second work of grace." But the ptc. and the vb. are both aor. (εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες;), the aor. ptc. points to a coincident action, i.e., "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?"

At times, possibly because of a euphemism [phrasing something in a more pleasing or acceptable way, and avoiding harsh or offensive terms], some words may *not* be translated into English. Cf. Rom. 9:10, which reads in the KJV, "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac…" The word "one" in English seems to refer to Isaac. The full, correct translation, however, would be "…by one sexual act [or emission of

sperm]…"[100] The emphasis is on the minuteness of Divine predestination, that in one emission of sperm from Isaac, two nations and destinies were determined through the conception of the twins.

Does the Bible command that women wear "modest apparel" in 1 Tim. 2:9? Traditionally, this has been the great proof–text for such teaching. The command is rather for suitable apparel and modest behavior, i.e., the term "modest" is to be construed with "behavior" and not with clothing as the English Bible assumes. "…Ὡσαύτως [καὶ] γυναῖκας ἐν καταστολῇ κοσμίῳ μετὰ αἰδοῦς καὶ σωφροσύνης…" "suitable or proper clothing," καταστολῇ κοσμίῳ, i.e., orderly. "with modesty and sound judgment [decency]," μετὰ αἰδοῦς καὶ σωφροσύνης refers to one's behavior. Modesty begins with one's behavior, not with one's dress. This strengthens rather than weakens the mandate.

Most Christian churches have women Sunday School or Bible teachers, never questioning the scriptural teaching of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 or 1 Timothy 2: 8–15. Yet the Scriptures are very clear that men are to assume the leadership and women are to remain silent and be in submission. Some would interpret 1 Tim. 2:12 to mean simply that women should not teach men, but the Greek does not support this argument, forbidding to women a teaching position altogether in the context of the church.

"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Note that the comma after "teach" is an attempt to equate the Greek, which teaches that: (1) the woman is not to be in a teaching position within the sphere of the church, (2) she is not to usurp authority over the man, and (3) She is to remain in silence. Note: διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ. This ought to be literally translated: "But to teach [emph.], a woman [emph.] I do not allow [permit], nor to usurp authority over a man [be in a position of leadership or

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[100] Rom. 9:10, ἐξ ἑνὸς κοίτην. Lit: out of one *coitus* or sexual act [emission of sperm].

authority in the church], but [quite the opposite] to be in silence [quietness].

Religious tradition and modern thinking, however, have replaced biblical teaching to such an extent that truth is ridiculed at the very thought that women should not teach in the sphere of the church. The compromise idea that a "Sunday School" is not part of a church and its ministry is utterly absurd. If "Sunday School" or Bible classes are not an essential part of the church's ministry, then what church would be scriptural in its teaching ministry? Whatever one's view, it must be aligned to the Scriptures, and not simply based on tradition, religious politics or accommodation.

The utmost care must be taken to carefully and thoroughly teach the people. Churches are disrupted and divided more over tradition, pride, personal prominence and contemporary issues than they are over the truth of Scripture. Pastors must count the cost and educate their people, for most will not receive the Word of God in the face of tradition!

Another example of English punctuation obscuring the meaning of the text occurs in Eph. 4:11, where apostles, pastors, teachers, etc., are given by Christ "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry…" The comma after "saints" should be omitted. Saints are to be equipped through the preaching and teaching ministry for the service of Christ.[101]

The translation or interpretation of certain words as "perfect" rather than "mature," "complete," "completely developed," or "finished," has led some to espouse a "Christian" or "'sinless' perfectionism."

The statements which may be construed to buttress the doctrine of perfectionism are listed after the following Greek terms or their

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[101] Eph. 4:12, πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας… "for the equipping [outfitting] of the saints for [unto] the work of ministering or service."

cognates. All which refer to human beings in a spiritual sense ought to be translated as follows: (1) τελειόω, τελείωσις, τελειότης, τέλειος, ἐπιτελέω connote "coming to an end, and thus completion, being finished, mature, adult," e.g., Matt. 5:48; 19:21; Jn. 17:23; 1 Cor. 2:6; 2 Cor. 12:9; Gal. 3:3; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:12, 15; Col. 1:28; 4:12; Heb. 5:9; 10:1; 11:40; 12:23; Jas. 1:4; 2:22; 3:2; 1 Jn. 4:17–18. (2) ἄρτιος, καταρίζω, καταρτισμός κατάρτισις connote "to be fully–limbed, symmetrically developed, completed, outfitted," e.g., Lk. 6:40; 2 Cor. 13:11; 2 Tim. 3:17; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 5:10; (3) πληρόω means "to fill up" and so "to complete," Rev. 3:2.

Such teaching began with John Wesley as a rather relative "Christian perfectionism" which was a complete dedication of love to Christ and later developed into the Oberlin or sinless perfectionism of Asa Mahan and Charles Finney, and then furthered in a modified form by A. B. Simpson.[102] Some elements of modern evangelicalism retain a non–Pentecostal modified form of perfectionism as "The Higher Life" Movement and the "Keswick Movement."

The words of our Lord to Mary Magdalene in John 20:17, "Touch me not…" have been alleged to mean that because he, as our Great High Priest, had not yet ascended to offer the sacrifice, she must not pollute him by any physical contact, are without sufficient foundation. This argument has been used to counter the seeming contradiction of Matthew 28:9, where the two Marys are described as having "held him by the feet and worshipped him." Actually, the present imperative of prohibition ought to be translated, "Stop clinging to me" rather than "touch me not."[103]

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[102] For a history of perfectionism and its distinctives, see B. B. Warfield, *Perfection and Perfectionism*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1971. 464 pp.

[103] μή μου ἅπτου, pres. imp. of prohib. "Stop clinging to me!" It was not out of fear of contamination as the Great High Priest sanctified to offer sacrifice, but as the Great High Priest who was not to be detained.

It is commonly thought and taught that the pronoun "it" in Romans 6:12 refers to "sin," which is the subject of the sentence. "It," however, refers to "body," not because it is the nearer antecedent, but because it agrees grammatically in gender with "body."

Note: BNT: Μὴ οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ "It" [αὐτοῦ] is neut. sing., as is "body" [σώματι]. "Sin" [ἡ ἁμαρτία] is fem. sing. The body is no longer the boss of the truly converted individual. [STE adds αὕτη].

What does the word "which" refer to in Hebrews 12:14? Does it refer, as in English, to both "peace…and holiness" as compound direct objects, or to one or the other?[104] Is a kind of pacificism included as a requirement "to see the Lord"? The Greek grammar is decisive: holiness is the one requirement.

Eph. 6:19, "…that I may open my mouth boldly…" is often used as a request for boldness in opening one's mouth to proclaim the gospel. The word "boldly," however, is not to be construed with opening one's mouth, but rather with the following, "to make known the mystery of the gospel." This may not be vitally important, but it is an example as to the influence of the English text and punctuation upon one's theology and thus upon one's thought and prayers.[105]

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[104] Εἰρήνην διώκετε μετὰ πάντων καὶ τὸν ἁγιασμόν, οὗ χωρὶς οὐδεὶς ὄψεται τὸν κύριον… The word "which" [Οὗ] is masc. sing., referring to "sanctification" [τὸν ἁγιασμόν], not "peace" [Εἰρήνην] which is fem. Holiness is the one great requirement for heaven.

[105] Eph. 6:19, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ [and for me], ἵνα μοι δοθῇ λόγος [in order that to me might be given a word, utterance] ἐν ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματός μου [in the act of opening my mouth], ἐν παρρησίᾳ γνωρίσαι [with boldness or unreservedness of speech to make known] τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου…

The word "whosoever" in John 3:16 is non–existent—despite its being a focal–point for modern evangelism, which seeks to be as all–embracive as possible. The wording is actually intensely personal and emphasizes an intensely personal and persevering faith. The Greek is emphatically definite where the English is somewhat indefinite by evangelistic implication.

John 3:16 is an epexegetical or explanatory statement appended to the preceding, i.e., v. 14–15. Our Lord approaches Nicodemus on the presuppositional level, destroying his religious presuppositions—physical descent from Abraham, circumcision and law–righteousness. Our Lord, taking the Old Testament reference to Moses and the serpent of brass (Numb. 21:4–9), prophesies of his own sacrificial death and emphasizes that one has eternal life through faith alone—an intensely personal, persevering faith. Note the parallel between v. 15 and 16 and the reading, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν, "in order that [a final clause] every single one without exception constantly or characterized as exercising faith [the singular relative participle ὁ πιστεύων with πᾶς] into him…" "To believe in[to]" [πιστεύων εἰς] was a technical expression of that culture and era that clearly denoted utter, unreserved commitment to someone or thing.

It is widely taught that believers need to "die to sin" in their experience. This is not only common to such traditions as the "Higher Life" movement, the Keswick [non–Pentecostal] holiness movement, and to many in the Evangelical tradition, it is also taught in some of the old Reformed and Baptist Catechisms.

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, followed by those of Keach and Spurgeon, reads:

Q. 35**:** What is sanctification?

Ans: Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, *and are enabled more and more to die unto sin* and live unto righteousness. [Italics ours].

Such teaching is based on passages such as Romans 6:1–10; Galatians 5:24 and Ephesians 4:22–24, making dying to sin, or becoming "dead to sin" an experience to be sought by those who

desire to become preeminently spiritual. This, however, is a teaching based on an inaccurate and inadequate translation of the Greek. Note the following: first, the words referring to "being dead" to sin in Rom. 6:1–10 are all in the aorist tense, denoting a past event, a punctiliar action, and ought to be translated "died," not "dead."

In Rom. 6, the two key statements are in v. 1 (which governs v. 1–14) and v. 15. (which governs v. 15–23). v. 1 uses the pres; v. 15 uses the aor. v. 1 refers to living in sin [ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ] and v. 15 refers to lightly committing acts of sin [ἁμαρτήσωμεν]. Rom. 6:2, μὴ γένοιτο. May it never be! οἵτινες ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, such ones as we are (qualitative. pers. pron.) who died to sin, πῶς ἔτι ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ; How shall we live any longer in it?! Cf. aor. ἀπεθάνομεν "died." (Every occ. of "dead" is aor., and should be so translated from v. 2–10). Every believer "died" to sin, but is not "dead" to sin. What is the difference? *The language refers to a past act, not to a present state.* It is neither a present state of experience nor an experience to be sought. It is rather the reality of our union with Christ. Believers "died" to the reigning power of sin. Cf. Rom. 3:9, πάντας ὑφ᾽ ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι ["all under sin," i.e., under sin's dominion] are" [as a state of existence]. The believer's union with Christ has changed his relationship to sin.

Second, this past event (denoted by the aorist tense) was our union with Christ in his death and resurrection–life at regeneration, which means for the believer that the reigning power of sin has been broken, and he now lives in the context of the resurrection–life and power of the Holy Spirit, necessitating a converted life (Romans chapter six, the entire passage).

What exactly is the believer's relation to sin if he "died to sin" and yet still sins? The necessary distinction must be made between living in sin (under its dominating or reigning power) and committing *acts* of sin. The believer no longer *lives* under the reigning power of sin, but he still commits *acts* of sin (Cf. Rom. 6:15, ἁμαρτήσωμεν and 1 Jn. 2:1 ἵνα μὴ ἁμάρτητε. καὶ ἐάν τις

ἁμάρτῃ… Both are aor., and so ref. to *acts* of sin). Modern Fundamental and Evangelical Christianity, with their doctrine of the "carnal Christian" heresy, unwittingly deny the necessary and practical implications of the believer's union with Christ.

Third, Romans 6:11 uses a different term, "corpse," a noun, not a verb. Believers are to reckon themselves to be "corpses" with respect to sin, i.e., having already "died" by virtue of their union with Christ. We are to reckon ourselves to be, as it were "corpses" [totally, wholly unresponsive] to the solicitations of sin, which was once our ruling master but has now been dethroned.

Rom. 6:11, ὑμεῖς λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς [εἶναι] νεκροὺς μὲν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ζῶντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. This statement, the first practical admonition or application in the Roman Epistle, declares that believers are to be totally unresponsive to their old master because they have been brought into union with Christ, which means a new sphere of life and activity. Sin, though no longer our ruling master, yet seeks to recruit, as it were, our members to wage a "guerilla warfare" against the reign of grace. This imagery is vivid, and the terms "instruments" is literally weapons of warfare [ὅπλα].

Note the remarks in the preceding paragraph, and also the context of the entire chapter. Fourth, the passages in Eph. 4:22–24 and Col. 3:9–10 are parallel, both containing the use of the aorist infinitive of result, i.e., *believers have already put off the old man and put on the new by virtue of their union with Christ.* Thus, both statements (Col. 3:9–10 being translated correctly in the English version) refer to a past event and present fact, not to an exhortation to be realized in one's experience. Thus, a body of erroneous and widely–accepted teaching has arisen because it is based solely on the English text and grammar.

Eph. 4:22–24, ἀποθέσθαι ὑμᾶς κατὰ τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφὴν τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπονκαὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον… Col.

3:9–10, ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωποῦκαὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον...[106]

It is traditional to speak and sing about the "fiery trials" of our faith (1 Pet. 4:12). Part of the scriptural basis for this traditional saying is found in 1 Peter 1:7, and the words, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." What does the pronoun "it" refer to? "faith" or "gold?" It refers to "gold," not "faith"—although some trials are called "fiery" by Peter.[107]

An example of *eisegesis*—reading a foreign meaning into the text—is found in the idea of the "backslidden Christian." It is commonly accepted by Christians of almost every doctrinal persuasion that a believer can "backslide," i.e., slide or gradually slip back into former sinful ways or habits. The major proof–text for such a doctrine is Proverbs 14:14, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways..." The whole idea pictured by "backsliding" is erroneous. The term and its cognates occur seventeen times in Scripture, all in three books of the Old Testament: Proverbs (once), Jeremiah (thirteen times) and Hosea (three times). With the possible exception of the statement in Proverbs, every instance refers to the rebellion and apostasy of Israel.

The English term is an *interpretation* of four Hebrew terms and a variety of Greek terms in the LXX.

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[106] See John Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, pp. 202–221 for a thorough discussion of the use of the aor. inf. of result and also of the experiential aspects of the believer's union with Christ.

[107] ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως πολυτιμότερον χρυσίου τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου διὰ πυρὸς δὲ δοκιμαζομένου... "Faith" [τῆς πίστεως] is fem. sing.; "gold" [χρυσίου] is neut. sing. and the words "though it be tried" are also neut. sing. [τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου]. The grammatical gender determines the antecedent of the pronoun.

Note: (1) The most common term [10 times] מְשׁוּבָה, "to turn back, apostatize" (Jer. 2:19 [LXX, ἡ ἀποστασία σου]; 3:6, 8, 11, 12; 5:6; 8:5; 14:7; Hos. 11:7; 14:4). (2) The next most common term [5 times] שׁוֹבָב, "back–turning, apostasy" (Jer. 3:14, 22 [LXX: ἐπιστράφητε υἱοὶ ἐπιστρέφοντες]; 8:5; 31:22; 49:4). (3) סֹרֵרָה, Qal. ptc., "characterized as rebellious or stubborn" (Hos. 4:16). (4) סוּג, Qal. ptc., "a characteristic turning back, being recreant, proving faithless, apostate (Prov. 14:14).

The comprehensive picture is one of turning back, open rebellion, a refractory shoulder which throws off the yoke and apostasy. The idea of sliding or slipping backwards, or the common preaching *simile* of a cow sliding back into a mud hole while trying to get out is based on a thought conjured from the English language. It is diametrically opposed to the idea of the Hebrew. While a Christian may be taken in sin, a mere professing believer may eventually apostatize, but it is highly questionable to import an Old Testament doctrine into the New Testament by a process of eisegesis. If "backsliding" is equated with outright apostasy, there may be some correspondence.

The Greek has its share of idiomatic expressions. One is the objective genitive,[108] i.e., "when the noun in the genitive receives the action, being related as the object to the verbal idea contained in the noun modified." [109] E.g., "the preaching of Jesus Christ" [τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ] (Rom. 16:25). It is not our Lord who is preaching, but rather the one being preached about. Mk. 11:22, "Have faith in

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[108] See Dana–Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 72–83. See also: A. T. Robertson, *Shorter Grammar*, pp. 224–232; A. T. Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, pp. 491–551; Blass–Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, pp. 89–100; J. H. Moulton, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, I, pp.72–74; III, pp. 207, 210–212; IV, p. 84; C. F.D. Moule, *An Idiom–Book of New Testament Greek*, pp. 39–41; and Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 92–95.

[109] Dana–Mantey, *Loc. cit.*, p. 78.

God" [ἔχετε πίστιν θεοῦ], i.e., it is not God's faith, but our faith in God, i.e., God is the object of our faith. E.g., Rom. 10:2, "have a zeal of God" [ζῆλον θεοῦ], not God's zeal, but the traditional religious zeal of the Jews. Cf. Rom. 3:3, "make the faith of God of none effect" [τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσει], it is faith in God, not God's faith, which is made of none effect.

The importance of this idiomatic use is seen in such passages as: Rom. 3:22; Gal. 2:16, 20; 3:22; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 3:9. In each of these passages, the KJV reads, "…the faith of Christ." The correct translation of the objective genitive is "faith in Christ." From a misunderstanding [ignorance] of the obj. gen., has derived the irrational idea that one is saved "by Christ's faith." Aside from being a denial of a recognized idiom, such would have a profound effect on the Deity of our Lord (a "lesser deity"?). If Mk. 11:22, an objective genitive, is translated, "Have faith in God," rather than "Have God's faith," then why not these other passages referring to Christ? It would also work great confusion concerning our justification by faith and other major doctrines.

Testimonies from the Past concerning the Importance of Studying the Original Languages

Martin Luther

Martin Luther (1483–1546) was the leader of the Protestant Reformation in Germany and beyond, who, by the study of the Scriptures in their original languages, found the grace of God and the freedom from sin that only comes by that grace. On this ground, he became convinced that reading Greek and Hebrew was one of the greatest privileges and responsibilities of the Reformation preacher, so as to preserve a pure gospel. Few arguments for the importance of biblical languages are clearer than Luther's 1524 treatise, *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools.* The following is an excerpt from this work:

And let us be sure of this we will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; they are the vessel in which this wine is held; they are the larder in which this food is stored; and, as the gospel itself points out, they are the baskets in which are kept these loaves and fishes and fragments. If through our neglect we let the languages go (which God forbid!), we shall…lose the gospel…

Experience too has proved this and still gives evidence of it. For as soon as the languages declined to the vanishing point, after the apostolic age, the gospel and faith and Christianity itself declined more and more…On the other hand, now that the languages have been revived, they are bringing with them so bright a light and accomplishing such great things that the whole world stands amazed and has to acknowledge that we have the gospel just as pure and undefiled as the apostles had it, that it has been wholly restored to its original purity, far beyond what it was in the days of St. Jerome and St. Augustine…

Yes, you say, but many of the fathers were saved and even became teachers without the languages. That is true. But how do you account for the fact that they so often erred in the Scriptures?…Even St. Augustine himself is obliged to confess…that a Christian teacher who is to expound the Scriptures must know Greek and Hebrew in addition to Latin. Otherwise, it is impossible to avoid constant stumbling; indeed, there are plenty of problems to work out even when one is well versed in the languages.

There is a vast difference therefore between a simple preacher of the faith and a person who expounds Scripture, or, as St. Paul puts it, a prophet. A simple preacher (it is true) has so many clear passages and texts available through translations that he can know and teach Christ, lead a holy life, and preach to others. But when it comes to interpreting Scripture, and working with it on your own, and disputing with those who cite it incorrectly, he is unequal to the task; that cannot be done without languages.

Now there must always be such prophets in the Christian church who can dig into Scripture, expound it, and carry on disputations. A saintly life and right doctrine are not enough. Hence languages are absolutely and altogether necessary in the Christian church, as are the prophets or interpreters; although it is not necessary that every Christian or every preacher be such a prophet, as St. Paul points out in I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4…

Since it becomes Christians then to make good use of the Holy Scriptures as their one and only book and it is a sin and a shame not to know our own book or to understand the speech and words of our God, it is a still greater sin and loss that we do not study languages, especially in these days when God is offering and giving us men and books and every facility and inducement to this study, and desires his Bible to be an open book.

0 how happy the dear fathers would have been if they had had our opportunity to study the languages and come thus prepared to the Holy Scriptures! What great toil and effort it cost them to gather up a few crumbs, while we with half the labor—yes, almost without any labor at all—can acquire the whole loaf! 0 how their effort puts our indolence to shame! Yes, how sternly God will judge our lethargy and ingratitude!

Here belongs also what St. Paul calls for in I Corinthians 14, namely, that in the Christian church all teachings must be judged. For this a knowledge of the language is needful above all else. The preacher or teacher can expound the Bible from beginning to end as he pleases, accurately or inaccurately, if there is no one there to judge whether he is doing it right or wrong. But in order to judge, one must have a knowledge of the languages; it cannot be done in any other way.

Therefore, although faith and the gospel may indeed be proclaimed by simple preachers without a knowledge of languages, such preaching is flat and tame; people finally become weary and bored with it, and it falls to the ground. But where the preacher is versed in the languages, there is a freshness and vigor in his preaching, Scripture is treated in its entirety, and faith finds itself constantly renewed by a continual variety of words and illustrations. Hence, Psalm 129 likens such scriptural studies to a hunt, saying to the deer God opens the dense forests; and Psalm 1 likens them to a tree with a plentiful supply of water, whose leaves are always green.[110]

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[110] "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools," in *Luther's Works,* ed. W. Bran and H. Lehman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), pp. 357–366. Quoted in part from Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 118–120.

Ulrich Zwingli

Ulrich Zwingli, an older contemporary of Luther, and the leader of the Swiss Reformation, was said to have memorized the entire Greek New Testament. It was his strong conviction that the Scriptures form the sole authority of the Christian's life, and thus emphasized their study in the original languages. In his day, Latin was the official academic, ecclesiastical and diplomatic language, thus he emphasized Latin among the languages to be mastered. His comments are, however, still pertinent for this day. The following is from his treatise, *On the Education of Youth*:

> Once a young man is instructed in the solid virtue which is formed by faith, it follows that he will regulate himself and richly adorn himself from within: for only he whose whole life is ordered will find it easy to give help and counsel to others.

> But a man cannot rightly order his own soul unless he exercises himself day and night in the Word of God. He can do that most readily if he is well versed in such languages as Hebrew and Greek, for a right understanding of the Old Testament is difficult without one, and a right understanding of the New Testament is equally difficult without the other.

> But we are instructing those who have already learned the rudiments, and everywhere Latin has the priority. In these circumstances I do not think that Latin should be altogether neglected. For an understanding of the Holy Scripture it is of less value than Hebrew and Greek, but for other purposes it is just as useful. And it often happens that we have to do the business of Christ amongst those who speak Latin. No Christian should use these languages simply for his own profit or pleasure: for languages are gifts of the Holy Ghost.

> After Latin, we should apply ourselves to Greek. We should do this for the sake of the New Testament, as I have said already. And if I may say so, to the best of my knowledge the Greeks have always handled the doctrine of Christ better than the Latins. For that reason, we should always direct our young men to that source. But in respect of Greek as well as Latin we should take care to garrison our souls with innocence and faith, for in these tongues are many things which we learn only to our hurt: wantonness, ambition, violence, cunning, vain philosophy and the like. But the soul…can safely steer past all these…

I put Hebrew last because Latin is in general use and Greek follows conveniently. Otherwise, I would willingly have given Hebrew precedence, for in many places even amongst the Greeks those who are ignorant of Hebrew forms of speech have great difficulty in attempting to draw out the true sense of Scripture…

If a man would penetrate to the heavenly wisdom, with which no earthly wisdom ought rightly to be considered, let alone compared, it is with such arms that he must be equipped. And even then he must still approach with a humble and thirsting spirit.[111]

Herman Witsius

Herman Witsius, a seventeenth century Dutch scholar and theologian wrote:

Let him apply himself diligently to the acquisition of different languages, and especially to those which God has distinguished by making them the channels of conveyance for His heavenly oracles, that he may understand God when he speaks, as it were, in His own language, that he who acts as the interpreter of God and hears the word at His mouth, may not require an interpreter for himself.[112]

John Owen

John Owen was one of the greatest of the Puritan writers and preachers. He was also Vice Chancellor of Christ's College, Oxford, during the Cromwellian Era.

There is in the originals of the Scripture a peculiar emphasis of words and expressions, and in them an especial energy, to intimate and insinuate the sense of the Holy Ghost unto the minds of men, which cannot be traduced into other languages by translations, so as to obtain the same power and efficacy.[113]

…a great help for the investigation of truth is the diligent study of the Holy Scriptures in those languages in which they were written by the Holy Spirit. Not only is this the only well from which we can draw the

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[111] Quoted in part from Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Ibid*, pp.135–136.

[112] Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Divine Covenants between God and Man.*

[113] John Owen, *Works* IV, p. 270.

original force and meaning of the words and phrases of Divine utterance, but also those languages (especially the Hebrew) possess a weight of their own—a vividness which brings to the understanding fine shades of meaning with a power which cannot survive the passage into another tongue.[114]

C. H. Spurgeon

C. H. Spurgeon was one of the greatest and most widely used preachers ever called and gifted by God. His attainments were largely through self–effort, yet he personally studied the Scriptures in the original languages.

A man to comment well should be able to read the Bible in the original. Every minister should aim at a tolerable proficiency both in the Hebrew and the Greek. These two languages will give him a library at a small expense, an inexhaustible thesaurus, a mine of spiritual wealth. Really, the effort of acquiring a language is not so prodigious that brethren of moderate abilities should so frequently shrink from the attempt. A minister ought to attain enough of these tongues to be at least able to make out a passage by the aid of a lexicon, so as to be sure he is not misrepresenting the Spirit of God in his discoursings, but is, as nearly as he can judge, giving forth what the Lord intended to reveal by the language employed. Such knowledge would prevent his founding doctrines upon expressions in our version when nothing at all analogous is to be found in the inspired original.[115]

J. M. Reu

John Michael Reu was a professor of Homiletics at Capital Seminary, and noted the great importance of the original languages as a basis for preaching. "If the preacher, owing to defective preparation, has no Hebrew, he may find a…stopgap…As for the preacher incapable of using the Greek New Testament, he will have difficulty to prove his right to exist."[116]

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[114] John Owen, *Biblical Theology*, p. 701.

[115] C. H. Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, pp. 24–25.

[116] J. M. Reu, *Homiletics*, p. 340.

Thomas Murphy

Thomas Murphy, a nineteenth century pastor and author of a volume on Pastoral Theology, devotes a chapter to "The Pastor in the Study," and in this chapter, a section on "The Study of Hebrew and Greek." His comments are worthwhile:

> It is to be feared that most pastors, as soon as they leave the theological school and enter upon the hard work of the ministry, drop the study of the original languages. At the very time when they are ready to enjoy the reading of the sacred word in the tongues in which it was first written, and to profit by it, and to go on improving in the exercise, they lay it aside, in very many cases to be taken up no more. By so doing, they lose, in a great measure, the advantages of an important study of the previous years. The commencement of one's ministry is the time, and the only time, for averting this danger. The knowledge already acquired should be carefully kept up. It should be increased until the sacred languages could be read with ease and pleasure. Some plan for persevering in this study should be adopted at the beginning.

> It need not take much time. Want of time arising from the pressure of other duties is generally the great obstacle. But there need not be many hours spent in it. One hour a week devoted to the Hebrew and one to the Greek will serve to keep up that knowledge of them already attained, and even to make a little progress….The knowledge which is at first fresh is easily retained, and then, if ever so little is added to it from week to week, it will gradually grow into a grand attainment in years. The systematic study may be very much aided by the careful examination in the original of each text with its context which is taken up for sermon or lecture. Some ministers keep up their knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek fairly in this way.

> The slowness of the progress, and the imperfect knowledge of these languages already attained, very often at first discourage from attempting further effort. It is so tedious to search out the interpretation of a passage, there is so little satisfaction in the operation, and there is such a mountain to be overcome before the task will be much easier, that it is frequently given up in despair. But is it not much if, even with difficulty, a passage can be traced back into the very language in which it was written by men inspired of God? And if present difficulties should be ever so great and present improvement ever so slow, yet what will not steady progress at

length achieve? What will not an hour a week, of even the slowest advance, amount to in ten years? The rule should be to keep up what has been already attained, and aim after some improvement, no matter how little.

The advantages…of being acquainted with the original languages of the Scriptures are very great.

1. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Bible can be better understood through the aid of this knowledge than it can possibly be without it….

2. We get nearer to the mind of the Spirit in this way. Every version must necessarily be a removal from it….

3. Out of all the possible languages of the world these were the ones which were providentially chosen for conveying the will of God to man….

4. It must be an unspeakable pleasure to get at the very terms which were written by inspired pens, the very sounds that were uttered by Jehovah, and heard from his lips by his highly–favored servants….

5. To be skilled in these languages gives one an independence in interpreting the Scriptures and an authority in expounding them which cannot be too highly valued….

6. Some of the best modern commentaries on the Scriptures cannot be used to full advantage without a knowledge of these languages….

How much it is regretted by multitudes of older pastors that in the beginning of their ministry they did not undertake and rigidly pursue this study! ….They feel the great want at every turn in their studies, and mourn that they had not understood it an earlier day and provided against it.[117]

B. B. Warfield

Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield was a professor at Princeton Seminary, continuing the legacy of Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge. He wrote:

Extremes meet. Pietist and Rationalist have ever hunted in couples and dragged down their quarry together. They may differ as

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[117] Thomas Murphy, *Pastoral Theology: The Pastor in the Various Duties of His Office*, pp. 129–134.

to why they deem theology mere lumber, and would not have the prospective minister waste his time in acquiring it. The one loves God so much, and the other loves him so little, that he does not care to know him. But they agree that it is not worthwhile to learn to know him. The simple English Bible seems to the one sufficient equipment for the minister, because in the fervor of his religious enthusiasm, it seems to him enough for the renovating of the world, just to lisp its precious words to man. It seems to the other all the theological equipment a minister needs, because in his view the less theology the better. He considers him ill employed in poring over Hebrew and Greek pages, endeavoring to extract their real meaning—for what does it matter what their real meaning is?

…If the minister is simply an advance agent of modern culture, a kind of University–Extension lecturer, whose whole function it is to "elevate the masses" and "improve the social organism"—why, of course art and literature should take the place of Greek and Hebrew, and "sociology" the place of Theology in our seminary curriculum. If the whole function of the minister is "inspirational" rather than "instructional," and his work is finished when the religious nature of man is roused to action, and the religious emotions are set surging, with only a very vague notion of the objects to which the awakened religious affections should turn, or the ends to which the religious activities, once set in motion, should be directed—why, then, no doubt we may dispense with all serious study of Scripture…

But, if the minister is the mouth–piece of the Most High, charged with a message to deliver, to expound and enforce; standing in the name of God before men, to make known to them who and what this God is, and what his purposes of grace are, and what is his will for his people—then the whole aspect of things is changed….No second–hand knowledge of the revelation of God for the salvation of a ruined world can suffice the needs of a ministry whose function it is to convey this revelation to men, commend it to their acceptance and apply it in detail to their needs…[118]

Kenneth Wuest

Kenneth Wuest (1893–1962) was professor of Greek at Moody Bible Institute and the author of several volumes on Greek studies.

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[118] B. B. Warfield, *Shorter Writings*, I, pp. 371–372.

He noted that "The simple application of the rules of Greek grammar and syntax will often lead to the discovery of some tremendous truth which would be passed by unnoticed in the use of the English translation…"[119] "Questions that are answered in hours of wading through commentaries, can often be answered in five minutes by recourse to a Greek lexicon." [120]

A. T. Robertson

A. T. Robertson (1863–1934) was professor of New Testament Greek at Louisville Seminary and author of several massive, practical works on New Testament Greek.

> There is nothing like the Greek New Testament to rejuvenate the world, which came out of the Dark Ages with the Greek Testament in its hand. Erasmus wrote in the preface to his Greek Testament about his own thrill of delight: "These holy pages will summon up the living image of His mind. They will give you Christ Himself, talking, healing, dying, rising, the whole Christ in a word; they will give Him to you in an intimacy so close that He would be less visible to you if He stood before your eyes."

> The lexicon may point the way to life…Grammar is a means of grace…

> …the Greek Testament….There is no sphere of study where one is repaid more quickly for all the toil expended….the real New Testament is the Greek New Testament. The English is simply a translation of the New Testament, not the actual New Testament….there is much that cannot be translated. It is not possible to reproduce the delicate turns of thought, the nuances of language, in translation. The freshness of the strawberry cannot be preserved in any extract.…

> It is possible for one to teach himself the elements of Greek so as to get a great deal of benefit from the study of the Greek New Testament….One does not have to be a gifted linguist to follow a course of study like this. It requires only a half hour a day and the

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[119] Kenneth Wuest, *The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament*, p. 39

[120] *Ibid*., p. 96.

determination to stick to it steadily, and one will win out and be glad of it all his life.

The trouble with all translations is that one's mind does not pause long enough over a passage to get the full benefit of the truth contained in it. The Greek compels one to pause over each word long enough for it to fertilize the mind with its rich and fructifying energy. The very words of the English become so familiar that they slip through the mind too easily. One needs to know his English Bible just that way, much of it by heart, so that it will come readily to hand for comfort and for service. But the minute study called for by the Greek opens up unexpected treasures that surprise and delight the soul.[121]

J. Gresham Machen

J. Gresham Machen (1881–1937), one of the founders of Westminster Seminary, a Greek scholar and Professor of New Testament, gave the following encouragement and practical advice to his students:

The Greek of the New Testament is by no means a difficult language; a very fair knowledge of it may be acquired by…[anyone]…of average intelligence. And to that end two homely directions may be given. In the first place, the Greek should be read aloud. A language cannot be easily learned by the eye alone. The sound as well as the sense of familiar passages should be impressed upon the mind, until sound and sense are connected without the medium of translation. Let this result not be hastened, it will come of itself if the simple direction be followed. In the second place, the Greek Testament should be read every day without fail, Sabbaths included. Ten minutes a day is of vastly more value than seventy minutes once a week. If the student keeps a 'morning watch.' The Greek Testament ought to be given a place in it; at any rate, the Greek Testament should be read devotionally. The Greek Testament is a sacred book, and should be treated as such. If it is

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[121] A. T. Robertson, Preface to *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* and *The Minister and His Greek New Testament*, pp. 15–21.

treated so, the reading of it will soon become a source of joy and power. [122]

George Ricker Berry

Dr. Berry (1865–1945), Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Colgate University and Colgate–Rochester Divinity School, in an article entitled "The Value of Hebrew and Greek to Clergymen," wrote:

> Without *some* knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, you cannot be certain, in a single instance, that in your sermon based on a Scriptural text, you are presenting the correct teaching of that text.
>
> Without *some* knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, you cannot be an independent student, or a reliable interpreter of the word of God….
>
> Within ten years the average man wastes more time in fruitless reading and indifferent talk, than would be used in acquiring a good working knowledge of Hebrew and Greek that in turn would impart to his teaching that quality of independence and of reliability which so greatly enhances one's power as a teacher.
>
> There is not *one* minister in *ten* who might not if he but *would* find time and opportunity for such study of Hebrew and Greek as would enable him to make a thoroughly practical use of it in his work as a Bible–preacher and Bible–teacher. [123]

Bernard Ramm

"The interpreter who interprets Scripture in his modern language is always working with a linguistic veil between himself and the original texts. And he never knows how thin or thick this veil is." [124]

Concluding Note

There is no greater or more reverent, vital study for the Christian than the inscripturated Word of God. To know God's Word as

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[122] J. Gresham Machen, quoted by Curtis Vaughn and Virtus E. Gideon, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*. Broadman Press, 1979. p. 6

[123] George Ricker Berry in the introduction to his *Interlinear Greek–English New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

[124] Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 107.

thoroughly and intimately as possible, to know and love its doctrinal propositions, and to consistently apply it to one's life by the grace of God—this is the core and substance of Christianity. Our love to and service for the Lord Jesus Christ, our faithfulness in every sphere of life, our joy in trial, our strength in temptation, and our glorious anticipation of future glory in the very presence of God, all hang upon our relationship to God's Word. A careful study of the Scriptures, seeking to develop some knowledge of and skill in the original languages, ought to become an integral part of the Christian's practical experience. It is indispensable for the minister.

An Introduction to
The Textual Criticism
of The Greek New Testament

Preliminary Issues

Definition and Description

Biblical Criticism[125] is a department of Exegetical Theology which is concerned with the biblical text. It is composed of two branches: Textual and Historical Criticism. These are also termed "Lower" and "Higher" criticism because the latter is founded and dependent on the former.

Old Testament Textual Criticism deals with the Hebrew text, the Aramaic and the Septuagint [LXX] or Greek Old Testament (c. 246 BC). New Testament Textual Criticism is concerned with the Greek text of the New Testament, the ancient versions and early Christian writings.

Textual or "Lower" Criticism (being first and foundational) is an integral part of establishing the text of Scripture. Historical or "Higher" Criticism (based upon the results of textual criticism) seeks to establish the genuineness—authorship, date and historicity—of any given biblical document through both internal and external evidence. Internal evidence includes whatever might be in the text of the document itself, e.g., claims to authorship, historical data and circumstances, a distinct writing style, etc., existing in the text. External evidence may be derived from other biblical documents, parallel passages in other documents, historical incidents that corroborate the document, religious tradition, etc.

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[125] "Criticism" derives from the Gk: κριτής, a judge. Cf. Heb. 4:12, "For the word of God is…a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." "Discerner" is κριτικὸς, or "critic, judge." A biblical critic is one who approaches the Scriptures with judgment, or uses judgment, i.e., investigates the Scripture.

Prejudice against Biblical Criticism

There is a great deal of prejudice on the part of the uninformed against the very idea of "Biblical Criticism." Mark the following: first, the modern existential trend in Evangelical and Fundamentalist thinking. "Faith," rather than being primarily doctrinal and objective, is held by many to be solely experiential and subjective, and so any rational or intelligent attempt to deal with the text of Scripture and the plain facts of history seems repulsive and an attempt to call into question the very Word of God. This anti–intellectual or irrational stance not only stifles investigation, it also tends to denigrate even the study of the original languages of Scripture, furthering traditional misunderstanding, a shallowness of ministry (topical rather than expository or exegetical preaching and teaching), and strangely, a lessening of proper scriptural authority in the lives of believers.

Second, the term "Higher Criticism" has been traditionally used by Fundamentalists and some Evangelicals in a very narrow and negative sense as pertaining solely to the rationalistic attempt to destroy the validity and authority of Scripture. It is held to be synonymous with "*Destructive* Higher Criticism" [Radical, Rationalistic Higher Criticism], which denies the supernatural, Divine inspiration, and miracles, etc., and thus undermines any historical and doctrinal validity to the Scriptures. The radical critics usually assign a "late date" to biblical books, thus denying the reality of biblical prophecy, or deny the unity of a given book, attributing much to later redactors [editors]. Thus, the legitimate science of Biblical Criticism has largely been lost.

Third, the "King James Version Only" mentality among Fundamentalists and some Evangelicals has become cultish. Any attempt to read or even refer to another Bible version is considered to be heretical and destructive of the faith. Such has become an almost superstitious and irrational approach to the text of Scripture. It must be remembered that the *King James Version*—or any other English version—as good as it may be, is inescapably the version of a translation, and thus at times twice removed from the originals.

An Important Note

One must understand that it is not Biblical Criticism *per se* which is erroneous, threatening or heretical, but the erroneous presuppositions of the given biblical critic which are at fault. "Modernism" [or "Liberalism"], a child of The Enlightenment [German Rationalism, French Skepticism and English Deism], beginning in the eighteenth century, which was grounded in a denial of the supernatural, and thus the veracity and authority of Scripture, could only produce an "unbelieving scholarship," i.e., a scholarly approach devoid of faith. Unbelieving [unregenerate] scholars have gone to the Scriptures to denude them of the supernatural and reduce them to mere historical or traditional religious documents which are largely unreliable. Contrary to this assault upon the Scriptures, believing, conservative biblical scholarship has used the very same science to defend the Scriptures.

Historico–Critical Exegesis

A survey of the presuppositions of "Destructive Higher Criticism" [Historico–Critical Exegesis] and "Modernism" or "Liberalism" in their approach to Scripture:

Definition and Description

The historical–critical approach to Scripture is the result of Enlightenment Philosophy and its naturalistic world–and–life view. As the biblical expression of theological "Liberalism" or "Modernism," it is also variously termed "Rationalistic Exegesis," "Historicism," "Radical Criticism," and "Destructive Higher Criticism."

Its description: first, Historico–Critical Exegesis refers to an exegesis which approaches the Bible from the *pou sto*[126] of the modern, "scientific" method which denies any supernaturalism, and therefore the Divine inspiration and infallibility of Scripture.

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[126] *Pou sto* (Literally, "[a place] where I may stand," δός μοι ποῦ στῶ) or point–of–reference.

Second, it seeks to reconstruct the contents and teachings of the Bible on a mere naturalistic [antisupernaturalistic] foundation according to the confines of human history. It presupposes that the universe is a closed and evolutionary system without external or supernatural providence or interference. It thus proceeds along Rationalistic presuppositions and principles.

Third, it is "historical" in that it limits the Bible, especialy the Old Testament, to Israelitish history, which it necessarily reconstructs along evolutionary lines, omitting all supernatural elements of miracles and prophecy.

Fourth, it is radical because it seeks to go to the very philological, historical, cultural and religious foundations of the biblical record and is extreme in its nature.

Fifth, it has been termed "Destructive Higher Criticism" to distinguish it from the legitimate science of Higher or Historical Criticism, which seeks by external and internal evidence to establish the date and authorship of a given document.[127]

General Characteristics and Principles

Although Old Testament Rationalistic Criticism differs from New Testament Rationalistic Criticism in certain aspects, there are several general characteristics and principles which are held in common. These are evidenced in the "Liberal" or "Modern" approach:[128] These characteristics are: first, a modern, "educated" mentality which recognizes that the validity of the objective,

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[127] Biblical criticism has two major divisions: textual or "lower" criticism, and historical, or "higher" criticism. These biblical sciences are legitimate when pursued with Christian theistic presuppositions and in their proper place. When the presuppositions are antisupernaturalistic, historicist, or rationalistic, then such science becomes illegitimate.

[128] These principles are generally adapted from Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*., pp. 64–69. A more detailed analysis can be found in W. R. Downing, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, pp. 142–156.

scientific method is to govern one's approach to the Bible. In this context, the authority and infallibility of the Bible are necessarily denied, and it is treated as any ancient literature or document—a blatant antisupernaturalism. The historical–critical method was characterized by the alien combination of technical or mere academic biblical scholarship and unbelief.[129]

Second, the exegete is to be without presuppositions. By this is meant that the Scriptures are not to be approached from the context of ecclesiastical Symbolics, i.e., the confessional standards of historic Christianity, and thus is to be interpreted as any other literature.

> Note: Symbolics (Gk. Σύμβαλον, Lat. *symbolum*, from συμβάλλειν, "to throw together, to compare") means a mark, badge, watchword or test. Used of creeds in a theological sense since the fourth century. (See Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, I, p. 3). Symbolics is the study of the creeds, confessions and doctrinal standards of any given church or denomination.

However, no one is without presuppositions, especially the Rationalist or Liberal! Further, the purpose is to separate the history and content of Scripture from doctrine, thus denying Divine inspiration and resulting in mere religious experience.

Third, inspiration is redefined from verbal, plenary and dynamic, to an existential power that inspires religious experience. Divine revelation gives way to human insight and subjective religious feeling.

Fourth, the determining factor of criticism or validity is "the spirit of Jesus," i.e., the spirit or teachings of Jesus are normative and whatever is morally or ethically below or beyond this is not binding.

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[129] The German radical biblical critics and their followers were nearly all highly educated in matters of the Original Languages, church history, philosophy, philology and exegesis—but were lacking in biblical, personal faith. Their literary productions in the realm of biblical scholarship have produced an enduring suspicion for any scholarly approach to the Scriptures.

This eliminates much of the Old Testament, with its wars of extermination, animal sacrifices, Mosaic institutions, death penalty for various offences, etc. and some of the New.[130] It in reality also excludes the principle of progressive revelation and the doctrinal content of Scripture and substitutes for it subjective religious experience.

Fifth, the supernatural element of Scripture is redefined. While the supernaturalism of miracles, prophecy and providence is denied, the idea of supernaturalism is transferred to the immaterial, e.g., prayer, ethics, morality, sacrificial human goodness—modern mysticism or existentialism.

Sixth, the concept of evolution is applied to the religious history of Israel, and thereby to its documents. Thus, Jehovah is first seen as a tribal deity who, through the process of cultural and religious development, becomes the God of Israel and later, of Christianity. The Scriptures were first oral traditions, then primitive writings, which were later edited or redacted, until they reached their present form (the operative view of "Form Criticism"). The documents were either written or edited after the events they predicted, thus, a much later date must be given to the books of the Old Testament and much of the New Testament.

Seventh, the notion of accommodation must be applied to the teaching of our Lord and the Apostles. This means that our Lord taught in terms limited to the understanding of his hearers, i.e., he accommodated himself to the conditions, superstitions and thinking of the time in which he lived.

Note: That God accommodated himself to human finiteness by the use of anthropomorphisms and human language in the Scriptures is understandable. But an "accommodationism" that undermines the

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[130] E.g., It does not matter, we are told, if Moses and Paul wrote about and condemned homosexuality. Jesus did not speak directly about it, therefore, it is neither sinful nor against "the spirit of Jesus"—such is the arbitrary nature of the "Liberal" or "Modern" approach.

veracity of Scripture is utterly foreign to both the truthfulness of God in general and to the Eternal Son of God in particular.

Thus, his testimony concerning the historicity of creation, Adam and Eve, sin and judgment are not actual, but merely an accommodation to a relatively primitive people who thought in such terms. All biblical doctrine must be considered in the same light.

Eighth, the Bible must be interpreted historically, i.e., in a reductionist sense, eliminating the supernatural, making theological beliefs the result of social and cultural conditions, and making religion essentially subjective and malleable. Such an approach seeks to stress the alleged commonality of Israel's religion with the pagan religions of other ancient peoples, and find a common source in myth, tradition and the human psyche—"comparative religions."

Ninth, philosophy has a legitimate claim upon religious belief. This, of course, would be valid, if the other principles and characteristics of Liberalism or Modernism were admitted, and all human knowledge—scientific, religious, moral and ethical—were leveled.

The truth is, that humanistic philosophy has provided the determining presuppositions for religious Liberalism and Modernism.[131] Rationalism and Deism formed the basis for the so–called "Modern Approach" to the Bible by eliminating the supernatural, and therefore the inspiration, authority and infallibility of Scripture. Immanuel Kant made ethics or moral will the essence of religion through removing objective Divine truth and relegating it to the *noumena* in his system.[132] G. W. F. Hegel provided a

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[131] By humanistic philosophy, we mean the thought–process of fallen, depraved man suffering under the noetic effects of sin and seeking to be his own "god" and determine for himself what is right or wrong, i.e., seeking autonomy, and denying the authority and infallibility of Divine revelation.

[132] The separation of religion from reason would characterize much of later "Biblical Mythology" and German Liberalism as promulgated by Schliermacher.

foundation for the historical–critical approach to biblical criticism through his dialectic[133] and pantheistic belief.[134]

A Short Historical Survey
of New Testament Historico–Critical Exegesis

J. S. Semler and Religious Rationalism

Rationalism held that the human intellect was capable of determining objective truth from reflection within in a time–space world rather than through the revelation of a transcendent God.

The historical school of religious Rationalism, a strange admixture of Rationalism, Pietism and Romanticism,[135] originated with Johann Salomo Semler (1725–1791), who denied Divine inspiration, held that the biblical record was historically conditioned to localized situations, and that our Lord and the Apostles accommodated themselves to the contemporary religious thinking of their day.

He thus held that the Scriptures were fallible records, mixed with error, and that historical investigation had no bearing on faith. As a Rationalistic exegete, he divorced the text from any doctrinal

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[133] The Hegelian dialectic philosophy of thesis, antithesis and synthesis has been influential in the thought of F. C. Baur and the Tübingen School, which viewed early Christianity as a conflict between the teachings of Paul and Peter, or between Palestinian and Hellenistic Christianity, etc. It has also been a factor in the Dialectic Theology of Karl Barth and the modern synthesis known as "Neo–Evangelicalism."

[134] "The mythical theory…[held by Herder, Heyne and Strauss]…was a logical and self–consistent application to biblical exposition of the Hegelian (pantheistic) doctrine that the idea of God and of the absolute…developed in the consciousness of humanity." Milton S. Terry, *Op. cit.*, p. 168.

[135] From Rationalism, they adopted their critical spirit, from Pietism, a subjectivism that separated objective truth from faith, and from Romanticism, the idea that the Bible was a literary monument to be interpreted in literary categories.

teaching and asserted that the exegete should not have any presuppositions.

Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791) followed Semler's commentaries with his own historical study of biblical documents. This approach became known as "Neology."[136] Later scholars of the Rationalistic or Historical School include Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827), who first posited myth as a category of biblical study.

H. E. W. Paulus and Naturalism

Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus (1761–1851), professor at Jena, Würtzburg and Heidelberg, Naturalistic commentator and author of a *Life of Jesus* (1828), explained away the miracles as natural events. "Of all the rationalistic theories the Naturalistic is the most violent and radical."[137] Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1835) in the mythical tradition was an answer to Paulus's work.

H. S. Reimarus and "The Quest for the Historical Jesus"

Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) wrote an extensive critique of Christianity from a Deistic standpoint, later published by G. E. Lessing as the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* (1774–1778). Reimarus thought our Lord to be a mere man, a political agitator who was executed by the Romans for treason. His disciples had then fabricated the farce of his resurrection.

These writings initiated a new era of biblical studies in which the question was raised as to how much of the original teaching of Jesus was reflected in early Christianity. It has been alleged that the original teachings and emphasis were lost to the Hellenizing influence of the Apostle Paul, and through legends, myths, etc.

The publication of David Friedrich Strauss's work, the *Life of Jesus* (1835) sought to ground our Lord's life in myth. This type of study culminated with *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* by Albert

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[136] "Neology," a new way of approaching and reading the Scriptures. Cf. Gerald Bray, *Biblical Hermeneutics*., pp. 257ff

[137] Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*., p. 167–168.

Schweitzer (1875–1965), who was a professor and medical missionary in Africa. Schweitzer, following the eschatological theories of Johannes Weiss (1863–1914), maintained that our Lord had convinced himself that he would rise and soon return to the earth. All these radical Christological works fomented crises in rationalistic and conservative biblical scholarship.

Herder, Heyne and Biblical Mythology

Reacting against the Naturalism of Paulus and others, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and Christian Gottlieb Heyne (1729–1812) developed the idea of biblical mythology as a legitimate factor in historical criticism and as a literary category. They sought to separate religious feeling from both myth and history.

Heyne was the first to define myth as a literary category, a device commonly and universally used by primitive peoples before the development of rational thought,[138] thus seeking a means by which the Bible could be interpreted without resorting to rationalistic assertions that the biblical writers had practiced deliberate deception.

Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827) and Johann Philipp Gabler (1753–1826), proponents of German "Neology," were associated with this school of thought, as was W. M. L. De Wette (1780–1849), who broke with the neologist tradition, although he asserted that much of the Old Testament was mythical.

F. D. E. Schliermacher and German Liberalism

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schliermacher (1768–1834), professor at Halle and Berlin, was the father of liberal German theology in the nineteenth century. He combined a critical approach (ignoring inspiration) to textual and historical issues with a religious tone he

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[138] The Radical critics held alleged "biblical myths" to be important vehicles for the expression of philosophical and religious ideas in an essentially poetic or epic form. Story–telling was used by primitive peoples as philosophy or rational thought would be used by more advanced peoples.

had inherited from Pietism. According to Kantian Idealism, he sought to make a distinction between what he considered essentials and non–essentials and separated the rational from the irrational, relegating religion to the realm of feeling. He viewed Christianity as the highest form of religious evolution. His major area of work was New Testament Criticism.

Baur and The Tübingen School

Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), professor at Tübingen was one the greatest and most influential critical New Testament scholars of the nineteenth century. His Hegelian philosophy led him to consider early Christianity as a synthesis created from the conflict of opposing forces. This led to the idea that each New Testament book had a "tendency" that had to be discerned before it could be interpreted. This view also led to a redactionist approach, a re–dating of several books, a restructuring of the New Testament, and a confusion of early heretical groups (Ebionites, Gnostics) with true Christians.

The Tübingen School of New Testament criticism, of which he was the founder and leading exponent, embroiled New Testament scholarship for half a century and was attacked by both conservative and radical scholars.

Usener and "The History of Religions" School

This approach was anticipated by Rudolf Sohm (1841–1917), a jurist, who argued that Church History must be pursued theologically. Hermann Usener (1834–1905) was a leading scholar in the field of Comparative Religions and led in the "History of Religions" approach to New Testament criticism.

Otto Pfleiderer (1839–1908) held that there was a radical difference between our Lord and Paul which resulted in the Hellenization of Christianity. Others of this school included Albert Eichhorn (1856–1926), who applied the Comparative Religions approach to the Old Testament, and Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), the author of the multi–volume *History of Dogma* (1886–1889).

H. Gunkel and Form Criticism

Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) pioneered the path in Form Criticism, which sought to examine the genre [*Gattung*] and "setting in life" [*Sitz im Leben*] of biblical construction. This theory holds that behind the documents were oral traditions, sagas, legends and myths, which may be discovered under the layers of the text. As the Documentary Hypothesis sought a "late" date through various redactors, Form Criticism sought the alleged early oral traditions. Form Criticism has played a major role in both Old Testament and New Testament critical scholarship.

G. Von Rad and Redaction Criticism

Gerhard von Rad (1901–1971) pioneered the development of Redaction Criticism. He argued, in opposition to Form Criticism, that the development of religious traditions was more important than their origin, and thus the focus moved to the alleged various redactions within the layers of the text, to the theology of the redactors, and to a study of the concept of covenants in the religious history of Israel.

Biblical Criticism: a Necessary Science

Legitimate Biblical Criticism is a necessary theological science which deals with both the text of Scripture and with the essential aspects [genuineness] of each biblical document. Biblical Criticism is necessary for various reasons. Some examples, suggestions and comments are given as to its nature, necessity and history: first, the autograph copies (the original, inspired documents hand–written by the inspired writers themselves) have long disappeared.[139] What remain are copies—and probably much later copies of copies, of copies. Aside from some papyri fragments, the oldest New Testament Greek mss. are in codex form [book form with leaves

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[139] The "original mss." are not identical with the "original Greek," which refers to the language, not the mss. The original mss. disappeared long ago. The original language remains.

rather than scrolls—a practice not in vogue until about the third or fourth century AD] and date no earlier than about the late third or early fourth century.

Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the late 1940s, the oldest Hebrew Old Testament mss. were date about 1100 AD.

Second, many of the biblical documents which we possess in the original languages have differences in the reading of their texts [variant readings]. This is understandable, given the intervening centuries, the hand–copying of manuscripts until the advent of printing in the fifteen century, the thousands of existing copies, the lack of supervision in copying, ancient translations and versions, heretical translations and versions,[140] etc. Through an exacting process, the attempt is made to sort out the original reading. If there is a questionable situation due to several readings which may be valid, then a list is drawn on a descending scale as to which reading carries the most weight or seems to fit historically, doctrinally, according to the author's style, etc. A list of such readings occurs in the critical apparatus at the bottom of the given page.

Third, variant readings often follow a given pattern, i.e., they may often be traced through various succeeding copies. For instance, if a given reading [transposed letter, different wording–ending, word, etc.] found its way into a given copy, two common things might occur: first, subsequent copies would carry this reading, and, possibly, if the wording was awkward, ungrammatical or doctrinally questionable, a subsequent copyist might change it or put an alternate reading in the margin. At times these marginal readings crept into the text.

It must be noted that although the Jewish Rabbis took great care with the Hebrew text (which still demonstrates differences due to copying, tradition, etc.), there was often no limitation, supervision or scrutiny in copying the New Testament. The pattern of variant

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[140] E.g., Marcion, a Gnostic heretic, made his translation of parts of Paul's epistles, severely editing them (140–160 AD).

readings has resulted in various text "families," i.e., patterns traceable geographically and historically through subsequent copies and textual variants.

Fourth, the early churches and Councils had to engage in Biblical Criticism in the process of *recognizing* the canon of Scripture. The following discusses this early "Biblical Criticism":

How did the early Christians recognize certain books as Scripture and reject others? The criterion [judge, standard] was not antiquity, as though books written in a given period were considered scriptural. Many books were in existence which were contemporary or even antedated some Scripture, e.g., *The Book of the Wars of the Lord* (Numb. 21:14), *The Book of Jasher* (Josh. 10:13), an epistle by Paul (1 Cor. 5:9). *1 Clement* (c. 96 AD) was written during the lifetime of the Apostle John. The answer lies in the application of various principles gathered from early Christian writings which detail the process used by the early Christians and churches:

1. *Is the book authoritative?* Does it possess Divine authority? This includes either immediate prophetic or apostolic authorship [genuineness], or authorship by an amanuensis or understudy and close companion of an apostle who wrote or interpreted under his authority and influence (e.g., Peter and Mark, or Paul and Luke). God inspired the Scriptures through the prophets and apostles.

2. *Is the book authentic?* Does it agree with the rest of Divine revelation and with the rule or "analogy of faith?" Does it contradict the truth in any way?

3. *Is the book dynamic*, i.e., does it possess the power of God to evangelize and edify? Does it manifest the witness of the Spirit?

4. *Is the book recognized by the early Church Fathers?* Is it quoted or referred to as Scripture and is undisputed by the Fathers?

5. *Is the book received by the people of God?* Does it have universal acceptance? Is it a book that is to be read in all the churches? Some later works, as the Epistles of Clement, Barnabas, Hermas, *et. al.*, were read in some churches for a time, but were

eventually discarded. There was a great and recognizable distinction between the apostolic writings and those of the early Fathers.

Thus, even in the early churches, Biblical Criticism included the text of Scripture itself, internal and external evidences, its doctrinal content, use by heretics, separation from other extant contemporary Christian literature, its place in religious society and use by the churches, a close and discerning investigation of the writings of the early Church Fathers and their quotations of scriptural texts, etc.

Fifth, some documents are traditionally held to be the work of a given author, but the text itself (internal evidences) and even external circumstances may or may not support such a claim. Biblical Criticism provides the available means and process to help ascertain the genuineness of the document, e.g., The Epistle of 2 Peter was the last biblical book to be finally and fully recognized as canonical because of textual difficulties and the question of genuineness in the early churches. The authorship of The Epistle to the Hebrews is still an open question with many.[141] The debate over the genuineness of 1 John 5:7–8 continues to foment to this day.

> Note: Although occurring in some ancient versions, no Greek text contained the passage. Erasmus thus left it out of his 1516 Greek Testament. The Romanists objected. He stated that he would include it if they could produce a Greek ms. which contained it. The passage was dubiously found in a sixteenth century Greek ms. of questionable origin. Thus, it was later inserted by Erasmus and eventually found its way into the *Stephanus Text* (1550), and into the KJV.

Sixth, archeological finds shed light upon the history of ancient peoples and thus upon the history detailed in Scripture. Although

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[141] The Pauline tradition dates to about the third century, but Paul's name does not occur in the document, and the style is quite different from that of his other writings. The subscript of the *Stephanus Text*, (13:25b) [πρός Ἑβραίους ἐγράφη ἀπό τῆς Ἰταλίας διά Τιμοθέου] varies in some mss. and is open to various interpretations.

such "evidences" do not "prove" the Scriptures to be true,[142] they may help in shedding light upon past events, customs, practices and thus various uses of words, terminology and language which help in understanding the text,[143] the times in which a given writer lived, or the various issues, places and even prophecies about which he wrote. Such evidence is incorporated into the study of Scripture by the use of Biblical Criticism.

Seventh, the Radical [rationalistic] "Higher" Biblical Critics have been and are being answered by conservative scholarship using the same principles of Biblical Criticism, but with presuppositions self–consistent with biblical Christianity.

Thus, throughout both Jewish and Christian history, Biblical Criticism has existed in one form or another. From the very beginnings of historic Christianity, Biblical Criticism has been with us in one form or another as a necessary science. Among the Jews, textual criticism was a necessary exercise from the use of the LXX (c. 246 BC), the *Targumim* [Chaldean or Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew text] and Talmudic writings.

The History of The English Bible

The Scriptures were originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic [Chaldee][144] and Greek. The Jewish Scriptures, our Old Testament, were translated into Greek in Alexandria, Egypt about 246 BC. This

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[142] The truth of Scripture, i.e., its self–authenticating nature, is vouchsafed to the mind and heart by the Holy Spirit; it is not proven by various evidences, as though the lesser could "prove" the greater!

[143] The rich source for such investigation, which has greatly and positively affected the study of N.T. Greek and Textual Criticism has been such items as the papyri (primitive paper made form papyrus, and found in the form of personal correspondence, documents, etc.), *ostraca* (pottery shards with writing on them), and inscriptions (public documents) of the first three centuries AD.

[144] Aramaic, spoken in and after the Babylonian exile, is called "Hebrew" ['Εβραΐς] in the N.T., e.g., Acts 22:2.

Greek translation, the *Septuagint* [LXX][145] was the translation of the Scriptures used during our Lord's earthly day and ministry, and often the version of the Old Testament quoted in the New.

In the second century of Christianity, the predominate language shifted from Greek to Latin. Various Latin translations became prominent, including the *Old Latin* (c. 200 AD) and especially Jerome's *Latin Vulgate* (c. 406 AD).[146] This latter version would hold sway over institutionalized Christianity[147] until Erasmus' *New Testament* (c. 1516) and the Protestant Reformation (1517–1648). Even the *Romaunt Version* of the Waldenses (c. 1180 AD) was translated from the *Latin Vulgate*.

> Note: The Greek N.T. of Erasmus marked the first return to the original languages of Scripture since the second century. The translation was in Latin. The Protestant Reformation came forth with Erasmus' Greek Testament in its hands!

> Note: See J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, I, pp. 28–29; McClintock & Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, IX, pp. 98–99.

The history of our English Bible began with the *Wyclife Bible*, an English translation from the *Latin Vulgate* (c. 1384–1395). This was handwritten and copied before the day of the printing press. [The following Bibles were all in printed form and thus widely distributed]. The next major translation in English was the *New Testament* by William Tyndale, translated from the Greek New Testament of Erasmus (c. 1525). After his martyrdom, his work on the Old Testament (c. 1530–31) was taken up and published in the *Coverdale Bible* (1535), then the *Matthew's Bible* (1537), the *Great*

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[145] LXX, the designation and abbreviation for the *Septuagint*, stands for the number 70, the traditional number of its translators.

[146] The *Latin Vulgate* is held by the Church of Rome to be the inspired Scripture, yet it is but a version of a translation, as is the King James Version.

[147] By "Institutionalized Christianity" is meant the Romish or state church.

Bible (1539) and the *Bishop's Bible* (1568). An English translation was published at Geneva, the *Geneva Bible* (1557–1560). These all had their influence on and were brought to their height of expression in the *King James Version* (1611). The KJV became the most influential and formative book in the English language.

Which Greek Text?
Presuppositions and Prejudice

The Controversy

Some Greek scholars hold to the "Critical Greek Text" [which is the latest scholarship]; some hold to the theory that the oldest mss. are the most trustworthy,as being closer to the original sources. Others hold more to the idea that the "Majority Text" [representative of the Byzantine type Text, including the so–called *Textus Receptus*] is closer to the true reading. The "King James Only" controversy often extends behind the KJV to the Greek text which allegedly supports it, the so–called *Textus Receptus*. *This controversy has divided many who have little or no idea of the issues involved.* The arguments are more irrational and even superstitious than intelligent, scholarly or aligned to the simple facts of the history of the Greek New Testament.

The major division is between the so–called *Textus Receptus* and the *Critical Text*. The *Textus Receptus*, or "the text received by all" is alleged to undergird the KJV. It is representative of the Byzantine or Majority text family. The Critical Text is the latest product of New Testament Scholarship, and gives the best–attested text with a critical apparatus with the important variant readings listed, if necessary, on a descending scale. The Latest Critical Text is the twenty–seventh edition of the Nestle–Aland Greek text.

The Issues

The text issue arose in the nineteenth century with the theories of B. F. Wescott and F. J. A. Hort, Greek scholars who championed a few of the oldest Greek texts, and most recently discovered: The *Codex Alexandrinus* (designated "A" [c. 450], presented in 1078 to

the Patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt), the *Codex Vaticanus* (designated "B" [c. 325–350], catalogued in the Vatican Library in 1475), the *Codex Sinaiticus* (designated "א," [c. 340] discovered in the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai by Count von Tishendorf in 1844, 1859), the *Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus* (designated "C" [c. 345], brought to Italy about 1500 by John Lascaris), and *Codex Bezae* (designated "D" [c. 450–550], found in 1562 by Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor at Geneva.

Wescott, Hort and others held that these oldest mss., when in agreement, represented the original, or much closer to it than the relatively more recent, "Majority Texts" (including the so–called *Textus Receptus*) and the majority readings, from which it was held by others that the most common reading among variants was probably the original or closest to it.

The "Wescott & Hort" theory gained preeminence among New Testament scholarship and their influence was seen in the Revised Version [RV] [English] of 1881, the American Standard Version [ASV] of 1901, also commonly called the "Revised Version;" the Revised Standard Version [RSV], etc. Thus, the controversy moved from the Greek text to the various versions, and the emergence of the "King James Only" mentality among those who thought that any change smelled of "Modernism" and undermined the Word of God. Even the study of Hebrew or Greek became somewhat suspect among some groups, and arguments were developed for the preservation of the "true text."

The Facts

The first printed Greek New Testament was that of Erasmus in 1516. Erasmus collected Greek mss. of the N.T. books until he had sufficient to complete almost all the New Testament. Lacking the last verses of the Book of Revelation, he translated the text from the

Latin Vulgate into Greek to complete the work.[148] This eclectic text became the basis for the *Stephanus Text* of 1550, and was the text which served as a basis for the *King James Version* of 1611.[149] This text was later edited again with emendations from Beza's Greek text and in 1633 was described in its publication as "the text received by all," hence the idea of *Textus Receptus*.

Theodore Beza (1519–1605), the successor to John Calvin at Geneva, published several editions of the Greek New Testament between 1565 and 1604, using the *Stephanus Text* of Robert Etienne with a few alterations. The Elzevir Brothers, printers at Leiden and Amsterdam, used Beza's text of the 1565 edition for two printings. The 1633 edition became the so–called "Received Text" [TR]. The designation *textus receptus* was taken from the words of the preface: *Textum ergo habes nunc ab omnibus receptum in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus*, i.e., "Therefore you now have the text received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted.

The facts of history plainly reveal two issues: first, the so–called *Textus Receptus* is itself an eclectic text. It was *the* "critical text" of its day, i.e., the best which then contemporary scholarship could produce from the best available sources. It was not a mysterious, perpetual or "preserved" text which had been kept "pure" for many centuries. Second, the so–called *Textus Receptus*, as an entity, did not exist until 1633, over twenty years *after* the *King James Version* was in print. These facts, of course, are lost on those who claim that

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[148] Erasmus translated from the Latin Vulgate into Greek several passages from Revelation, including the final six verses. For a full discussion of Erasmus' Greek Testament, see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968. pp. 98–103.

[149] An eclectic text is a text selected from various sources. Erasmus collected almost enough Greek mss. to complete the New Testament, but had to translate the final verses of Revelation from the Latin into the Greek. The so–called *Textus Receptus*, as Erasmus' Greek New Testament (c. 1516) and the *Stephanus Text* (c. 1550) before it, was an eclectic text, not a "pure text" or one which had been "preserved" from antiquity.

"the King James Versions is based on the *Textus Receptus*," and whose ignorance, superstition and even lack of any knowledge of the language, causes them to refuse to even consider facts or issues.

The History

Contemporary New Testament scholarship has retreated somewhat from the theories of Wescott and Hort, and today is more conservative. The theory of the majority text is once again flourishing among conservatives, and evangelical scholarship is returning to a more balanced view.

The Manuscripts of The New Testament:
The Sources for Textual Criticism

Number and Type

A manuscript (sing., "ms."; pl., "mss.") is a hand–written document. Thus, the extant mss. of the New Testament are those which were written by hand before the advent of printing in the fifteenth century.

The text of the New Testament exists in three forms: The ancient Greek mss., the ancient translations and versions and the writings of the early Church Fathers who quoted from their Greek Testament.

Greek Manuscripts

There are approximately 4,700 mss. of the whole or parts of the Greek New Testament. Of this number there are:

1. *Uncial* mss. numbering over 240, i.e., written in capital letters without word divisions. The lines were approximately twelve letters, e.g., John 1:1 [We have retained the clause divisions]:

ΕΝΑΡΞΗΗΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ
ΚΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΣΗΝ
ΠΡΟΣΤΟΝΘΕΟΝ
ΚΑΙΘΕΟΣΗΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ

These mss. are dated from the third to the sixth centuries. These are the most important documents for the study of the text of the New Testament.

2. There are 2,646 *Minuscule* mss. written in small case (as our modern New Testament Greek texts) with separated words, and often in cursive [with connected letters]. These mss. are dated generally from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries E.g., Jn. 1:1 in minuscule letters—

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν
πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

(Note that the above is *not* cursive, and the *kappas* [κ] are not written as "C," as is true of some cursive and minuscule mss.).

3. *Greek Lectionaries* [*pericopes*] number 1,997. These contain Scripture lessons for church liturgical worship. These were necessarily copied from very ancient sources.

Note: *Pericope*, from the Gk περίκοπη is pronounced "pe ri´ kĕ pē". Orig., "to cut around," and thus, to select out and isolate a short passage for liturgical worship.

4. *The Papyri*. These mss. date from the second to the third centuries, and so from sources allegedly very near the originals.. These number 70 and are fragments of papyrus, an early form of paper, containing portions of Scripture. The earliest are:

- *The John Rylands Fragment*, which contains a portion of Jn. 18:31–38 (c. 117–138 AD).

- *The Chester Beatty Papyri*, consisting of three codices containing most of the New Testament (c. 250 AD).

- *The Bodmer Papyri*, containing parts of the New Testament and early homilies and hymns for liturgical purposes (c. 200 AD).

Ancient Translations and Versions

There are some 9,000 copies of the early versions, i.e., copies which are dated in the early centuries, not subsequent copies of a more modern time. These early translations and versions of the first centuries still exist and are in some cases a century or more older than the leading extant Greek mss, and were without doubt translated from very early copies of the Greek text. These versions are significant in that they give a witness to Greek mss. which were extant at the time, but no longer in our present possession.

Syriac

1. *Ancient Syriac* (c. 150 AD). Partly preserved in the Dura fragment discovered in 1920.

2. *The Diatessaron of Tatian* (c. 170 AD). An ancient harmony of the four Gospels.

3. *The Old Syriac* (c. 200 AD). Two incomplete copies of the Gospels. One discovered in the St. Catherine Monastery in 1892; the other in 1848 in Egypt.

4. *The Peshitta* (c. 600 AD). A revision of the *Old Syriac*. 2 Peter, 3 John, Jude, Revelation missing, reflecting concern and uncertainty of early churches concerning the canon at that time.

5. *The Philoxenian–Harklean Syriac* (c. 508 AD). A worked done by Bishop of Hierapolis in 508 of the books omitted by the Peshitta, and later revised by Thomas of Harkel with other Scripture. A slavish rendering of the Greek text.

6. *The Palestinian Syriac* (c. 600 AD). An independent work not affected by previous Syriac versions. Text is largely lectionary.

Latin

Latin gradually overcame the use of Greek in the Western churches by 200 AD. It is possible that an ancient Latin version existed before this time.

1. Old Latin Version (c. 200 AD).

2. *The Latin Vulgate* (c. 403 AD). This is included, although the textual resources Jerome used to "correct" the *Old Latin Version* remain unknown.

Coptic

The Coptic Christians needed their own translation of the New Testament early in the second century with the spread of Christianity into Egypt. The two versions in Coptic are:

1. *The Sahidic Version* (c. 200 AD). This was the version used in Upper Egypt in the earliest times.

2. *The Bohairic Version* of Lower Egypt is later in date, but became the official Version of the Coptic Church.

The Early Church Fathers

The third source for the study of the Greek text is from the quotations of the early Church Fathers. The Greek texts they used in those early centuries (c.100–800 AD) would be preserved in their writings. The advantages are that these men lived and wrote in specific places at specific times. The texts they had can then be studied historically and geographically, as well as textually.

The disadvantages are that often the Fathers may have quoted from memory or paraphrased some quotations, and some of their earliest writings are only preserved in the writings of later Church Fathers. This latter disadvantage makes variants a great possibility due to the existence of later texts, "corrections," and probable scribal errors.

The Most Important Greek Manuscripts and their Families or Types

The Most Important Greek Mss

The 240 and more uncial mss. of the Greek New Testament are the most important documents for New Testament Textual Criticism as they are the oldest and most complete. Some of the papyri are older, but exist only in fragments. The Minuscule mss. were written

later and are therefore neither as ancient nor probably copied from sources as ancient as the Uncials.

Following are the most important Uncial mss, or some of the most important out of the thirty–seven considered most important, because of their early age and relative completeness:

1. The *Codex Vaticanus* (designated "B" [c. 325–350], catalogued in the Vatican Library in 1475). Written on vellum [parchment], it includes most of the LXX [Greek O.T.], almost the entire New Testament in Greek, and part of the Apocrypha. It is of the Alexandrian type text. Biblical Scholars were forbidden by Rome to study it for almost 400 years.

2. The *Codex Sinaiticus* (designated "א," [c. 340] discovered in a monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai by Count von Tishendorf in 1844, 1859). This uncial ms., written on vellum, contains almost all the LXX and the entire New Testament, except two short passages, the O.T. Apocrypha and several of the Epistles of the Early Church Fathers. It contains evidence of scribal "corrections" in the sixth or seventh century. It is of the Alexandrian type text, with some instances of Western type readings.

3. The *Codex Alexandrinus* (designated "A" [c. 450], presented in 1078 to the Patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt). This uncial vellum text was eventually shipped to England (1624–1627), but arrived too late for it to influence the King James Version. This uncial contains almost the whole LXX version of the Old Testament and most of the New Testament, with some additional writings from the Apocrypha.

4. The *Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus* (designated "C" [c. 345], brought to Italy about 1500 by John Lascaris). This uncial contains parts of the Old Testament and Apocrypha and most of the New

Testament.[150] This ms. is a compound of all the textual types, agreeing frequently with the Byzantine or Neutral type text.

5. The *Codex Bezae* [*Codex Cantabrigiensis*] (designated "D" [c. 450–550], found in 1562 by Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor at Geneva, at St. Irenaeus Monastery at Lyons, France. Beza gave it to Cambridge University). The oldest bilingual ms. of the New Testament, written in both Greek and Latin. This uncial ms. contains most of the four Gospels, Acts and 3 John, with variations [variant readings] indicated. The Gospels are of the Western type text.

6. The *Codex Claromontanus* (designated D^2 or D^{p2} [c. 550], found by Beza at Clermont, France, at a monastery). This uncial contains most of what is missing in the *Codex Bezae*. The text is distinctly of the Western type.

Text Families or Types

Through tracing the occurrence of variant readings and other peculiarities, the Greek mss. of the New Testament can presumably be traced not only textually, but historically and geographically to a common ancestor, a primitive text or copy. The various Greek mss., the quotations from the Fathers, the lectionaries and the papyri have enabled scholars to trace the various text types to their allegedly common ancestors textually, historically and geographically.

This has given rise to distinct text "types" or "families," especially during the time of the Minuscule mss., which were written after the era of the Uncials. Text "types" or "families," therefore, are more predominant in the Minuscule era (seventh–fifteenth centuries). The issue with text families is that these tend to either reject or reflect the Byzantine type of text which is generally

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[150] "Palimpsest" [rubbed out, erased], "rescriptus" [written again or over]. Originally, the ms. contained the entire Bible, but was erased and written over by Ephraem, who wrote his sermons on the vellum. By chemical treatment, the original writing was restored.

represented by the so–called *Stephanus Text* and later *Textus Receptus*.

There are basically four distinct families or types of texts, although there are some intermingling of various types, leading to various sub–groupings:[151]

Note: There are allegedly three ways in which text types or families can become mixed: (1) A scribe may have had before him two different manuscripts which represented two text types and copied from each. (2) He may have had one text before him but been familiar with another type of text which he consciously or unconsciously inserted. (3) The text before him may have already have been "corrected" by a text of a different type or marginal corrections may have crept into the text.

1. *Alexandrian [Neutral] Type*. This family of texts allegedly originated around Alexandria, Egypt, a center for Christian scholarship by the second century. This type of text is characteristically marked by shorter readings and a neat, scholarly printing of the Greek than the other families. According to Wescott & Hort, when the *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Alexandrinus* agreed, the reading was the original reading. This, of course, is not rigidly followed by modern scholarship.

2. *Western Type*. This family is a "catchall" type, named after the Western circulation of Greek mss in North Africa, Gaul [France] and Italy. Related to this are the Egyptian and Syriac–speaking churches of the East. This type of text is longer because of the tendency toward periphrastic expressions [longer readings] and alleged interpolations.

3. *Caesarean Type*. Caesarea was the center of Christianity in Palestine in the third and fourth centuries, distinguished by a large library and Christian scholars. The text from this geographical center allegedly originally came from Alexandria, and then went to Armenia and the Caucasus in western Russia.

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[151] The scheme of Wescott & Hort is no longer strenuously followed, except in a general sense of the various text families.

This text historically stands between the Alexandrian and Western type in its development.

4. *Byzantine Type*. [Κοινή]. This is alleged to be conflated[152] type of text which smooths out difficulties and haromonizes differences. Used liturgically by the Byzantine [Greek] Church. Considered to be a rather late and secondary type of text. Some of its readings, however, derive from the Church at Antioch (c. 300 AD). The so–called *Textus Receptus* represents this type of text.

<div align="center">How "Corrupt" is The Greek Text
of The New Testament?</div>

The so–called "corruption" of the Greek New Testament refers to the variant readings which have crept into the text. These exist as a textual, historical fact which must be accounted for. The issue for the Greek student is, however, how significant are these?

The Byzantine type of text, represented by the *Stephanus Text of 1550* and its revision, the so–called *Textus Receptus*, was *the* Greek text of Western scholarship until the discovery of the great Uncials in the nineteenth century. It ought to be noted that both the *Stephanus Text* and *Textus Receptus* were published with a critical apparatus with variant readings noted in their text.

These variant readings were acknowledged by all scholars, and neither text was considered to be non–eclectic until reaction to the theories of Wescott & Hort by advocates of the Textus Receptus and the later "King James Only" controversies.

The following information and quotations demonstrate the true state of New Testament textual critical scholarship concerning the state of the text:

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[152] "Conflation," from the Lat: *conflare*, "to blow together." The merging or blending of two variant readings into one.

The Enumeration of Variant Readings

There are over 200,000 variant readings in the mss. of the Greek New Testament—according to the system of exact enumeration necessarily espoused by textual criticism. So every text has an individual place and proper significance, each variant reading, no matter how minuscule (e.g., change of a letter) is counted in each ms. *Thus, if 100 mss. had the same exact variant reading, that variant is not counted as one variant, but as 100 variants*, i.e., 1 variant x 100. Thus, the number of *different* variant readings is much, much smaller than the 200,000.

Quotations concerning the Variant Readings

The following quotations give a clear picture of the state of the Greek text of the New Testament, enabling us to state that we have almost without the slightest doubt, the original text [of the autograph copies] of the New Testament:

After comparing the hand–written ancient copies of Scripture with a modern book from the author's autograph copy to the final printed volume,

> …the New Testament text must be adjudged, in comparison with a well–printed modern book, extremely corrupt.

> On the other hand, if we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing, we must render the opposite verdict, and declare it to be marvelously correct…such has been the providence of God in preserving for His Church in each and every age a competently exact text of the Scriptures, that not only is the New Testament unrivalled among ancient writings in the purity of its text as actually transmitted and kept in use, but also in the abundance of testimony which has come down to us for castigating its comparatively infrequent blemishes…Its wonderful approxi–mation to its autograph is the undisguised envy of every modern reader of ancient books….

> …Dr. Ezra Abbot was accustomed to say that about 19/20 of them [variant readings] have so little support that, although they are various readings, no one would think of them as rival readings; and 19/20 of the remainder are of so little importance that their adoption or rejection would cause no appreciable difference in the sense of the passages in which they occur. Dr. Hort's way of stating it is that

upon one word in every eight various readings exist supported by sufficient evidence to bid us pause and look at it; that about one word in sixty has various readings upon it supported by such evidence as to render our decision nice and difficult; but that so many of these variations are trivial that about only one word in every thousand has upon it substantial variation supported by such evidence as to call out the efforts of the critic in deciding between the readings.

The great mass of the New Testament, in other words, has been transmitted to us with no, or next to no, variation…[153]

Commenting on the Words of Hort above, Geisler and Nix state, "Mathematically, this would compute to a text that is 98.33 percent pure." They then refer to the statement by A. T. Robertson that the real concern of textual criticism is of a "thousandth part of the entire text." "This would make the reconstructed text of the New Testament 99.9 percent free from substantial or consequential error."[154]

Phillip Schaff, the astute church historian and scholar, stated,

…of the [thousands of] variations only about 400 affect the sense; and of these 400 only about 50 are of real significance for one reason or another, and, again, not one of these 50 'affect an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching.'[155]

The Evidence for and Methodology
of New Testament Textual Criticism

The Evidence for Textual Criticism

The evidence available for textual criticism is of two types: internal [intrinsic] and external. Generally, external evidence is more important than internal evidence because it is more objective, but

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[153] B. B. Warfield, *Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, pp. 12–14.

[154] Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 365–366.

[155] H. S. Miller, *General Biblical Introduction*, p. 280.

decisions ought to take both into account. Textual Criticism is both a technical science and a delicate art.

External Evidence

External evidence deals with the comparison of mss., either singularly, in groups or in "families" [text types]. There are three categories of external evidence:

1. Chronological. The date of the text type is important, as is the date of the given ms. Earlier text types are preferred over later ones.

2. Geographical. A wide distribution of witnesses are preferred over those having some geographical proximity, i.e., a reading is preferable which is not limited to a given textual type or "family," but transcends such geographical limitations.

3. Genealogical. Witnesses to variants are "weighed," not "counted," i.e., the Alexandrian text is usually considered superior and the Byzantine text generally inferior. A reading supported by two or more text types is usually considered superior to one supported by only one text type.

Internal Evidence

Internal evidence deals with an individual ms. There are two types of internal evidence:

1. Transcriptional, or considered from the standpoint, characteristics or habits of the copyist.

2. Intrinsic, i.e., the individual characteristics of the given author. This would include his peculiar style throughout the book or his corpus of writings, the immediate context of the given passage, the harmony of reading with the author's doctrinal or practical teaching elsewhere [and in the context of the canonical writings], and the influence of the author's linguistic and cultural background.

Transcriptional Evidence

This is concerned with the alleged errors of the given copyist or scribe.

Two issues of Note: (1) The text became corrupt to some extent by the existence of the variant readings. This is without question. (2) A "copyist" or "scribe" could have been a professional scribe or copyist, a pastor or elder, or simply an individual Christian who copied a given document or passage without any supervision whatsoever. The copyist could have been a heretic who changed a reading in some way to conform to some ancient religious group. Some passages may have been quoted and copied from memory, etc.

These errors have been classified as either unintentional or intentional. It must be carefully noted that these principle or rules concerning errors are neither primary nor arbitrary, but were developed into an organized body through the efforts to explain the existing variant readings, i.e., these later efforts of scientific conjecture to explain the variants reflects the nature of such pre–existing variants.

Unintentional Errors

These unintentional errors have been classified in a seven–fold manner:

1. Errors of the eye, or misreading a ms. These may be sub–classified as: (1) Repetitions of letters, syllables, words or phrases. (2) Omissions of letters, syllables, words or phrases. (3) Transposition of letters, syllables or words. (4) Differences in spelling. (5) Similarity of letters. (6) Mistaken abbreviations. (7) Insertions from marginal glosses, doxologies, etc. (8) Wrong division of words. (9) Eye wandering to a different line or column.

2. Errors of the ear, if the copyist was taking dictation. This could include wrong spelling of diphthongs, or the differences between long and short vowels, etc.

3. Errors of speech on the part of the one dictating the document's contents. Failure to properly enunciate correctly, misreading [errors of the eye] on the part of the one dictating, etc.

4. Errors of the mind, or memory.

5. Errors of judgment. Misreading or misunderstanding an abbreviation, allowing marginal errors and readings to creep into the text, having two or more variant readings present, or more than one ms.

6. Errors of the pen. This concerns a possible dysfunction between the eye and the hand in the process of writing.

7. Errors of carelessness or ignorance. Human thinking, copying and writing are prone to such. This would include missing words, wrong words, misspellings, etc.

Intentional Errors

At times, the copyist may have intentionally changed the text he was copying or editing. These alleged or possible errors are classified in an eight–fold manner:

1. Linguistic and rhetorical corrections. Changing a letter or the sake of euphony, smoothing apparent harshness of expression, changing rare forms or idioms into more usual forms of expression, grammatical corrections.

2. Historical changes. These may have been made to conform to other passages or mss.

3. The influence of translations and versions known to the copyist. Some mss. were bilingual, and the influence of language may be reflected in another.

4. Harmonistic changes. Attempts were made for one account in one of the Gospels to harmonize with the same account in another Gospel record.

5. The substitution of a more inoffensive term, i.e., euphemism. The more offensive term would be relegated to the margin, for the time being.

6. Changes to remove a real or apparent difficulty. Some mss. omitted Jn. 8:1–11 for fear of promoting immorality.

7. Doctrinal corrections. These seem to be rare, but 1 Jn. 5:7–8 could be part of such an issue.

8. Liturgical changes. Most of these occur in lexionaries, where the Scriptures might be altered for singing or responsive reading.

Intrinsic Evidence

Intrinsic evidence is concerned with the writer [original human author] rather than a copyist. It seeks to answer the question, "What did the original author write?" The attempt is made to properly ascertain which variant makes the best sense from the standpoint of the writer, his style, doctrinal emphases, the given context, etc. The issue is not what seems best to the critic, but what would have seemed best to the original writer. Such work is indispensable in dealing with any significant variant.

The Methodology of Textual Criticism

The Methodology of the Textual Critic includes:

1. Comparison of the documentary evidence.

2. Conjecture. The first includes collection of the evidence, the collation of the evidence, comparison of the evidence and the classification of the evidence. The second part of the methodology is an intelligent conjecture based on scientific principles. Through this two–fold methodology, the critic seeks to ascertain the true text.

The Use of External Evidence

There are certain generally–accepted rules for dealing with external evidence:

1. The number rule. The variant reading found in the greatest number of texts is not necessarily the correct reading. The vast majority of texts are later. The original reading is more apt to be found in a fourth century text than a tenth century text, unless it can be proven that the tenth text was copied from a text earlier than the fourth century text.

2. The manuscript–age rule. Closely related to the previous rule, the oldest text may not be the correct reading, as one fifth century ms. may have been copied from another fifth century ms., while

a seventh century ms. may have been copied from a third century ms.

3. The text–age rule. This is concerned with the age of text type or family rather than the ms itself. The type of text might carry more weight evidentially than a given text within a given group.

4. The best–text rule. The best–text [original text] may not be the oldest text, but very best text contained within the mss, taking all other principles together.

The Use of Internal Evidence

There are several general principles dealing with internal evidence:

1. The more difficult reading is preferable, due to the alleged tendency of copyists to smooth out such readings.

2. The shorter reading is preferable over the longer.

3. The more verbally dissonant reading in parallel passages are preferable.

4. The less refined grammatical constructions are preferable.

The General Principles of Textual Criticism

Now, in summary, is a listing of the generally–accepted principles of textual criticism, revealing it to be both a science and an art which demands great reverence for the Scriptures, a thorough acquaintance with the text, and a consistency with the scientific conjecture. This list is essentially taken with little modification from Phillip Schaff's introduction to Wescott & Hort's Greek Testament:

1. The critic must be a trained scholar and know what to look for in order to make a choice in variant readings.

2. Every type of evidence must be thoroughly taken into account.

3. The sources for the given text must be sifted and classified, and the authorities "weighed" rather than "numbered".

4. The restoration of the true text must be founded upon the history and genealogy of the textual variations. The ancestry of the text must be traced as far back as possible.

5. The reading of an earlier ms. is preferable to that of an older ms. because it is presumably nearer the source, although this is not a rigid policy.

6. In general, the shorter reading is preferred to the longer, because additions and insertions are more probable than omissions.

7. The more difficult and obscure reading is preferable to the more simple and easy in construction.

8. That reading is preferable which best explains the origin of the other variants.

9. That reading is preferably which best suits the literary style of the author.

10. That reading which bears the earmarks of doctrinal controversy should be ruled out in favor of one to which no suspicion is attached.

11. The agreement of the most ancient witnesses decides the true reading against all medieval copies and printed editions.

12. The primary uncials outweigh all the other texts.[156]

We would add that doctrinal considerations may outweigh even a well–attested variant reading, e.g., Rom. 5:1 and the ἔχομεν [pres. ind.] preferred over ἔχωμεν [pres. subj.].[157] Also, the passage John 7:53–8:11, which, although believed misplaced by some, has all the indications of true Scripture, and is retained, despite its textual

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[156] Adapted from H. S. Miller, *Op. cit.*, pp. 289–290.

[157] See Bruce M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 511.

history and its omission by many ancient texts, possibly because of fear of condoning immorality.[158]

These principles and methodology were not invented by the modern textual critic, but most are of long–standing, as the variants themselves are from the early centuries of Christianity. It was left to the modern textual critic to formulate these into a more consistent science.

The Greek Student must develop the textual skill, historical acumen and doctrinal discernment to be reverent, independent and rational in his studies and ever true to the text as he believes it to be. The use or non–use of such textual criticism may depend upon various factors. The true student will remain true, consistent, intelligent and never a slave to the ideas of the scholars.

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on Biblical Criticism and Related Issues

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Opening the Text

Verbal, Plenary Inspiration: A Necessary Implication

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.   2 Tim. 3:16–17 [160]

The Bible is the inspired Word of God. Divine inspiration is both verbal [extending to the very choice of words, grammatical constructions and syntactical relationships in the original languages] and plenary [full or extending to every part]. This is the uniform witness of all orthodox Christianity. It is the essential presupposition of true Christianity from which all else derives. Apart from the authority of Scripture in its exactness, one is left with tradition, subjective experience or imagination, none of which are infallible or authoritative.

A necessary implication of verbal, plenary inspiration is that the preacher must open the text. This must be the inspired source through which he feeds his flock and evangelizes the unconverted.

Note: Preaching is to be consistently grounded in biblical doctrine. Biblical doctrine derives from and depends on Divine revelation. Divine revelation depends on language. Language depends on grammar and syntax, and the grammar and syntax of the very Word of God are properly considered only by a careful exegesis in the original language. This is the necessary and logical manifestation of belief in verbal, plenary inspiration. Such a belief and conviction must under gird all preaching.

Preaching ought to indulge itself to a given degree when necessary in both exegesis and hermeneutics to open and explain the

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[160] 2 Tim. 3:16, πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος… The reading is singular "every word, nuance, grammatical construction, syntactical relation of Scripture is God–breathed…" Cf. Matt. 4:4. …It stands written with undiminishing authority [γέγραπται]…Not upon bread alone shall live the Man [οὐκ ἐπ' ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος], but by every word [ἀλλ' ἐπὶ παντὶ ῥήματι] that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

text and its meaning. Yet this is rarely the case. Sadly, in most pulpits one might merely hold to inspired concepts, as one hears, not careful scriptural exposition, explanation and hermeneutical clarification, but mere general references and proof–texts thrown into the sermon—and often without substantial comment. The emphasis is on an outline, illustrations or the emotions rather than opening the inspired Word of God and expounding it as the basis for the message. The preacher is a prophet—God's spokesman—one who declares the Word of God. Thus, he must seek to make this Word clear and understandable.

Homiletically, there are essentially two types of sermons: textual and topical, i.e. one either opens and expounds a given passage or finds a text to introduce a given subject. Either way, the text should be opened, i.e., exegeted, expounded and clarified or made plain. The sermon should flow from the text. Every text mentioned from the pulpit should be commented upon in some way so it suitably fits into the scheme of the message and the people may be fed and taught.

Further, a careful distinction ought to be made between interpretation and application. The failure to do so is one of the gravest faults of the pulpit ministry. The Christian ministry is an instructional ministry—didactic, evangelistic, polemic and apologetic. The minister's task is not only to declare the gospel, but to educate the congregation. Sitting under a sound, well–rounded ministry in the ordinary church services should be a biblical and doctrinal education. If not, then there is necessarily a given amount of failure in the very nature of that ministry itself. Sitting under a godly, expository ministry for several years ought to approach the character of a seminary education.

What is the testimony of Scripture regarding opening or expounding the text? Moses was not only the first author of

Scripture, he was also the first expository preacher. His orations in Deuteronomy were largely an exposition of the Moral Law.[161]

Was not this the personal occupation of the "blessed man" in Psa. 1:2? Consider David and his pondering the meaning and force of the Law (Psa. 119:9, 11, 18, 27).

> Note: Psa. 1:2, "...in his Law doth he meditate day and night." יֶהְגֶּה to continually growl, mutter; LXX, סֶהְתֵּלֵמֶ, "take pains with, practice." He carefully mulls over the meaning of the words of the Law constantly until they are memorized.

Take careful note of the studies and searching of Daniel in the prophecies of Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2).

Was this not the ancient method adopted by the scribes under Ezra during the Era of Restoration (Neh. 8:1–8)? They "caused the people to understand the law….they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused *them* to understand the reading." The returning remnant from the Babylonian Captivity spoke Aramaic, an ancient Chaldean dialect. The Scriptures were written in Hebrew.

The Scribes had to open or expound the text and give the sense so the people could understand the Word of God exactly. They evidently engaged in both exegesis, or what the text said, and hermeneutics, or what the text meant. The exact meaning of Scripture is of the utmost importance. Our very salvation, doctrinal convictions, Christian experience and hope of eternity rest upon it! This is the essence of the time–worn truth that "the Bible is our sole rule of both faith and practice." Thus, it behooves us to know it thoroughly.

This was the very approach our Lord took with the Lawyer (Lk. 10:25–26). "What is written in the Law? How readest thou?" This necessarily implies both a careful exegesis and also an interpretation

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[161] Dt. 1:5, "...began Moses to declare this law..." "Declare" is בָּאֵר, Pi'el intensive, "to expound, make distinct, clear." LXX: διασαφῆσαι, "to make plain, explain, unfold."

of the text. The entire passage, which contains the "Parable of the Good Samaritan," encompasses the whole of expository preaching, from the "What is written in the Law? How readest thou?" To the "Go and do thou likewise!"

Did not our Lord do the same with his disciples (Matt. 13:52; Lk. 24:25–27, 32, 44–47)? He completely opened the Scriptures to their understanding, and his "text" was the entire Old Testament!

Matt. 13:52 implies both an instructional ministry and a progression in that ministry. Lk. 24:27 [διερμήνευσεν], unfold the meaning, expound. V. 32 [διήνοιγεν ἡμῖν τὰς γραφάς] to unfold the sense completely. V. 45 [τότε διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς γραφάς] to open the thought–process completely to comprehend the meaning of the Scriptures.

What a great, enlightening sermon that must have been—and no one complained about its depth or length.

Was not the Apostle concerned with an exact exegesis of the text (e.g., Gen. 12:1–3; 22:18; Rom. 1:17; 3:9–18; 4:3,7–9, 13, 16–18; Gal. 3:16)? He took the Abrahamic Covenant in its essence (Gen. 22:18), even to the use of the singular reading in the Hebrew and showed that it referred, not to the "seed of Abraham" in the plural, i.e., the Israelitish people, but in the singular; it referred to the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16).[162] Did not the Apostle urge Timothy in the strongest language to do a careful exegesis and exposition of the very text of Scripture in 2 Timothy 2:15?[163]

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[162] Gen. 22:18, "…in thy seed" is sing. בְזַרְעֲךָ, [LXX: ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου] as it is in Gal. 3:16, τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ.

[163] 2 Tim. 2:15. σπούδασον, aor. imp. Give the utmost diligence! ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, cutting straight the word of truth, i.e., carefully opening the text and laying it out. Paul knew how to cut a straight line as a worker in cilicium, and applied this figure to the text of Scripture. Nothing could be clearer.

This was also the inspired, customary model of the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:2–3).[164] This is a graphic illustration of inspired preaching. It ought to be studied closely. This was Paul's customary method of reaching out to the Jews in the synagogue ministry. The Jews knew their Scriptures, yet were blind to the saving truth contained therein. This the Apostle carefully laid out before his critical audience through a careful exegesis and interpretation of the text. What an example to modern preachers who must stand and declare the Word of God to unbelievers and often to those who have been mistaught and need exact instruction and correction!

Some objection might be made against this pervasive principle by appealing to such passages as Acts 17:22–34 and Paul's address to the Areopagus at Athens. In the greater context of v. 16–34 this address, the first recorded confrontation between Christianity and Greek philosophy, Paul quoted not one passage of Scripture. The answer is that he had been preaching "Jesus and the resurrection," i.e., the gospel, for several weeks in the synagogue and on a daily basis in the agora.[165] This address, a culminative and summary statement in the form of a Christian World–and–Life View, was meant to put "Jesus and the resurrection" in their proper historical and redemptive context. Every statement he made was thoroughly grounded in Scriptural truth, although such was not explicitly stated.

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[164] Acts 17:2–3, κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰωθὸς, according to his habit or custom, i.e., Paul's usual method of preaching. διελέξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν, aor. verb. "reasoned, thoroughly declared." διανοίγων καὶ παρατιθέμενος. These pres. ptcs. explain the aor. verb. He completely opened [exegeted] the text and then from this he brought forth his reasons. Paul always opened the text as the basis for his preaching. See an instance of this in Gen. 22:18 and Gal. 3:16.

[165] Acts 17:18. συνέβαλλον...ἔλεγον...εὐηγγελίζετο. The use of the imperf. verbs reveal a length of time or a continual confrontation as Paul preached the gospel with authority [καταγγελεὺς]. His was a biblical ministry. The final address only served to put the truth in the context of both world history and a Christian world–view.

Others may object by stating that exegetical and expository preaching would be "over their people's heads." The fault lies with the preacher who does not systematically instruct his people in the Word of God. The people will grow in grace, knowledge and spiritual appetite if the preacher himself grows and progresses in his studies, and his studies then develop and enrich his ministry. Rich expository preaching develops the spiritual appetite of God's people. Remaining limited to spiritual "milk" is a picture of spiritual degeneration, not one of spiritual advancement (Heb. 5:10–14).[166]

The preacher who opens the text will be constantly educated in the Scriptures himself and in corresponding spiritual growth and knowledge. Such a preaching ministry will have at its disposal an infinite store of truth and an inexhaustible room for the growth of the hearers if the text of Scripture is always opened. One should be constantly edified and educated under the ministry. Conversely, ministers who do not habitually open the text deprive themselves and their hearers of spiritual understanding and growth. One may sit under such a deprived ministry for years and learn very little. May we strive to open the text and seek to make the meaning plain for our hearers. Did not our Lord command, not only to "feed my lambs," but also to "feed my sheep"?

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[166] Heb. 5:10–14. Mark the two perf. verbs, "are dull" and "are become" (γεγόνα…γεγόνατε), both implying a state of degeneration in the knowledge of Divine truth.

Observations on Divine Predestination

Text: Ephesians 1:3–11

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Introduction

The biblical doctrine of predestination is a most glorious and yet intensely practical truth. Indeed, the principle of predestination underlies all revealed truth, as it reveals the infallible purpose of the sovereign, infinite, immutable, self–disclosing triune God of Scripture.

Some preliminary thoughts: as part of Divine revelation, predestination is to be known, studied and believed.

Acts 20:20, 26–27. *And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house...Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

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

The doctrine of predestination leads to a proper biblical perception of both God and man, exalting God as God and humbling man to his true position as God's creature.

> **Rom. 11:33–36.** O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.

Predestination is the fountain of all grace, giving to grace its glorious nature and distinct character.

> **Rom. 11:5–6.** Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Predestination is the expression of God's sovereign, eternal, immutable love to his own, and is at the very foundation of the believer's confidence and assurance of salvation.

> **Rom. 8:28–39.** And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?…For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Predestination is the biblical source of all boldness, encouragement and comfort in trial.

> **1 Cor. 15:58.** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Rightly understood, predestination is a proper biblical incentive to holiness and responsible action.

Eph. 2:8–10. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

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

Presuppositions

There are several biblical and theological presuppositions prerequisite to a proper study of biblical predestination. Unless the inscripturated Word of God forms the *pou sto*,[167] or point–of–reference and there is a proper, i.e., scriptural understanding of the nature and character of God, all remains relative and speculative, with no authoritative or final Word.

Biblical Presuppositions

The Nature and Authority of Scripture

God has revealed himself in several ways: God has revealed himself *through the light of nature*. Man was created uniquely and distinctly in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26–28), as an intelligent, morally–responsible being who could think, act, and live in the context of God.

God has revealed himself to us *in creation*. However, because man is a sinner and sin has affected his mind (the noetic effects of sin), he suppresses any truth from the witness of creation.

"Noetic" derives from the noun νοῦς, "mind" (the seat of reflective consciousness, perception, understanding, judging or determining), and the corresponding verb νοέω, "to think,

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[167] *pou sto* (Literally, "[a place] where I may stand") or point–of–reference.

understand, perceive, judge, intelligently determine." The noetic effects of sin refer to the result of the fall on man's intellect. He can neither correctly perceive Divine truth (Gen. 3:1–7; Acts 17:27–28; Rom. 1:18–32; 3:9–18; 1 Cor. 2:14), nor act positively with regard to it (Rom. 8:7–8) apart from regenerating grace. At regeneration, three absolutely necessary realities occur: the impartation of Divine life in a sovereign act of God (Jn. 3:3, 5, 8; Eph. 2:4–5, 8–10), the breaking of the reigning power or sin (Rom. 6:6, 14), and the re–creation of the image of God in principle in righteousness, holiness of the truth and knowledge (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10).

Cf. Rom. 1:18–20: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [κατεχόντων, pres. ptc., "habitually suppressing"] the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse [εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους, "the result is, they have no defense or apologetic"]."

God has revealed himself to us *through his providence* or works in time and history whereby he governs all his creatures and all their actions. God has revealed himself to us *through the Lord Jesus Christ*, who is the eternal Son of God—God manifest in the flesh.[168] God has revealed himself to us *through his Word—the Bible*. The Bible is the very Word of God in written form [*inscripturated*].

Note: The inscripturation of Divine revelation is vital, as it has preserved and continues to provide the only objective Divine truth and standard for man. Note the significance of the formula, "It is

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[168] Cf. Jn. 1:18, θεὸν [emph. pos.] οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν [perf.] πώποτε μονογενὴς θέος [TR reads υἱος] ὁ ὢν [pres. ptc.] εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρος ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο [aor.]. Lit: "God no one has ever seen—ever. The only begotten [well–beloved] son, the one being constantly in the bosom of the Father, that one has exegeted Him [once–for–all, aor.]."

written:" γεγράπται, (perf.), "It stands written [with undiminishing authority]."

It is therefore essential to hold that the Scriptures alone comprise the objective, authoritative revelation of God. Any departure at this point would set aside any definite or sufficient foundation for the study of doctrinal truth. Because the Bible is the very Word of God and completely trustworthy in every respect, it is *sufficient* as the Christian's only rule of both faith [what is to be believed] and practice [how faith is to be expressed in the life].

The Unity of Scripture

The unity of the Scriptures must be assumed: as the Scriptures derive from the self–consistent, self–disclosing Triune God, they are self–consistent and non–contradictory—one passage cannot be used to oppose or nullify another.

Biblical truth is a unity, and any portion of Scripture must be considered in the context of the whole of Scripture or understood in terms of the "Analogy of Faith."[169] This preserves one from a "proof–text" mentality that disregards both the immediate and ultimate context.

A Consistent Approach to Interpretation

The method applied to the Scriptures must be in accordance with the Scriptures themselves: To interpret in such a manner as to deny, ignore or misrepresent their teaching is to both be in grievous error and to dishonor God.

The only intelligent, consistent hermeneutic is the *historico–grammatico* method. It is such an interpretation that is necessitated by and in accordance with the rules of grammar and the facts of history. It is a "common–sense" interpretation (i.e., adhering to the principle of the *usus loquendi,* or the common meaning and use of

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[169] The "Analogy of Faith" refers to the perspicuity of Scripture, i.e., Scripture interprets Scripture. The more obscure passages are understood by clearer passages, presupposing that the Scriptures, as the very Word of God inscripturated, are not self–contradictory, but complementary.

words in the given era, society or culture). The *grammatico–historical* method presupposes that God has given his revelation in an intelligent and understandable form.

Theological Presuppositions

God: The Absolute Personality

Our doctrine of God must be derived from the Scriptures. This presupposes that God is the absolute Personality.

As a personality, God is not a mere abstraction or principle, but an intelligent, self–determining Being. As the absolute (i.e., free from all external limitations and restrictions) Personality, God is infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, supra–temporal and immutable. Scripture likewise represents the purpose or self–determination of God as absolute, eternal and immutable.

> But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. (Psa. 115:3)

> The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, *so* shall it stand. (Isa. 14:24)

> Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; *I am* God, and *there is* none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure...yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it. (Isa. 46:9–11)

> Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. (Acts 2:23)

> For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. (Acts 4:27–28)

> Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. (Acts 15:18)

The Divine Attributes

The nature and character of God are revealed in his moral attributes and are inseparable from his eternal purpose. The Divine attributes are not contradictory, but stand as a unified and harmonious whole. God is all–wise, righteous, holy, gracious, merciful and good.

Neh. 9:17, 31....but thou *art* a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not....Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou *art* a gracious and merciful God.

Psa. 145:17. The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

Rom. 9:14. What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

Rom. 11:33–36. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.

God's predestinating purpose manifests these same characteristics: it is wise, righteous, holy, gracious, merciful and good. Predestination is not a mere exercise of raw [isolated, untempered] power or a contradiction of God's nature and character; rather, it is a reflection of all his attributes.

Gen. 50:20. But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.

Rom. 8:28–30. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Eph. 3:10–11. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Men do not oppose predestination in principle, they oppose *Divine* predestination. They want to predestinate everything themselves—to be their own "gods" and determine for themselves what will or will not be, what is right or wrong!

The Definition and Description of Predestination

By definition "predestination" means "to determine the destiny beforehand."

Note: The English word is derived from the Latin [*Vulgate*] *praedestinatio*, which is the translation of the Greek προορΐζω (*proorizo,* from πρό, before, and ὁρίζω, the source of the Eng. "horizon"), to mark out. The term occurs in the A.V. four times: Rom. 8:29–30; Eph. 1:5, 11. The R.V., *et. al.*, uniformly use the synonymous term "foreordain".

The term has a three–fold usage in Scripture: first, the comprehensive, eternal purpose of God (Eph. 1:11). Second, the soteriological purpose (Eph. 1:5) to the eschatological purpose realized in the believer's glorification and ultimate conformity to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Third, the comprehensive use of the term may be described as :

The eternal (Isa. 46:9–10; Acts 15:18; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 4:11), immutable (Isa. 14:24; 46:11; Prov. 19:21), all–inclusive (Acts 17:25, 28; Eph. 1:11; Rev 4:11), all–wise (Jer. 51:15; Rom. 11:33–35; 16:27; Eph 3:10–11; 1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 25), just (Isa. 45:21; Zeph. 3:5; Rom. 9:14) and holy (Ex. 15:11; Isa. 57:15) decree or purpose of God (Isa. 14:24; Dan. 4:17, 24; Eph. 1:11), whereby, from eternity, from within Himself (Psa. 115:3; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 11:33–36; Eph. 1:5, 9) and for his own glory (1 Chron. 29:11–13; Eph. 1:3–6, 12–14; Rev 4:11), he has determined whatsoever comes to pass (Rom. 11:33–36; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Neh. 9:6).

This would include the ideas of: first, "decree" or "purpose," emphasizing the immutability, power and determination of the Divine mind. Second, "counsel," stressing the perfect or absolute wisdom of God in both its formulation and execution. Third, "providence," which is that infallible process by which God brings to pass in time and history his eternal decree.

Biblical Terms

Introduction

Biblical Terms are only introductory to the concept of Divine Predestination. The Scriptures use a variety of terms to describe the eternal, infallible purpose and sovereign control of God over his creation. The following six word–groups will help serve as the Biblico–theological basis for the concept of predestination or the absolute sovereignty of God in its supra–temporal and temporal aspects.

> Note: Word studies must be utilized with caution. God has not spoken in isolated or unconnected words, but in words arranged in a given syntax and context, expressing his Word intelligently, consistently and authoritatively. Each term must be considered both lexically (the basic or dictionary sense) and also syntactically (as it is used in a given syntax or context).

These terms, however, serve only as an introduction, as Divine predestination is presupposed and interwoven into the very nature and fabric of Scripture.

Predestination or Foreordination

First, the Old and New Testament terms which explicitly denote *predestination* or *foreordination*:

יָצַר (*Yatsar*), to mold into a form, fashion, destine, frame. "Fig. for frame, pre–ordain, plan." The noun form is "potter," one who fashions.

> **Isa. 43:7.** *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have *formed* him; yea, I have made him.

Isa. 46:11. Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have *purposed it*, I will also do it.

Jer. 51:19. The portion [God] of Jacob *is* not like them; for he [God] *is* the *former* of all things…

Προορἵζω (*Proorizo*), predestinate, foreordain, fix or determine the destiny beforehand. The source of definition for the Greek terms are: G. Kittel, *Thelogical Dictionary of the New Testament* (9 Vols.); J. H. Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*; Arndt–Gingrich, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*; Colin Brown, Ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (4 vols.).

Rom. 8:28–30. For whom he did foreknow, he also did *predestinate to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did *predestinate*, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

προέγνω…προώρισεν…ἐκάλεσεν…ἐδικαίωσεν…ἐδόξασεν..
Every act of God from eternity past to eternity future—foreknowing, predestinating, calling, justifying and glorifying—occur in the aor. tense, connoting and emphasizing the immutability and infallibility of the eternal purpose or redemptive decree.

Eph. 1:5, 11. …Having *predestinated* us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Acts 4:27–28. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel *determined before* to be done.

1 Cor. 2:7. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God *ordained before* the world unto our glory.

Counsel–Decision–Determination–Purpose

Second, there are a variety of biblical words used to connote the idea of *counsel*, *decision*, *determination*, or *purpose*. יָעַץ (*Ya'ats*), purpose, deliberate, resolve, counsel.

Isa. 14:24, 27. The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I *have purposed*, *so* shall it stand...For the Lord of hosts *hath purposed*, and who shall disannul *it*? and his hand *is* stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

עֵצָה (*'Etsah*), counsel, plan, purpose.

Prov. 19:21. *There are* many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the *counsel* of the Lord, that shall stand.

Psa. 33:11. The *counsel* of the Lord standeth for ever…

Isa. 46:10–11. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My *counsel* shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my *counsel* from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.

חָשַׁב (*Chashab*), purpose, plan, devise, make a judgment.

Gen. 50:20. But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.

Jer. 49:20. Therefore hear the *counsel* of the Lord, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath *purposed* against the inhabitants of Teman…

Lam. 2:8. The Lord hath *purposed* to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion...

זָמַם (*Zamam*), purpose, plan, devise. "It is used mainly of the Lord carrying out his purposes in judgment..."[170]

Lam. 2:17. The Lord hath done *that* which he *had devised*…

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[170] Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 244.

Jer. 4:28. …I have spoken *it*, I have *purposed it*, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.

מְזִמָּה (*Mezimmah*), plan or intent. A derivative of זָמַם (*Zamam*), above.

Jer. 23:20. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the *thoughts* of his heart...

Jer. 30:24. The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done *it*, and until he have performed the *intents* of his heart...

יָכַח (*Yakach*), decide, judge, appoint.

Gen. 24:14, 44. And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be* she *that* thou *hast appointed* for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master....*let* the same *be* the woman whom the LORD *hath appointed* out for my master's son.

Προτάσσω (*Protasso*), to place before, to appoint, define beforehand.

Acts 17:26. And 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.

Προτίημι (*Protithemi*), to place before, set forth, purpose with one's self, determine.

Eph. 1:9. Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath *purposed* in himself.

Πρόθεσις (*Prothesis*), a purpose (noun form of προτίημι, above).

Rom. 8:28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his purpose*.

Eph. 1:11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the *purpose* of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Eph. 3:11. According to the eternal *purpose* which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord…

2 Tim. 1:9. Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own *purpose* and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Προχειρίζω (*Procheirizo*), to put into the hand, deliver, to choose, appoint, determine.

Acts 22:14. And he said, The God of our fathers hath *chosen* thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

Προχειροτονέω (*Procheirotoneo*), to choose or designate beforehand.

Acts 10:41. Not to all the people, but unto witnesses *chosen before* of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

Κληρόω κλῆρος (*kleroo, kleros*), to cast lots, determine or choose by lot, assign by lot, a lot, what is obtained by lot, an inheritance or portion.

Acts 17:4. And some of them believed, and *consorted* with [were alloted by God to] Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.[171]

Eph. 1:11–12. In whom also we have *obtained an inheritance*, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.[172]

Ὁρίζω (*Horizo*), to define, mark out boundaries or limits, determine, appoint.

Acts 2:23. Him, being delivered by the *determinate* counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

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[171] The mid. would connote "consorted with," but the pass. καὶ προσεκληρώθησαν τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ τῷ Σιλᾷ implies that these were allotted to Paul and Silas by God.

[172] ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐκληρώθημεν προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ. The meaning is "obtained by lot," i.e., by Divine purpose and choice, and approaches the idea of election.

Acts 17:26. And 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.

βουλή βούλημα βοῦλομαι (*Boule*, *Boulema*, *Boulomai*), will, counsel, purpose, to will deliberately, have a purpose, be minded.[173]

Acts 2:23. Him, being delivered by the determinate *counsel* and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

Acts 4:28. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy *counsel* determined before to be done.

Rom. 9:19. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his *will*?

Eph. 1:11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the *counsel* of his own will.

Θέλω θέλημα θέλησις (*Thelo*, *Thelema*, *Thelesis*), to will, be resolved or determined, to purpose.

Eph. 1:5, 9, 11. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his *will*...Having made known unto us the mystery of his *will*, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself...In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own *will*.

Μέλλω (*Mello*), to be on the point of doing something, about to, intend. Used of what is inevitable, "of those things which will come to pass...by fixed necessity or divine appointment... destined."[174]

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[173] "As respects the distinction between βοῦλομαι and θέλω, the former seems to designate the will which follows deliberation, the latter the will which proceeds from inclination." J. H. Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

[174] *Ibid.*, p. 397.

Matt. 3:7. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath *to come* [destined wrath]?

Mk. 10:32. And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things *should happen* [about to occur, being prophesied or destined before] unto him.

Lk. 9:44. Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man *shall be* [is about to be, destined to fulfill prophecy] delivered into the hands of men.

The Divine Decree

Third, the biblical terms which specifically connote or emphasize the concept of *decree*.

גְּזֵרָה (*Gezirah*), an Aramaic word denoting determination or decree.

Dan. 4:17. This matter *is* by the *decree* of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

חֹק (*Choq*), statute, custom, law, decree. From the root חָקַק, which means "to engrave" [enter into law, which was engraved on stone tablets], hence "rendered certain" when pertaining to Divine decree.

Psa. 148:6. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a *decree* which shall not pass.

Jer. 5:22. Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand *for* the bound of the sea by a *perpetual decree*, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?

חָרַץ (*Charats*), to bestir one's self, acted pointedly, decide, determine, decree.

Isa. 10:22–23. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, *yet* a remnant of them shall return: the consumption *decreed*

shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a consumption, even *determined*, in the midst of all the land.

חָתַךְ (*Chathach*), decree, determine. An *hapax legomenon.*[175]

Dan. 9:24. Seventy weeks *are determined* upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Προετοιμάζω (*Proetoimazo),* to prepare beforehand, to prepare beforehand in mind and purpose, to decree.

Rom. 9:23. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had *afore prepared* unto glory.

Eph. 2:10. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath *before ordained* that we should walk in them.

Choice or Election

Fourth, biblical terms which denote *election* or *choice*. When referring to the Divine choice or election, the source is never mere prescience [mere foreknowledge of events or persons], but the absolute, gracious love or Divine prerogative.

בָּחַר, בָּחִיר (*Bachar, Bachiyr*), select, appoint, choose. The noun form (בָּחִיר) occurs thirteen times in the Old Testament, referring exclusively to the Divine choice.

Psa. 33:12. Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD; *and* the people *whom* he *hath chosen* for his own inheritance.

בָּדַל (*Badal*), divide, distinguish, separate, select.

Lev. 20:24, 26. …I *am* the LORD your God, which *have separated* you from *other* people...And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD

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[175] An *hapax legomenon* [ἅπαξ λεγόμενον] is a word that occurs but once.

am holy, and *have severed* you from *other* people, that ye should be mine.

ἐκλέω, ἐκλέκτος, ἐκλογή (*Eklego, Eklektos, Ekloge*), choose, pick out, elect.

> **Rom. 8:33.** Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's *elect*? *It is* God that justifieth.
>
> **Rom. 9:11.** (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to *election* might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)
>
> **Eph. 1:4.** According as he *hath chosen* us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.[176]

Αἱρέομαι (*Aireomai*), to take to one's self, to choose, prefer.,

> **2 Thess. 2:13.** But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God *hath* from the beginning *chosen* you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

Foreknowledge

Fifth, terms which denote *foreknowledge*, emphasizing a prior acquaintance with and relationship to those foreknown.

> Note: Divine foreknowledge is not mere prescience [to simply know beforehand], but necessarily involves the reality of decree or predestination. It is not merely contingent knowledge, but refers to who and what God has rendered certain and therefore foreknows in a certain and intimate sense. Note must be taken that it is not merely *what* God knows, but also *whom* he knows. Foreknowledge then necessarily implies a personal or intimate relationship when used of persons.

יָדַע (*Yada'*), to know, especially in an intimate or personal sense (This term connotes the idea of caring for, to know intimately [in a sexual or other intimate sense]).

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[176] Eph. 1:4, ἐξελέξατο, aor. mid., "chose out for himself [or with reference to himself], much stronger than the act. voice, emphasizing either personal interest or the intensive use of the mid. voice.

Amos 3:2. You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

προβλέπω προείδον (*Problepo, Proeidon*), to foresee [something rendered certain], not used of contingent foresight.

Gal. 3:8. And the scripture, *foreseeing* that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Heb. 11:40. God *having provided* some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Προγινώσκώ, προγνώσις (*Proginosko, Prognosis*), to foreknow, foreknowledge [certain knowledge of a thing or person].

Rom. 8:29. For whom he *did foreknow*, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

1 Pet. 1:20. Who verily *was foreordained* before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

Will–Desire–Good Pleasure

Sixth, terms which denote *desire* or *good–pleasure*, emphasizing that God's determination and desire are synonymous, i.e., that there is no distinction between the Divine determination and good–pleasure.

חָפֵץ (*Chapets*), to incline, bend, be pleased with, delight in, will.

Psa. 115:3. But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he *hath pleased*.

Isa. 46:10. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my *pleasure*.

הוֹאִיל, יְאַל (*Ya'al, Ho'iyl*), to show willingness, please, determine, resolve.

1 Sam. 12:22. For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it *hath pleased* the Lord to make you his people.

צְבָא (*Tseva'*), An Aramaic word, please, will, desire.

Dan. 4:35. And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his *will* in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Εὐδοκεω, εὐδοκία (*Eudokeo, Eudokia*), to seem good to one, good pleasure, choose, determine, decide.

Matt. 11:25–26. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it *seemed good* in thy sight.

Eph. 1:5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the *good pleasure* of his will.

βοῦλομαι (*Boulomai*), will, counsel, purpose, to will deliberately, have a purpose, be minded.

Acts 2:23. Him, being delivered by the determinate *counsel* and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

Acts 4:28. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy *counsel* determined before to be done.

Acts 20:27. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the *counsel* of God.

Rom. 9:19. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his *will*?

Eph. 1:11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the *counsel* of his own will.

Θέλω (*Thelo*), to will, be resolved or determined, to purpose.

Eph. 1:5, 9, 11. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his *will*...Having made known unto us the mystery of his *will*, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself...In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own *will*:

A thorough study of the preceding terms and selected passages reveals that: God acts according to his eternal purpose. God is absolutely sovereign over his creation. God completely fulfills his

desire and intention, i.e., that his eternal purpose is both immutable [unchangeable] and infallible [absolutely certain of fulfillment].

Predestination and a World–and–Life View

Everyone, consciously or not, has a philosophy of life, a framework or a set of presuppositions from which he thinks and acts, a *Weltanschauung*, or world–view. It is an individual's perception of reality and how he relates to it, his convictions and the sum of his presuppositions which represent his total outlook on life, the world about him and ultimate reality. Our world–and–life view determines literally everything in our relationship to reality.

A biblical world–and–life view, which views reality in the context of Christian theism, necessarily grounds the promises and prophecies of God in the truth of Divine predestination. To negate predestination is to abandon the self–revelation of God, and thus consistent Christian theistic world–and–life view.

Predestination in Creation

The reality of predestination is scripturally all–inclusive—a revelation of the Divine eternal purpose commenced, continued and consummated to the glory of God. It is vital, therefore, to recognize both creation in general, and history in particular, as manifestations of this eternal purpose: first, God is sovereign in creation. To adequately comprehend the relationship of predestination to creation both the sovereignty of God *in* and *over* creation must be noted: the Scriptures assert that God is absolutely sovereign in creation (Gen. 1:1f; Isa. 45:21; Jer. 32:17; Col. 1:15–17).

In creation both the power of God and his purpose are manifested. The act of creation was a glorious revelation of the Divine omnipotence, as God created all things *ex nihilo* by fiat decree (Gen. 1:1–5; Psa. 33:6, 9; 148:1–5; Heb. 11:3). It was, then, a manifestation, among other things of the unlimited, absolute power of almighty God. There is no limit to his power or control, and what he created, he fully and wisely governs and preserves (Neh. 9:6; Acts 17:24–25, 28; Rom. 11:33–36; Eph. 3:8–10). God created this

universe with a distinct purpose—his consummate glory (Rev. 4:11). Thus, all creation is intrinsically teleological, every single entity having a definite place in the all–inclusive purpose of God, which is invincibly and providentially progressing toward fulfillment.[177]

God is sovereign over creation. God exercises absolute control over his creation, sustaining all things by fiat decree.

Note: Heb. 1:3 emphasizes the "utterance of his power" in the Greek (φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ). Cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15–17; and Rev. 4:11, which all state explicitly that "all things" are sustained and "consist" by the fiat decree and power of God. The Greek of Romans 11:36 is an exact declaration that God is the Source (*of him*), Support (*through him*) and End (*to him*) of all things (…ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα…).

He sent the flood to overthrow primeval creation, divided the Red Sea and the Jordan River, sent storms to fulfill his will, turned rivers into blood, sent fire from heaven and sent or withheld rain as it pleased him.

Not only is God in absolute control of the elements, but he likewise works his purposes through animals, sending frogs, lice, flies and locusts upon the Egyptians; shutting the mouths of dogs against the Israelites; commanding the ravens to feed his prophet; sending lions and bears to be his executioners (1 Kgs. 20:35–36; 2 Kgs. 2:24; 17:24–25); preparing a great fish, an insignificant gourd and a tiny worm to correct Jonah; shutting the lions' mouths against Daniel; and causing a cock to crow to rebuke Peter.

He further exercises absolute control over all spirit beings, including good and evil angels and Satan himself. The Scriptures further reveal that God exercises absolute control over the totality of

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[177]In Proverbs 16:4 the Hebrew gives the connotation that the Lord made all things *for his own purpose*. There is a definite teleological element in this passage that is all–inclusive.

every human life.[178] Creation, then, is a revelation of the omnipotence of God, a God who spoke into existence all things and wisely governs them, great and small—from the rise and fall of civilizations (Acts 17:26) to the fall of a sparrow (Matt. 10:29)—and is bringing them providentially to their predetermined consummation.

Predestination and History

What is history? History is the manifestation in time of God's eternal purpose that began with creation. Predestination is absolutely essential for a world–and–life view that is consistently biblical. A denial or avoidance of this truth would necessitate a radical departure from a truly biblical philosophy of history.

Note: These references are to Clark H. Pinnock, Ed., *Grace Unlimited*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975. 264 pp. Donald M. Lake writes: "...a divine determination that makes history unintelligible." (p. 46). David Clines concludes: "Predestination in whatever form usually plays a role subsidiary to that of the full and (to all intents and purposes) undetermined relationship of God and man." (p. 124). I. Howard Marshall asserts: "Predestinarian language...leads to the temptation to think of God acting in terms of a blueprint prepared in eternity past. But this is to misinterpret the language and leads to illogical consequences. *It destroys the freedom of God who can, for instance, be grieved that he has created men, and then decide what he is going to do next.*" (pp. 140–141).

To biblically comprehend history, there are four aspects that must be considered: first, history is theocentric, theocratic and teleological. It is theocentric in that it is the outworking in time of God's eternal purpose to bring glory to himself. All history, therefore, ultimately centers in the triune Godhead. It is theocratic in that the whole of history and each of its particulars to the minutest

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[178]In the Hebrew text of Psalm 139:16 the meaning is that all the Psalmist's days [ימים] were determined before he was born. Cf. Prov. 19:21; 21:1; Dan. 4:35; Acts 17:24–28; Rom. 9:11–21.

detail are alike governed by God. This by necessity must exclude nothing. To exclude anything—even one particle of one atom—from the governing hand of God would be to deny the reality of God in any biblical sense.

The Scriptures reveal God as ruling over nature, plant and animal life and all moral beings. It is teleological in that it is the temporal and providential actualization of God's predetermined end for creation. Apart from the biblical truth of predestination, history would be meaningless. To say "meaning" is to say "God," and to say "purpose" is likewise to say "God."

The Scriptures present a philosophy of history that is diametrically opposed to Platonism, positivism or biological and social Darwinism.

> Note: Divine predestination is the key to a proper understanding of history. History is not cyclical—does not repeat itself—as some ancient and modern philosophers and historians have suggested. Nor is the flow of time from the past to the present and onto the future, as an evolutionary and humanistic philosophy of history presumes. Biblically, the flow of time is from the future to the present, and from the present into the past. History is nothing more or less than the progressive realization and unfolding in time of the eternal purpose of the self–disclosing, Triune God of Scripture.

All humanistic thinking concerning history progresses from the past to the present and into the future. This is by necessity, as man apart from God must remain in his own thinking autonomous and left to determine his own destiny.

However, because all things are predetermined and controlled by God, history is progressing into the realm of the reality—fulfillment or actualization—of God's eternal purpose. *Simply and in the light of biblical revelation, time progresses from the future to the present and then into the past.* Apart from such a concept of history, God would be robbed of his nature and essence, character and glory; the Scriptures would lack any consistent meaning or significance; and the certain fulfillment of prophecy would be an open question. What might become of Divine promises? Where would the certain

destiny and glory of the Redeemer or the redeemed rest? Upon chance? Predestination is the key to a biblical philosophy of history.

The Scriptures give meaning to history. Apart from Divine predestination, history could have no meaning. All would be cosmic process, impersonal behavioristic determinism. The past would be indefinite, fading back into some primeval ooze; the present would be horribly uncertain, devoid of real meaning and therefore any true significance; the future would loom before men as a dark, yawning abyss.

It is either predestination or chance; either God or fatalism. When man rejects Divine predestination, he merely substitutes his own, seeking through self–effort, pragmatic, scientific socialism to control his destiny and give meaning to his existence and to history—apart from God. But only in God, in a God who purposes and controls all things, can history and therefore human existence have real meaning.

History is Christocentric and salvific in its focal point. The focus of history is upon the redemption of men in and through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of God. It is in Christ alone that man finds true fulfillment and the ultimate realization of his position in the universe. This realization is actualized through Divine grace from election to glorification.

Toward this glorious end prophecy points; to this consummate end the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head, Representative and Savior of his elect became incarnate, lived, suffered, died, was buried, raised again and ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high; and to this blessed end believers can wait in confident expectation—for God has rendered all certain in his loving, eternal, redemptive decree.

Predestination–Circumstances–The Free Acts of Men

By principle, example and declaration, the Scriptures reveal that God is absolutely sovereign over all inclinations, intentions, motivations and acts of men. Two aspects of this all–inclusive

relationship should be examined: first, God is in absolute control of all the circumstances that characterize human existence. The free acts of men by necessity are contained within and limited by the circumstance of their lives. Their wills, inclination, motivations and subsequent actions are largely determined by the limits God has imposed upon human life in general and individual lives in particular.

God is sovereign over the rise and decline of nations (Acts 17:26) and their defeat or victory (Deut. 2:30–33). The nations of Canaan were destroyed for their iniquity (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 18:9, 12). The ancient powers of Egypt, Assyria and Babylon were overturned by God in judgment. Israel was delivered into the hand of the heathen for her apostasy. Yet protection and deliverance are also from the hand of the Lord (Ex. 34:23–24; Psa. 91:1–8).

The states of sickness or health and the issues of life and death are Divinely ordained (Deut. 32:29; 1 Sam. 2:6). The physical and mental state of the individual at birth and in the subsequent life are controlled by God (Ex. 4:11). God smote nations and individuals with diseases for their sin and rebellion (1 Sam. 5:6; Numb. 11:33; 12:10; Acts 12:23). He struck the first–born of Egypt dead (Ex. 11:4–5) and destroyed an entire Assyrian army (2 Kgs. 19:35). God destroyed the antediluvian world for iniquity. He restored Hezekiah to health (Isa. 38). It is God who determines the life–span of every human being (Job. 14:1, 5; Psa. 139:16; Acts 17:24–28).

The call of God to the prophetic or preaching ministry is sovereignly controlled by God (Jer. 1:4–10; Acts 13:2–4; Gal. 1:15–16). God grants physical (Judg. 14:6), mental (Ex. 31:1–6) and spiritual gifts according to his own will and purpose (1 Cor. 12:4–11).

Second, the Scriptures reveal the absolute control exercised by God over the free acts themselves. Not only are men restricted by the Divinely–appointed circumstances of their lives, but their very free actions are likewise predetermined by the Divine hand for the accomplishment of the eternal purpose. The Scriptures declare that

God is sovereign over the disposition of men's hearts (Prov. 21:1), turning them to serve his purpose. Pharaoh's heart was hardened by God that he might demonstrate his power through the monarch and execute judgment upon the gods of Egypt by his wonders.

> Note: Cf. Ex. 4:21; 7:3, 13–14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 32, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 12:12; 14:4, 8, 17; Rom. 9:17–21. A study of these passages reveals that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and stated such before the issue came before the monarch. It was the Divine purpose to use the obstinacy of this king for a testimony to the power of Israel's God. (cf. Ex. 7:3–5; 10:1–2; 14:4; 20:2; Numb. 23:22–23; Deut. 1:30; 4:37; 11:1–4; Josh. 2:9–11; 9:9; 1 Sam. 4:7–8; 6:1–6). He would designate himself as the Lord who "brought you out of Egypt."

Sihon the King of Heshbon was made obstinate by God to his own destruction (Deut. 2:30–33). God made the minds of Hophni and Phineas calloused against the reproof of Eli because he would slay them (1 Sam. 2:22–25). Rehoboam's heart was turned in arrogancy by God at his secession to the throne that the kingdom might be divided (2 Chron. 10:3–15). God made the mind of Amaziah impudent against the reproof of the prophet he sent that Amaziah might be delivered into the hands of his enemies (2 Chron. 25:14–16, 20). After all the Divine judgments upon Egypt, when the Egyptians had every reason to hate the Hebrews, God gave them favor in the sight of the Egyptians to give them great riches that the Egyptians might be spoiled (Ex. 12:35–36).

God is likewise absolutely sovereign over the sinful passions of men, overruling these to accomplish his will (Psa. 76:10; Prov. 19:21). The history of Joseph is an account of hatred, favoritism, intrigue, lust, injustice and immorality; yet all these things were used in the Divine providence to place Joseph in command of the Egyptian Empire to further God's purpose (Gen. 50:20). Abimelech would have sexually taken Abraham's wife, but God withheld Abimelech from sinning against him (Gen. 20:3–6). God turned the hearts of the Egyptians to hate the Hebrews to further his purpose for their highest good (Psa. 105:25). Samson's desire for marriage to a

Philistine woman based on physical attraction was used of God because he desired an occasion against the Philistines (Judg. 14:1–4).

The prophecy concerning Gog demonstrates the absolute control of God over human intentions. God will draw him as with "a hook" in his jaws against his land and govern his thoughts and actions (Ezk. 38:1–4, 10–13, 16–17). The hatred and envy of the Sanhedrin culminated in the illegal trial and murder of the Son of God, but all this was predetermined by God for his glory (Acts 2:23; 4:27–28).

God uses men as instruments in the accomplishment of his purpose. The king of Assyria was raised up by God to execute judgment upon Israel, then was punished for his pride and arrogance. God likens this heathen king to an "axe" or "saw" in his hand for vengeance (Isa. 10:5–15). God used Nebuchadnezzar to take Judah into Babylonian captivity, yet demonstrated through him that Divine power governed the affairs in heaven and on earth (Dan. 4:16–17, 25–26, 32, 34–37). God named, empowered and commissioned Cyrus prophetically over 200 years before his birth and reign to begin the restoration of Jerusalem (Isa. 42:1–7; Ezra 1:1–2).

God further moved upon the hearts of Darius (Ezra 6:1–3, 21–22) and Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:1, 6, 12–28) to continue and complete the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. Pilate was the judicial instrument in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without his authority and official permission the Sanhedrin could not execute the death sentence. Pilate's moral weakness, fear and expediency delivered Jesus to be crucified, yet it was all governed by the hand of God (Jn. 19:9–11; Acts 4:27–28).

Men as free moral agents are fully responsible for their actions, good or evil. In every instance above God sovereignly worked his will without interference, yet in each case the agents worked within their own freedom and with full responsibility for their deeds. There is no conflict between Divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Predestination and Prayer

Unless one has a proper concept of God and his absolute control over this universe, he can neither pray nor live as a true believer in

any scriptural sense of that term. To deny the absolute sovereignty of God over all his creation is to reduce prayer to a superstitious mental or verbal exercise. It is to replace God as revealed in his Word with the idea of an unscriptural "incomprehensible influence" that must be left inexplicable.

Prayer may be defined very generally as follows: "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with the confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."[179]

Such a definition is based upon Divine revelation and includes the essential elements. To omit any of the above would be to deviate from biblical teaching. Further, to properly understand prayer, there are certain presuppositions concerning God himself that necessarily undergird its reality and validity. *God must be both personal and present*. Without such a concept of God, prayer would become utterly impossible. One could not pray to an impersonal, amoral or vague force. The Scriptures reveal God as a person with the essential and moral attributes of personality, and as a God who is omnipresent.

God must be a prayer–hearing and answering God. Unless he both hears and answers prayer, his whole nature and character must be held in question; his moral attributes must be in conflict; and his very essence may be doubted. *God must have unlimited power over his creation*, or prayer would be reduced to urging God to do the best he could in a utilitarian operation.

Prayer for rain, harvest or safety would be utterly senseless unless God is in control of this physical universe. Prayer for protection, deliverance, justice, the social or moral condition of men would be without reason if God were not absolutely sovereign over the minds, motives and actions of men. Prayer for preaching, the

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[179]*The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Question 98. Cf. Psa. 62:8; 10:7; 1 Jn. 5:14; Matt. 26:39; Jn. 6:38; 16:23; Dan. 9:4; Phil. 4:6.

success of the Gospel or the salvation of sinners would be utterly absurd if God were not reigning over the hearts and souls of men in free and sovereign grace. Yet men did, do and will continue to pray for these very things because the very nature of God demands that he be omnipotent and the Scriptures declare him to be so—whether it enters at all times into their consciousness or not.

God must have a will, intention or purpose. This is essential to God as a person, a moral, intelligent being and to the very biblical concept of Deity. A God without a purpose would either be completely arbitrary in his own right, or wholly given over to the whim of his moral creatures and their requests, or yet inconsistent with himself and them. A God without self–determination would indeed be a God devoid of both intelligence and wisdom, and further, of any distinct moral qualities. The alternative is not merely a God who has a vague or general plan, but a God who ultimately controls all things and is bringing them to a moral, logical, teleological and glorious consummation consistent with his nature and character.

Thus, as a believer prays in the light of Scripture, he has to a given degree a cognizance of a God who is intensely personal and everywhere present; a God who both hears and answers prayer; a God who is very God and therefore the fully adequate and proper object of his total dependence and faith.

Finally, it is objected that if God foreordained all things, prayer is without significance. Mark the following: God both commands and encourages us to pray. Prayer is thus an act of obedience. "And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (Ephesians 6:18)." "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6–7). "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Prayer is a call to faith in the sovereign government of God. To set ourselves against the will or purpose of God in our prayers is to rebel against Him. "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven" (Matthew 6:9–10).

Prayer is a call to submit or conform to the sovereign will of God. Prayer is primarily an act of worship in the context of loving, trusting submission to the sovereign will of God. "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

> Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. (Romans 8:26–28)

> And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. (1 John 5:14-15)

Prayer is one of the God-ordained means of accomplishing His will and bringing glory to Himself. Thus, rather than discourage or render prayer unnecessary, predestination actually encourages prayer and gives to the believer the glorious anticipation of an answer.

> And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master *were* in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, *even* the time that women go out to draw *water*.

> And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand *here* by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy

pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be* she *that* thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel *was* very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw *water* for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels. And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not. (Genesis 24:10-21)

Prayer is an acknowledgment of our finiteness and God's infiniteness; of our dependence upon Him and His care and concern for us. "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).[180]

The Scriptural Significance of Prayer

What is the scriptural significance of prayer? Prayer is a means used by God to fulfill his will, both in the one who offers the prayer and through the object of that prayer. In true prayer the one who prays must be in a right relationship with God, which would include

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[180] ....ὅτι αὐτῷ μέλει περὶ ὑμῶν "..because to him it matters concerning you." It may not matter to others, but it does to God!

confession of sin (Psa. 66:18; Isa. 59:1–2) and a resignation to the Divine will (Matt. 6:10; Lk. 22:42).

Prayer is a means not only of fulfilling the will of God, but also of aligning the heart and thinking of the person who prays to that will. The preparation of the heart and the work of the Holy Spirit in intercession is that the prayer might be "according to the will of God." (Rom. 8:26–27). The believer's confidence in answered prayer rests in his praying according to the will of God (1 Jn. 5:14–15). Foreordination does not render prayer insignificant; to the contrary, it biblically gives to prayer its true meaning. This may be graphically illustrated from Genesis 24. Abraham's servant was sent to take a bride for Isaac (v. 1–10).

Predestination and Prophecy

Biblical prophecy is essentially a direct communication from God concerning his relationship to creation, and specifically to men in a temporal context (Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:21). The predictive element in prophecy is two–fold: first, there are certain prophecies that are conditional, or contingent, consisting of threats or promises and may be generally considered as part of God's preceptive will (e.g., Jer. 18:1–10; Jonah 3:1–4:11). Second, there are unconditional predictions revealing what God absolutely and invincibly purposes to bring to pass (e.g., Isa. 7:14; 9:6; 53:1–12; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10).

The phenomenon of the absolute prediction in prophecy is unique. It is the revelation of what God has determined to accomplish, a revelation given variously days, years, centuries or even millennia before the actual event.

The Presuppositions of Prophecy

The reality and validity of these phenomena rest upon several presuppositions: That there is a God who reveals the future to men. Such a God must be omniscient, able to communicate with men and must have a definite purpose for revealing certain future events to his moral creatures. For God to reveal a future event with absoluteness, that event must have been established as certain. Without such a

certainty not only would all rest on contingency, the very validity of prophecy would be without foundation.

God must either foreknow (in the sense of mere prescience) or foreordain the future. If the former, then as has been asserted previously, God himself by necessity must be subject to either a superior power or under the impersonal force of a fatalistic determinism. If the latter, then God must be omnipotent and thus sovereign over his creation and, therefore, the future. The latter and not the former is the scriptural representation of God (Psa. 115:3; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:11).

For God to absolutely reveal a future event, he must not only have predetermined that event, he must also be sovereign over all the variables which bring that event to actuality in its given time and place. Thus, the very nature of prophecy itself rests upon the reality of predestination and God's absolute control over his creation.

Objections to Predestination

Natural Objections. The temptation and fall resulted in man seeking to implement the lie of Satan and become his own "god" (Gen. 3:1–7). Man naturally seeks autonomy, to determine for himself what is right and wrong, and to give meaning to his existence apart from God—humanism, with its intrinsic rationalism, relativism and pragmatism.

Because man yet lives in the real world created, governed—and therefore interpreted—by God, he must ultimately either pervert his concept of the real world or deny its objective reality. The first alternative is fatalism; the second is existentialism. In the former man seeks to void the universe of God, and thus of his Absolute Personality, morality and any absolute or universal—and therefore, ultimately of meaning. As such the world becomes a "multiverse" or mass of unrelated "brute facts," a world governed by chance, fate or luck. In the latter man retreats from the real world seeking to find meaning within himself and his experience. In either case fallen man naturally hates the idea of being controlled, i.e., he hates the reality

of a God who is absolutely sovereign. It is this natural aversion that underlies all objections to predestination.

Philosophical Objections: first, it is objected that Divine predestination is synonymous with fatalistic determinism. Donald Macleod makes the necessary distinction between Calvinistic [biblical] predestination and determinism:

> It is very often assumed that Calvinism, if it is not the same as determinism, will at least support and identify with it. But there is a radical confusion in such an assumption: a confusion between a philosophical theory and a theological doctrine. Determinism is a philosophical theory to the effect that every event has a cause which makes the event itself inevitable and infallibly certain. In accordance with this, many philosophers have argued that even our human moral choices are determined by our history, our heredity, our genetic composition, our environment and so on. Calvinism is not a philosophical theory. It is a theological statement to the effect that God has fore–ordained whatsoever comes to pass—not that all events have a cause within history.[181]

Fatalism is the belief that all events are necessarily brought to pass by an impersonal, amoral cosmic process of chance. Predestination is the revealed truth that everything is determined by a righteous, holy, just, gracious, merciful and loving God who is teleologically working all things for the highest good and his consummate glory. Fatalism is impersonal; predestination is righteous. Fatalism claims no purpose; predestination teleologically anticipates the glory of a self–determining God. Fatalism necessarily and ultimately leads to pessimism and indolence; predestination biblically understood leads to morally responsible behavior in accordance with God's revealed will.

Second, it is stated that predestination discourages responsible action. This objection is both philosophical and rationalistic, not scriptural, for the Scriptures teach that men are to live and exercise

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[181] *A Faith to Live By*. Mentor, Geanies House, Fearn, Ross–Shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1998, p. 43.

themselves under the authority of and in obedience to all the revealed will of God, which includes the use of means (cf. Deut. 29:29; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:6–8). Indeed, certainty should lead to responsible action (Isa. 55:8–11; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:7–9).

A third objection is that predestination denies free–will. The will as an entity is not and cannot be free. First, in man it is affected by a great number of variables, as man cannot control many of his circumstances. Second, the will is governed by and subject to the nature or character of the given person. No one possesses the power of contrary choice. The will as the natural, voluntary expression of the nature is limited by that nature. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18) nor act unrighteously (Psa. 92:15; 145:17; Rom. 9:14) because he is true and is righteous (i.e., morally self–consistent). Man is sinful by nature and his will is bound by his depravity and is thus biased toward evil (Rom. 8:5–8; Jn. 8:44). To assert that fallen man possesses a free–will would further be a direct denial of Divine omnipotence (Psa. 115:3; Isa. 14:24 46:9–11; Dan, 4:35).

This objection confuses free–will with responsibility. Man is not free, yet he is fully responsible. Responsibility denotes the obligation to respond or be accountable to a higher power or authority. Fallen, rebellious men do not have the power of contrary choice to act against their depraved natures (Rom. 3:10–12; 8:5–8; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Pet. 2:14). This, however, does not constitute them mere "robots," but rather still moral (Rom. 2:15), rational (Rom. 1:18–20), responsible beings who are not independent from God, but fully accountable to him as Creator, Lawgiver, Moral Ruler and only Savior. Iain Murray states the issue clearly:

> The error of Arminianism is not that it holds the biblical doctrine of responsibility but that it *equates* this doctrine with an unbiblical doctrine of 'free–will' and preaches the two things as though they were synonymous. But man's will is always exercised in harmony with his nature and, as his nature is at enmity with God, so is his will. Man being fallen, his will *cannot* be neutral or 'free' to act contrary to his nature. 'Free–will' has carried many souls to hell, but never a

soul to heaven yet...Man's spiritual inability is due solely to his sin and therefore it in no way lessens his responsibility.[182]

Fourth, it is objected that God cannot command a person to do what he does not have the ability to do—savingly repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a remonstrance is a misunderstanding of both human responsibility and of the biblical doctrine of grace. Human responsibility is based on the Divine prerogative and authority. God as Creator and Judge holds man fully responsible for his thoughts, words and actions. Saving grace is much more than a mere abstract or impersonal principle, conditional response on the part of God, or a universal, largely ineffectual intention extended toward all men without exception.

First, saving grace is a *principle* by which a holy and righteous God can deal with sinners apart from wrath—a principle of unmerited favor in the stead of merited wrath (Eph. 2:8–10; Rom. 11:5–6). Second, it is a *provision* in and through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, for God as both holy and righteous cannot arbitrarily set aside sin (Rom. 3:25–26; 5:1–11; 2 Cor. 5:21). Third, it is a Divine *prerogative*, bestowed upon those whom God has chosen as the objects of his redemptive love (Jn. 6:44; 17:2; Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:3–6; 2:4–5). Finally, saving grace is a *power* from God (Ezk. 36:25–27; Jn. 1:12–13; 1 Cor. 1:26–31; 2 Tim. 1:9) that enables the sinner to respond, to savingly repent and believe (Acts 11:18; 18:27; Phil. 1:29). Free and sovereign grace effects a quickening work between the command to repent and believe and the sinner who is spiritually dead in sins (Eph. 2:1–5).

To understand that God enables sinners to savingly respond to the Gospel is to understand fully the doctrine of grace. To attribute ability to the sinner is to misunderstand grace and also to corrupt it through the intrusion of human merit (Rom. 11:5–6).

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[182]Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*. London: Banner of Truth, 1966, p. 69.

Finally, it is asserted that predestination would make God unethical. The theistic ethics of some would predicate to God nothing that would interfere with the ethical or moral nature of man, leaving God in a utilitarian position to respond to man and make the best of the existing situation. This is at once a humanization of God and a direct contradiction of the Scriptures. Because God is absolutely sovereign, he gives an account to no one. Because he is absolutely righteous, what he does and commands is always right.

To charge God with a "breach of ethics" is in reality to predicate to him the imperfections and limitations of fallen humanity and to assert that he himself is subject to a higher standard or power—an Absolute or Universal above and beyond himself. Or, it is to assert a contradiction within his very nature and character. Either alternative would be to deny that he is God in any biblical sense of the term. This is likewise a direct contradiction of the Scriptures, for they teach that God does intervene, rule and overrule in the moral and ethical spheres for the highest good and his glory. In Exodus 34:24 God declares: "For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders; neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year."

God overruled the natural inclination and coveteousness of heathen hearts to protect the property of the Israelites when it was left unguarded during the yearly feasts. Further, God caused the Egyptians to hate the Israelites and enslave them (Psa. 105:25). God turned men against each other to bring upon them just retribution for their sin: then God brought an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Schechem and the men of Schechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech; that the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood might be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Schechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren. (Judg. 9:23–24).

All of the moral and ethical implications in the actions of sinful men that culminated in the suffering and death of the Son of God were predetermined and absolutely controlled by God:

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. (Acts 2:23).

For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. (Acts 4:27–28).

"What saith the Scripture?" (Rom. 4:3a) must ever be the final court of appeal.

Biblical Objections. Predestination, it is affirmed, is based upon the foreknowledge of God (cf. Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:2; Acts 2:23), that is, God foresaw what was going to happen and laid his plans accordingly. It may be answered: first, that foreknowledge is not synonymous with omniscience; it is concerned, not with contingency, but with certainty (Acts 15:18; Rom. 8:29–30), and thus implies a knowledge of what has been rendered certain.

Note: The statement of A.H. Strong is to the point: "Foreknowledge implies fixity and fixity implies decree...If God foresaw the future as certain, it must have been because there was something in himself which made it certain; or, in other words, because he had decreed it." A.H. Strong, *Systemic Theology*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1967, p. 356.

Second, foreknowledge is biblically and intrinsically related to the Old Testament term "to know"[183] and implies an intimate relation with and knowledge of its subject (Cf. Gen. 4:1; Amos 3:2). The salvific passages in the New Testament (Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:2) all speak of *persons who* (and not merely *what*) are foreknown, implying much more than mere prescience, implying a relationship that is both certain and intimate.

Third, Acts 2:23 would make foreknowledge dependent upon God's "determinate counsel" by the grammatical construction which

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[183] ידע (*Yada'*), to know, especially in an intimate or personal sense. This term connotes the idea of caring for, to know intimately.

combines both together as one thought with "foreknowledge" referring to and enforcing the previous term.

> Note: ...τῇ ὡρισμένῃ βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ..." The construction is that of the combined use of the articular and anarthrous connected with a single definite article and the co–ordinate conjunction καί, both substantives being of the same case. The second term, "foreknowledge," thus refers to and further enforces the first, "determinate counsel". This is an occurrence of the so–called Granville Sharp's rule, the linguist who formulated this construction: When two substantives of the same case are connected by the coordinate conj.καί, and the first is arth. and the second anarth., the second refers to the same person or thing. If both are arth., they refer to separate persons or things.

<div align="center">Foreseen Faith</div>

It is at this point that the idea of "foreseen faith" must be considered. It is alleged that God elected sinners because he foresaw they would believe and accept his offer of grace: first, if this were true, it would destroy completely the concept of grace by making faith an inherent ability in the natural man and necessarily the final deciding factor in salvation—and thus, meritorious.

Second, the Scriptures very clearly reveal the absolute nature of Divine grace—that it cannot be tainted in any way with human merit or works. Salvation is by grace *through* faith (διὰ πιστέως Cf. Rom. 3:22, 25; 1 Pet. 1:5; Eph. 2:8), never *because of* faith (διὰ πίστιν)!

> Note: Τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μή τις καυχήσηται.. That saving faith is a gift bestowed by God cannot be denied by referring the "that" (τοῦτο, neut. pron.) of Eph. 2:8 to either "grace" or the whole concept of salvation, for the following reasons: (1) "faith" is a feminine abstract noun, and although pronouns normally agree with their antecedents in gender, abstract feminine nouns may and do take neuter pronouns. (2) Although "grace" is neuter, it is the remoter antecedent; "faith" is the nearer and therefore much stronger possibility. (3) If "that" refers to salvation as a whole, then faith would necessarily be included as the gift of God. For a cogent discussion of this verse and τοῦτο, see

William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary on Ephesians*, pp. 121–123.

The Divine choice is definitely not based upon foreseen merit, which necessarily would include any natural ability of an inherent faith; rather, the choice proceeds from Divine prerogative and love (Deut. 4:37; 7:6–8; Eph. 1:4–5). Foreseen faith would render any "election" quite unnecessary!

Finally, to base God's eternal purpose on mere prescience would be to restrict God to the forces within nature and history or to subject him to an external, impersonal and superior force, i.e., a God–depersonalizing fatalistic determinism or an unscriptural, inexplicable dualism.

A second objection is that there is only a general predestination and sovereignty exercised by God. He is clever enough to out–think men and will therefore be able to control the general course of history, although he does not and cannot control its many details because he cannot control man. However: the Scriptures reveal that God is absolutely in control of all his creation to the minutest detail and last being, including man. Not only does God wield absolute sovereignty over floods, fire, wind, storms, ravens, lions, frogs, fish, lice, plagues, sickness and health, life and death, Satan and angels; not only does he uphold this entire universe by the fiat decree of his power—he also controls man.

God works his sovereign will through man's lust, hatred, wrath, obstinacy and envy (Gen. 50:20; Deut. 2:30; Judg. 14:4; 1 Sam. 2:22–25; Psa. 76:10; 105:25; Acts 2:23; 4:27–28). He raises man up to reveal his power and great name (Rom. 9:16–18). He prohibits man from sinning against him (Gen. 20:3–6). He uses man for the instrument of his vengeance (Isa. 10:5–15) or the restorer of his people (Isa. 45:1–7; Ezra 1:1–2). He moves man to his just destruction (1 Kgs. 22:19–22) or he saves man by his free and sovereign grace and lifts him up to sit in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4–7). If there is one being, one man, one atom in this

universe outside the sovereign control of God, then this universe as such must cease to exist and there is no God—no meaning!

A third objection is that the Scriptures contain expressions that are opposed to predestinarian language: God repenting or grieving (Gen. 6:5–6; Jonah 4:2). It may be answered that: these anthropomorphic expressions do not contradict the many passages which reveal God's determining purpose, but represent the human side of the situation, an accommodation to the finite minds of men to bring God into their thinking as really personal and intimately involved in human affairs.

Any other alternative would be contradictory to the Scriptures and an attempt to dethrone God. Even an attempt to base all on prescience would still not sufficiently answer this problem, for if God foreknew the given situation he would not need to repent—unless God did not foreknow it—a denial of his omniscience and consequently of his very essence.

Fourth, it has been asserted that the will of God is not always done, indeed, it is often successfully contradicted. The Scriptures reveal God absolutely sovereign, working his will and pleasure without any external influence or hindrance (Job 23:13; Psa. 155:3; Prov. 19:21; Prov. 21:1; Dan. 4:35). However, the Scriptures also state that men oppose his revealed will (Gen. 2:16–18; 3:1–7; Jn. 5:40), reject his purpose (Lk. 7:30), resist his Spirit (Acts 7:51–52) and make his commandment of none effect through their traditions (Matt. 15:6), etc.

The context reveals that these resisted the Holy Spirit in the same manner their ancestors did, by persecuting and killing the prophets who were commissioned and energized by the Holy Spirit to proclaim his truth to Israel. Sinners do, indeed, resist the Spirit of God through his messengers and their message, but this is not to be equated with a resistance of the Spirit's direct and effectual work in regenerating grace (Cf. Ezk. 36:25–27; Jn. 3:3–8; Eph. 2:4–5).

To this seeming antimony there are three alternatives: first, that the Scriptures themselves are contradictory—an inadmissible

conclusion. Second, that God's will is often thwarted by the autonomy of man and his intentions frustrated. Third, that a necessary distinction must be made between what God determines he will do and what he reveals and commands for his moral creatures, that is, his decretive and preceptive wills. This final alternative is in agreement with Scripture which itself draws this distinction (Deut. 29:29).[184]

There are three considerations in seeking to understand the will of God in this connection: first, God has only one will. When the distinction is made between the decretive and preceptive will of God, the word "will" is used with different connotations. The former is properly his will, determination or purpose; the latter is his rule or Law–Word for man's duty and conduct; and so only his will in a metaphorical sense. By the latter God does not reveal what he will do, but rather commands men what they should do. The decretive will reveals God as absolutely sovereign, accomplishing his pleasure; the preceptive will reveals God as Moral Governor, commanding his morally responsible creatures to live and act in accordance with his revealed Law–Word.

Second, because God's preceptive will is in reality his Law–Word to govern the duty of men and not the *totality* of his decretive will, which may be and often is, hidden in his secret counsels from his finite creatures, God may and often does allow men to sin by not

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[184]The Scriptures give examples of the revealed will of God expressed in a command and yet declare at the same time that the secret will of God was otherwise. Cf. Gen. 22:1–18 and the offering up of Isaac as a burnt offering. God had intended this as a test of Abraham's faith. Cf. Ex. 4:21–23 and the command to Pharaoh to release the Israelites, yet God told Moses that He would harden Pharaoh's heart that he should not let Israel go. Cf. 2 Kgs. 20:1–7; Isa. 38:1, 5 where King Hezekiah was told that he would immediately die, but God added to his life fifteen years. Cf. Deut. 25:1; Lev. 21:10; Matt. 26:65; Ex. 20:16; 23:1; Matt. 26:59–60; Acts 2:23; 4:27–28 and the violations of the Old Testament in the trial and crucifixion of Christ.

restraining their lawless tendency and behavior. Thus, the preceptive will of God is often contradicted by men under Divine permission.

Third, although God permits men to violate his preceptive will, this neither means that these two wills are opposed nor that men act independently of God. Rather, it means that God permits men to oppose his preceptive will to overrule their actions and fulfill his decretive will. Herman Bavinck summarizes the matter lucidly:

God's revealed will instead of being opposed to the secret will is the means whereby the latter is carried out: by means of warnings, and admonitions, prohibitions and threatenings, conditions and commandments, God's counsel is accomplished; while *because of the decretive will man, when he transgresses God's commandment, does not for a moment become independent of God but in the very act of transgressing serves God's counsel,* and becomes an instrument (however unwillingly) of God's glory...Those who deny the revealed will do injustice to God's holiness, the majesty of the moral law, and the seriousness of sin; while those who reject the decretive will come in conflict with God's omnipotence, wisdom and sovereignty. (Italics added.)[185]

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[185]Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977, pp. 240–241.

The Problem of Evil

Introduction

Since the early Greek Philosophers, many thinkers have concerned themselves with what has become known as "The Problem of Evil." This article seeks to introduce and examine this issue in the context of Scripture, and, reasoning from the Scripture, to give an intelligent and coherent defense of the Christian position. No apology is given for this position. As the Scriptures are self–consistent, a consistent answer may be sought and given.

What Is "The Problem of Evil"?

"The Problem of Evil" can be and is usually stated in the following terms: "How can evil exist in a universe created and governed by an all–powerful, benevolent [inherently and completely good] God?" The contention is that either God is not wholly good or not all–powerful.

Note: It should be stated from the outset that this "problem" exists in the minds of fallen, sinful men because their world–and–life views do not derive from Scripture, i.e., are non–revelational. Christians, positing a Theistic Christian World–and–Life View possess a "revelational epistemology," i.e., their world–and–life view derives from Divine special revelation—the inscripturated Word of God.

Note: A "World–and–Life View" is one's overall philosophy of life—one's "over–arching or meta–narrative" which is inclusive of one's concept of himself, the world about him, his relation to it and everyone else, and his concept of ultimate issues—all of which determine how he thinks, acts and instinctively reacts at a presuppositional level. A "Christian Theistic World–and–Life View" is a comprehensive philosophy of life which derives from a consistent concept and implementation of Biblical truth.

Note: Epistemology is the science of truth and knowledge and truth claims. All assumptions or presuppositions must have a sufficient epistemological basis. Biblical Christians have the inscripturated Word of God [Divine special revelation] as the basis of their truth and knowledge. There are three Greek terms for knowledge: γινώσκω, "come to know, become acquainted with, understand;" οἶδα, "perception, fullness of knowledge;" ἐπίσταμαι, "to

understand, to fix one's thoughts upon, to be assured, know for certain, ἐπιστῆμη, (noun form) is also used for both intellectual power, scientific knowledge and artistic skill. It is from this term that the word *epistemology* is derived. For scriptural examples of this term, cf. Mk. 14:68; Acts 10:28; 15:7; 18:25; 19:15, 25; 20:18; 22:19; 24:10; 26:26; 1 Tim. 6:4; Heb. 11:8; Jas. 3:13; 4:14; Jude 10.

Presuppositions

It must be understood at the outset that all human thought is presuppositional, i.e., man is not intellectually neutral [completely open–minded], but approaches any given subject with certain assumptions or presuppositions which govern his thought–process. This is certainly evident in the realm of theology and metaphysics. Such issues as the finiteness of human reason, the nature of Divine special revelation,[186] and the noetic effects of sin, all have a determining force on the subject of "the Problem of Evil."

Note: The term "noetic" derives from νοέω, "to think," and refers to the sinful and limiting effects of the Fall on the human thought–process. Rom. 1:18 reveals that fallen, sinful human beings habitually suppress the truth in and by their wickedness [τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων]. They are religiously, intellectually and morally dishonest. Rom. 1:21 further describes these as "futile in their reasonings and darkened in their incapacitated hearts." [ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδία].

The Spirit of God in Divine illumination compensates for some of this in the case of true believers (1 Jn. 2:20, 27), but not all limitation or prejudice is removed.

Further, man by nature is a creature of faith. He must have faith in something or someone as he instinctively senses that objective

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[186] God has revealed himself in both general [nature, creation] and special [direct, intelligent communication that has been inscripturated] revelation. Divine special revelation—the Scriptures—must not be explained away anthropomorphically or figuratively. It is basic to understand that special revelation has been given to be understood by man.

knowledge and truth are external to himself. Finite creatures simply cannot comprehend an infinite Being, unless that infinite Being in some way condescends to reveal himself or his actions to them. Apart from such a revelation, they are simply left with an anthropocentric, finite, empirical or philosophical speculation.

The triune, self–disclosing God of Scripture, the Creator and Ruler of the universe has, however, chosen to reveal himself, his moral self–consistency, redemptive purpose and some of the ultimate issues of good and evil, righteousness and judgment, in his inscripturated Word—a Word that is understandable, inspired, infallible and authoritative. This Divine special revelation is not exhaustive, yet it is entirely sufficient for both faith and practice.

Man's knowledge, however, is not only finite, it is further limited by the noetic effects of sin. Thus, there is a given amount of prejudice or sinful limitation on his part when approaching Divine truth. The Scriptures must be taken as they are, and the person, character, purpose and actions of God must not be called into question—finite creatures do not have that right (Rom. 9:14–21). The Scriptures must speak as the final authority.[187] Any explanation as to "The Problem of Evil" must be found in the nature, actions or purpose of God as revealed therein.

The Mystery of Evil

The existence of evil in the universe of a righteous and holy God is a great mystery, yet the Scriptures reveal that God has determined all things and this must include sin. To deny or seek to circumvent this would bring God down to the level of the finite and leave evil as an inexplicable mystery existing in opposition to God in a dualistic sense.

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[187] The Scriptures are sufficient as our final rule of both faith and practice. Fallen, sinful men, however usually seek to either blunt or deny the authority of Scripture by relegating it to either legend or the product of religious evolution. Some, while professing to hold to Scripture, seek to spiritualize it, denying or destroying its literal meaning, thus making it relative to their thinking.

Divine Sovereignty

That God is absolutely sovereign over all things, even evil, and uses such for his purpose and glory, is a scriptural fact: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." (Isa. 45:7).

Note the statement made by the *Scofield Reference Bible*:

> "Heb. *ra*, translated 'sorrow,' 'wretchedness,' 'adversity,' 'afflictions,' 'calamities,' but never translated *sin*. God created evil only in the sense that he made sorrow, wretchedness, etc., to be the sure fruits of sin."[188]

רַע (*ra'*), however, is the common word for *moral evil* and, although never translated "sin," it is translated hundreds of times as "evil," and eighty–one times as "wicked," "wickedly" and "wickedness," referring to all types of sins. In this context neither *peace* nor *evil* can be used in such a restricted sense as the *Scofield Reference Bible* has attempted to give these parallel terms, as the Scriptures in their use of these reveal.

God sent an evil spirit between the men of Shechem and Abimelech (Judg. 9:23–24). He sent an evil spirit to obsess King Saul (1 Sam. 16:14; 18:10; 19:9). He brought evil upon Israel for her sins (1 Kgs. 9:9). A lying spirit was sent by God to lead Ahab to his defeat and death (1 Kgs. 22:20–23). The Lord appointed the defeat of Ahithophel's counsel that he might bring evil upon Absolom (2 Sam. 17:14). God turned the hearts of the Egyptians to hate the Israelites (Ps. 105:25). The greatest crime in history—the illegality of the trial, the abuse, shame, suffering and death of the Son of God with all its attendant sin on the part of men—was predetermined by God (Lk. 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:27–28). How can God do these things and yet remain holy, righteous and free from sin?

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[188] *Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 754

The Origin of Sin

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Isaiah 14:12–15)[189]

And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. (Luke 10:18)

Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8:44)[190]

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. (Jude 6)

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season....and the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Revelation 20:1–3, 10)

Sin did not originate with the fall [apostasy] of man. Sin originated in the spirit [angelic] world. Lucifer [Satan, the devil] apostatized from God and took a number of angelic beings with him. He it was in the guise of the serpent who tempted Adam and Eve and

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[189] The context of Isaiah 14 (v. 4ff) refers this statement to "the king of Babylon," evidently addressing Satan through this king.

[190] "...from the beginning..." must refer to the temptation and subsequent fall of Adam through the temptation of the devil through the serpent.

through this brought about the fall of mankind. The entrance of sin into the human race came through Adam's willful disobedience to the explicit commandment of God (Gen. 2:16–17; 3:1–7; Rom. 5:12; 3:23).

> Note: The use of the aor. in both Romans passages, in their given context, point to an event, i.e., mankind did not simply inherit a sinful nature or tendency from Adam—"all have sinned," thus referring to personal experience and activity, but "all sinned" in an event, a point in time (Rom. 3:23, πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ. "For all sinned and are subsequently constantly coming short…" Rom. 5:12, …δι᾽ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον…ἐφ᾽ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον. "by one man sin entered into the world…for all sinned."). Every human being is a sinner by imputation, nature and personal activity.

The human race apostatized from God in Adam as their representative head. Holding the Scriptures to be the inspired, infallible Word of God inscripturated, we must accept their record as to the origin of sin.

"The Problem of Evil"

Scriptural Statements

> But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive. (Genesis 50:20)

> And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city. And the city shall be accursed, *even* it, and all that *are* therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent…And they utterly destroyed all that *was* in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword. (Josh. 6:15–17, 21)

> Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off

this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you. (Josh. 23:15–16)

Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed. (Judges 2:15)

Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech. (Judges 9:23)

But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. (1 Samuel 16:14)

And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite *is* better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom. (2 Sam. 17:14)

Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, *It is* for Saul, and for *his* bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites. And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites *were* not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.) Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?

And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, *that* will I do for you. And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us *that* we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, *whom* the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give *them*…the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite: and he delivered them into the hands of the

Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD…And after that God was entreated for the land. (2 Sam. 21:1–14)

And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil. (1 Kgs. 9:9)

And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade *him*, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee. (1 Kgs. 22:20–23)

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, *even* all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read. (2 Kings 22:16)

…the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. (Job 1:8–12)

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he *is* in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence

of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. (Job 2:3–7)

And the LORD turned the captivity of Job…also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. (Job 42:10)

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. (Psalm 76:10)

The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. (Prov. 16:4)

O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but *it is* in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, *Are* not my princes altogether kings? *Is* not Calno as Carchemish? *is* not Hamath as Arpad? *is* not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?

Wherefore it shall come to pass, *that* when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done *it*, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant *man*: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs *that are* left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.

Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? *or* shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake *itself* against them that lift it up, *or* as if the staff should lift up *itself, as if it were* no wood. (Isa. 10:5–15)

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. (Isaiah 45:7)

...shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it? (Amos 3:6)

Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release

thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above… (Jn. 18:10)

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. (Acts 2:23)

And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. (Acts 4:24, 27–28)

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose….who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. (Rom. 8:28, 35–36)

(For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then?

Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power

over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? (Romans 9:11–21)

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen. (Rom. 11:33–36)

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are [they exist] and were created. (Rev. 4:11).

> Note: Rev. 4:11. The created universe exists for the mere good pleasure of God—to reveal the totality and glory of His Divine attributes—His justice, righteousness and indignation as well as His grace and mercy. The depths of reality culminate with the moral self–consistency of almighty God who is absolutely holy and righteous, yet inherently good and merciful.

The Essential Issue and Possible Answers

"The Problem of Evil" can now be re–stated: "How can evil exist in a universe created and governed by an all–powerful, benevolent [inherently and completely good] God?" The possible answers, according to human reasoning, are:

First, If evil exists (and it does as a sad and awful reality), then there is no omnipotent [all–powerful], benevolent God—the argument of the atheist.

Second, Evil exists, and therefore, if God exists, he must be either limited in his power or arbitrary in his moral character. The former is the argument of the Pelagian or Arminian; the latter, the argument of those who espouse a non–biblical [pagan] concept of God. Pelagianism [named after Pelagius, a fifth century teacher of Christian perfectionism] holds to free will. Arminianism [named after Jacobus Arminius, a seventeenth century professor and minister who held to defective views of human freedom and sinfulness] is the semi–Pelagian position.

Third, Evil exists, therefore there is more than one God, or there are equal forces [good and evil] in conflict. This is the non–biblical [pagan] argument of those who would posit a dualism (a "good god" and "bad god" or opposing equal forces or principles of both good and evil), or a polytheism in conflict for control of the universe.

> Note: This is the thinking of some professing Christians when they reduce their concept of God to the level of the devil, making them equals—a pagan, dualistic concept. Such [non–] thinking is present in such statements as, "God casts his vote, the devil casts his vote, and now it's up to you to cast your vote," when referring to the election of sinners to salvation. Such talk is utterly irrational. It is to hold a concept of God that is simply not scriptural, for the Word reveals that God is absolutely sovereign, even over the evil acts of men—and Scripture is the ultimate authority.

Fourth, Evil does *not* exist, except as an illusion in our human thinking—the view of some western cults and Eastern religions (e.g., Christian Science, Buddhism). This would make any ultimate distinction between good and evil arbitrary, and thus deny the moral self–consistency of the Divine character. Such a view borders on fatalism, as seen in Islam, which portrays "Allah" as arbitrary in his actions and beneficence or mercy.

Fifth, Evil exists as a mystery, independent of God, who remains to a *limited* degree powerful and benevolent. This is the inconsistent argument of some [including Pelagians and Arminians], who attempt to deliver God from the charge of being the "author of sin" and yet seek to retain his goodness.

> Note: That God has ordained all things, including evil and sin, is the teaching of Scripture, but to state that God is the author of sin is to imply that he himself is evil or tainted by sin in some way. This is simply *not* true. God ordains the evil of sin and its fruits and controls it, but ever to overrule it for the highest good and his glory (Rom. 8:28–39; Rom. 9:6–24; Eph. 1:3–14).

This is not fatalism, but biblical revelation which finds its source in the Divine moral self–consistency—The God of the Bible is inherently good, not evil. He is righteous, never unrighteous. He is loving, gracious and merciful. The end or culmination of his eternal

purpose is his own glory and the highest good for his creation. Some who deny His absolute sovereignty hold that God is either working in a utilitarian fashion as best he can, or that he merely foresaw evil and its results, but was not able to prevent them; or that there are some situations brought about by morally free agents that even God did not foresee.

While the latter two are somewhat extreme, the idea that God merely foresaw or foreknew evil would not remove culpability from God. If God foresaw what would happen and then laid his plans accordingly, then *he could have prevented sins, but evidently chose not to do so*. Thus, God would be ultimately responsible for sin by allowing it, yet not controlling it for the highest good and his glory.

Further, if God merely foresaw evil as a certainty—and it must have been certain for God to foresee it as such in the biblical sense—then God himself could not have prevented sin. Sin would have existed and been determined by a force outside God. He would thus finitely exist *within* a "universe" over which he exercised no ultimate control, a "universe" controlled in the final sense by an atheistic determinism!

Sixth, Evil exists in the universe of an omnipotent, benevolent God, who is completely sovereign over it and uses it for his own glory and the highest good—the argument of the consistent Calvinist. [In contrast to the Pelagian and Arminian, the consistent Calvinist, named after John Calvin the sixteenth century Reformer, holds the biblical truth of Divine sovereignty and the truth of God's moral self–consistency in his eternal and redemptive purpose].

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God is Sovereign over Evil:
Considerations and Implications

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The last view—that God is absolutely sovereign over both natural and moral evil, and uses evil for his own glory and the highest good—is the only view that can be consistently aligned to the teaching of Scripture. Natural evil is evil that occurs in the realm of nature (calamities such as floods, famine, disease, suffering, earthquakes and pestilence). Moral evil is evil or sin that occurs

because of the wickedness of man against man (e.g., wars, rapes, torture, murders, hatred, deceit, theft, destruction, etc.).

Every other view, deriving from sinful humanistic reasoning, and so calling God and his actions into question, seeks to point out an incoherence in the Christian system. These views either deny God and evil, or limit God and seek to bring him down to the finite level and destroy his moral self–consistency—and thus any sufficient or consistent basis for morality.[191]

The truth of the sovereignty of God over evil may be clarified by the following considerations and implications:

First, the existence of evil in a universe created and governed by a benevolent God is not incoherent if God has a morally sufficient reason for this evil to exist. This "problem" is more psychological than logical or philosophical.[192] Man would rather call God and his actions into question than submit himself in complete trust, even to a God who is benevolent in the context of his righteousness.

Second, such a view does not take all the mystery out of "The Problem of Evil." God is infinite, and so are his wisdom, power and purpose. We are finite, and simply cannot comprehend all that is implied in this profound issue. Why God, who is absolutely morally self–consistent, should ordain evil, must to a given degree remain a mystery to finite beings. Such matters must be approached by a faith that rests in a wise and morally self–consistent God.

Third, as finite creatures, we are temporally limited in our thinking to the present and the past. When considering "The Problem

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[191] This is often the approach by the secular college or university professor in his challenge to students who are professing Christians, but doctrinally unsound and inconsistent in their faith. He seeks to destroy both their faith and their basis for morality.

[192] This issue is fully dealt with by Greg Bahnsen in *Always Ready*. Texarkana: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996. pp. 165–174. He maintains that the "problem of evil" is actually a personal expression of a lack of faith.

of Evil," one must take into account the reality of time. What might be considered as evil in the context of past or present reality may later prove to be great blessing or to result in such. This was certainly true of all the evil realities and events that conspired in the providence of God in exalting Joseph to become the prime minister of Egypt (e.g., his being spoiled by his father, the envy and hatred of his brothers, his being sold into slavery, the attempted seduction by Potiphar's wife, his imprisonment, and the forgetfulness of Pharaoh's cup–bearer, etc.).

None of these things were good in themselves—each was undoubtedly evil—but they all "worked together for good". Such good may or may not be seen in this life, but may await the unveiling of eternity (Rom. 8:28–31).[193]

Fourth, the Scriptures teach that God is both benevolent [absolutely good] and also that he ordains evil deeds. The following quotation is in accord with the testimony of Scripture and deserves to be carefully studied:

> God is good, yet he ordains evil deeds. We know that these truths are compatible, for Scripture teaches both and God cannot deny himself...God can foreordain evil only if he himself is good, for in Scripture "evil" is "evil" only by contrast with the goodness of God. God is truly good only if the evil in the world is foreordained by him, for only if evil is fully controlled by God can we be confident that there is a good purpose in it, and only if there is a good purpose in it can we trust the overall good purpose of God.[194]

Fifth, God foreordains evil; he does not merely "permit" or "allow" it. Such wording as "God permits [allows] evil" is often used by theologians who are either seeking to avoid the idea that

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[193] It is important to note that the truth of Romans 8:28 occurs in the context of eternity, and is not limited to this earthly life (cf. v. 28–31). Further, the context contains the very worst that men can do to believers (v. 35–36).

[194] John M. Frame, "The Problem of Theological Paradox," *Foundations of Christian Scholarship*, p. 321.

God is the culpable author of sin, or are using human language for want of expression.[195]

Sixth, God is not the author of evil in the sense that he himself is culpable [blameworthy] or tainted by sin. Such would be a denial of his inherent goodness. That God is not the author of sin may be clarified by the following considerations:

1. The Scriptures hold men fully responsible for their own sins, which would not and could not be true if God were the author of sin (Acts 2:23; Rom. 1:18–32; 2 Thess. 1:7–9; Jude 14–15; Rev. 20:11–13).

2. If God were to charge men with sins for which he were really responsible, then he would not and could not be just, indeed, he would be less than just—he himself would become a criminal, a sinner! Such would be absolutely unthinkable and unscriptural. Thus, the biblical reality of human culpability would necessarily preclude God from being the author of sin.

3. Although God wills evil, it must not be imagined that he wills it in the same sense and manner that he wills what is righteous, holy and good. He ordains evil to exist and controls it, overruling it to the highest good and his glory (Psa. 145:17; Rom. 11:33–36; Rev. 4:11). He does not take pleasure in evil in a positive sense. Thus, it may be right for God to ordain what is not right for man to do and therefore wrong for God to command man to do under his preceptive will. The Dutch Theologian Herman Bavinck seeks to explain this truth by an illustration:

> Because man is a rational, moral being, God does not treat him as if he were a stone or a log but deals with him and addresses him in accordance with his nature. Just as a father forbids his child

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[195] Such language as "permit" or "allow" when used of God, although an understandable accommodation to human language and finiteness, might suggest that God is relative, i.e., there is an absolute above or beyond him to which he himself is either subject or against which he must contend (i.e., evil exists independently from God). Neither is true.

to touch a sharp knife though he himself uses it without injury or damage, so God forbids us to sin though He himself is able to use and does use sin as a means of self–glorification.[196]

God, then, ordains sin, but he does not command it. Sin exists as part of the Divine teleological purpose, but it is not forced upon men by necessity. Men cannot make God culpable for their own sin and breach of God's preceptive will.

Donald Macleod seeks to put the matters of the fore–ordination of sin and human freedom in simple, yet profound statements, by asserting that God has fore–ordained both sin and human freedom:

> …God is not the author of sin. God has fore–ordained sin. He has fore–ordained whatsoever comes to pass, and sin has come to pass, and God's purpose controls, limits, preserves and governs the universe even in the presence of this fact of sin….He does not himself sin. He does not condone sin. He does not constrain to sin. He does not induce to sin. He does not tempt to sin….Fore–ordination is not destructive of freedom; God has ordained freedom…fore–ordination is what *establishes* freedom…nothing can take away from the human being the liberty essential to moral responsibility, because God has fore–ordained the freedom of men at the point of moral decision–making…God fore–ordains their actions, but he fore–ordains them as free actions: as things they do by their on personal volition….I am free because God fore–ordained my freedom.[197]

The above statement by Macleod must *not* be interpreted in the Arminian sense that "God created man with a free will and so cannot violate that will," but in the sense that God created man as a free and responsible moral agent. God would not, yea, could not externally limit his own sovereignty in such a away as to render himself morally incapacitated or even inconsistent. He would then cease to be God.

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[196] Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, p. 240.

[197] *A Faith to Live By*. Mentor, Geanies House, Fearn, Ross–Shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1998, pp. 40–44.

They must, as moral, rational, responsible beings, bear the consequences of their own transgressions. God thus controls evil, but not in the sense that he rejoices or takes pleasure in it. To say that God does not control evil is to deny his omnipotence. To say that he wills evil in the same sense as he does what is right and holy is to deny his righteousness and holiness. To say that he controls evil in such a way that men are relieved of their moral responsibility is to deny both their free moral agency and his essential nature.

To say, however, that God ordains men to contradict his Law–Word through their own willful actions, and that he controls this for the ultimate good and glory of his eternal purpose, is to assert the absolute sovereignty of God over evil and yet preserve his wisdom, righteousness and holiness. Finite creatures must leave such mystery to the infinite God.

In the Great Theodicy of Romans chapter 9, the Apostle answers objections concerning the absolute sovereignty of God over the moral character and destiny of men.

Note: "Theodicy," from θέος, "God," and δική. "justice," hence, an attempt to justify God in the context of the problem of evil. The apostle's arguments are more than an attempt, however, they are inspired Scripture—and thus the final word on this subject.

His argument assumes three questions: Is God unfaithful to his covenant promise [v. 6–13]? Is God unrighteous in his sovereign prerogative [v. 14–18]? Is God unjust in holding men accountable [v. 19–29]? He asserts that God is, indeed, absolutely sovereign in the spiritual, moral and ethical spheres, and that no one has the right to question the Divine prerogative or purpose. If we hold to the whole of Scripture coherently, we shall have no reason to raise an objection.

The absolute sovereignty and moral nature of God must lead to the conclusion that God is not the author of sin because he completely controls the evil of his moral creatures. God is the one great and incomprehensible "Absolute," the ultimate source of all

meaning. In the final analysis there is no true meaning apart from God.

The Essential Issue and Possible Answers

"The Problem of Evil" can now be re–stated: "How can evil exist in a universe created and governed by an all–powerful, benevolent [inherently and completely good] God?" The possible answers, according to human reasoning, are:

First, If evil exists (and it does as a sad and awful reality), then there is no omnipotent [all–powerful], benevolent God—the argument of the atheist.

Second, Evil exists, and therefore, if God exists, he must be either limited in his power or arbitrary in his moral character. The former is the argument of the Pelagian or Arminian; the latter, the argument of those who espouse a non–biblical [pagan] concept of God.[198]

Third, Evil exists, therefore there is more than one God, or there are equal forces [good and evil] in conflict. This is the non–biblical [pagan] argument of those who would posit a dualism (a "good god" and "bad god" or opposing equal forces or principles of both good and evil), or a polytheism in conflict for control of the universe.

Note: This is the thinking of some professing Christians when they reduce their concept of God to the level of the devil, making them equals—a pagan, dualistic concept. Such [non–] thinking is present in such statements as, "God casts his vote, the devil casts his vote, and now it's up to you to cast your vote," when referring to the election of sinners to salvation. Such talk is utterly irrational. It is to hold a concept of God that is simply not scriptural, for the Word reveals that God is absolutely sovereign, even over the evil acts of men—and Scripture is the ultimate authority.

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[198] Pelagianism [named after Pelagius, a fifth century teacher of Christian perfectionism] holds to free will. Arminianism [named after Jacobus Arminius, a seventeenth century professor and minister who held to defective views of human freedom and sinfulness] is the semi–Pelagian position

The created universe and every fact in it (being a created fact) derives its meaning from God and must be interpreted by him. Thus, evil itself must be and can only be comprehended and interpreted in the context of God as he has been pleased to reveal himself in Scripture.

Thus, rather than make God the author of sin, predestination in the context of the scriptural revelation of his nature and character, preserves God from this charge and is a guarantee of his absolute moral perfection.

The Christian's ultimate hope and comfort do not lie in the omnipotence or absolute sovereignty of God, although such truths are comforting. The believer's ultimate hope rests in the self–consistency of God's moral character—that he is absolutely righteous, good and truthful; that he cannot lie, and that his promises remain true. The truth, glory and hope of Romans 8:28—"we know that all things work together for good"—is that God is morally self–consistent and his purpose will infallibly result in the highest good.

Note the truth of Romans 8:28, οἴδαμεν δὲ (and we perceive [by faith, which reaches far beyond all experience]) ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν (that to those characterized as habitually loving God) πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν (all things are constantly working together for good), τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν (to those who are characterized as being called according to his [eternal, infallible] purpose). The context (vv. 28–39), which contains the very worst that men can do to believers, yet maintains the immutable love of God through Christ to his own, demonstrates the truth of v. 28. Note that οἴδαμεν is used, not γινώσομεν, to emphasize a perception that surpasses experience and relationships. This is necessarily the perception of a faith that rests in the eternal, infallible purpose of God.

Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism:
A Discussion of the Primary Issues Involved

Every Christian, Bible student, Bible teacher, biblical scholar and preacher approaches the Scriptures from his given hermeneutical presuppositions. These may be correct or incorrect, mixed with a given amount of error, developed through personal study, inherited through religious tradition, received through formal or informal religious instruction, a seminary education or acquired through reading a given "Study Bible." All believers have the same Bible, but often have diverse approaches to its interpretation. All truth—even God's Truth—is necessarily interpreted according to one's presuppositions. This paper discusses two of the general hermeneutical approaches and the primary issues involved.

There have been, since the early twentieth century and the advent of Dispensational teaching, two general, diverse approaches to biblical interpretation within Reformed and Evangelical Christianity and among Baptists: Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism.

Covenant Theology has been the historical–theological–biblical approach of both Reformed and Baptist Theology since the sixteenth century.

C. H. Spurgeon (1834–1892):

> The doctrine of the covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It has been said that he who well understands the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, is a master of divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scripture are based on fundamental errors with regard to the covenants of law and grace.[199]

This can be noted by the Reformed and Old Baptist Confessions of Faith and the leading Baptist preachers and divines:

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[199] Comments appended to the sermon, "The Covenant," as quoted by Pascal Denault, *The Distinctives of Baptist Covenant Theology*, pp. 6–7.

The First London Baptist Confession (1644), Article 10:

Jesus Christ is made the mediator of the new and everlasting covenant of grace between God and man, ever to be perfectly and fully the prophet, priest, and king of the Church of God for evermore. 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15; John 14:6; Isa. 9:6–7.

The *Second London Baptist Confession* (1677, 1689), Chapter 7: Of God's Covenant:

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. Luke 17:10; Job 35: 7–8; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15; John 14:6; Isa. 9:6–7.

2. Moreover, man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace,[2] wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved;[3] and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe. [2]Gen. 2:17; Gal. 3:10; Rom. 3:20–21; [3]Rom. 8:3; Mark 16:15–16; John 3:16; Ezek. 36:26–27; John 6:44–45; Psa. 110:3.

3. This covenant is revealed in the gospel, first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman,[5] and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament;[6] and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect;[7] and it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all of the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency. Gen. 3:15; [6]Heb. 1:1–2; [7]2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:2; [8]Heb. 9:6, 13; Rom. 4:1–2ff., Acts 4:12; John 8:56.

All of the notable Baptist preachers, writers and divines of the Seventeenth through the nineteenth century among the Baptists were Covenant theologians, e.g., John Spilsbury, Benjamin Keach, Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffin, John Bunyan, Hercules Collins, Nehemiah Coxe, Thomas Patient, John Gill, John L. Dagg, C. H. Spurgeon, J. P. Boyce and B. H. Carroll.

Dispensationalism began its development in the late nineteenth century and has been popularized through the *Scofield Reference Bible*. Dispensationalism now characterizes much of Evangelical Christianity and is often predominant in modern Baptist circles.

Covenant Theology

Covenant Theology views Scripture in terms of the Divine eternal, creative and redemptive purpose or Covenant of Redemption [the *pactum salutis* or "Covenant of Peace"] and its out–working in time and history in terms of the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace revealed in Scripture. The various subordinate and progressive covenants under the Old Covenant and Testament [Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic] were covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12), and the New or Gospel Covenant is the realization and finalization of the Covenant of Grace. In short, the New or Gospel Covenant *is* the Covenant of Grace. It is all of free and sovereign grace from election to glorification, and pertains to the elect alone.

The eternal redemptive purpose extends from personal election (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 11:5; 2 Pet. 1:10), to predestination (Eph. 1:5, 11; Rom. 8:29–30), covenant redemption (Rom. 3:24–26; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 3:18), effectual calling (Rom. 8:30; 9:24; 1 Cor. 1:26; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 4:4; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:9; 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 1:1), regeneration (Jn. 3:3–5, 7; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23), justification (Rom. 3:24; 4:25; 5:1–2, 16, 18; 8:30; Gal. 3:24; Titus 3:7), adoption (Gal. 4:4–7; Rom. 8:13), sanctification (Jn. 17:17; 1 Cor. 1:1–2, 30; 6:11; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Heb. 10:10; 1 Pet. 1:15–16) and glorification (Psa. 73:24; Rom. 8:18, 23; 9:23; 1 Cor. 15:43; 2 Cor. 4:17; Col. 3:4; 2 Tim. 2:10; Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:1, 10; Jude 24).

Covenant Theology holds that God has always dealt with man within a covenant relationship—from a principle of *representation* and *imputation*—i.e., either in Adam or in Christ [this identification is also termed Federal Theology], and not merely on a personal basis (Rom. 3:24–6; 5:11–19; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45–47). We were in Adam by

nature; we are in Christ by grace. There has ever been and will ever be only one method of salvation and a right relationship with God—through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament believers looked forward to the cross; we, as New Testament believers look back to it, as it were (Gen. 3:15; Jn. 8:56; Heb. 11:1ff). There was never salvation through animal sacrifice or the works of the Law (Rom. 3:27–31; 9:31–32; Gal. 2:16; 3:10–16).

Note that Animal sacrifices were all typical, not effectual, and pointed prophetically to the cross (Heb. 10:11–14). Only the shed blood of the Lord Jesus ever could, can or shall take away sin.

Acts 13:39. And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

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

Rom. 3:20. [19] Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. [20] Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

The Covenant of Works was made with unfallen Adam (Gen. 2:16–17). Adam transgressed, apostatized and broke this Covenant (Gen. 3:1–13; Hos. 6:7).[200] God instituted the Covenant of Grace (Gen. 3:15) as both a promise to fallen, sinful man and a challenge to the serpent. The history of redemption and the subsequent dealings of God with mankind are to be viewed in terms of this Covenant of Grace as promised in the subordinate covenants of the Old Testament and both realized and finalized in the New Testament Covenant of Grace or New Covenant which was ratified by the blood

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[200] Hos. 6:7, the Heb. reads "like Adam" [כְּאָדָ֖ם] not "like men."

of the Lord Jesus (Gen. 12:3; Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 11:19–20; 36:25–27; Matt. 26:28; Gal. 3:16; Heb. 8:6–13; 10:16–18; 12:24; 13:20).

Indeed, The Covenant of Grace is the Covenant of Works [broken by the first Adam] realized, fulfilled and mediated through the person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ who, as the "Last Adam" and "Second Man," the only Mediator, Savior and Redeemer, completely fulfilled and satisfied its requirements through his active and passive obedience. This perfect righteousness and complete obedience are imputed to the elect through faith alone. Thus, the entire scope of salvation effectually comes to the elect by free and sovereign grace alone. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15; Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; Isa. 9:6–7).

Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism by contrast emphasizes such terms as "dispensation" (οἰκονομία, Eng. "economy," from οἶκος, "house," and νόμος, "law," hence the management of an household, a stewardship) and "age" (αἰὼν, "age," "era") in the Scriptures. Dispensationalism is an inclusive hermeneutical approach that views the Scriptures as divided into various well–defined time–periods or "dispensations."

In each dispensation God reveals a particular salvific purpose to be accomplished to which men respond in either faith or unbelief, obedience or disobedience, contrary to Covenant Theology, which holds to only one method of salvation through faith in Christ alone. These dispensations or time–periods are seen as the successive stages of progressive revelation. Although the number of ages varies from five to many dispensations [ultra–Dispensationalism], the commonly–held Seven Dispensations are: "Innocency" [the era of unfallen Adam], "Conscience" and "Human Government" [from the Fall of Adam to Noah], "Promise" [from Abraham to Moses], "Law" [from Moses to Christ], "Grace" [from Pentecost to the Rapture] and a literal "Millennium" [1,000 year reign of Christ on Earth], followed by the eternal state.

Note: Rather than hold to the relevance and perpetuity of the Moral Law, Dispensationalism, which is antinomian by nature and necessity, views the Law as a legal document given only to Israel, and confined to the "Dispensation of Law" [from Sinai to the Cross].

Dispensational Theology is latently Arminian through, at the least, a "modified Calvinism," which is, in reality, a refined Arminianism.

Robert Haldane:

Many call themselves moderate Calvinists, a denomination to which it is not easy to affix a precise idea. To the system called Calvinism, there may be nearer or more distant approaches, but those who deny any of the peculiar doctrines of that system cannot in any sense be called Calvinists. To affix the term Calvinism to any system, from which the doctrine of predestination is excluded, or in which it is even modified, is entirely a misnomer.

Some profess Calvinism, but affect to hold it in a more unexceptionable manner than it is held in the system in general. They seem to think that in the defense of that system, Calvin was extravagant, and that he gave unnecessary offense by exaggerated statements, and by language not warranted by the Scriptures. Such persons, it is presumed, are strangers to the writings of Calvin. Calvin himself is remarkable for keeping on Scripture ground, and avoiding anything that may justly be termed extravagant. No writer has ever indulged less in metaphysical speculation on the deep things of God than this writer. To support his system, it was necessary only to exhibit Scripture testimony; and he seems quite contented to rest the matter on this foundation.

What is called moderate Calvinism is in reality refined Arminianism. It is impossible to modify the former without sliding into the latter. If the doctrine of God's sovereignty and of unconditional election be denied, regeneration and redemption must undergo a corresponding modification, and all the doctrines of grace will be more or less affected.[201]

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[201] Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 478–479.

It is also unavoidably antinomian, in that it relegates the "Mosaic Law," including the Moral Law, as epitomized in the Decalogue, to an alleged "Dispensation of Law" from Sinai to the Cross. Thus the Moral Law has been abrogated by the redemptive work of our Lord and does not apply to this "Dispensation of Grace." The result is that the very nature of conversion [replaced by "decisionism"] and Christian experience have been severely modified and the reality of personal sanctification made optional through the necessarily antinomian doctrine of the "carnal Christian" error, which makes the believer's union with Christ ineffectual, contrary to Scripture (Rom. 5:11–6:23; Col. 3:1–5ff). Note the comments of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871–1952), a leading proponent of Dispensationalism:

> ...every believer is now said to be sanctified positionally, holy, and by so much a saint before God. This position [union with Christ] bears no relationship to the believer's daily experience more than that it should inspire him to holy living....As positional sanctification is absolutely disassociated from the daily life, so experimental sanctification is absolutely unrelated to position in [union with] Christ.[202]

> Note: The Scripture makes our union with Christ the very foundation of our definitive and practical, progressive sanctification, as manifest in our daily lives (Rom. 6:1–23; 1 Cor. 6:14–20; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 5:13–17; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:3–6; 2:4–10).

> Lewis Sperry Chafer:

> ...Those *believers* who are dominated by the flesh respond to the flesh and those that are dominated by the Spirit respond to the Spirit (Rom. 8:5). In any case the carnal or fleshly mind functions in the realm of spiritual death and the spiritual mind in the realm of spiritual life and peace (Rom. 8:6)...Too much emphasis can hardly be given to the fact that the *Christian* may function in his life either in the realm of spiritual death—separation from God—or the realm of things related to the Holy Spirit...The *Christian* is saved and safe in

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[202] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, VII, pp. 279–280.

Christ, yet in his manner of life he may prove σαρκικός or πενυματικός.[203]

The Apostle Paul called some of the Corinthians "carnal" because they were looking to men rather than to our Lord, not because they were living unconverted or sinful lives (1 Cor. 3:1–4). Further, Rom. 8:5–11 is clearly a contrast between the converted and unconverted, not between "carnal" and "spiritual" Christians.

Thus, contrary to Dispensational teaching, regenerating grace must be expressed in the life through a biblical conversion experience and a subsequently converted and sanctified lifestyle as necessitated by the New or Gospel Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 11:19–20; 36:25–27; Jn. 3:3–7; 5:24; Heb. 8:6–13; 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9).

Further, Dispensationalism gives priority, not to grace but to race, holding national Israel to be central to God's redemptive purpose, and "The Church Age" [the "Dispensation of Grace" from the Cross to the Rapture] to be but a parenthesis in God's dealings with national Israel.

The terminology "The Church" is used by both Reformed Covenant Theology and Dispensational Theology. The Reformed use such terminology to identify an "Old Testament Church" [i.e., Israel as the Covenant people of God] and a "New Testament Church" [to designate those under the New Covenant and their children]. Dispensationalism uses this terminology to designate the whole of largely Gentile Christianity as distinct from national Israel. Neither use of the term "Church" [ἐκκλησία] is scriptural, but traditional and nebulous.

The Deciding Issue

The deciding factor with regard to biblical interpretation is: should the New Testament be brought into strict conformity to a

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[203] *Ibid.*, p. 70

rigid literal interpretation of the Old Testament, or should the Old Testament be interpreted and understood in the light of the New? Dispensational Theology makes the Old Testament determinative in interpretation and seeks to conform the New Testament to a rigid Old Testament literalism. Non–Dispensational theology makes the New Testament determinative and thus interpretive and explanatory of the Old.

One's hermeneutical approach thus determines the relationship of the New Testament to the Old, the Old Covenant to the New, the progressive nature of Divine revelation, the very nature of grace, salvation and the church; the nature of Christian experience, the relevance and perpetuity or abrogation of the Moral Law as the standard of righteousness and the ultimate fulfillment of the covenants of promise in the New or Gospel Covenant in the Person and redemptive work of our Lord and the fullness of the gospel, and thus the nature and fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

A Consideration of Some Issues Involved

Paedobaptist Covenant Theology

The great distinction between Reformed paedobaptist tradition and the historic Baptist position,[204] although both are essentially Covenantal in their theology is that, first, the Baptists have held that there are elements of diversity within the covenants, while Reformed tradition has held that the Abrahamic Covenant was and is *identical* with the Covenant of Grace [One Covenant, two administrations]. Second, that the Covenant of Grace is just that—a Covenant in which grace is both free and sovereign—and thus pertains to the elect alone. Reformed paedobaptists necessarily corrupt the nature of free and sovereign grace with the inclusion of the infant children of believing parents upon the idea of "covenant children" and

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[204] For further study, see Earl Blackburn, Ed., *Covenant Theology: A Baptist Distinctive*. Birmingham, Al: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013. 161 pp. and Pascal Denault, *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*. Birmingham, Al: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013, 167 pp.

presumptive regeneration. Mark the following stratements by paedobaptist theologians:

Charles Hodge:

They, therefore sin against God and their own souls who neglect the command to be baptized in the name of the Lord; and those parents sin grievously against the souls of their children who neglect to consecrate them to God in the ordinance of baptism. Do let the little ones have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, even they afterwards choose to erase them. Being thus enrolled may be the means of their salvation.[205]

Louis Berkhof:

It is possible to proceed on the assumption (not the certain knowledge) that the children offered for baptism are regenerated and therefore in possession of the *semen fidei* (the seed of faith); and to hold that God through baptism in some mystical way, which we do not understand, strengthens this seed of faith in the child."[206]

The root source of the issue, in the research and thinking of this writer, is that the Reformers inherited and modified the practice of paedobaptism from the Church of Rome, which also possesses an Old Testament mentality with its priesthood, rites, rituals and ceremonies.

Viewing, on the one hand and, not fully accepting the baptismal regeneration of the Romish Church, and also seeing in Scripture the characteristics of a New Testament Church with a regenerate membership and the baptism of believers, but finding in their Reformed Movement many in their ranks who were mere outwardly professing Christians, they retreated into a half–way position on the "visible church"[composed of both believers and unbelievers as opposed to their concept of the "invisible" or "true" church composed of only the elect] and paedobaptism.

Martin Luther on a Believer's Church (1526):

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[205] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, III, p.588.

[206] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 641–642.

Those who want to be Christians in earnest, and confess the Gospel by hand and mouth, ought to enlist themselves by name and assemble apart from all kinds of people in a house alone to pray, read, baptize, receive the sacraments and practice other Christian duties. In this manner we could know who were not Christians, punish, correct, exclude and excommunicate. Then we could expect general thanksgiving, giving willingly and distributing among the poor. I cannot yet found [establish] such a church, for I have not the people to do it with, and do not see many who are urgent for it.[207]

The result was the establishment of Protestant State Churches as rivals to Rome [the "neo–Constantinian" principle],[208] and a modified paedobaptism, enabling them to enlist the civil magistrate to enforce religion and to remain inclusive in their doctrine of salvation to include infants, apart from the clear teaching of Scripture.

Martin Luther on the civil magistrate:

Every person is duty–bound to prevent and suppress blasphemy, each according to his status. By virtue of this commandment princes and civil authorities have the power and the duty to abolish unlawful cults and to establish orthodox teaching and worship. Concerning this point Leviticus applies: "He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, let him be put to death." …princes must not only protect the goods and the physical being of their subjects, but their most essential function is to promote the honor of God, to repress blasphemy and idolatry. That is why in the Old Testament the kings…put false prophets and idolaters to death. Such examples apply to the function of the princes.[209]

Reformed paedobaptists hold to one "Covenant of Grace" in both the Old and New Testaments, with two administrations, thus

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[207] Quoted by Thomas Armitage, *History of the Baptists*, I, p. 397.

[208] The "Constantinian Change" was the establishment of the State Church system. The Protestant Reformers followed suit in establishing their own state churches—"neo–Constantinianism." See Leonard Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid: A Study in Church State Relations*.

[209] Leonard Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, p. 195. Also see Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, pp. 294–296; Thomas Armitage, *The History of the Baptists*, pp. 401–403.

holding to circumcision in the Old Testament and finding its counterpart in infant sprinkling [paedobaptism] in the New as the "seal of the covenant"—apart from any biblical teaching or testimony—and opposing the clear teaching of the personal faith and baptism of believers only [credobaptism], and necessarily by immersion.

Note: The NT teaches the baptism of believers by immersion, a symbolism—not of washing or cleansing [the Reformed argument concerning baptism]—but of the believer's union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–5; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:11–13). To change either the subjects or the mode of baptism would mean a complete reinterpretation of both the ordinance and its significance.

Note Rom. 4:9–11. Circumcision was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith" Abraham had *before* his circumcision, i.e., Abraham was circumcised as a believer. This was a singular instance, and such personal faith cannot be predicated of infants. Logically, if the principle is carried to baptism and the New Testament, we would necessarily have believer's baptism.

Baptists hold that the Old Testament and its progressive covenants—Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic, were covenants of promise anticipating the New or Gospel Covenant which is realized in and through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 2:12; Heb. 7:22; 8:6–13; 9:1–20; 13:20).

Thus, Reformed tradition, denying the diversity and straining for the unity of the covenant[s], makes no distinction between the promises made to Abraham and his physical descendants concerning their nation and land, and the spiritual promises made to Abraham concerning his spiritual seed and children (Gen. 12:1–3; Rom. 2:28–29; 4:9–11; Gal. 3:5–24; Eph. 2:12; Heb. 7:22).

This peculiar paedobaptist "Covenant Theology" was developed by Zwingli and Bullinger in their disputations with the Anabaptists as they sought to defend infant sprinkling and the concept of covenant children against the clear Scriptural teaching of believer's

baptism by immersion by "arguing from the covenant."[210] Indeed, not finding their proof within the New Testament or Old Testament Scriptures, they resort to "arguing from the Covenant," and resort to "good and necessary consequences" rather than standing by the clear teaching of Scripture.

J. G. Vos: "The real proof of infant baptism depends on the truth that the children of believers are included in the Covenant of Grace."[211]

B. B. Warfield:

It is true that there is no express command to baptize infants in the New Testament, no express record of the baptism of infants, and no passages so stringently implying it that we must infer from them that infants are to be baptized….the warrant for infant baptism is not to be sought in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament…and nothing short of an actual forbidding of it in the New Testament would warrant our omitting it now.[212]

[Where in the Old Testament do we find such a warrant? This is synonymous with "arguing from the Covenant,"not from Scripture]

At this point, the great distinction is revealed between Reformed paedobaptists and Baptists in their basic approach to Scripture, as revealed and contrasted in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646) and the *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* (1689):

The Westminster Confession, Chapter I, Article VI:

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture…

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[210] See M. E. Osterhaven, "Covenant Theology," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 279.

[211] J. G. Vos, "Blue Banner Faith and Life," January–March Issue, 1959. p. 37, as quoted by T. E. Watson, *Should Infants be Baptized?* p. 84

[212] B. B. Warfield, *Studies in Theology*, p. 399.

Contrast this with the *Second London Baptist Confession* of 1689, Chapter I, Article 6:

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture.

Note the alleged difference between the Reformed view of "good and necessary consequence" and the Baptist view of "either expressly set down or necessarily contained in Scripture." Infant sprinkling, we may state, is neither a "good" nor a "necessary consequence," as it flies in the face of the clear teaching of Scripture and the very nature of free and sovereign grace.

Paedobaptists have an Old Testament perspective, which views the Old Covenant as determinative; Baptists have a New Testament perspective, which views the Scriptures as a progressive revelation with their finality in the New or Gospel Covenant and believer's baptism, as clearly revealed in the New Testament.

Male children under the Old Covenant were circumcised as their covenant–sign; under the New or Gospel Covenant, regeneration, or "circumcision of the heart" "made without hands" is the covenant–sign (Rom. 2:28–29; 4:9–16; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11–13). Under the Old Covenant, every male within the patriarchal and familial context was circumcised—sons, descendants and slaves. The New or Gospel Covenant pertains only to regenerate persons as consistent with the very nature of free and sovereign grace, therefore these alone are to be baptized.

Paedobaptist Covenant Theology is inconsistent first, in that it gives precedence to the Old Covenant, not the New [one Covenant with two administrations]. Second, it includes the unregenerate in the Covenant of Grace, as they view the Covenant[s] as one with two administrations in order to include the children of believing parents. Third, it limits the sprinkling to the immediate children of believing parents, but excludes everyone else within the context of the extended "family"—all descendants and servants or employees.

Paedobaptist Covenant Theology
and Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism separates national Israel and "The Church" into two distinct entities, yet includes the Jews, not by grace but by race. Most Dispensationalists hold that national Israel is yet a specially favored people of God, and are to be treated as such (Gen. 12:1–3). Further, it holds that during the millennium national Israel will return to Divine covenant centrality religiously and politically, with a world government centered at Jerusalem under a Davidic King, and animal sacrifices will be re–instituted through a rigid literal conformity to the Old Covenant.

Thus, both Reformed paedobaptists and Dispensationalists hold to a determining precedence of the Old Testament over the New, and also to nature and race within the "Covenant" or "Dispensation" of Grace—a position which is unscriptural and contradictory, depriving the New Covenant of its gloriously distinct nature—free and sovereign grace deriving from the finished work of Christ—and both by necessity return to an Old Covenant mentality which remains necessary to their hermeneutic.

New Covenant Theology

New Covenant Theology is a relatively new approach to the Scriptures among Calvinistic Baptists, developed as a position between Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology. As a hybrid, it possesses some characteristics of both. New Covenant Theology is generally situated within the biblical and historic Baptist faith with some very notable and determinative exceptions.

Historically, this movement began in the latter part of the Twentieth century with a conflict between Reformed and Sovereign Grace Baptists over the issue of the relevance and observance of the Fourth Commandment, i.e. concerning the unity of the Decalogue, then of the entire Decalogue or the Moral Law as a rule for the believer's life. Both Covenant Theology and Dispensational influences colored the early debates.

New Covenant Theology holds with Covenant Theology to the unity of God's people, both Jews and Gentiles as believers. "The Church" is spiritual Israel. With Dispensationalism it denies the existence of both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, and maintains that the Ten Commandments, as part of the Mosaic Covenant, have been abrogated by the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Law, therefore, has no relationship to either believers or unbelievers.

Thus, in common with Dispensationalism, New Covenant Theology is necessarily antinomian—although such terminology is denied—holding that believers are no longer under the Ten Commandments, but under "the Law of Christ," as though these were different. Their stand is that "everything that God commands is 'moral law' to the individual commanded."[213]

They further hold "that God has not written his Law on the hearts of all men," contrary to the teaching of the Apostle Paul concerning every man as the image–bearer of God (Rom. 2:11–16) and both the promise and the fulfillment of the New Covenant, and (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 11:19–20; Ezk. 36:25–27; Heb. 8:6–13). Several other statements made by proponents of this view also seem self–contradictory in the light of Scripture. For a full discussion of New Covenant Theology, see Alan Cairns, Loc. Cit., pp. 303–306, and the several websites pertaining to this movement.

Concluding Thoughts

The Consistency of Baptist Covenant Theology

In our opinion, the historic Baptist position, as delineated in the Old Baptist Confessions of 1644 and 1689 and in Covenant Theology—without the paedobaptist peculiarities [the precedence of the Old Covenant, infant sprinkling, covenant children, presumptive regeneration and a *corpus mixtum* concept of the church] is

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[213] John Reisinger, as quoted by Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, p. 303.

scripturally sound with the principles of both a consistent, progressive revelation, believer's baptism and a thoroughly New Testament [New Covenant] view of the church as composed of baptized believers.

The Baptist position also stands against the distinctives of Dispensationalism [the priority of the Old Testament as the rigid rule of literal interpretation, the precedence of national Israel through race apart from grace, antinomianism, optional sanctification and latent Arminianism]—is true to the Scriptures in its avoidance of antinomianism and its alignment to the perpetuity of the Moral Law as the one and only Divine standard of righteousness.

A Commentary on the Law and the Gospel
from the New Testament

In the remainder of this pamphlet, we will give some quotations and explanations demonstrating the relevance and perpetuity of the Moral Law from the New Testament. This remains one the most crucial issues, especially with regard to Dispensationalism and New Covenant Theology.

An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a nebulous and relativistic concept of sin, for Scripture views sin in absolute terms as transgression of God's Law (1 Jn. 3:4). An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a high view of man's alleged "native ability" and "free will," failing to scripturally comprehend the utterly devastating effects of the Fall and sin (Rom. 6:17–18; Eph. 2:1–5). An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a defective view of God's love. The holy, righteous and gracious love of God to both saints and sinners is usually either deluded to an emotion or stripped of its moral character. An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a low or cheapened view of grace, the gospel and of salvation in general, with an emphasis on the experimental and subjective rather than the doctrinal. The awful reality and power of sin determines the nature and character of salvation. An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a low view of repentance, or a

foregoing of this truth altogether, as sin becomes relative and subjective (Acts 17:31).

Further, an ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a low view of the gospel invitation. Psychological pressure to "make a religious decision" replaces the universal mandate to repent in the face of certain Divine judgment (Acts 17:31). Conviction of sin is seen as a light matter. Religious "decisions" are made for a variety of issues—a bothered conscience, deliverance from addiction, family unity, finding meaning in life, etc. Biblical conversion is from the reigning power and condemnation of sin. An ignorance of the Moral Law necessarily means a perverted view of conversion and Christian experience and the necessity of a holy, godly and converted life. Dispensational antinomianism has given us "easy–believeism," and the "carnal Christian" heresy. An ignorance of the Moral Law usually means a carnal security and a general lack of seriousness. Dispensational antinomianism denies the Lordship of Jesus Christ in salvation (Acts 2:36).

> Note: ἀσφαλῶς οὖν γινωσκέτω πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ὅτι καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε. The emphasis is upon the present Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Modern Evangelical Christianity possesses all of these with its denigration of the awful seriousness of any and all sin, its worldly entertainment and lack of holiness, its "easy–believeism," "carnal Christian" heresy, denial of the Lordship of Christ in present Christian experience (Acts 2:36) and a smug "carnal security" which rests, not in the imputed righteousness of Christ, but a religious decision. Much of this can be traced directly to an ignorance of or a denial of God's Moral Law.

The preaching of the Law without the Gospel becomes legalism; the preaching of the Gospel without the Law becomes antinomianism. The Law safeguards the moral self–consistency of God and therefore magnifies the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ through the grace of the Gospel. The Gospel answers to the

moral self–consistency of a holy and righteous God and therefore the demands of the Law. Both together glorify the grace of God and give his love its necessary moral character. It is this Divinely–revealed balance that we find in the New Testament.

> **Rom. 2:14–16.** [14] For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: [15] Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) [16] In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Man, as the image–bearer of God, had the law indelibly embedded in his heart at creation, rendering him a rational, morally–responsible being. It was the Moral Law of God which was the God–ordained means of saving conviction of sin [the "pricks" or goads of Acts 9:5] in the spiritual awakening of Saul of Tarsus. See his personal testimony to this conviction in Rom. 7:7–13.

> **Gal. 3:24.** Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.[214]

The Moral Law remains as the God–ordained means of conviction of sin. Charles Bridges: "…as there is a legal mode of preaching the gospel, so there is an evangelical mode of preaching the law…."[215]

> We cannot indeed have too much of the Gospel; but we may have too little of the law, and a defect in the Evangelical preaching of the Law is as clear a cause of insufficient ministration, as a legal preaching of the Gospel. In such a ministry there must be a want of spiritual conviction of sin *generally*—of spiritual sins *most particularly*—and—flowing directly from hence—a low standard of spiritual obedience. Indeed, all the prevalent errors in the Church may be traced to this source.

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[214] ὁ νόμος γέγονεν…, perf., i.e., "…the law has become and continues to be…"

[215] Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, p. 223.

We should never have heard of Methodist perfection—Mystic dependence upon the inward light [Quakerism]—Antinomian delusion—inconsistent profession of orthodoxy—Pharisaical self–righteousness—or Pelagian and Socinian rectitude of nature—if the spiritual standard of the law had been clearly displayed, and its convincing power truly felt.[216]

[We would add modern Dispensational antinomianism with its "decisionism," "easy–believeism" and "carnal Christian" heresy].

Charles Bridges:

...Those, indeed, who dispense with the law from their ministry, acknowledge no medium of conviction but the cross. But did not our Lord employ the Moral Law with the young ruler, for this express purpose? Was it not also the appointed means of bringing the Apostle to the spiritual apprehension of his sin?

Its cognizance of every thought, imagination, desire, word, and work, and its uncompromising demand of absolute and uninterrupted obedience, upon pain of its everlasting penalty—convince the heart of its guilt, defilement, and wretchedness, and leave the sinner without excuse and without help; under the frown of an holy and angry God; prepared to welcome a Saviour, and lost forever without him.

Thus is the prayer—"God be merciful to me a sinner"—forced even from him, whose external deportment had been, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." He now sees in himself the very character of sinfulness and misery to which the Gospel addresses itself; and, stretching out the hand of desire and faith, he receives the free gift of Christ.[217]

C. H. Spurgeon:

There is no point upon which men make greater mistakes than upon the relation between the law and the Gospel. Some men put the law instead of the Gospel; others put the Gospel instead of the law; some modify both and preach neither; and others entirely abrogate the law, by bringing in the Gospel.

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[216] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

[217] Charles Bridges, *Loc. cit.*, pp. 223–225.

Many think that the law is the Gospel, and who teach that men by good works may be saved. On the other hand, many teach that the Gospel is a law, by obedience to which men are meritoriously saved. A certain class maintain that the law and the Gospel are mixed, and that partly by the law, and partly by grace, men are saved....

As concerning the Human Heart. The law causes the offense to abound… By discovering sin to the soul. When once the Holy Ghost applies the law to the conscience, secret sins are dragged to light, little sins are magnified to their true size, and things apparently harmless become exceedingly sinful….The fountains of the deep are broken up, the chambers of imagery are opened, the innate evil of the very essence of fallen man is discovered....The law cuts into the core of the evil, it reveals the seat of malady, and informs us that the leprosy lies deep within….He who once thought that he could repent and believe at pleasure, finds in himself no power to do either the one or the other."[218]

Heb. 8:6–13. [6] But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. [7] For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

[8] For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: [9] Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. [10] For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: [11] And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. [12] For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. [13] In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

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[218] C. H. Spurgeon, "Law and Grace," *The New Park Street Pulpit*, Vol. I, pp. 285–290.

This passage concerning the New Covenant, above, is the express fulfillment of Jer. 31:31–34, which is quoted in vv. 8–12, contrary to the principles of Dispensationalism and New Covenant Theology. It further declares that everyone in this New Covenant will be regenerated, contrary to paedobaptist Covenant Theology. Finally, it does not teach one covenant with two administrations, but rather the Old Covenant passing away with the fulfillment of the promise and the reality of the New Covenant.

> **Matt. 5:17–18.** [17] Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. [18] For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Matt. 5 is concerned with the Moral Law, as the context reveals.

> **Rom. 6:14.** For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law [ὑπὸ νόμον], but under grace.[219]

> **Gal. 5:18** But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law [οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον].

"Law" in both passages above is anarthrous [without the def. article], and thus refers to a mere principle of outward command. Grace gives an inward dynamic or enablement. This must *not* be interpreted in a Dispensational or New Covenant Theology sense as contrasting the so–called "Dispensations of Law and Grace"—a somewhat common error.

> **Rom. 13:8–10.** [8] Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. [9] For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. [10] Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.

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[219] οὐ γάρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον. anarth. use, referring to a principle of mere outward commandment.

"Love" is *not* the fulfillment of the Law in a *temporal* or Dispensational sense, as though the Law were limited to Israel in a given time–frame, but in an *interpretive* sense. As love is the fulfillment of the Law, so the Law interprets love, i.e., the Law gives to love its moral character and context.

Apart from a necessary external standard—Divine Law—love remains undefined. True, consistent, biblical love is not a merely subjective, undefined, indefinite feeling, but an objective reality commanded in the context of and conditioned by the Law–Word of God (Rom. 13:8–10), i.e., we love our neighbor when we do not deprive him of his life, lie about him, steal from him, commit adultery with his wife or covet what he has—or do anything that tends toward such overt acts. The absence or abrogation of the Law is not freedom, but lawlessness—and lawlessness is sin (1 Jn. 3:4).[220] It is only in terms of God's Law that we may consistently love our neighbor—and even love our enemies!

1 Tim. 1:5–11. [5] Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and *of* a good conscience, and *of* faith unfeigned:... [8] But we know that the law *is* good,[221] if a man use it lawfully; [9] Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man,[222] but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, [10] For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; [11] According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

The Moral Law of God is a present reality which judges men, and is to be rightly used. In the context of the Jewish misuse of the

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[220] "...sin is the transgression of the law." Lit: ""sin is lawlessness" (ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία).

[221] V. 8. "Exceeding excellent is the law" [καλὸς ὁ νόμος].

[222] V. 9. "upon a righteous does not lie as a heavy sentence" [δικαίῳ νόμος οὐ κεῖται].

law as a system of self–righteous justification, Paul states that it is "exceedingly excellent" if properly used, i.e., as a means of convicting of and restraining sin. The law does "not lie upon" [οὐ κεῖται] the righteous, i.e., rest upon him as a sentence of condemnation, but it does upon the ungodly.

> **Rom. 7:12, 14, 22; 8:3–4.** [12] Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good…. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin….For I delight in the law of God after the inward man…[3] For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: [4] That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

In this section (Rom. 6:15–8:9), which is concerned with the believer's relationship to the law, the Apostle refutes both antinomianism and legalism. The believer "delights in the law of God after the inward man," but is delivered from either casting off the Law [antinomianism] or turning it into a system of works [legalism].

There is no chapter division at 7:25–8:1. The Moral Law is holy, good, just and spiritual. Grace brings us into conformity to it (Rom. 8:1–4). There is no antinomian grace.

When the Apostle contrasted himself with the absolute standard of the Law in 7:14 ["but I am carnal, sold under sin"], he used the term "carnal" [ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι] in the sense of being "made of flesh," i.e., the very epitome of weakness before the absolute righteousness of the Law, not the term σαρκικός, which connotes exhibiting the characteristics of the flesh. This neither caters to the idea of the "carnal Christian" nor to the idea that he was unregenerate at this time. As a mature believer before God's Holy Law, he is the epitome of human weakness. This section (7:14–25) deals with the principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption, as he several times differentiates between "I" and "sin that dwelleth in me."

Rom. 10:4. For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

This verse is self–explanatory. Our Lord is the fulfillment [τέλος][223] of the law concerning justification, but only for those who believe. We are either in union with Adam—condemned, or in union with Christ—justified. Unbelievers are still condemned under the Covenant of Works in union with Adam.

1 Cor. 9:21. To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ [μὴ ὢν ἄνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ' ἔννομος Χριστου], that I might gain them that are without law.

The Apostle was not lawless as a believer, but lived in the sphere of God's Law in Christ. The issue focuses on the Gentiles described as those "without law" and he himself as being "in–lawed" to Christ. The meaning, to be consistent, must be that although he lived as the Gentiles did when among them, he was yet living [among Jews or Gentiles] in the sphere of Christ's law.

Note: τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς ἄνομος, μὴ ὢν ἄνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ' ἔννομος Χριστοῦ. The designation "those without law" (τοῖς ἀνόμοις) was a common reference by the Jews to the Gentiles. Among the Gentiles, Paul lived as a Gentile, but never in a lawless way, as he was "in–lawed" to Christ (ἔννομος Χριστου) [in the sphere of or under the authority of Christ's Law].]. He was neither a legalist nor an antinomian. The Moral Law of God and the Moral Law of Christ are one and the same.[224]

Rom. 3:19–20. [19] Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. [20] Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

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[223] The essential meaning of τέλος is that of fulfillment or consummation. See Liddell & Scott, *Greek–English Lexicon*, pp. 1772–1774.

[224] See the complete discussion of every issue in Ernest Kevan, *The Moral Law*. Escondido: The den Dulk Foundaton, 1991. 97 pp.

The Moral Law is relevant and perpetual, universal in its scope ["under the law," ὁ νόμος λέγει τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λαλει, i.e., within the sphere of the law's jurisdiction] over all mankind—and will be the one Divine Standard on the final Day of Judgment. The function of the Law is to expose sin for what it is before God and man. Note "the knowledge of sin" is διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας, i.e., through the Law is the full, complete knowledge of sin.

We close this paper with a quotation from a sonnet and then a hymn which both embrace the right relationship between the purpose of the Law and the glory of the Gospel: the first is from a Sonnet on the Law and the Gospel by Ralph Erskine (1685–1752):

> The Law's a tutor much in vogue,
> To Gospel–grace a pedagogue;
> The Gospel to the Law no less
> Than its full end for righteousness.
>
> When once the fiery Law of God
> Has chas'd me to the Gospel–road;
> Then back unto the holy Law,
> Most kindly Gospel–grace will draw.
>
> When by the Law to grace I'm school'd;
> Grace by the Law will have me rul'd;
> Hence, if I do not the Law obey,
> I cannot keep the Gospel–way.
>
> A rigid master was the Law,
> Demanding brick, denying straw;
> But when the Gospel–tongue it sings,
> It bids me fly, and gives me wings.[225]

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[225] Extracted from Ralph Erskine, "The Believer's Principles concerning the Law and the Gospel" [A sonnet containing 386 verses], *Section III*, "The Harmony betwixt the Law and the Gospel."

And finally, the grand hymn by Matthias Loy on the Law of God, which lexpresses itself in a balance of Law and Gospel:

The law of God is good and wise,
and sets His will before our eyes,
Shows us the way of righteousness,
and dooms to death when we transgress.

Its light of holiness imparts
the knowledge of our sinful hearts
That we may see our lost estate,
and seek deliverance ere too late.

To those who help in Christ have found,
and would in works of love abound
It shows what deeds are His delight,
and should be done as good and right.

When men the offered help disdain,
and willfully in sin remain,
Its terror in their ear resounds,
and keep their wickedness in bounds.

The law is good; but since the fall
Its holiness condemns us all;
It dooms us for our sin to die,
and has no power to justify.

To Jesus we for refuge flee,
Who from the curse has set us free,
And humbly worship at His throne,
Saved by His grace through faith alone.[226]

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[226] Taken from the *Baptist Edition* of the *Trinity Hymnal*, p. 449.

A Vindication of The Baptists

Introduction

This study and vindication can be studied in much more depth through such works as our Book on *The New Testament Church*, John T. Christian's *History of the Baptists*, and a host of others listed in our handout.

The texts we will use to introduce our subject are those usually reserved for Apologetics. Defending or vindicating our Baptist Faith—the primitive faith of New Testament Christianity—is both an exercise in *Apologetics* and *Polemics*. Apologetics [ἀπολογία], a defense of the faith against an unbelieving world, and Polemics [from πολήμος "war," and πολέμικος "warlike"] is the study of doctrinal differences and controversies. Apologetics and Polemics are also known as "Controversial Theology."

Every aspect of Divine truth needs to be strongly defended, and this includes the doctrine of the church and the ordinances!

Texts

2 Cor. 10:3–5. [3] For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: [4] (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal [τὰ γὰρ ὅπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν οὐ σαρκικὰ], but mighty through God [δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ] to the pulling down of strong holds;) [5] Casting down imaginations [λογισμοὺς καθαιροῦντες], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ...

Until very recent times, almost every religious movement made use of the state and carnal means both to advance itself and to intimidate, punish torture and often execute others. This was true of Rome and of the Protestants—and now, of Islam. The last person burned in London for being a Baptist, i.e., for believer's baptism was Edward Wightman (1611).[227] Consider "The Great Ejection" in 1662

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[227] Thomas Armitage, *History of the Baptists*, I, p. 459.

when over 2,000 gospel ministers were ejected from their pulpits by the Angican Church for non–conformity.

1 Pet. 3:12–16. [12] For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil. [13] And who *is* he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? [14] But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy *are ye*: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; [15] But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer [ἕτοιμοι ἀεὶ πρὸς ἀπολογίαν] to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: [16] Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

The truth of salvation by grace, believer's baptism, freedom of conscience and the New Testament Church are realities for which we must give a consistent answer!

Jude 3. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints [ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι τῇ ἅπαξ παραδοθείσῃ τοῖς ἁγίοις πίστει].

Our distinctives are scriptural and therefore an integral part of the primitive faith!

1 Tim. 3:14–15. [14] These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:[15] But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God [ἐν οἴκῳ θεοῦ], which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth [στῦλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας].

The church is the dwelling place [οἴκῳ] of the living God. It is preeminently the pillar [στῦλος, support, upholder] and ground [ἑδραίωμα, ground, broad base of a pillar] of the truth! The church is to glorify God by manifesting his wisdom, by giving Him reverence in her worship. by declaring the truth in her ministry, defending the truth in her witness, illustrating the truth in her ordinances, reflecting the truth in her life and vindicating the truth in her discipline.

A final passage, which characterizes most of our Baptist forefathers:

1 Cor. 1:26–29. [26] For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: [27] But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; [28] And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: [29] That no flesh should glory in his presence.

As in the New Testament and Apostolic Era, throughout the ages, most Baptists have been from among the lower and common classes of people, with the exception of some few who came to Baptist convictions from the educated classes, as did many clergymen did from the Anglican Church in the 1600s. Until the nineteenth century, Baptists were excluded from the universities in Britain by law. Most Baptists were self–educated; however, many have achieved prominence. e.g., John Bunyan, "The Immortal Dreamer,"[228] John Gill,[229] Abraham Booth,[230] William Carey,[231] Adonairam Judson,[232] Sinclair Thomson, the "Shetland Apostle" Alexander Carson the "Jonathan Edwards" Northern Ireland, etc.

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[228] John Bunyan: upon his conversion, he could not read. By the time he was incarcerated in Bedford Gaol, he carried with him a Greek lexicon of which he was the author!

[229] John Gill: He mastered Greek, Hebrew and Latin by age 12, and wrote over 10,000 pages of theology!

[230] Abraham Booth: His writings survive to this day, including his masterful *Defense of the Baptists* and his theological–historical work, *The History of Redemption*.

[231] William Carey: a cobbler, who became "The Father of Modern–Day missions." He was self–educated, but mastered several languages and wrote several linguistic works, including a Sanskrit dictionary.

[232] Judson was America's first foreign missionary. He was brought to Baptist convictions through reading his Greek NT during his voyage to India, and, upon his arrival, was baptized by Wm. Carey. He pioneered missionary work in Burma.

Sinclair Thomson, "The Shetland Apostle," the preeminently gifted and self–taught preacher of the Shetland Islands, who began the Baptist work in the Shetland Islands and established several churches.

Alexander Carson (d. 1844), a Presbyterian–turned–Baptist who was put out of his church building and took his entire congregation with him. He wrote 11 volumes of sound Calvinistic and Baptistic theology, including the two classic works, *The Mode & Subjects of Baptism* and *NT Church Polity.*

The greatest preacher of the nineteenth century, C. H. Spurgeon, largely self–taught, who pastored the largest Baptist and Evangelical Church in the world for 30 years, baptized over 14,600 converts, and produced over 135 literary works in addition to his 66 volumes of printed sermons. We must also mention such Baptists in America, such as B. H. Carroll, a Southern Baptist,[233] and J. Frank Norris of Fundamentalist fame.[234]

We propose to approach this "Vindication of the Baptists" in four parts: first, Why is such a vindication necessary? Second, a statement on Baptist Distinctives. Third, a description of the Nature and Character of the New Testament Church. Fourth, a discussion of Baptist Antiquities.

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[233] B. H. Carroll: "The Baptist Colossus." A Texas Ranger, Soldier, Preacher, Pastor, Denominational Leader among Texas Baptists and Professor of Bible. He was largely self–educated, but read some 300 pp. a day throughout his adult life. He wrote a 17 Volume Bible Commentary and founded Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. See Alan J. LeFever, *Fighting the Good Fight*, p. 43.

[234] Dr. Norris, a protégé of B. H. Carroll, pastored simultaneously the two largest Baptist churches in the world, The First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, TX [approximately. 8,000 members] and Temple Baptist Church in Detroit, MI [approximately 5,000 members].

Why is Such a Defense
or Vindication of The Baptists Necessary?

Issues and Answers: Nine Considerations.

There are age–old questions to be answered and both older and newer controversies with which we must deal. Among the issues which must be addressed are the following: first, we are Christians by the free and sovereign grace of God. We are Baptists by conviction. This conviction derives from the Scriptures, not merely religious tradition or ecclesiastical advantage, and has been deepened throughout history by both State and Ecclesiastical persecution.

Second, it is never good or advantageous to be ignorant of one's history, especially if that history reflects the truth of the Word of God. Every generation needs regeneration. And likewise, every generation of Baptists needs to be grounded in both scriptural doctrine and practice—and in our glorious heritage!

Third, Baptists represent the primitive or New Testament faith of God's elect. It is historically demonstrable that New Testament Churches, believing in salvation by grace, practicing believer's baptism and holding to soul–liberty or freedom of conscience,[235] have existed since the days of the Apostles to the present time. This is based on five considerations:

1. The promise of our Lord—

> **Matt. 16:18.** And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [Πέτρος], and upon this rock [πέτρα] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.[236]

> **Matt. 28:18–20.** [18] And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. [19] Go ye therefore,

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[235] Freedom or liberty of conscience does not exist with paedobaptism. Infants are essentially born into a given church!

[236] The institution of the N.T. Church is founded upon our Lord, not upon Peter or his confession of faith. No city takes its gates to war. The reference is to the militancy of the N.T. Church against the Kingdom of Satan and evil.

and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: [20] Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always [καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας], *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

2. The teaching of Scripture—

1 Cor. 3:11. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Eph. 3:21. Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.[237]

3. The fact that Church history is not self–interpreting. The New Testament Church is the model for every church. God did not simply allow Christianity to evolve into the Church of Rome, then reform and divide into the Anglican, Lutheran and Reformed Churches at the Sixteenth Century Reformation.

4. The witness of history—Romish and Protestant historians witness to the truth of New Testament principles among the various evangelical groups both prior to and since the Protestant Reformation.

New Testament believers and churches can be identified and traced according to their principles and practices.

Baptists not Protestants. We did not come from the Protestant Reformation. Our forefathers, known under different, often derogatory names, have existed from the time of the New Testament. Modern Baptists are the inheritors and progeny of countless hundreds of thousands who have held to the evangelical faith, believer's baptism and freedom of conscience through the ages.

We are not defending the name "Baptist." A true, New Testament Church is such, regardless of the name. The name "Baptist" began as "Anabaptist," or "re–baptizer." This, our

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[237] "The Church" is not a "universal, invisible Church," but a local church, the term used institutionally [e.g., "jury"] or eschatalogically.

forefathers denied, stating that they did not recognize Romish paedobaptism as true baptism!

All Baptist distinctives derive from the Scriptures, predominantly the New Testament. Any given church is therefore a New Testament or Gospel church to the extent that it conforms to the New Testament; conversely, to the extent that any given church departs from the New Testament, to that extent it ceases to be a New Testament or Gospel church.

The churches of the New Testament were true churches until their doctrine or practice became a permanent departure from New Testament truth. These believers and churches have been known by various names in history, such as Montanists, Novatians, Donatists, Paulicians, Vaudois, Paterines, Albigenses, Berengarians, Bogomili, Cathari, Gezari, Arnoldists, Petrobrusians, Poor Men of Lyons [Leonists]; Henricians, Waldenses, Lollards, Wyclifites, Bohemian Brethren, Hussites, etc.

Every one of these groups has had heretical and scandalous accusations raised against it by the state church, i.e., The Church of Rome. We hold that among these groups were NT Christians and churches.

Since the early centuries—indeed, by the fourth century—the generic name for those who continued in New Testament truth as opposed to the state church were derogatorily termed "Anabaptists" because they did not recognize Romish baptism and were said to "re–baptize" their converts.

We are not defending the ideas, errors or heresies of some modern "Baptists": e.g., The Pelagian philosophy of "free will" and the "decisionism" of modern evangelical Christianity, the denial of biblical predestination and sovereign grace, the invitational system, Conventionism and Associationism, which often set aside the autonomy of the local assembly, Dispensationalism and Open Communion.

Modern "Baptists" [Reformed Baptists] believe that we came from the Reformation and are thus "Protestants" who derived from

the Independents. These also hold that Baptists did not begin to immerse after the New Testament pattern until 1641, a theory which was satisfactorily answered early in the last century, and only recently revived.[238] Other Baptists [some "neo–Landmarkers"] hold to a "chain–link" theory of succession through churches, ["mother–daughter" church concept], ministers or baptisms which reflects the ideas of Romish "Apostolic Succession." True perpetuity must remain essentially doctrinal.

We do, however repudiate any "se–baptism," i.e., self–baptism or baptism apart from a church or one who has been himself scripturally baptized.

Some Baptists have turned from the importance and centrality of the local church to the denomination, a step toward a "universal, invisible church" concept.

There is little attention given in modern, Evangelical Christianity to the importance of the doctrine of the church. Baptists have been derided for emphasizing what we term "Church truth." *All scriptural truth is sacred and important*, including the New Testament doctrine of the church! The New Testament in its local expression is to be "the pillar and ground of the truth"!

It assumed in modern times that any religious group, regardless of its doctrine or practice is a "church."[239] Under the idea of a "universal, invisible church," each religious group is a part of "the Body of Christ" or at the least a "para–church" organization. Baptists have always held to and emphasized the truth of the "gathered church" or local assembly.

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[238] See Paul Nelson, Ed., *The Whitsitt Controversy: Argument and Refutation.*

[239] E.g., Matt. 18:20. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." No covenant, no membership, no ordinances, no discipline—not a NT church.

As the New Testament Church is the God–ordained institution for this gospel economy, all authority rests with the local church. The local church recognizes and ordains both ministers and sends forth missionaries (Acts 13:2–4; 14:26–27).

We do not recognize any "free–lance" ministries. Nor do we recognize man–made agencies such as boards, committees, associations or conventions which set aside or usurp the function and authority of the local church. All ministries are to be under the authority and discipline of the local church. Behind the theory of ministries apart from the local church stands the "universal, invisible church" concept.

Some modern Baptists tend toward a Presbyterian polity of eldership rule rather than congregational. The New Testament teaches a congregational government (Acts 6:1–6). The terms for "rule," προΐστημι and ἡγέομαι, are shepherding terms and mean "to preside over" or "to lead." There is no thought of assumed ecclesiastical power, such as existed among the Jews [ἄρχων] (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17).

Other Baptists tend toward a "Community Church" idea. By necessity, a community church must reflect the community, i.e., it is the community rather than the church which determines the doctrine and practice. A Community Church cannot consistently abide by NT principles and reamain consistent.

Finally, Baptists have a glorious history, which stands against the utmost scrutiny possible through doctrinal and historic investigation.

State and Protestant Churches

Several churches or religious groups make the claim to be the "only true church." This claim usually rests either upon antiquity [Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic] or the theory that the truth had been lost for generations until they revived and re–established it [Plymouth Brethren, Mormons and Campbellites]. All Protestant Churches assume that Rome was the "Mother Church" and they derived from her. Other churches, presupposing Protestantism, have

relatively recent beginnings. Some groups have little or no scriptural concept of what a true, New Testament church is. What are the facts?

- *The Greek or Eastern Orthodox Church* claims to be the true Apostolic Church because it claims to antedate the Romish Church. It remains the Greek "Catholic" Church.

- *The Church of Rome* [Roman Catholic Church][240] claims to be the only true and Apostolic Church, founded upon Peter by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 16: 18–19). Rome further claims in her antiquity that all and any churches existing throughout history have departed from her and consequently are apostate. The facts of history are that the Romish Church began with the "Constantinian Change"[241] in 313–325 AD, and finally established her power under Pope Gregory the Great about 604 AD.

- The churches of the Protestant Reformation are the Lutheran, Anglican and Reformed.

- *The Lutheran Church* was established through the leadership of Martin Luther about 1530 as a reform of the Roman Catholic Church and a reaction against her excesses. Lutheranism holds to consubstantiation rather than Romish transubstantiation, the ubiquity of the body of Christ, infant sprinkling, etc.

- *The Anglican or Episcopal Church* [originally the State Church of England], derived from Rome, was founded by King Henry VIII about 1536 as a separate body when the British Parliament

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[240] Gk: καθολίκος, "general, throughout the whole, universal." The dominant or liberal party which became the state church.

[241] The "Constantinian Change" [313–325 AD] refers to the establishment of the State Church system, which continued until the Protestant Reformation. The Reformed and Lutheran Churches then established their own "Constantinian" power to rival that of Rome.

made Henry the Supreme Head of the national church. The "High Church" considers itself to be "Anglo–Catholic."

- *The Reformed Churches*, including the Presbyterian and various Dutch churches, derived largely from John Calvin and the Genevan Reformation [1550s]. These churches were never founded in theory or practice as New Testament churches, but as churches rival to Rome with their own Constantinian bias.

- Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Reformed Churches deserve note. Zwingli at first sided with the Anabaptists, but later turned against them and had them drowned in lake at Zurich.

- *Congregationalism* began as a distinct movement when the "Separatists" broke with the Church of England and the Presbyterians about 1584. The leader of this movement was Robert Browne [The "Brownists"], who came under strong Baptist influence in his formative years at his first pastorate. Baptistic principles led him into a mediating position which became the essence of Congregationalism, i.e., support of local church autonomy and polity, as opposed to the ecclesiasticism of the English Church, yet retaining infant baptism.

- *The Methodist Church* was founded after Whitefield's death by the organizing abilities of John Wesley in the mid–Eighteenth century. From its leaders, it derived originally from the Church of England. Most of the subsequent holiness groups such as the Nazarene and Christian Missionary Alliance Churches derived from the Methodists.

- *Brethrenism* originated in Dublin, Ireland, in 1831 as a movement back to the simplicity of the New Testament in order and worship. It was a reaction against the established church, formalism, sectarianism and lack of spirituality. It is Dispensational in doctrine.

- *The Christian Church* ["Disciples of Christ"] finally and completely separated from the "Campbellites" ["Church of Christ" Church] in 1906, following many years of various

disagreements over denominationalism, missionary societies and instrumental music.[242] This church still teaches that water baptism is "being baptized into Christ."

- *Pentecostal and Holiness churches* began as reactions to the major denominations and their seeming lack of vital spirituality, holiness and Christian experience. Such movements as the *Church of the Nazarene* (organized in 1907 as the "Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene") and the *Christian and Missionary Alliance* (founded about 1881 by A. B. Simpson took its present name in 1887) were the result of the Wesleyan holiness movement and perfectionist teachings within Methodism and the later Oberlin perfectionism.

- The Pentecostal churches (e.g., *the Assemblies of God*, founded about 1914–1918, is the largest denomination among this group) were founded in the early part of the twentieth century from the Pentecostal ''revival'' of 1900–1907, which emphasized tongues as a sign of the "second blessing."[243]

- *Bible Churches* came from the Plymouth Brethren movement and the Fundamentalist–Dispensational movement of the early twentieth century. These are non–Charismatic, non–denominational and Dispensational.

- *Open Bible Churches* originated from the 1906 Pentecostal or "Full Gospel Revival" at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles, and from two other Pentecostal movements in Oregon (1919) and Des Moines, Iowa (1932).

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[242] See Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations*, pp. 75–79.

[243] Both Christian and pagan religions have experienced *glossolalia* throughout history. On January 1, 1900, at a Bible College in Topeka, KS., Agnes Ozman "spoke in tongues" as the alleged sign of being "baptized in the Spirit" and initiated the modern Pentecostal movement. See Robert G. Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement*, p. 25.

The Cults

- *Oneness Pentecostal Churches* began in 1914 as a break away from mainstream Pentecostalism. The two main groups are the United Pentecostal Church and the United Apostolic Church. Other groups are the Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible Way Churches. These deny the doctrine of the Trinity, and are also known as "Jesus Only" Pentecostals [modalistic Monarchiasts]. They also deny justification by faith and hold baptism to be essential for salvation. As Pentecostals, these hold to speaking in tongues as a sign of being baptized in the Holy Ghost.

- The *"Church of Christ" Church* or ["Campbellites"] was founded by Alexander Campbell, a Presbyterian–turned–Baptist–turned–out, about the year 1827. The group took the name of "Reformers" or "Gospel Restorationists," believing that the apostolic faith and practice had long since disappeared from the earth and that they were the true church. They teach that baptism is essential for salvation (i.e., in reality a baptismal regeneration, or in their words, "one meets the blood in the water"). Thus, this religious system denies salvation by grace in principle and practice.[244]

- *Mormonism* ["Latter–Day Saints"] is a cult founded about 1830 by Joseph Smith. This group claims apostolic office and authority, and so claims to be the only true church. Among their errors and heresies are: baptismal regeneration, Apostolic Succession, an unscriptural priesthood, baptism for the dead by proxy (a necessary doctrine for their baptismal regeneration), salvation by works and a denial of the sufficiency of Scripture

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[244] For a discussion on the history, principles and practices of the Campbellite system, see Bob L. Ross, *Campbellism, Its History and Heresies* and J. H. Milburn, *Origin of Campbellism*.

(i.e., added revelation through the vision and writings of Joseph Smith).[245]

- *Seventh–Day Adventism* began as an "adventist" or millennial group with William Miller, a Baptist minister, about 1844. Further influence came from the Seventh–Day German Baptists. The group was distinctly formed and its doctrines formulated by Ellen G. White about 1863. The peculiar and unscriptural doctrines of this religious system include a legal salvation, "Saturday Sabbath" (Sunday worship is supposed to be the "mark of the Beast"), soul–sleep, annihilation of the wicked, Satan as the scapegoat or sin–bearer, and the Divine inspiration of Mrs. White in her visions and revelations.[246]

- *Christian Science* as a religious system was established about 1879 under the influence of Mary Baker Eddy. It is more distinctive and is filled with error concerning every fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith.[247]

- *Russelism* ["Jehovah's Witnesses"] were founded about 1884 by Charles Taze Russell; this group first was known as "Millennial Dawnists." Some of their doctrines were derived from Seventh–Day Adventism. In doctrine and practice, this cult denies, among other truths: the Trinity, the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, salvation by grace (substituting a system openly teaching salvation by works of self–effort), annihilation of the wicked, and the literal return or advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.[248]

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[245] See Walter Martin, *The Maze of Mormanism*; J. K. Van Baalen, *The Chaos of the Cults*; Herman Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism–Shadow or Reality*?

[246] See J.K. Van Baalen, *Op. cit.*, pp. 228–256.

[247] *Ibid.*, pp. 85–103.

[248] *Ibid.*, pp. 257–276.

All of the aforementioned groups possess the following characteristics: first, these have no scriptural authority or commission. Second, none can be traced historically to the New Testament or Apostolic Era in either doctrine or practice. Third, their origin can be historically dated in time and their human founders named. Fourth, in almost every case there is a definite departure from New Testament doctrine and practice in the four essential matters of salvation by grace, believer's baptism by immersion, ecclesiasticism [church hierarchy or ruling bodies] and soul–liberty or freedom of conscience.

The Baptists

The Baptists can be traced to no human founder or any historical date subsequent to the personal, earthly ministry of our Lord. Historically, Baptists have been New Testament in doctrine and practice.

Roman Catholic Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius, President of the Council of Trent, Stated:

> Were it not for the fact that the Anabaptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past 1200 years, they would swarm greater than all the reformers. …If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and boldness of which a man or any sect shows in suffering, then the opinions and persuasions of no sect can be truer and surer than those of the Anabaptists, since there have been none for the 1200 years past that have been more generally punished or that have been more cheerfully and steadfastly undergone, and have offered themselves to the most cruel sort of punishment than these people.[249]

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711), a Dutch Reformed pastor and theologian, in answer to the question concerning church perpetuity, wrote:

> Where was the Reformed [Calvinistic or Evangelical] church prior to Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin?

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[249] Cardinal Hosius, President of the Council of Trent, *Letters Apud Opera*, 112–113, as quoted by John T. Christian, *The History of the Baptists,* pp. 85–86.

Answer: First of all, the true church remains steadfast by reason of her durability—a durability which does not fluctuate. True doctrine is an infallible distinguishing mark of the church…Wherever true doctrine resides…there also is the church…prior to Luther this church existed wherever this true doctrine, which never ceased to be, was to be found.

…The church existed in several independent churches which maintained separation from popery…Such churches existed since early times in the southern parts of France, as well as in some parts of England, Scotland, Bohemia, and also in Piedmont. Against these churches popes have initiated many persecutions, but they continue to exist until this day.…prior to the time of Zwingli and Luther there had been very many who adhered to the same doctrine…and that Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin had by renewal brought this doctrine to light.…

Reynerius, one of the leaders of the Inquisition, who did some writing prior to the year 1400, writes concerning the Waldenses:

Among all sects that either are or have been, there is none more detrimental to the Roman Catholic Church than that of the Leonists (that is, the poor men of Lyons—the Waldenses)…it is the sect that is of the longest standing of any; for some say it has existed since the time of the apostles…it is the most general of all sects; for scarcely is there any country to be found where this sect has not been embraced…this sect has a great appearance of godliness, since they live righteously before all men, believe all that God has said, and maintain all the articles contained in the *sybolum* (the twelve articles of faith)…

Archbishop *Sessellius* writes in his book against the Waldenses:

"The Waldenses originate from a religious man named Leo, who lived during the time of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great [313 AD]."

Such is the witness of these parties. Do you yet ask whether the Reformed [Calvinistic or Evangelical] Church existed prior to Luther? To this I reply that she was to be found among those whom we have

just mentioned; that is, those residing in Piedmont among the Waldenses.[250]

John Lawrence von Mosheim, a Lutheran and "The Father of Modern Church History," wrote:

…the origin of…the Anabaptists…is lost in the remote depths of antiquity….Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe, persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the modern Dutch Baptists.[251]

W. C. King, in *Crossing the Centuries*, wrote:

Of the Baptists it may be said that they are not Reformers. These people, comprising bodies of Christian believers known under various names in different countries, are entirely distinct and independent of the Roman and Greek Churches, and have an unbroken continuity of existence from the Apostolic days down through the centuries. Throughout this long period, they were bitterly persecuted for heresy, driven from country to country, disenfranchised, deprived of their property, imprisoned, tortured, and slain by the thousands, yet they swerved not from their New Testament faith, doctrine and adherence.[252]

L. Burnett, "Church of Christ" [Campbellite] historian:

The Baptists have connection with the Apostles through their line of succession, which extends back 350 years, where it connects with the Waldensian line, and that reaches to the Apostolic day….Baptists also have connection with the Apostles in what they teach and practice…[253]

A. C. Lewis, a Presbyterian and professor of Church History in the Presbyterian Seminary of Chicago, wrote: "The first Baptist

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[250] Wilhelmus à Brakel, *De Redelijke Godsdeinst*, [The Christian's Reasonable Service], II, pp. 37–39.

[251] Lutheran Historian John Lawrence Von Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, II, pp. 119–120. Also see the explanation of Jarrell on this quote, *Ibid*., pp. 310–311.

[252] Quoted by Mason, *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

[253] L. Burnett, "Church of Christ" Church Editor of "The Christian Messenger," 1888, Quoted by W. A. Jarrell, *Ibid*., p. 314.

church was not formed or organized, but evolved out of out of Anabaptist antecedents."[254]

Dr. Williston Walker, the great Congregationalist historian and Professor of Church History at Harvard University, wrote:

> Some men of weight in church history…would find a continuous relation between the Anabaptists of the Reformation period and individual sects like the Waldenses, and through them a line of free and possibly evangelical churches, back to the early days of Christianity.[255]

The King of Holland in 1819 appointed J. J. Dermout, his personal chaplain, and Dr. Ypeij, Professor of Theology at Groningen, to write a history of the Dutch Reformed Church and to investigate the claims of the Dutch Baptists. These two authors were highly regarded as great Christians, able historians and astute theologians in their church. They wrote:

> We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists…were the original Waldenses, and who have long in history received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community which has stood since the days of the Apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrine of the Gospel through all ages. The perfectly correct external and internal economy of the Baptist denomination tends to confirm the truth, disputed by the Romish Church, that the Reformation about in the 16th century was in the highest degree necessary, and at the same time goes to refute the erroneous notion of the Catholics that their denomination is the most ancient.[256]

W. A. Jarrell, Baptist historian:

All that Baptists mean by church "succession," or Church Perpetuity, is: There has never been a. day since the organization of

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[254] W. A. Jarrell., *Ibid*., p. 58.

[255] W. A. Jarrell, *Ibid*., p. 61.

[256] A. Ypeij, and J. J. Dermout, *Geschiedenis der Netherlandsche Hervomke Kerk*, I, p. 148, as quoted by John T. Christian, *Op. cit.*, pp. 95–96.

the first New Testament church in which there was no genuine church of the New Testament existing on earth.[257]

We close this section with a quotation from C. H. Spurgeon, a humble Baptist of broad fellowship, unquestionable honesty and a great breadth of both scholarship and fellowship:

> We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the Reformation, we were reformers before Luther or Calvin were born; we never came from the Church of Rome, for we were never in it, but have an unbroken line up to the Apostles themselves. We have always existed from the very days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river which may travel underground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents. Persecuted alike by Romanists and Protestants of almost every sect…"[258]

> We care very little for the "historical church" argument, but if there be anything in it at all, *it ought not to be filched by the clients of Rome,* but should be left to that community, which all along held by "one Lord, one faith and one baptism.…The afflicted Anabaptists, in their past history, have borne such pure testimony, both to truth and freedom, that they need in nothing be ashamed.…It would not be *impossible* to show that the first Christians who dwelt in the land were of the same faith and order as the churches now called Baptists.[259]

> …when any say to us, "You as a denomination, what great names can you mention? What fathers can you speak of?" We may reply, "More than any other under heaven, for we are of the old apostolic church that have never bowed to the yoke of princes yet; we, known among men, in all ages, by various names, such as Donatists, Novatians, Paulicians, Petrobrussians, Cathari, Arnoldists, Hussites, Waldenses, Lollards, and Anabaptists, have always contended for the purity of the Church, and her distinctness and separation from human government. Our fathers were men inured to hardships, and unused to ease. They present to us, their children, an unbroken line which comes legitimately from the apostles, not through the filth of

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[257] W. A. Jarrell, *Baptist Church Perpetuity*, p. 3.

[258] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1861, p. 225.

[259] C. H. Spurgeon, in *Ford's Christian Repository,* as quoted by W. A. Jarrell, *Op. cit.*, p. 330.

Rome, not by the manipulations of prelates, but by the Divine life, the Spirit's anointing, the fellowship of the Son in suffering and of the Father in truth."[260]

Baptist Distinctives

The one great Baptist distinctive is *not* that we baptize believers, and that by immersion. Rather, the Scriptures are our sole rule of both faith and practice, and thus we baptize believers by immersion upon a credible profession of faith, after the clear, inspired pattern of the New Testament.

The Scriptures are the Only and All–Sufficient Rule of Both Faith and Practice

This stands in contrast to other historic criteria such as "Apostolic Succession," religious tradition, ecclesiastical authority, creeds, confessions, church councils, rationalism, mere philosophy or logic, and modern religious irrationalism which stresses experience and emotionalism.

Baptists have a distinctly "New Testament Mentality." This principle and reality can be noted in comparison with Reformed thought and teaching. We hold to the progressive nature of Divine revelation, holding the New Testament to be a progression over the Old. The Reformed stand, as it were, in the Old Testament, and view the New Testament through Old Testament eyes. We, as Baptists, stand in the New Testament, and view the Old Testament through New Testament eyes. Our essential approach to Scripture differs, and thus affects the nature of the Divine covenants,[261] salvation and the church!

Reformed thought maintains that the "church" existed in both the Old and New Testaments.[262] Also, that circumcision has been

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[260] C. H. Spurgeon, *Op. cit.*, 1861, p. 613.

[261] Reformed Theology holds that the Abrahamic Covenant *is* the Covenant of Grace.

[262] It is common for some to refer to "The Jewish Church" in the OT.

replaced by infant sprinkling and the Passover by the Lord's Supper, essentially only substituting one rite for another. The Passover is fulfilled in our Lord (Jn. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7) and circumcision is fulfilled in regeneration (Rom. 2:28–29; 4:9–11; Col. 2:11).

We differ on the doctrine of Scripture in our confessions. Mark the great distinction between the *Second London Baptist Confession* of [1677] 1689 with the *Westminster Confession* [1647] on the doctrine of Scripture:

The *first London Baptist Confession of Faith* was written in 1644 and published in 1646. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* of the Presbyterians was first printed on December 7, 1646 and subsequently published in 1647. The *First London Baptist Confession* then antedated the *Westminster Confession* and was thus unaffected by it. *The first London Baptist Confession* is a local church document. The *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* was written in 1677 and published in 1689. It is a "Baptist" version of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. The major and most well–known subsequent Baptist Confessions—The *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* (1742) and The *New Hampshire Baptist Confession* (1833)—were both affected to a significant degree by the *Westminster Confession*.

Although the two major Baptist Confessions subsequent to 1677 significantly reflect the *Westminster Confession*, they do *not* include its language respecting "good and necessary consequence," as noted below:

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is *either expressly set down in Scripture*, or by *good and necessary consequence* may be deduced from Scripture…[263]

Contrast this with the *Second London Baptist Confession of 1689*, Chapter I, Article 6:

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, *is either expressly set*

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[263] The *Westminster Confession*, Chapter I, Article VI.

down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added…"

Note the alleged difference between the Reformed view of "good and necessary consequence" and the Baptist view of "either expressly set down or necessarily contained in Scripture." Baptists have allowed "good and necessary consequences," but infant sprinkling was neither a "good" nor a "necessary" consequence!

Salvation by Grace Alone

Salvation by grace implies: that salvation must be scripturally viewed in the context of the eternal, infallible redemptive purpose of God (Rom. 8:28–31; Eph. 1:3–14) and that grace is unmerited favor in the place or stead of merited wrath. Grace and works or human ability cannot be commingled (Rom. 9:6–24; 11:5–6; Eph. 2:4–5, 8–10).

Those who hold to infant sprinkling [paedobaptists] confuse the essence and issue of salvation by grace by their particular doctrine of covenant theology.

Grace is more than *a principle*. It is *a prerogative*—God freely and sovereignly bestows this grace on whom he will, according to his eternal, infallible purpose; and *a power*—which enables the sinner to freely and effectively lay hold of Christ by faith (Phil. 1:29); Regeneration or the "new birth" precedes faith and repentance (Jn. 3:3, 5–8; Acts 16:14; Jas. 1:18); Gospel holiness and righteousness are necessary characteristics of experimental salvation and Christian experience (Rom. 6:1–23; Eph. 1:3–6; 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10; 1 Thess. 1:3–5). Baptists historically have been Calvinistic, holding to the realities of sovereign grace in salvation.

Believer's Baptism by Immersion

The terminology of baptism in the New Testament. There is one term used in the New Testament for baptism: βαπτιζεῖν, which denotes to dip, plunge, immerse, or wash by dipping, βαπτίσμα, the act of baptism. These derive from the root βαφ, which connotes "depth." Had the inspired writers of the New Testament desired to

convey the idea of sprinkling, they could have used the common term in the New Testament for sprinkling, ῥαντιζεῖν or προσχύσις an affusion, pouring or sprinkling, and λουεῖν, for washing or bathing.[264]

The symbolism of baptism

The baptism of believers by immersion is symbolic of the believer's union with Christ in His death and resurrection–life (Rom. 6:3–5). A change in either mode or subject changes the nature and meaning of this ordinance and clearly contradicts the teaching of the New Testament!

A Regenerate Church Membership

This is distinctive of a true New Testament or Gospel church, and necessarily implies: first, that the membership is bound by a common personal faith and saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Acts 2:41–42, 47).

Second, that the church inquires to see if the prospective member has a credible profession of faith before baptism. Church membership is not by baptism, but by a vote of the membership.

Third, church membership is voluntary. A church that practices the immersion or sprinkling of infants and considers the church to be composed of both believers and their children is largely involuntary in membership and alien to the New Testament.

The Priesthood of the Believer

In the context of the New Covenant or Testament, there is no priest–cult or ecclesiastical mediator between the individual believer and his Lord. Every believer is a "king–priest," and has immediate access to God through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1–3; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:13–10:18; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6). The priesthood of the

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[264] Cf. Mk. 7:4, "the washing of …tables…" [βαπτισμοὺς…κλινῶν]. These were mats for reclining or pads for sleeping.

individual believer stands in the closest relationship to soul–liberty or freedom of conscience.

> Note: Cf. Heb. 5:5–6; 6:20; 7:1–25 for the perpetuity or everlasting nature of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. esp. 7:23–25. "unchangeable" is ἀπαράβατον, lit: "inviolable, untrespassable." No Romish, Mormon, Jewish or Protestant priest can trespass upon the priesthood which our Lord holds.

The Autonomy of the Local Assembly
under the Lordship of Jesus Christ

The autonomy, or self–governing nature of each local body of Christ, presupposes four realities: first, the terms *Pastor*, *Elder*, *Bishop, Minister*, *Servant of the Lord*, *Steward* [the latter three in a ministerial or pastoral context] all designate the same office in the local assembly. "Pastor" (ποιμήν, shepherd) and "Bishop" (ἐπίσκοπος overseer, one who exercises oversight) both refer to the work of the Gospel ministry—that of pastoring or overseeing the local assembly or flock of Christ. "Elder" (πρεσβύτερος, has the primary connotation of "aged," then of maturity, seniority of rank, or a position of responsibility). "Steward" [οἰκονόμος], "minister" [διάκονος]. These terms are all used interchangeably in the New Testament for the ministerial office within the local church (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9).

There is no ecclesiastical hierarchy, or church office that exists apart from or beyond that of the local assembly under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Each local church is a distinct "body of Christ" under the sovereign headship or Lordship of the Lord Jesus. Cf. 1 Cor. 12:27, "Now ye are the body of Christ [ὑμεῖς δέ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστου], and members in particular."

Second, the New Testament does not teach an "Apostolic Succession," therefore Baptists do not recognize any authority above the local assembly, except that of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and his inscripturated Word. Matthias replaced Judas to fulfill the prophetic Scripture (Psa. 109:8; Acts 1:15–26), but no one ever

succeeded the original Apostles of the New Testament era into that office.

Third, there is no extra–biblical authority that rules beyond the local assembly, such as presbyteries, consistories, councils, national synods, denominational conventions, or national churches.

The so–called "First Church Council" held at Jerusalem in Acts 15, although attended by the inspired Apostles, was actually a *conference* between two churches and possessed no authority beyond the agreement of the Apostles and messengers who attended.

Soul Liberty or Freedom of Conscience

Only the Word of God can command the conscience of the Believer. It is foreign to the teaching of the New Testament to bind the conscience by religious tradition, ecclesiastical decree, or denominational standards; or attempt to enforce religious convictions by means of the civil authorities. Church discipline, or exclusion from membership and its privileges, is the extremity of church action.

Further, church discipline must be for an offense described or referred to in Scripture, either directly stated or in principle, not simply a violation of religious tradition or prejudice. Finally, church discipline is not to be done by degrees, but by a definitive act of the membership.

The Nature and Character
of the New Testament Church

The two major issues which have had a pervasive influence in Christian thinking and practice are: first, the nature of the church and, second, the relation of the church to the kingdom of God. But first, two positive statements concerning the church as the "pillar and ground of the truth."

The Nature of the Church:
The Pillar and Ground of The Truth

1 Tim. 3:14–15. [14] These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: [15] But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how

thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The pillar [στῦλος] upholds and forms the support; the ground [ἑδραίωμα], is the base upon which the pillar stands; it is larger and forms a solid and broad foundation for the pillar. Paul uses both metaphorically for the institution of the New Testament Church in its relation to the truth of God and His Word. The purpose of the Church is to glorify God, and especially to glorify Him in the context of His truth!

Eph. 3:21. Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

1 Cor. 10:31. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

The church is corporately to seek the glory of God in its worship, obedience, evangelism, fellowship, ministry, discipline and love of the truth.

The church is to glorify God by manifesting his wisdom. It is through the New Testament church that God has designed to reveal his infinite wisdom to the powers of the universe

Eph. 3:2–11. [2] If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: [3] How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, [4] Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) [5] Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; [6] That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

[7] Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. [8] Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; [9] And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: [10] To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the

church the manifold wisdom of God, [11] According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

The church is to glorify God by reverence in her worship. She is to magnify his name and regulate her worship and public life according to his Word. The regulative principle of worship is that such worship is scriptural and reverent in principle, content and expression. The Lord is to be worshipped "in the beauty of holiness" (1 Chron. 16:29–30; Psa. 29:2; 96:9). That which is not scriptural in principle, or does not reflect the holy, righteous character of God, is not God–honoring worship.

The church is to glorify God by *upholding* his truth. The church is to *reverence* the truth of God in her worship, *declare* the truth in her ministry, *defend* the truth in her witness, *illustrate* the truth in her ordinances, *reflect* the truth in her life and *vindicate* the truth in her discipline. A church cannot glorify God if she does not do so in, by, through and because of the truth (Jn. 17:17; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Tim. 3:15).

The Purpose and Life of the Church

The New Testament Church is to glorify God in all things in obedience to the Scriptures. The purpose and function of the church is to preach the gospel, baptize and teach converts, seeking to bring these to spiritual maturity.

Matt. 28:18–20. [18] And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. [19] Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: [20] Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

The church's ministry is not one of programs and activities, but of the ministry of the Word for the evangelization of the unconverted and the instruction and edification of the converted! Anything else is unscriptural! The modern trend in entertainment and conformity to the world is decidedly unscriptural! Women teachers, women leading in worship, various societies or groups within the church are

counter to our Lord's commands! The life and function of the church are very simple and direct.

The New Testament Church: Neither Universal nor Invisible

It is commonly assumed by many that all true believers together constitute the "One True Church," the "Bride of Christ," The "Body of Christ," the "Universal, Invisible Church." The term "church" is ἐκκλησία, a called out assembly. Some would take the term, etymologically as ἐκ "out" and καλέω, "Called," and hold that "The Church" is composed of all those called out of the world into a spiritual body. A bare etymology can obscure truth!

Further, it is the teaching of Dispensational Theology that all believers are "baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit" upon conversion. This "Body of Christ" is held to be synonymous with the "Universal, Invisible Church." When the biblical evidence is carefully examined, it is clearly seen that it is our Lord who baptizes in or with the Holy Spirit, that such occurred at Pentecost, and is not an individual occurrence. E.g., it is common for some to speak of "The Church" as the composite of all Christians. Some would declare that they are serving "the Body of Christ" in a given area or time, implying that this "Body of Christ" is a universal entity comprised of all believers in a given time or location.

It is also common to hear some speak of "the Early Church," the "Medieval church" or "the Modern Church," implying that "The Church" is comprised of all believers. The term "Church" is held to be synonymous with Christianity itself.

Some presuppose such a theory because of religious teaching and tradition; others assume this theory from ignorance or lack of personal investigation; still others accept this view for the sake of convenience; finally, some receive such teaching as an integral part of either Reformed or Dispensational Theology. We hold that such a concept of the church is founded upon non–biblical and un–scriptural principles.

The Historical Background of This Theory

The philosophy that formed the basis for a universal, invisible church derived from the Greek philosopher, Plato (c. 428–348 BC).

Platonic philosophy considered certain general truths or concepts to be immutable. This was the theory of "Forms" or "Ideas." These "forms" or "ideas" were immutable truths or spiritual realities which existed in the real, immaterial or spiritual realm.

The material world consisted of the imperfect reflections of these "ideas" or "forms." *Thus, inherent in Platonic thought was a dualistic concept of the universe.* In the Greco–Roman civilization of the first century AD, a revival of Platonic thought occurred. This Neoplatonism was manifestly dualistic, separating sharply the spiritual or immaterial from the material or physical. Such Neoplatonic philosophy became the basis for Gnosticism, and through Gnostic heresy, entered the ranks of Christianity.[265]

From Romanism to Protestantism

Roman Catholicism holds to a "Universal, Visible Church," the "one true Church" apart from which there is no salvation.

The distinction between the material and immaterial, spiritual and physical, exists most strongly in the Protestant distinction between the "Universal, Invisible Church" (i.e., the ideal, the true, the pure church composed of all the elect who are truly regenerate, often called the "holy Catholic or Universal Church"), the *corpus Christi* and the "visible church" (i.e., the imperfect reflection of the true ideal, composed of both saved and unsaved), or the *corpus mixtum.*

Through a Dispensational hermeneutic the theory of a "Universal, Invisible Church" has permeated evangelical and Fundamental Christianity. Thus, within Reformed ranks and among

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[265] See K. L. Schmidt, Kittle's *TWDNT*, III, pp. 501–536, especially pp. 533–536.

Evangelical and most Fundamental groups, this theory is accepted almost without question as biblical truth.

<center>The "Universal, Invisible Church"
and the Baptists</center>

The *First London Baptist Confession* of 1644 was a local church document.

> Jesus Christ hath here on earth a [manifestation of His] spiritual kingdom, which is His Church,[266] whom He hath purchased and redeemed to Himself as a peculiar inheritance; which Church is a company of visible saints,[267] called and separated from the world by the word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of faith of the gospel, being baptized into that faith, and joined to the Lord, and each other, by mutual agreement in the practical enjoyment of the ordinances commanded by Christ their head and king.[268]

The first departure came with the [1677] 1689 *Second London Baptist Confession*. At this point, the Baptists took the Protestant or dualistic view, following the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Chapter 26, "Of the Church, Article 1, reads:

> 1. The catholic or universal church, which (with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) may be called invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

We hold that the term "Church" [ἐκκλησία] refers to an assembly, and that a "universal, invisible church" cannot have any of the characteristics demanded by this term or its use of the New Testament. A "Universal, Invisible Church" could have:

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[266] Some have held that the church and the kingdom of God are identical and coextensive. The church is *a part* of the kingdom of God.

[267] The 1644–46 Confession held to truth of the local church. The later 1689 confession adopted the Protestant idea through the *Westminster Confession* that the church is a catholic or universal entity comprised of all believers.

[268] *First London Baptist Confession*, 1644, Article XXXIII.

- No address or location, yet every church in the New Testament was located at a particular place (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:2).

- No pastor, elders or spiritual leadership that was functional or operational.

- No deacons or property, no distributions or administrative activity that is inherent in the very nature of a New Testament church.

- No organization, yet every church by virtue of its nature must have some organization, i.e., membership, leadership. Without some basic functional organization, there is properly no church.

- No active membership and so no functional or practical purpose within the body. Imagine a church with only an "inactive membership list." Some, at least, hold tenaciously to such a theory because it relieves them of their biblical responsibility to the local assembly.

- No discipline, yet a church cannot exit without both formative and corrective church discipline.

- No treasurer, no administration, no giving, no distributing to the necessity of the saints.

- No preaching, yet the ordinance of preaching is the primary Gospel ordinance of the New Testament church! No teaching for edification.

- No prayer meetings, indeed, no prayer at all. Imagine an ideal "church" totally without prayer.

- No commission, yet the New Testament as an institution, manifest in every local assembly has been given the great responsibility of the "Great Commission" (See Matt. 28:18–20).

- No missionary, indeed, no Gospel effort whatsoever. Every true Gospel church is missionary by it very nature.

- No ordination because of no need or purpose for leadership, yet it is found that "they ordained them elders in every church" (Acts 14:23).

- No responsibility, to one's self or to anyone else. No care. No sympathy. No relationship to others as is true in the essential nature of any church (l Cor. 12:26).

- No business meetings because of no business to discuss and no one with whom to discuss any business. The Jerusalem church held a business meeting before Pentecost (Acts 1:15–26).

- No function, nothing operational or actual.

- No worship, yet worship is to be a primary exercise and purpose for every church.

- No singing, yet every God–ordained institution–The Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple and the New Testament churches all engaged in singing. The Church in glory will sing.

- No purpose.

- No name, yet every church is identified by a name and a location.

- No assembling, and thus, no church.

The term "Church" is used in three senses" (1) Locally, (2) institutionally, which some would call the "universal, invisible church"[269] and (3) eschatologically. Cf. Heb. 12:22–24:

<blockquote>
[22] But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, [23] To the general assembly and church [πανηγύρει καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων][270] of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, [24] And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant,
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[269] When reference is made to **"The Church,"** it is used in the same sense as the institution of the jury," i.e., in an abstract sense. If referring to a particular jury, it is concrete and local.

[270] πανηγύρει, from πανήγυρις, the public and festive gathering of the whole people, a national gathering.

and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.

The New Testament Church and The Kingdom of God

The church and kingdom are neither synonymous nor co–extensive. The church is an institution within the greater entity of the kingdom of God. Both Roman and Protestant theology confuse "the Church," either visible or invisible, with the "kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of Christ." A thorough study will reveal that these final three—"Kingdom of God," "Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of Christ"—are ultimately synonymous terms.

Matthew uses the term "Kingdom of heaven" nineteen times. The other Synoptic Gospels are exactly parallel, but use the term "kingdom of God" in the very same places.

Romanism errs in viewing the church as a universal, visible entity, co–extensive with the State and its spiritual counterpart. If "the church" and "the kingdom" were synonymous and coextensive, then if one were not in the "true church" he would be excluded from the kingdom and thus unsaved.

Protestantism errs in believing the church to be composed of both saved and unsaved in its "visible" aspect, thus either identifying it with the parables of the kingdom (which emphasize the mixed nature of the kingdom into the good and the bad), or retreating to a "universal, invisible church" synonymous with a spiritual kingdom composed only of the truly regenerate. The essence of all such error is found in a radical departure from the New Testament usage of the term "church" [ἐκκλησία], a gathered assembly.

The New Testament church and the kingdom of God are closely related, yet distinct. A thorough study will reveal that the kingdom of God is a comprehensive term for the sovereign rule of God and the realm over which this rule extends. Scripturally, the kingdom has past (prophetical), present (historical) and future (eschatological) aspects. Thus, the kingdom of God is universal and includes all

believers. It also includes a realm in which the power of Divine rule is experienced. These qualities have led some to confuse the kingdom with the church.

The distinctions between the kingdom of God and the New Testament church may be seen by contrast:

- The kingdom of God is the inclusive, comprehensive, sovereign and redemptive work of God in the world; the church is an organism within this kingdom, proclaiming its message and furthering its advancement as it has been commissioned (Matt. 16:18–19; Acts 19:8; 20:24–25; 28:23, 31; Col. 4:11; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:4–5).

- Men "see" and "enter into" the kingdom of God by regeneration. This is quite apart from any direct connection with a church, but is concerned with the sovereign grace and power of God alone in its realization (Jn. 3:3, 5). Entrance into a New Testament church is upon the scriptural prerequisites of conversion, baptism and the vote of the church (Acts 2:41).

- The kingdom is universal; the church is necessarily local [i.e., a body, assembly, congregation. Such language would be utterly foreign in reference to the kingdom of God].

- The kingdom is a monarchy; the church is a democracy under the headship of Jesus Christ and the rule of his Word.

- There is a gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 9:35), but never a gospel of the church.

- The kingdom is an indistinct, unobservable entity (Lk. 17:20–21); the church is observable and quite distinct in all its characteristics (e.g., membership, leadership, ordinances, ministry, etc.).

It must be noted in church history that when the church and kingdom are considered synonymous, there are inevitable political, social and military implications. Both Romanism and Protestantism

have historically resorted to political power and even to the sword to enforce their dictums and defend their causes (Cf. 2 Cor. 10:3–5).

Baptist Antiquities

We do not contend for the antiquity of the name "Baptist," but for the continuity of New Testament principles, churches and persons.

Baptists, as we have noted, have existed under various names since the beginning of the Christian era. The one generic term throughout the ages has been the pejorative term, "Anabaptist," which our forefathers denied, declaring that Romish state Church paedobaptism was no true baptism at all!

The Montanists (2nd–8th Centuries)

The first distinct sect that arose to confront this departure from New Testament practice were the Montanists (c.156–172). Montanus was a native of Phyrgia and the protest took his name. Montanists only represented the maintenance of primitive Christianity and a strong reaction in discipline, morals and separatism as opposed to the corrupt and worldly churches of that time. They, therefore, did not actually originate with Montanus, but the contemporary movement of protest in the second century was identified with his name. This principle of identifying a group, and often an already–existing group, with the name of a prominent leader, has been often repeated in history (e.g., Novatians, Donatists, Paulicians, Waldenses, Petrobrusians, Henricians, Arnoldists, Lollards, Hussites, etc.

The Montanist movement was orthodox in its doctrine; it was distinct in its protest against the laxity in discipline, worldliness and lack of vital godliness. It was an attempt to restore (albeit with a rigorous and legalistic tendency) primitive Christianity in practice. Möller states:

> But Montanism, was, nevertheless, not a new form of Christianity; nor were the Montanists a new sect. On the contrary, Montanism was simply a reaction of the old, primitive church,

against the obvious tendency of the day, to strike a bargain with the world and arrange herself comfortably in it.[271]

The Montanists contended that any who had renounced his faith and his Lord under Roman persecution must be "rebaptized" before being re–admitted to church membership because he had renounced Christ. In this they consistently contended for a regenerate church membership and strong church discipline. They further baptized all who entered their fellowship, stating that baptism was meaningless without personal faith (hence, they were the first group to be known as "Anabaptist").

Historical evidence reveals that they held tenaciously to salvation by grace, and believer's baptism by immersion and were strongly opposed to any alliance with the world (including, therefore, the State).

The Novatians (3rd–8th Centuries)

The second distinct movement or sect during this era were the Novatians. They received their name from either Novatian, a leader in the church at Rome, or Novatus, a dissident from Cyprian's church at Carthage in North Africa, who joined forces with Novatian in Rome. The impetus for this movement was the same as the Montanists in the preceding century—laxness in discipline concerning the *lapsi*, or those who had compromised their faith under persecution, worldliness and the re–admission of those who had apostatized under persecution.

Note: The occasion of this movement was the election of Cornelius as bishop of Rome after the death of Fabian (c. 250). The majority of the church sided with Cornelius, who advocated re–admitting to fellowship and communion those who had apostatized under the persecution ordered by Emperor Decius. The minority, against his will, elected Novatian and withdrew fellowship from the majority, causing the assembly to split. Cornelius in Rome and Cyprian in

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[271] Möller, *Schaff–Herzog Encyclopedia*, II, p. 1562, as quoted by W. A. Jarrell, *Baptist Church Perpetuity*, p. 76.

Carthage wrote many damaging things against Novatian to discredit him.

The Novatians contended for the identical issues which the Montanists had before them: discipline, separation and a regenerate church membership.

The churches of the Novatian movement were "strict communionists" in accordance with their discipline. Because of this distinctive as "pure" churches, they were called the "Cathari" (from the Greek καθαρίζειν, "to purify) , or "Puritans." The name would continue down to the Protestant Reformation to characterize such groups, especially the Paulicians, of later centuries (i.e., Cathari, Cathars, Gazari, etc.).

The Novatian churches were strong throughout the Empire and prospered even during great persecution. In 331, Constantine, after failing to reconcile them to the Catholic Church, turned against them and they came under the baneful hand of the State church.

The doctrines of the Novatians were identical with the New Testament pattern. According, to Crispin, a French Romanist historian, they held tenaciously to four things: the purity of church members, i.e., a regenerated church membership; for the purity of church discipline; for the independence of each local congregation; and the baptism of those whose first baptism they had reason to doubt, hence their being labeled as "Anabaptists."[272] The learned Mosheim, while opposed to their rending the visible church, wrote:

> This sect cannot be charged with having corrupted the doctrine of Christianity by their opinions. There was no difference, in point of doctrine, between the Novatians and other Christians. What peculiarity distinguished them was, their refusing to re–admit to the communion of the church, those who, after baptism, had fallen into the commission of heinous crimes…They considered the Christian church as a society where virtue and innocence reigned universally…and, of consequence, they looked upon every society which re–admitted heinous offenders to its communion, as unworthy

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[272] See Orchard *Op. cit*., p. 87.

of the title of a true Christian church. It was from hence, also, that they assumed the title of *Cathari*, i.e., the pure…they obliged such as came over to them from the general body of Christians, to submit to be baptized a second time, as a necessary preparation for entering into their society.[273]

Novatianism and infant baptism were diametrically opposed to each other.…the Novatian churches were what are now called Baptist churches, adhering to the apostolic and primitive practice.[274]

Primitive British Christianity

Believers and churches true to the principles of the New Testament existed throughout Western Civilization. Romish "Christianity" did not put ashore in Britain until 597, with Austin under the power of Pope Gregory I. Britain was the home of many true believers and churches in the first six centuries. The great labors of Patrick were performed well over a century before the first elements of Romish religion were known in the British Isles. Historical evidence portrays Patrick as a New Testament Christian who held tenaciously to New Testament principles.

Primitive Christianity flourished in Wales and throughout Britain in the first six centuries. Archbishop Ussher (1581–1656), Prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, wrote: "We have the strongest reason to conclude that these islands enjoyed the blessings of a pure enlightened piety, such as our Savior Himself taught, unembarrassed by any of the idle tenets of the Romish Church."[275]

The Venerable Bede (c. 673–735), known as the "Father of English Church History," wrote: "The Britons preserved the faith

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[273] J. L. Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, I, p. 84.

[274] J. M. Cramp, *Baptist History*, pp. 58–59.

[275] Quoted by J. Davis, *History of the Welsh Baptists*, p. 18.

which they had received uncorrupted and entire in peace and tranquility until the time of the Emperor Diocletian."[276]

Jonathan Edwards, the great American theologian and philosopher, wrote: "A great part of the churches in England, Scotland and France, retained the ancient purity of doctrine and worship much longer than any others."[277]

The Donatists (4th–7th Centuries)

The center of the Donatist Controversy was Carthage in North Africa in the fourth and early fifth centuries (although elements had existed since the end of the Diocletian persecution in 305). The issue was essentially the same as the Montanist and Novatian Controversies that preceded it. The ultimate issue was the nature of the church and a regenerated membership.

The distinctive doctrines of the Donatists were identical with the Montanists and Novatians before them, the doctrines of primitive Christianity. Crespin, a French Romish historian, stated that they held: first, for the purity of church members, by asserting that none ought to be admitted into the church but such as are visibly true believers and true saints. Secondly, for purity of church discipline. Thirdly, for the independency of each church. Fourthly, they baptized again those whose first baptism they had reason to doubt. They were consequently termed rebaptizers and Anabaptists.[278]

The Donatists were the first sect or distinct New Testament group to receive openly and fully the baneful effects of the "Constantinian" principle of the State Church and so were the first to declare freedom of conscience or soul liberty. Donatus himself

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[276] Quoted by Jarrell, *Op. cit.*, 318. At the time of the Diocletian persecution, many fled into the mountains of Wales for refuge.

[277] Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, I, p. 596.

[278] As quoted by John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, I, p. 45; Note that is was stated both re the Novatians and the Donatists by Crespin, G. H. Orchard, *Concise History of the Baptists*, pp. 87.

declared to the imperial commissioners: "*Quid est imperatori cum ecclesia*?" ["What has the emperor to do with the Church?"]

That which distinguishes the present case is….the ideas concerning universal, inalienable human rights; concerning liberty of conscience; concerning the rights of free religious conviction.[279]

What was their resemblance or relationship to other ancient and more modern groups? Merivale stated: ''They represented the broad principle of the Montanists and Novatians."[280] Osiander wrote that "Our modern Anabaptists are the same as the Donatists of old."[281] Fuller, the Episcopal historian, declared that "The Anabaptists are the Donatists new dipt."[282] Heinrich Bullinger, the Reformer, wrote that "The Donatists and the Anabaptists held the same opinion."[283]

The Paulicians (7th–16th Centuries)

This most important and misunderstood people represented in many ways the very mainstream of primitive Christianity for centuries. They suffered more from the slanders of Rome than almost any other New Testament group.

Their origin has been variously explained. The term "Paulician" did not occur until the seventh century (c. 660). It was derived either from the name of the Apostle Paul, whose writings the Paulicians considered central, or from one of their leaders. This group represented an element of apostolic and primitive Christianity that had remained in the Taurus Mountains since the days of the New Testament. It was only brought to the light of history by its conflict with the Byzantine powers. Edward Gibbon, the author of the

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[279] Augustus Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, III, p. 258.

[280] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[281] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[282] *Ibid.*

[283] *Ibid.*

unequaled *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, wrote concerning these people:

Through Antioch and Palmyra the faith must have spread into Mesopotamia and Persia; and in those regions became the basis of the faith as it spread in the Taurus Mountains as far as Ararat. This was the primitive form of Christianity. The churches in the Taurus range of mountains formed a high recess or circular dam into which flowed the early Paulician faith to be caught and maintained for centuries, as it were, a backwater from the main for centuries.[284]

Adeny, another historian, wrote that the Paulicians were the survival of primitive Christianity and were Baptistic in nature:

Therefore, it is quite arguable that they should be regarded as representing the survival of a most primitive type of Christianity….Ancient Oriental Baptists, these people were in many respects Protestants before Protestantism.[285]

The great Lutheran historian, Mosheim, allowed their antiquity before the seventh century, stating that the movement was "revived" during that time:

A certain person, whose name was Constantine, revived, under the reign of Constans, the drooping faction of the Paulicians, which was now ready to expire; and propagated with great success its pestilential doctrines.[286]

Broadbent, the Brethren historian who traced their history from the Apostolic Era to the Protestant Reformation, stated:

…there were in those wide regions of Asia Minor and Armenia, around Mount Ararat and beyond the Euphrates, churches of baptized believers, disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, who kept the

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[284] Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, VI, p. 543, as quoted by John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, I, p. 49.

[285] Adeny, *The Greek and Roman Churches*, pp. 217, 219, as quoted by Christian, *Ibid*.

[286] Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, I, pp. 164–165.

teaching of the Apostles received from Christ and contained in the Scriptures, in an unbroken testimony from the first.[287]

The evangelistic labors of the Paulicians were phenomenal. Their missionaries reached all points of Europe and established themselves in Italy, the Piedmont, southern France and Holland. There were Paulician missionaries burned in England under the decree of Henry II in 1145.[288]

Augustus Neander, the great German Protestant historian, also added his testimony:

We find nothing at all in the doctrines of the Paulicians which would lead us to presume that they were an off–shoot from Manichaeism; on the other hand we find much which contradicts such a supposition.[289] Cf. *The Key of Truth*.

Note: See Christian, *Op. cit.*, p. 48–49. An ancient document called the *Key of Truth*, giving the doctrinal distinctives of the Paulicians, and often referred to in medieval history by them, was discovered in Armenia in 1891 by F. C. Coneybeare and subsequently published in 1898. This document has become final proof of their freeness from Manichaeism.

The Bogomili (9th–16th Centuries)

This people who dwelt in the Balkan peninsula in the areas of Bulgaria (hence the name Bulgars) and Bosnia (modern Yugoslavia) received their name either from one of their early leaders or from their character. *Bogomili* is a plural compound word denoting, roughly, "friends of God" (from *Bogu*, God, and *mili*, those who are dear or acceptable, or *moliti*, to pray, and so those who pray to God, or, yet again, from *Bogmiliu*, i.e., "Lord have mercy").[290]

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[287] E. H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 44.

[288] See B. Evans, *Early English Baptists*, I, pp. 10–12.

[289] Neander, *Op. cit.*, III, p. 244.

[290] See Neander, *Op. cit.*, VIII, p. 278; Broadbent, *Op. cit.*, pp. 57–58; Christian, *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

The Bogomili were from Paulician stock. The persecutions under Theadora (842) and the enforced migrations (970) transferred many Paulicians into the Balkan Peninsula in the ninth and tenth centuries. Their spiritual lineage and heritage, then, harkens back to the Paulicians.

Many Bogomili migrated into Western Europe, identifying with the Albigenses of Southern France, the Waldenses, Paterines and the Bohemian Brethren. Conversely, when the Inquisition bore down heavily upon the Albigenses, many of them fled to Bosnia. The Bogomili held close fraternal ties with the other New Testament groups and their influence extended from the Atlantic to the Black Sea, according to Sacchoni, the Inquisitor. Concerning this relationship and influence. Broadbent states:

Their relations with the older churches in Armenia and Asia minor, with the Albigenses in France, Waldenses and others in Italy, and Hussites, in Bohemia, show that there was a common ground of faith and practice which united them all. They formed a link, connecting the primitive churches in the Taurus Mountains of Asia Minor with similar ones in the Alps of Italy and France.[291]

Their numbers were evidently great and thus account for their power and influence. Baker states that "The Bogomilis of the twelfth century may have numbered as many as two million."[292] Dr. L. P. Brockett, an authority on the Bogomili, stated that as early as the twelfth century these churches numbered a converted, believing membership as large as that of the Baptists throughout the world today."[293]

The doctrines of the Bogomili have been maligned, assailed and, evidently, to a large degree, misrepresented. They were further accused of unnatural vices. This is noted in the English term "bugger," which was ultimately derived from "Bogomili," "Bulgar,"

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[291] Broadbent, *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

[292] Robert Baker, *Op. cit.*, p. 178.

[293] As quoted by J. B. Moody, *My Church*, p. 205.

the French "Bougres," and finally, "bugger." Such behavior is denied by association with respected groups. The Bogomili were alike exemplary. Broadbent defends them from history:

> There is no evidence to support the charge that these Christians, whether called Paulicians, Thonracks, Bulgarians, Bogomils, or otherwise, were guilty of wicked practices, and the accounts of their doctrines given by their enemies are unreliable. It was generally admitted even by these that their standard of life, their morals, their industry, were superior to those which prevailed around them; and it was largely this which attracted to them many who failed to find in the State Church that which satisfied them.[294]

The Albigenses (10th–16th Centuries)

This people had the horrible distinction of suffering more than any other under the heavy, bloody hand of Rome during the Crusades and Inquisition.[295] The name Albigenses does not occur historically until the twelfth century (the name itself is merely geographical, denoting the large province of Southern France, especially in the area of Toulouse and Albi). Before that time New Testament believers in that area were called *Vaudois, Cathari, Publicani*.

The origin and antiquity of the Albigenses, at least in part, dates back to Apostolic times. There were primitive churches in Gaul (France) that suffered during the pagan Roman persecutions (64–311) years prior to Constantine the Great (313–331). Novatian preachers had also established congregations in that area by the third century AD. During the Moorish invasion of Spain and Western France (ending in 732 with the Battle of Tours), many primitive *Navarri* and *Vaudois* from the Pyrenees region migrated into the Albi area and on into the Piedmont valleys of the Alps. Thus, the Albigenses had roots in primitive Christianity.

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[294] Broadbent, *Op. cit.*, 60.

[295] See J. C. L. Simonde De Sismondi, *History of the Crusades Against The Albigenses in the Thirteenth Century*.

G. H. Orchard traces these people back into earliest times and quotes Simondi to this effect:

> …diverse churches existed in the second century in Narbonne, Gaul. Simondi says that, Toulouse had scarcely ever been free of this heresy from its first foundation, which the fathers transmitted to their children from generation to generation, almost from the origin of Christianity.[296]

Concerning the relationship of Gaul to Spain and the common life of the *Navarri* with the *Vaudois* and later Albigenses, the French Protestant historian Allix stated: ''At an early period the churches of the North of Spain were always united with those of the south of France.''[297]

> As the Albigenses were essentially one with the Paulicians and Bogomili and closely associated with the Waldenses, they received the same slanders and charges of heresy. Archbishop Usher, Irish Protestant Prelate and Prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, stated that the charge of "Manichaeism on the Albigensian sect is evidently false."[298]

The charge of Luciferianism against them [demon worship, Satanism] is quite contradictory to their demeanor, doctrine and close fellowship with groups such as the Waldenses. The basis for such charges must be found in the medieval preoccupation with demonism which reached its peak fervor at that particular time.[299] Such charges were as common as that of Manichaeism.

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[296] Simondi, *History of the Crusades*, p. 6, as quoted by Orchard, *Op. cit.*, p. 163.

[297] Allix, *The Albigensian Church*, Chap. 11, p. 109, as quoted by Orchard, *Ibid.*, p. 166.

[298] Acland, *The Glorious Recovery of the Vaudois*, lxvii, as quoted by Christian, Loc. cit.

[299] See Paul Christian, *The History and Practice of Magic*, pp. 298–300, 320–324.

The Paterines (9th–13th Centuries)

These were established in Italy, and centered in the areas of Milan and Turin. The Paterine movement had its roots in primitive Christianity and came to prominence in the ninth through the thirteenth centuries, when it was dispersed or driven underground by a bloody Inquisition.

The name "Paterine" is of uncertain origin. It may be from the term meaning "vulgar," "low–bred," "illiterate," as most of these people and their preachers were originally of the lower and artisan classes; or it may be derived from a term meaning "sufferers" or "Martyrs." This group was known by its enemies variously as Cathari, Gezari, Chazars, Bogomili, Albigenses and Paulicians. Many of these terms had become generic because of their widespread and interrelated influence and missionary efforts.

Their history began in primitive Christianity. There is evidence that their roots were found in the Novatian movement (250). The New Testament believers and churches eventually became known toward the eighth or ninth centuries as Paterines. The French Protestant historian, Allix, stated: "It was by means of the Paterines that the truth was preserved in the dioceses of Milan and Turin."[300]

During the great Paulician migrations of the ninth and tenth centuries, many found refuge in both the Milan area and the Piedmont within Italy. This influx brought renewed power and attention to these people. Allix again noted: "Here, then, very truly, we have found a body of men in Italy, before the year 1026, five hundred years before the Reformation, who believed contrary to the opinions of the Church of Rome and who highly condemned their errors."[301]

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[300] *Rem. Pied. Ch*, Ch. 19, p. 175, as quoted by Orchard, *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

[301] Quoted by Benedict, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Paterines had a great missionary influence that spread throughout Europe, reaching to the coast of France on the West and even to Poland on the East and North. Arnold of Brescia, who had been in France among the Albigenses, returned (he was a native of this area), and preached with great effect in Italy.

The Church of Rome suffered great losses and so retaliated with a vengeance after the Albigense Crusade, and in 1220, under orders from Pope Honorius III, began a crusade against the Paterines. Thus, the thirteenth century witnessed the suppression and dispersion of these people throughout all Europe. Mosheim said that, "Indeed, they passed out of Italy and spread like an inundation throughout the European provinces but Germany in particular afforded an asylum, where they were called Gazari instead of Cathari."[302]

Medieval British Christianity (6th–14th Centuries)

Christianity entered Britain within thirty years after the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. There were churches established in England as early as 60 AD and in Wales from the year 63 AD. Britain contained churches, schools for ministers and the New Testament pattern of Christianity unhindered until the arrival of Austin in 597. This monk was sent under the authority of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) to "convert" the Britons. Romish religion was established officially at the Synod of Whitby in 664.

New Testament Christianity continued, often hidden, and always resistant, "…until the rise of the Lollards and Wyclifites, when it merged with these movements and saw the dawn of the Protestant Reformation. There is evidence that it continued to exist through the Dark Ages into the light of the Protestant Reformation. E. H. Broadbent wrote:

> In 596 (597), Austin, with forty Benedictine monks, sent by Pope Gregory I, landed in Kent. The two forms of missionary activity in the country, the older British and the newer, Roman, soon came into

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[302] Quoted by Benedict, *Ibid*., 18.

conflict….but the British order continued its resistance, until in the thirteenth century its remaining elements were absorbed into the Lollard movement.[303]

Jonathan Edwards maintained that these people kept, up a witness for true Christianity constantly throughout those Dark Ages in Britain:

> …great part of the land and France, retained churches in England, Scotland and France retained the ancient purity of doctrine and worship much longer than many others. In every age of this dark time, there appeared particular persons in all parts of Christendom who bore a testimony against the corruptions and tyranny of the Church of Rome…and pleaded for the ancient purity of doctrine and worship. God was pleased to maintain an uninterrupted succession of many witnesses through the whole time, in Germany, France, Britain and other countries; private persons and ministers, some magistrates and persons of great distinction, and there were numbers in every age who were persecuted and put to death for this testimony.[304]

There are two examples of ancient churches surviving, hidden, from the time of Wyclife to the Reformation and beyond. The Hill Cliffe Church had a continuous existence during this entire time. There is a recorded and documented history of a baptized congregation in the vicinity of Longworth, England, known as "The Church in the Hop Garden," which antedated Wycliffe and had a continuous history until 1935.[305]

The Lollards and Wycliffites (14th–15th Centuries)

The Lollard movement (1315–1400s) received its name either from Walter Lollard, a Waldense barb who had migrated from Holland, or Walter received his name from the movement. The term "Lollard" possesses several possibilities: a term of reproach of

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[303] Broadbent, *Op. cit.*, pp.35–36.

[304] Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, I, p. 596.

[305] John Stanley, *The Church in the Hop Garden*. London: The Kingsgate Press, n.d. 261 pp.

Belgic origin; a Latin term from *lolium*, ''tare,'' ''Babler, mutterer, mumbler,'' or a term from the Dutch, "lullen," to sing in a low tone (hence, the Middle Eng., "lullaby," to lull to sleep with a soft song).

> Note: Many of these barbs, being peddlers, tradesmen, artisans, or traveling minstrels, would ply their trade and also preach, or witness in a quiet manner when opportunity permitted. Their wares often included tracts and portions of Scripture; their songs contained Divine and Gospel truth; and their conversations were pointed to evangelize.

Walter Lollard, an eloquent preacher, came into England declaring the gospel until he was burned in 1320. His influence was so great that the King, at war in Ireland, was immediately recalled and counter–measures taken according to the gentle ways of the Constaninian principle—sword and fire. This was no false alarm, for one of their historians, a contemporary, declared that "more than half the people of England" had become followers of Lollard and Wycliffe before the end of the century!

After Walter Lollard, there arose the great British "Morning Star of the Reformation," John Wycliffe (1319–1384). He was a priest and scholar in the Romish church, but advanced into much New Testament truth before he died. He began to maintain that the Scriptures were the only rule of faith and practice, a more primitive concept of the church; he denied that infants would be damned without baptism; he stated that baptism without personal faith signified nothing; finally, he denied the power of the pope. Some thirty years after his death, at the Council of Constance (1415–1418), he was condemned, his bones exhumed and burned and his ashes scattered into the river Swift.

The historian Neal, no friend of the Baptists, wrote:

> If Wycliffe himself did not pursue the consequences of his own doctrine so far, yet many of his followers did, and were made Baptists, by it….All our historians agree in affirming that the doctrine of Wycliffe spread very extensively throughout the country; inasmuch that according to Knighton, a contemporary historian,

'More than half of the people of England embraced them and became his followers.'[306]

The resurgence of New Testament Christianity into the open in Britain could no longer remain completely hidden, and continued until the Protestant Reformation. Acknowledges Mosheim: "The Wyclifites, though obliged to keep concealed, had not been exterminated by one hundred and fifty years of persecution."[307] These Lollards denied infant baptism and all the other traditions of Rome and adhered to the principles of primitive Christianity after the New Testament pattern.

The Bohemian Brethren and Hussites (15th Century)

Bohemia, now known as Czechoslovakia, is a part of the Black forest and mountainous region of East–central Europe. This vast, secluded region had afforded refuge for dissenters ever since the Boii fled from the Roman yoke in pre–Christian times, hence the name Bohemia.

The history of Christianity in Bohemia dates back to very early times. The Apostle Paul preached in the area of Llyricum i.e., on the borders of the slavic people of the first century. Evidence reveals that Christianity entered this area in the first and second centuries. Some of the Vaudois, migrating from the Moorish invasion of Spain and France, evidently settled in this region (711–732). In the eighth and ninth centuries the Paulicians or Bogomili came into this region under the Theadoric persecution (842) and later upheavals (i.e., the 970 migration into Thrace and into Europe and the later persecutions under both Byzantium and Rome, in the llth–13th centuries). Gibbon, the historian, maintained that, "They affected an entrance into Europe by the German Caravans."[308] Albigenses entered this

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[306] Neal's *History of the Puritans*, III, pp. 329–330.

[307] Mosheim, as quoted by Christian, *Op. cit.*, p. 187.

[308] Gibbon, *Fall and Decline of the Roman Empire*, c. 54, as quoted by Orchard, *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

region during their dispersions from France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

From the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, the Bohemian Brethren, as they were known, maintained close fellowship and fraternal ties with the other New Testament groups on the Continent, especially the Waldenses.

The influence of Wycliffe and Huss was great. The writings of Wycliffe were brought into Bohemia from various possible sources. Wycliffe was tutor and close friend of Richard II, King of England, whose wife was Anne of Bohemia. Through this relationship, many students from Bohemia came to study in England at the University of Oxford. Perhaps by personal influence through Anne, but very evidently through the expelled students (one of whom was Jerome of Prague, the great leader and martyr in the movement), the writings and influence of Wycliffe reached Bohemia and John Huss at the University of Prague.

John Huss adopted many of Wycliffe's doctrines and New Testament principles. Huss taught and preached these doctrines and was subsequently condemned at the Council of Constance in 1415 and burned for heresy. Jerome was later also burned. There is evidence that the Bohemian Brethren (as the Lollards in England were identified with and joined to the Wyclifites) became identified with the Hussite movement until they were eventually one entity. This group applied to the Waldenses for ordination of their ministers and held a constant and close relationship, holding conferences and correspondence on a regular basis. Evidently, they, like the Wyclifites, went far beyond their leader, and became Baptists (and most probably under the influence of the Bohemian Brethren), as noted by Erasmus:

> The Hussites renounce all rites and ceremonies of the Catholic Church; they ridicule our doctrine and practice in both sacraments (i.e., they partook of both bread and wine, contrary to Romish practice, which excluded the laity from the cup); they deny orders and elect officers from among the laity; they receive no other rule than the Bible; they admit none into their communion until they are

dipped in water, or baptized; and they reckon one another without distinction in rank to be called brothers and sisters.[309]

The Waldenses (3rd–16th Centuries)

The Waldenses formed the largest and most prominent group during both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance era. It is erroneously supposed by some historians that the name was derived from Peter Waldo (c. 1170). A close examination of both the history of the movement and the derivation of the name, however, lead to a contrary conclusion. The name "Waldense" was derived from the word "valleys," and was used to designate those New Testament believers in the valleys of the Piedmont of Northwest Italy and the surrounding region.

The origin and antiquity of the Waldenses dates from the time of Constantine and Pope Sylvester (330). The valleys of the Piedmont had proven a haven for those who were dissidents from Romanism. These merged with indigenous churches that had existed there for generations. It is known that in the time of Montanus and Novatian, many found refuge in these valleys. The following testimony of reliable historians witnesses to the great antiquity of the Waldensean peoples and movement. George Stanley Faber:

> The evidence which I have now adduced distinctly proves, not only that the Waldenses and Albigenses existed anterior to Peter of Lyons; but….The Valensic churches were so ancient, that the remote commencement was placed, by their inquisitive enemies themselves, far beyond the memory of man.[310]

Theodore Beza, successor to John Calvin at Geneva and intimately knowledgeable concerning these people, declared:

> As for the Waldenses, I may be permitted to call them the very seed of the primitive and purer church, since–they are those that

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[309] Erasmus, as quoted by both Christian, *Op. cit.*, p. 94, and Orchard, *Op. cit.*, p. 238.

[310] G. S. Faber, *The Vallenses and Albienses*, as quoted by John T. Christian *Op. cit.*, P. 74.

have been upheld, as is abundantly manifest, by the wonderful providence of God, so that neither those endless storms and tempests by which the whole Christian world has been shaken for so many succeeding ages…nor those horrible persecutions which have been expressly raised against them, were ever able so far to prevail as to make them bend, or yield, a voluntary subjection to the Roman tyranny and idolatry.[311]

Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), the Lord Protector of England, was concerned about these people, whom he considered with highest regard. He commissioned Sir Samuel Morland to personally see about their welfare and stated himself that these were "the most ancient stock of pure religion."[312] Dr. Alex Muston speaks of these Christians of the Valleys in the following terms:

> The Vaudois of the Alps are, in our view, primitive Christians, or inheritors of the primitive Church, who have been preserved in these valleys from the alternatives successively introduced by the Church of Rome….It is not they who separated from Catholicism; but Catholicism which separated from them, in modifying the primitive worship.[313]

In the Reformation era, it was a common inquiry on the part of these people to their Protestant antagonists: "Where was your church before Luther or Calvin?" They believed themselves to be the successors of Apostolic Christianity, and according to the great Protestant historian Neander, this claim was not groundless:

> …it is not without some foundation of truth that the Waldenses of this period asserted the high antiquity of their sect, and maintained that from the time of the secularization of the Church—i.e., as they believed, from the time of Constantine's gift to the Roman Bishop

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[311] As given by Samuel Morland, *History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of the Piedmont*, p. 6; see John T. Christian, *Op. cit.*, pp. 73–74, for a slight variation in translation from Morland's version.

[312] Quoted by Ray, *Op. cit.*, p. 179.

[313] Alex Muston, *The Israel of. the Alps*, p. 1, as quoted by Ray, p. 184.

Sylvester—such an opposition finally broke forth for them, had been existing all along.[314]

The statement of Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711), a Dutch Reformed pastor and historian, as pertaining specifically to the Waldenses [previously quoted]:

Where was the Reformed [Calvinistic or Evangelical] church prior to Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin? ....Do you yet ask whether the Reformed [Calvinistic or Evangelical] Church existed prior to Luther? To this I reply that she was to be found among those whom we have just mentioned; that is, those residing in Piedmont among the Waldenses.[315]

Jonathan Edwards, the great American Protestant theologian and philosopher, in his *History of Redemption*, carefully traced the witness of truth during the dark times under Romish tyranny and wrote:

In every age of this, dark time, there appeared particular persons in all parts of Christendom, who bore a testimony against the corruptions and tyranny of the Church of Rome…God was pleased to maintain an uninterrupted succession of many witnesses through the whole time….

Besides these…there was a certain people called the Waldenses, who lived separately from the rest of the world and constantly bore a testimony against the Church of Rome through all this dark time…they served God in the ancient purity of His worship and never submitted to the church of Rome.[316]

E. H. Broadbent, the Brethren historian, diligently traced the avenues of primitive Christianity and stated:

In the Alpine valleys of Piedmont there had been for centuries congregations of believers calling themselves brethren, who came later to be widely known as Waldenses, or Vaudois….They traced their origin in those parts back to Apostolic times. Like many of the so–called Cathar, Paulician and other churches, these were not

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[314] Augustus Neander, *Op. cit.*, VIII, p. 352.

[315] Wilhelmus à Brakel, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 37–39.

[316] Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, I, p. 596.

"reformed," never having degenerated from the New Testament pattern as had the Roman, Greek and some others, but having always maintained, in varying degree, the Apostolic tradition. From the time of Constantine there had continued to be a succession of those who preached the gospel and founded churches, uninfluenced by the relations between Church and State existing at that time. This accounts for the large bodies of Christians, well–established in the Scriptures and free from idolatry and other evils prevailing in the dominant, professing Church, to be found in the…the Alpine valleys.[317]

The Anabaptists of the Reformation Era

At the dawn of the Protestant Reformation, thousands from the Black forest region welcomed Luther and the Protestant Reformers. These people, scattered over the whole of Europe, were known as "Anabaptists." They appeared in history developed, organized and in every country suddenly and simultaneously. Who were they? Whence was their origin?

It is true that there were some classified as "Anabaptists" during the Reformation who practiced infant baptism, and some later practiced sprinkling, but the main body of the Anabaptists held tenaciously to the New Testament pattern. After the Munster Rebellion, which was erroneously charged to the Anabaptists, the term was associated with all that was evil: heresy, schisms, civil disobedience and anarchy, and all gross immorality. It is to be remembered, then, that the term was used very loosely, and as a term of derision.

What was the origin of these people? How did they so quickly and mysteriously appear, developed and organized, so suddenly and simultaneously all over Europe and Britain at once, at the very dawn of the Protestant Reformation? Was there any relationship between these Anabaptists and former groups such as the Waldenses, Albigenses, Bohemian Brethren, Hussites, Wyclifites and others? There is great historical evidence that the Anabaptists of the

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[317] E. H. Broadbent, *Op. cit.*, pp. 89–90.

Reformation era were but the continuation of these former groups, known at that time under a different, yet ancient generic name.

John Lawrence von Mosheim, the "Father of Modern Church History," and a Lutheran stated:

> …the origin of…the Anabaptists…is lost in the remote depths of antiquity….Before the rise of Luther or Calvin, there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe, persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the modern Dutch Baptists.[318]

Robert Barclay, a Quaker historian, declared:

> …The rise of the Anabaptists took place prior to the Reformation of the Church of England, and there are also reasons for believing that on the Continent of Europe small, hidden societies, who have held many of the opinions of the Anabaptists, have existed from the time of the Apostles.[319]

Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer (who, although at first associated with the Swiss Anabaptists and their leaders, afterward turned against them and shed their innocent blood with Constantinian fervor), declared: "The institution of the Anabaptists is no novelty, but for 1300 years has caused great trouble to the Church."[320]

Dr. Ludwig Keller (Lutheran), the Royal Munster Archivist, and the greatest authority on the Munster Rebellion (having in his possession all documents and being well–studied in the Munster affair), wrote:

> There were Baptists long before the Munster rebellion….A contemporary, who was not a Baptist has this testimony concerning the beginning of the movement: "The Anabaptist movement was so rapid that the presence of Baptist views was speedily discoverable in all parts of the land."….The more I examine the documents of that

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[318] Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, II, pp. 119–120. See also the note of Jarrell, *Baptist Church Perpetuity*, pp. 310–311.

[319] Barclay, Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth, pp. 11–12, as quoted by Roy Mason, *The Church That Jesus Built*, p.107.

[320] As quoted by Armitage, *The History of the Baptists*, p. 422.

time, at my command, the more I am astonished at the extent of the diffusion of Anabaptist views, an extent of which no other investigator has any knowledge….Many Baptist Churches cannot be innumerated for the reason that their existence was a profound secret….It is not to be doubted, also, that in the progress of scientific invention still further traces will be brought to light….Much rather can it be proved that in the lands mentioned Baptist churches existed for many decades and even centuries.[321]

Goebel, a German Protestant historian, perceived the inherent connection between the Waldenses and the later Anabaptists: "Wherever in Germany before the Reformation, there were large bodies of Waldenses, there during the Reformation large bodies of Anabaptists sprang up."[322]

Thus, there is abundant documented evidence that the Anabaptist movement of the Reformation era was but the contemporary expression of New Testament Christianity that had been so constantly manifested since the Apostolic era. Doctrine and faithfulness to the New Testament pattern are essential; names are incidental.

<div align="center">Luther, Calvin and Anglicans on Baptism.</div>

These three represent the three major movements which came from the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century: Lutherans, Reformed and Anglican:

Martin Luther in the early days of the Reformation, was convinced of believer's baptism by immersion, but turned from it to the Constantinian principle of the state church, as did Zwingli.

The term baptism is Greek, and may be rendered dipping, as when we dip something in water, so that it is covered all over. And although the custom is now abolished amongst many, for they do not dip children, but only pour on a little water, yet they ought to be

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[321] Keller, *Preussische Jahrbucher*, Sept., 1882, translated by Henry Burrage in *Bap. Quart. Rev*, vol. 7, pp. 28–33, as quoted. by Jarrell, *Op. cit*., pp. 303–305.

[322] Goebel, *History of the Christian Life in the Rhine Provinces*, as quoted by Armitage, Op. cit., p 304.

wholly immersed and immediately withdrawn. For this the etymology of the term seems to demand.

And the Germans also call baptism *taufe,* from depth, which in their language they call *tiefe*, because it is fit that those who are baptized should be deeply immersed. And certainly, if you look at what baptism signifies, you will see that the same is required. For it signifies this, that the old man and our sinful nature, which consists of flesh and blood, are totally immersed by divine grace, which we will point out more fully. The mode of baptizing, therefore, necessarily corresponded with the significance of baptism, that it might set forth a certain and full sign of it.[323]

The great Genevan Reformer, John Calvin wrote in his *Institutes*:

Whether the person baptized is to be wholly immersed, and that once or thrice, or whether he is only to be sprinkled with water, is not of the least consequence: churches should be at liberty to adopt either, according to the diversity of climates, although it is evident that the term baptize means to immerse, and that this was the form used by the primitive church.[324]

Calvin's influence, through the English Reformation and Puritanism, marked the gradual transition from immersion to sprinkling.

Archbishop Whately, Anglican:

Except upon extraordinary occasions, baptism was seldom, or, perhaps, never, administered for the first four centuries, but by immersion or dipping. Nor is aspersion or sprinkling ordinarily used to this day… England was the last place where it was received, though it has never obtained so far as to be enjoined; dipping having been always prescribed by the rubric.[325]

Dean Stanley, preeminent Anglican prelate and scholar:

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[323] Martin Luther, *Krip. Tyrol. Anab*., p. 17, as quoted by Thomas Armitage*, History of the Baptists*, p. 398.

[324] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chap. xv., section 19.

[325] Quoted by Richard B. Cook, *The Story of the Baptists*, p. 31.

For the first thirteen centuries, the almost universal practice of baptism was that of which we read in the New Testament, and which is the very meaning of the word—"baptize"—those who were baptized were plunged, submerged, immersed into the water. That practice is still, as we have seen, continued in Eastern Churches. In the Western Church it still lingers amongst Roman Catholics, in the solitary instance of the Cathedral of Milan …It lasted long into the Middle Ages… Even in the Church of England it is still observed in theory. Elizabeth and Edward the Sixth were both immersed. The rubric in the Public Baptism for Infants, enjoins that, unless for special cases, they are to be dipped, not sprinkled. But in practice it gave way since the beginning of the seventeenth century.[326]

Thus, it is witnessed by history—even by Romish and Protestant historians—that the teaching of the New Testament is believer's baptism by immersion, any other mode being unscriptural and a product of expediency, tradition or prejudice.

Baptists are the representatives of New Testament Christianity in the world. We have a glorious biblical and historical heritage which must not be forgotten.

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[326] In *Nineteenth Century*, October, 1879, as quoted by Richard B. Cook, *Ibid*., pp. 30–31.

Why We do not use
the Invitational System

Introduction

This chapter addresses the use of the invitational system. While we do not doubt the sincerity and earnest love for Christ, the souls of men and the good of God's people on the part of those who utilize such methods, yet we lovingly disagree with them on scriptural grounds. While we, for good and necessary biblical and doctrinal reasons, repudiate the system, we love our Christian brethren and seek the unity which is described in Psalm 133. May the Lord use this paper to cause our brothers in Christ and in the ministry to reconsider and reevaluate their evangelistic methodology, if they resort to such methods. Unscriptural methods, unless they are utterly incoherent, derive from unscriptural tradition which in turn derives from unscriptural doctrine.

The Invitational System Defined and Described

The invitational system, as practiced in the past two centuries, is a relatively recent innovation, absolutely unknown for over 1800 years. That prior time included eras of the greatest revivals and spiritual awakenings ever witnessed in Christian history when untold thousands were converted and the moral climate of countries and societies were transformed by the power of the gospel.

This system is inclusive of several well–established entities, such as the "altar call," the "anxious seat," the "mourner's bench," the "call for decisions,"[327] "rededication," and the idea that evangelistic results can be immediately known with a given degree of certainty by physical movement and emotional demonstration. This idea of "coming forward" at the conclusion of a religious service serves a utilitarian purpose of being the proper response to

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[327] See "The Origin of the Call for Decisions," Albert B. Dodd, a reprint of the 1847 article from the *Princeton Review*. *The Banner of Truth Magazine*, December, 1963, pp. 9–15.

almost any religious concern. This "Old Time Religion" is not so old as not to be a relatively new and essential departure from the biblical and historic faith which experienced times of great blessing without such for over 1800 years.

This system has become so entrenched in modern Evangelical Christianity that "coming forward" during "the invitation" is often held to be synonymous with coming to Christ.[328] This has resulted in what some have termed "decisional regeneration."[329]

Decisional regeneration does not bring men to Christ any more than does baptismal regeneration. It may be true that some are converted under such preaching, but this is in spite of the false methods used, not because of them. The Bible is clear in its declaration that only by the Spirit of God can men be "born again." True repentance and saving faith come as the result of the new birth and are never the cause of the great change.[330]

One, however, may come to the "altar" and never find Christ. Indeed, this very action may prove to be a hindrance to true conversion. Spurious conversions are numerous:

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[328] Billy Graham in the London Crusade of 1966, "Don't let distance keep you from Christ. It's a long way, but Christ went all the way to the cross because he loved you. Certainly you can come these few steps and give your life to him." Quoted by Iain Murray, *The Invitation System*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1973, p. 5.

"You ask me why I am asking you to come forward? It is an act of your will in receiving Christ as Savior," Billy Graham, *God in the Garden*, a record of the Madison Square Garden Billy Graham Crusade.

[329] Harold J. Ockenga, "Some Reformed theologians…teach that regeneration by the Holy Spirit precedes conversion. The evangelical position is that regeneration is conditioned upon repentance, confession and faith." Quoted by Iain Murray, *The Invitation System*, p. 18.

[330] James E. Adams, *Decisional Regeneration*. Canton, GA: Free Grace Publications, 1983, 16 pp.

There is often a return to "the altar" for a renewed sense of religious feeling. "The consequent peace…is mistaken for spiritual joy. Self–love, of course, prompts a spurious gratitude and praise for it; and causes the heart to love the scenes, the means and the companions of its delicious intoxication. And now we have the "stony ground hearers" reproduced (Matt. 13:20–21). The dead heart, having no true vitality to generate spiritual emotion from within, sinks into a chill and dreary vacuity when alone; and thus it is all the more prone, for a while, to crave a return to the place and the scenes where the exhilarating appliances were enjoyed.[331]

I shall fail at this time in setting forth the gospel if I shall lead anybody to think that he can get salvation by going to the church or to the meeting–house or going to a minister, or going into an enquiry room, or going to a penitent form. No, we are to go nowhere but to Jesus. You, as you are, are to come to Christ as he is, and the promise is that on your coming to him he will give you rest….You see there are two persons. Let everybody else vanish, and let those two be left alone, to transact heavenly business with each other.[332]

The "altar call" is used for various purposes. Some are called forward for salvation, for baptism, for "rededication," for the call for some kind of religious service or ministry, or for some other allegedly spiritual reason or concern, such as praying for a person or a given religious situation or blessing, or for freedom from some kind of addiction. But coming to the "old fashion altar" and coming to Christ for any reason are two entirely different things—and these must never be confused.

Personal Experience

This writer was reared in such a religious environment and in his early days as a professing believer "went forward" for various reasons both before and after his conversion. Having endured hundreds of "altar calls" over many years as a child, a youth, a Bible College student and as a pastor, he is somewhat qualified to

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[331] Robert L. Dabney, *Discussions Theological and Evangelical*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967 reprint. Vol. I, p. 564.

[332] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, Vol. 1882, pp. 649–650.

comment on the unscriptural nature of this system. Once he learned of its unscriptural character, its history of development and personally witnessed the damage it has caused, he both ceased such activity and has taken an active stand against this unscriptural practice.

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A Word of Clarification:
Sinners Invited to Christ, Not to the Front

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A word of clarification is necessary. While opposing the invitational system, we do *not* oppose inviting sinners to Christ, yea, urging them to Christ *during* the preaching. We firmly declare the free offer of the gospel to any and all men without exception (Matt. 11:28–30; Jn. 3:16; Acts 2:36–39; 17:30–31; 1 Tim. 2:1–4). What we do oppose is the idea that inviting sinners to come to the front of a church building is identical with or might be confused with inviting them to Christ. We would agree with C. H. Spurgeon, who stated:

> Oh, that you would trust in the Lord Jesus!…Did I hear you say, "I will pray about it?" Better trust at once. Pray as much as you like after you have trusted, but what is the good of unbelieving prayers? "I will talk with a godly man after the service." I charge you first trust in Jesus… "I should like to go into the enquiry room." I dare say you would, but we are not willing to pander to popular superstition. We fear that in those rooms men are warmed into a fictitious confidence. Very few of the supposed converts of enquiry rooms turn out well. Go to your God at once, even where you are now. Cast yourself on Christ, now, at once; ere you stir an inch! In God's name I charge you, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ…![333]

We are also opposed to the unscriptural practice of urging believers to the front or "altar" for any given alleged spiritual purpose or concern.

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[333] C. H. Spurgeon, *Ibid.*, 1884, p. 456.

The History of the Invitational System

The Beginnings: The Kentucky Frontier Revivals

The idea of inviting or urging sinners or others to the front of a church building or to a designated place for an alleged spiritual reason is a relatively recent innovation in the history of Christianity. The earliest examples of what has become known as the "invitation system" can be traced to the Kentucky Frontier Revivals of the era 1798–1806 and the Methodist camp meetings. About l793 revivals broke out in various parts of these United States and spread along the western border of the American frontier. As with most revivals, there were physical demonstrations such as ecstasies, "jerks" [physical convulsions], swooning, fainting or falling down. The Presbyterians and Baptists, both being strongly Calvinistic and more reverent, sought to discourage such emotional extremes in their meetings, but the Methodists began to promote such. These "fallings" were seen to be the immediate work of the Spirit and identified those who were "saved."

The Methodists desired to have an immediate counting of their "converts" by such means, as they were defensive of their Arminian theology, especially in the context of the prevailing Calvinism.[334] In the chaos of such meetings, it was soon determined that it was more orderly to have people "come to the altar" to be counseled, prayed for and counted. In their frontier camp meetings, marked by emotional extremes, and lasting for days, a certain part of ground was marked out as "the altar" for this purpose. This seems to have had its origin in their Methodist Episcopal background, in which the front of the church building was designated as "the altar," the place where the sacraments were dispensed by an Episcopal priest.

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[334] Calvinistic theology was preeminent during this era, and no one thought that Arminianism would ever produce such converts as the strong Calvinistic gospel preaching. "Before 1800, as Isaac Backus knew, any argument that Arminianism was more effective in evangelism than Calvinism would have been regarded as absurd." Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994, p. 188.

This was an altogether new innovation. George Whitefield the Calvinist, John Wesley the Arminian, and the first Methodist preachers never resorted to such, not even in counting converts. As itinerate evangelists, they preached and left the results to God. They did note in their diaries that many were often greatly affected with weeping, fell down under deep conviction, and at times emotionalism broke through in their meetings, but such outbursts were neither promoted nor encouraged. Our Baptist forefathers, some of the most evangelistic preachers in the Colonies and the early years of our Republic, neither knew of nor used the invitational system.

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The Advent of Charles G. Finney
and The "New Measures"

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Charles G. Finney, a lawyer, became a Presbyterian evangelist in the 1820s almost immediately upon his conversion, and took the "altar call," "anxious seat" and "mourner's bench" from the Methodists and combined it with his Pelagian doctrine or "New Haven Theology," and these became the "New Measures" which have since increasingly characterized American evangelicalism and its evangelism.[335]

> Note: The use of the "New Measures" split the Presbyterians into the "Old School," or orthodox Calvinists who held to the Westminster Standards, and the "New School," or those who used the "New Measures" and adopted the "Taylorism" or "New Haven Theology" of a Semi–Pelagian system, revivalism, moral reform and interdenominational cooperation. See W. A. Hoffecker, "New School Theology," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990. pp. 767–768.

> "New Haven Theology," Taylorism," or "The New Divinity" was the Pelagian system of plenary human ability taught in New England, espoused, refined and popularized by Charles G. Finney. See W. R.

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[335] For a brief history of the "altar call" and the birth of revivalism, see Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, pp. 163–190.

Downing, *Lectures on Calvinism and Arminianism*. Morgan Hill, CA: P.I.R.S. Publications. 2000, pp. 288–290, 320, 324–325, 327–333.

Finney was *not* an Arminian. He was a Pelagian, and accordingly reduced his evangelism to a psychological approach. To Finney, and to his followers, salvation was simply a redirecting of the will, not a change of nature necessarily beginning with regeneration.

The idea of simply redirecting the will was based upon the Pelagian idea that command implied ability.

> The doctrine upon which I insisted, that the command to obey God implied the power to do so, created in some places considerable opposition at first...the Spirit's influences are those of teaching, persuading, convicting and, of course, a moral influence, I was regarded by many as teaching new and strange doctrines.[336]

This marked the beginning of the idea of preaching to persuade the will rather than challenge the mind with Divine truth to reach the conscience. Intelligent, biblical preaching would eventually give way to a more psychological and emotional approach.

> Note: Arminianism holds that man has a fallen, sinful nature, and that the will of man is brought by the Holy Spirit to a given place where it can either choose or refuse the gospel message—prevenient grace. Pelagianism holds that man does *not* have a fallen, sinful nature and thus man possesses a will which is entirely free [plenary human ability] and thus that man possesses the power of contrary choice. Every man's will is allegedly as free as that of unfallen Adam. This is a denial of the imputation of Adam's sin [the immediate imputation of Adam's sin—original sin] and also a denial of the inheritance of Adam's fallen nature [mediate imputation]. Speaking of his pastor, George W. Gale, Finney stated about Gale's Calvinistic convictions: "...in short he held all those doctrines that logically flow from the fact of a nature sinful in itself....These doctrines I could not receive. I could not receive his views on the subject of atonement, regeneration, faith, repentance, the slavery of the will, or any of the kindred doctrines." Charles G. Finney, *Autobiography*, p. 46.

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[336] Charles G. Finney, *Autobiography*, p. 157.

Man, according to Finney, had the power to change his own heart, i.e., the Pelagian doctrine of free will. In Mr. Finney's own words:

> …in our investigations henceforth, let it be understood, that I use regeneration and conversion as synonymous terms.
>
> We have said that regeneration is synonymous, in the Bible, with a new heart. But sinners are required to make to themselves a new heart, which they could not do, if they were not active in this change. If the work is a work of God, in such a sense, that he must first regenerate the heart or soul before the agency of the sinner begins, it were absurd and unjust to require him to make to himself a new heart…
>
> Regeneration is ascribed to man in the gospel, which it could not be, if the term were designed to express only the agency of the Holy Spirit….
>
> ….Regeneration, to have the characteristics ascribed to it in the Bible, must consist in a change in the attitude of the will, or a change in its ultimate choice, intention, or preference…
>
> …the subject is active in regeneration…regeneration consists in the sinner changing his ultimate choice, intention, preference….Of course the subject of regeneration must be an agent in the work.[337]
>
> Note: Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971, p. 285. Finney equated regeneration at times with a moral persuasive influence upon the mind, with sanctification, and with conversion. This confusion resulted from his Pelagian and Perfectionist presuppositions. See B. B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, Vol. VIII. *Perfectionism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981, pp. 3–215.

The emergence of Charles G. Finney, his Pelagian doctrine of human ability, and defective ideas concerning God, man, salvation, grace, society and morality, were largely a reflection of various forces which at that critical point characterized the American mind–set. There were struggles rising with national identity: French

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[337] *Ibid.*, pp. 365–371.

Skepticism, German Rationalism, Hegelian philosophy, "Manifest Destiny;" and burgeoning social and political issues such as the abolition of slavery, women's rights and the Temperance Movement.

>…Finney's moralistic impulse envisioned a church that was in large measure an agency of personal and social reform rather than the institution in which the means of grace…are made available to believers who then take the Gospel to the world. In the nineteenth century, the evangelical movement became increasingly identified with political causes—from abolition of slavery and child labor legislation to women's rights and the prohibition of alcohol. At the turn of the century, with an influx of Roman Catholic immigrants already making many American Protestants a bit uneasy, secularism began to pry the fingers of the Protestant establishment from the institutions (colleges, hospitals, charitable organizations) they had created and sustained.

>In a desperate effort at regaining this institutional power and the glory of "Christian America" [a vision that is always powerful in the imagination, but, after the disintegration of Puritan New England, elusive], the turn–of–the–century Protestant establishment launched moral campaigns to "Americanize" immigrants, enforce moral instruction and "character education." Evangelists pitched their American gospel in terms of its practical usefulness to the individual and the nation.

>That is why Finney is so popular. He is the tallest marker in the shift from Reformation orthodoxy, evident in the Great Awakening (under Edwards and Whitefield) to Arminian (indeed, even Pelagian) revivalism, evident from the Second Great Awakening to the present.[338]

The invitational system has since become entrenched in American Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism. It has become in many instances such an inherent part of evangelism that many believe no one can be saved without or apart from an "altar call." Not to give an "invitation" is now thought by most to be non–evangelistic or even anti–evangelistic! It has been the experience of this author to be asked at times how people can be saved without an "altar call." Once a well–meaning deacon declared, "If you had

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[338] Michael Horton, *Premise*, Vol. II, Number 3, March 27, 1995.

given an altar call after that message, I *know* that people would have been saved!"

The Unscriptural Nature
of the Invitational System

The Invitational System: No Scriptural Precedent

The invitational system is unscriptural. There is absolutely no precedent in Scripture for this practice. It is not only unscriptural; it is anti–scriptural, for it is based upon unscriptural principles of false doctrine which derive from a defective view of God, grace, salvation and man's condition by nature, the belief in a sacrosanct place within a church building, the idea that a minister has the right to legitimately demand an immediate, public "religious decision" from his hearers, and equating physical movement with a spiritual response to an allegedly spiritual command. No one who believes the Scriptures to be the inscripturated Word of God should have anything to do with such an unscriptural system.

Neither our Lord nor his Apostles ever resorted to such a practice. The exhortation was within the confines of the preached message (Matt. 11:28–30; Jn. 6:28–29, 37; Acts 2:36–41; 17:30–34). This practice of exhorting sinners to Christ in the preaching of the gospel has been the practice of true gospel ministers since the days of the New Testament. We cannot improve upon the ministry of our Lord or his inspired Apostles—we cannot improve upon biblical evangelism and we dare not modify the inspired pattern.

Charles G. Finney and His Defense
of The "New Measures"

Charles G. Finney never pretended that his "New Measures" were scriptural. He knew better. He simply based his innovations on psychology [He termed psychology "the philosophy of the human mind"]. When attempting to justify the use of the "anxious seat" or "mourner's bench," he states, "What is the great objection? I cannot see it. The design of the anxious seat is undoubtedly philosophical,

and according to the laws of mind."[339] Writing further about the anxious seat, he states:

When a person is seriously troubled in mind, everybody knows there is a powerful tendency to conceal it. When a person is borne down with a sense of his condition, if you can get him willing to have it known, if you can get him to break away from the chains of pride, you have gained an important point towards his conversion. This is agreeable to the philosophy of the human mind.[340]

Thus, the use of the "altar call" was to put pressure on the individual and either bring him to make a public commitment or reveal his hypocrisy.

…Preach to…[the sinner], and, at the moment, he thinks he is willing to do anything; he thinks he is determined to serve the Lord; but bring him to the test; call on him to do one thing, to take one step, that shall identify him with the people of God or cross his pride, and his pride comes up, and he refuses; his delusion is brought out, and he finds himself a lost sinner still; whereas, if you had not done it, he might have gone away flattering himself that he was a Christian. If you say to him: "There is the anxious seat, come out and avow your determination to be on the Lord's side," and if he is not willing to do so small a thing as that, then he is not willing to do anything, and there he is, brought out before his own conscience. It uncovers the delusion of the human heart, and prevents a great many spurious conversions, by showing those who might otherwise imagine themselves willing to do anything for Christ that in fact they are willing to do nothing.[341]

Baptism and the Anxious Seat

Unable to connect his "New Measures" to Scripture, he came as close as he could, not with the invitations to come to Christ in Scripture, but with the ordinance of baptism.

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[339] Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*. New York: Fleming H. Revell, n.d., p. 253.

[340] *Ibid*.

[341] *Ibid*., pp. 264–265.

The Church has always felt it necessary to have something of the kind to answer this very purpose. In the days of the apostles baptism answered this purpose. The Gospel was preached to the people, and then all those who were willing to be on the side of Christ were called on to be baptized. It held the precise place that the anxious seat does now, as a public manifestation of a determination to be a Christian.[342]

Billy Graham and his Defense
of the Invitational System

The greatest modern purveyor of the invitational system, Evangelist Billy Graham, has tried to base the invitational system on both Scripture and psychology. As to Scripture, he has used passages such as Matthew 10:32 ["Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven"], which can hardly refer to this practice. His attempt at scriptural justification lacks any substance or coherency.

Note: Iain Murray, *The Invitational System*, pp. 8–9. Matt. 11:28 refers to our Lord's call for sinners to come to him, not to "the altar." Rev. 3:20 refers to our Lord seeking fellowship and communion in an apostate church, not standing at the door of the sinner's heart seeking entrance for salvation.

The psychological defense is the determining issue with Billy Graham, as it was with Charles G. Finney. Graham knew full well of the psychological implications of the "altar call," and he and his staff have quoted various philosophers and psychologists as to the need for emotional release and public demonstration to seal the religious decision. Some of the names mentioned in particular are William James, William Sargant, George Target and Gordon Allport.

Graham stated, "Many psychologists would say that it [the altar call] is psychologically sound. One of the reasons why our films and television dramas usually have a bad effect is because they stir the

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[342] Loc. cit.

emotion to a high pitch and do not offer any practical outlet for action." *The Christian*, July 8, 1966, p. 24, as quoted in Iain Murray, *The Invitation System*, p. 12. Leighton Ford, of the Billy Graham evangelistic staff in *The Christian Persuader*: "I am convinced that giving some kind of public invitation to come to Christ is not only theologically correct, but also emotionally sound. Men need this opportunity for expression…impression without expression can lead to depression."[343]

Referring in general to psychiatrists, psychologists and their ideas, one of Graham's associates, Curtis Mitchell, commented:

A Chicago psychologist once said, "This generation needs converting more than any generation in history."

A famous British psychologist recently said, "We are so psychologically constituted as to need converting, and if the church fails to convert people, we psychologists are going to have to do it." So even psychology is recognizing the need for man to be converted. "The Bible teaches that you must be converted to enter heaven. The psychiatrist teaches that you must be converted in order to get the most out of life."

….Wherever he is, if a man goes forward, either in fact or in spirit, the result is a change. What takes place? Psychologists, psychiatrists, theologians and evangelists have all tried to explain.[344]

The Effects and Legacy of Charles G. Finney

The advent of Charles G. Finney marks the watershed in American Evangelical Christianity and its approach to evangelism. It would never be the same. Finney came to prominence in a time of true revival when scores of great men—men such as Isaac Backus, Asahel Nettleton, Archibald Alexander, Edward D. Griffin, Edward

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[343] *Ibid.*, pp. 11–16.

[344] Curtis Mitchell, *Those Who Came Forward*. The World's Work, Ltd., 1966, p. 22, as quoted by Iain Murray, *The Invitation System*, pp. 14–15.

Payson—all Calvinistic in conviction and possessing a true passion for the gospel and a love of men's souls, had been laboring successfully for years and had seen the beginnings and glorious fullness of the "Second Great Awakening." But the history has been re–written and the truth concealed from succeeding generations. With Finney came "revivalism," and with "revivalism" came division and decline.

> …there can be no question that by 1900 the impression was almost universal that Charles Grandison Finney had introduced revivals in nineteenth–century America and that his usefulness so exceeded that of all who went before him that there was little evangelistic endeavour before him that deserved serious attention. The belief has been repeated so often that it is commonly regarded as an unquestionable fact.

> Billy Graham, for instance, writes of Finney: "Through his Spirit-filled ministry, uncounted thousands came to know Christ in the nineteenth century, resulting in one of the great periods of revival in the history of America." Another modern writer claims: "When Charles Finney was converted and filled with the Holy Ghost the American churches were in a sickly state. Most churches were either Hyper–Calvinist or Universalist…apathy prevailed."[345]

Such statements are historically and factually false and misleading. Finney's advent did not signal the beginning of these revivals, but rather their demise.

Sola Scriptura: The Deciding Issue

Sola Scriptura, or "Scripture Alone" has always been the standard and cry of true Christianity. That the invitational system is unscriptural ought to settle the issue once–for–all, but some, even among those inclined toward sovereign grace, resort to such means

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[345] Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, pp. 297–298. Murray's work does much to correct this revisionist view. Finney himself constantly denounced the great and useful Calvinistic preachers of his day in his preaching, witnessed some of them being put out of their pulpits due to his inflammatory influence and measures, and later further promoted such fiction in his *Autobiography*.

at times because of religious tradition, religious and psychological pressure from contemporaries, the emotionally–charged atmosphere of a given meeting or a hybrid approach to evangelism and Christian commitment. This accommodation to unscriptural, merely traditional practices ought to humble those have prided themselves in being scriptural in all things!

> …the cry of *Sola Scriptura* is more often an indication of good intention than it is fact. [Evangelical Christianity]…is saturated with doctrine and practices which have no Biblical foundation. Many teachings and habits touching the Gospel are as much the products of human invention and tradition as the indulgences of Tetzel. And certain doctrines in our midst are quite as dangerous.[346]

The Psychological Nature
of The Invitational System

Unregenerate Man
Cannot Rise above the Psychological

By nature unregenerate man cannot rise above the psychological level. He seeks to do so, however, by his attempts at magic, mysticism, drugs, the occult or religious excitement. The emotional religious excitement generated in "revivalism" befits more Old Line Pentecostalism or the more modern Charismatic Movement than it does Evangelical or Fundamentalist Christianity. Religious excitements, however, are not only true of Christianity, but of other religions as well—consider "Turkish fanatical dervishes, Hindoo–Faquirs or our own [native] Indian medicine men."[347]

Unless the Spirit of God is effectually at work within the heart, soul or personality—i.e., in regenerating grace, adoption and conversion—such attempts at true spirituality must prove futile. Man is limited to the psychological plane. He can only rise to the truly

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[346] Walter J. Chantry, *Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972, p. 12.

[347] Cf. Robert L. Dabney, *Op. cit.*, pp. 558–559.

spiritual plane through the effectual work of the Spirit of God—and the Spirit of God is pleased to move in terms of His Holy Word.

As delineated in the previous section, the invitational system is limited to the psychological level. This is not to say that God may not sovereignly save sinners under such a system, but such conversions will be in spite of such unscriptural religious innovations, not because of them. Those converted under such circumstances may remain spiritually–crippled and scripturally ignorant until brought under the influence of proper biblical teaching. Such emotionally–charged and psychologically–manipulated invitations only work confusion, of which God is not the author.

Regeneration and Conversion

True conversion is spiritual. It is much more than merely a question of man's will or seeking to redirect it under preaching. Conversion is the result of the effectual work of the Spirit of God in regeneration. Conversion is the immediate and spontaneous outward manifestation of regeneration or the "new birth." The very nature of the regeneration itself reveals its utter necessity before man can savingly and freely believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The necessity of regeneration or the new birth is found in the utter spiritual impotence of man (Jn. 3:3, 5; 1 Cor. 2:14), the blinding power of the devil (Matt. 13:4, 19; 2 Cor. 4:3–6), the eternal redemptive purpose, and the righteous character and omnipotence of God.

If any human being is to be saved or delivered from the reigning power of sin, his own innate animosity toward God, the blinding power of Satan, and ultimately delivered from eternal hell, God must initiate the work of salvation (Isa. 64:6; Matt. 13:3–4, 18–19; Acts 16:14; Rom. 1:18–25; 3:11, 27–21; 8:5–8; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3–6; Eph. 2:1–10; 4:17–19; Titus 3:5; 1 Jn. 5:19). To say all this is to declare that salvation is by grace; anything less would be a denial of the same.

There are six essential spiritual realities which comprise regeneration, or the "new birth." If any one of these realities is not true or actual within the personality, the individual is yet unregenerate: first, the impartation of Divine life (Jn. 3:3, 5; Eph. 2:1, 4–5). Unless the individual receives such a principle of spiritual life, he cannot even "see" the kingdom of God, much less enter it. He may perceive, know or understand much, even so as to be without excuse, but his will is bent toward sin and evil and his inner being is darkened (Rom. 1:18–25; 1 Cor. 2:14).

Second, the breaking of the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:3–14, 17–18, 20, 22). Every human being by nature is a willing bondslave of sin. This power is broken by God in a definitive act of grace, and a radical cleavage is made with the reigning power of sin in the life. This aspect of sanctification—definitive sanctification—is contemporaneous with regeneration.

Third, the removal of natural heart–enmity against God and his truth (Rom. 8:7–8; 1 Cor. 2:14). Man by nature has an innate aversion to God and his truth. This animosity is removed by a sovereign act of God, enabling the sinner to savingly turn to God in the context of his truth.

Fourth, the re–creation of the image of God in principle (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–10). Both these passages refer to a past act, not to an entreaty.[348] Man was created as the image–bearer of God. In the Fall, this image was devastated spiritually, morally and intellectually; the thought–process became fragmented and given to futility. The physical body, with its appetites and desires, assumed a controlling influence over the individual (Rom. 6:6, 11–14; Eph. 4:17–19). In regenerating grace, God re–creates the image of God anew in principle in righteousness, holiness of the truth and

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[348] Eph. 4:22–24. The use of the aor. inf. of purpose [ἀποθέσθαι...ἐνδύσασθαι] reveals this to be a past fact, not a present exhortation. This alone coincides with aor. ptcs in Col. 3:9–10 [ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον...ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον].

knowledge—a spiritual, moral and intellectual transformation. With the mind thus freed, and a holy disposition given to the personality, the sinner is enabled to freely turn to Christ in faith as presented in the gospel message.

Fifth, the removal of satanic blindness (2 Cor. 4:3–6). The words, "…God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness…" refers to the sovereign creative act of God in Gen. 1:3. There is a distinct parallel between the Divine work of physical creation and spiritual regeneration.

Above and beyond all matters of the will or heart, looms the awful, evil power of Satan, who specifically blinds sinners to the truth of the gospel. He further seeks to remove any influence of the gospel in any way he possibly can (Matt. 13:3–4, 18–19; Mk. 4:4, 15; Lk. 8:5, 12). This blinding influence is removed by an act of God's grace.

Sixth, the gift of saving faith (Eph. 2:4–10). Conversion, or repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is inseparable from regeneration. Conversion is the infallible and immediate consequence of the work of the Holy Spirit upon and within the personality (Acts 16:14). The Scriptures usually consider regeneration and conversion inclusively as one. It is conversion, pointedly personal faith in the Lord Jesus and repentance from sin, which necessarily and infallibly expresses the work of God within the personality (Acts 13:12, 48; 14:1; 16:14, 27–34; 17:4, 11–12, 34; 18:8, 27; 19:18; Rom. 10:9–10, 13, 17; 1 Cor. 2:4–5; Eph. 2:4–10).

Faith and Regeneration:
Salvation by Grace or by Works?

The idea that conversion—man's repentance and faith—is prior to regeneration, and that regeneration is simply the Divine response to man's faith necessarily brings conversion down to the psychological level. Indeed, it brings all of salvation down to the psychological level. If man, of his own "free will" [the fanciful idea of the power of contrary choice] can harness his human trust and

direct his will savingly to Christ by his own self–effort, then salvation is altogether by works [human ability] and not by grace. And is this not the predominant religious "feeling" of our time? Salvation by grace to many means that we did not deserve salvation, but God sent the Lord Jesus to die on the cross for sinners; thus grace remains a bare, passive and inactive principle until enlivened by man's alleged free will, faith and religious activity.

The Utilitarian Nature
of The Invitational System

The Invitational System: An Alleged Answer
for Every Issue

The invitational system has become so entrenched in—so essential and necessary to—modern evangelical Christianity that it is used for any and every condition within the religious experience. Sinners are emotionally urged to "come forward" to "the altar" for salvation. Those who have made their religious "decision" are invited to respond to the "altar call" for baptism and church membership. Those who want to join themselves to the church are invited to do so at the "altar call." Those who want to "rededicate" their lives to God after falling into some kind of sin or have some kind of guilt or want to "make Jesus Lord of their lives" are invited to "come forward." If anyone wants to give himself to God in Christian service such as the Gospel ministry or the mission field, he "goes forward" to settle the issue and make it known publicly. Folks who desire freedom from addiction, find meaning in life, are seeking to keep their families together or to find "a meaningful relation with God," are all invited to respond to the "altar call" where, at times, someone will pray with them.

No public confession of sin. In fact, there is often no confession of sin at all, either public or private. Sin often remains irrelevant, as does repentance. No reconciliation with an offended brother or sister. No restitution for wrongs. The act of "coming forward" by itself settles the issue in many congregations. There is something mysterious, effectual and final in responding to the invitation before

a religious congregation. The individual and congregation both sense that something allegedly spiritual has occurred.

Acting Scripturally

What would and should the average church do without the invitational system? The answer: act scripturally, obediently and responsibly. Put all of the fervency and passion into the preaching of the gospel. Act publicly when necessary and privately when Scripture and discretion demand it. Sadly, many may go to "the altar" and yet never deal with sin, sinful relationships or with their own religious experience in a scriptural manner.

The Sacramental Nature
of The Invitational System

In the following two sections, it is not our intention to be crass, insensitive or irreverent, but to be truthful and to put the invitational system, as an unscriptural practice, into such a practical light that its true, ritualistic and unscriptural nature may be seen.

Sacrament and Sacrosanct: The Altar

The term "sacrament" derives from the Latin *sacramentum*, meaning something sacred or holy.[349] Something which is sacrosanct [*sacer*, "sacred" and *sanctus*, "holy"] is a thing or place which is very holy or sacred. Some place which is sacrosanct is designated as very holy or sacred by virtue of its religious significance. The altar of the Romish and Episcopal Churches is at the front of the sanctuary, or holy place. This is the place where the officiating priest dispenses the sacraments—i.e., sacerdotally manipulates the bread and wine and these allegedly become in some mysterious way the body and blood of our Lord. Something mysterious and spiritual occurs at "the altar" through the power of the priest.

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[349] The Greek term is μυστήριον [*mysterion*], the source of our word "mystery." This implies something more than that which is material— something mysterious, holy, having supernatural power or significance.

The Methodist frontier revivals, as noted in the second section of this study, hearkening back to their Methodist Episcopal roots, designated a certain piece of ground or area as "the altar" at their camp meetings. This place, by this designation and terminology, became, in principle, sacrosanct and the action of coming to "the altar" was, in principle, sacramental and thus spiritual. Those desiring to make a religious commitment were urged to "come to the altar" as a sign that they were subjects of great religious impressions—and to be counted as the immediate results of the evangelistic techniques used. Performing this religious act soon became synonymous with a saving act.

Evangelical Churches with Altars?

Today, in Evangelical Protestant, Fundamentalist and Baptist churches, the front of the building ["sanctuary"?] becomes "the altar" during the use of the invitational system. Having the right purpose by coming to a given location at the command of a religious leader, publicly assuming a given posture ["coming and kneeling at the old fashioned altar"] and performing a given ritual such as praying or repeating a set form of prayer and signing a card are equated with something of a transforming religious and spiritual nature and a spiritual commitment. How can this be? Is it really a spiritually–transforming matter of being public, of place, of purpose, of posture and of performance? Many sincerely believe it to be so.

This demonstrates how strong an unscriptural tradition may become, and how such unscriptural tradition may supplant the truth until the truth itself is looked upon as error! One must never underestimate the strength of religious tradition. The manner in which one is reared in religious tradition usually determines what one considers to be scriptural or unscriptural—whether in fact this distinction is true or not.

Public, Place, Purpose, Posture and Performance?

Let us put the matter plainly and visualize its true character step by step: first, the matter of doing this publicly. There is something constraining about performing a religious act before a congregation

of religious people.[350] One either must sincerely believe that he is doing his best to obey God in the purpose, place, posture and performance of such a public ritual, or he has the self–conscious burden of keeping up an outward appearance of what he has publicly professed in his religious excitement, even if he has no sense of an inward reality after the excitement has waned.

What if one left the church building during the "altar call" to be alone with God to sort out his pressing issues, to weep, to cry out to God apart from human eyes (Matt. 6:5–6), or even to seek out an offended party to seek forgiveness or reconciliation—would this not be acceptable? To leave the building and congregation at such a critical time as the public invitation, informing no one of the purpose, would be considered by most folks as turning one's back on God and even quenching the Spirit. Their ignorance would become their prejudice.

Second, the matter of place. The front of the building is the place where men meet with God—at "the altar." The preacher has said so. The congregation believes it. The individual may believe it. The urgent command is to "come down to the front" if one is serious with God. In the minds of many, this place is sacrosanct. It is the one place where God may be found at that particular time. Not to respond in the intended way is allegedly to be out–of–step with both God and man.

Third, the matter of purpose. "Coming forward" is an act of the will in receiving Christ as one's personal Savior, or the purpose may vary to include a whole array of religious concerns: baptism, church membership, "rededication," a call to the ministry, finding fulfillment and meaning in life, deliverance from addiction, to pray for a given situation, etc. Responding to the "altar call" allegedly

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[350] See section two and the quotations of Charles Finney and his defense of the "New Measures."

clinches the reason, whatever that reason may be, and makes the purpose spiritually effectual.

> Note: [1] "The inner decision for Christ is like driving a nail through a board. The open declaration of it is like clinching the nail on the other side, so that it is not easily pulled out. Impression without expression can lead to depression." Leighton Ford, quoted by Iain Murray, *Op. cit.*

And this is done before a congregation. A public step has been taken, a public commitment has been made which is decisive. Not to respond to the "public invitation" is considered tantamount to stubbornly refusing God and the work of his Spirit.

Fourth, the matter of posture: "Come down right now to the front and kneel down at the old fashioned altar!" What if one did not kneel, but simply stood? Would coming and not kneeling be acceptable? It would seem that the work was not yet wholly done and the person was not properly or sufficiently "broken down," to use Finney's terminology.

> A revival will decline and cease, unless Christians are frequently re-converted. By this I mean, that Christians, in order to keep in the spirit of revival, commonly need to be frequently convicted, and humbled and broken down before God, and "re-converted." This is something which many do not understand, when we talk about a Christian being re-converted. But the fact is, that in a revival, the Christian's heart is liable to get crusted over, and lose its exquisite relish for Divine things; his unction and prevalence in prayer abate, and then he must be converted over again. It is impossible to keep him in such a state as not to do injury to the work, unless he passes through such a process every few days.[351]

Must he not be talked to and reasoned and prayed with until he *kneels* at "the altar" before the congregation after the accepted fashion?

Fifth, the matter of performance: Repeating a prayer? Would not the Spirit of God lead the individual to cry out, as did the poor Publican, "God be merciful to me the sinner"? Was not this the

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[351] Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, p. 281.

announcement of Saul's conversion to Ananias, "…behold he prayeth"? (Acts 9:11). Signing a card? This is as unscriptural as genuflecting, is it not?[352] This may be allegedly necessary for a record of the person and his or her purpose in coming to the front, but it has no spiritual efficacy. Yet tracts and other commitment cards often have a line for a signature so that one may seal his religious decision with his name in his own handwriting as a means of committing himself to Christ for any given religious reason.

Now, let us consider the reverse of these things in order to visualize the strength of such an unscriptural tradition. What if, for the sake of argument, the preacher or evangelist asked people, not to come to the front, but to go to the back of the building ["sanctuary"?] if truly serious about the state of their souls or any other serious religious issue, and not to kneel, but to sit on the floor and put their hands over their heads in a hostage–type of posture and remain there praying silently or softly humming a hymn?

Would not the congregation think that the preacher was completely amiss or had lost his senses? Would not everyone immediately object to this alleged confusion? This would be something entirely new, different, innovative, pragmatic—and would it not seem inherently wrong to the congregation? It would be a radical break with a long–accepted practice which had assumed the place of being essential. People simply do not respond by going in the "wrong" direction away from the public view, to a different place than "the altar," or assuming the "wrong" posture or not praying the proper prayer!

Does it really come down to the issues of being public, going to the proper place, having the stated purpose, demanding a certain posture and performing a certain ritual? Are not all these sacramental? Is the place where these unscriptural practices are held

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[352] Genuflecting is the motion of making the sign of the cross on one's chest and head according to the Roman Catholic ritual.

truly sacrosanct? Not one of these—the public, place, purpose, posture or performance—can be substantiated from Scripture. Is not the whole system unscriptural, and thus deceptive and dangerous? Is not the whole system psychological and emotional, rather than spiritual? Who would not stand up against such a decidedly unscriptural practice? Only a few, sadly, and these have often been severely criticized as being uncooperative and non–evangelistic.

The Sacerdotal Nature
of The Invitational System

What is Sacerdotalism?

The term "sacerdotal" derives from the Latin *sacerdos*, a priest. "Sacerdotal" then refers to a religious system which functions through a priestly work. Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christianity, being gospel–centered, have nothing to do with either an altar at which the sacraments are dispensed or with an earthly priesthood. The priest stands between God and men. The very thought is repugnant to Evangelical Christians. But is this *really* so? Do not Evangelicals and Fundamentalists in reality have their own sacramentalism and sacerdotalism? We have already seen the contradictory and unscriptural nature of the invitational system, which is sacramental in principle. What of the sacerdotal nature of this system?[353]

The preacher has preached a stirring message. Religious excitement is running high. The emotions of the congregation are deeply stirred. Both the preacher and the people anticipate the "altar call." They both believe in the invitational system. It is allegedly and traditionally the right the thing to do at this critical time. Everything

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[353] This writer has often heard such commanding words as, "Come down to the front right now. Do not delay! Give your hand to me and your heart to Christ!" Is not this sacerdotal in the minds of those who would respond? Is not the preacher and his word of authority necessary for this transaction? It all depends on whether or not one believes in this unscriptural system.

throughout the entire religious service has led up to—not the preaching—but to this time of spiritual crisis. Those who are used to such services and have accepted the unscriptural tradition of the invitational system are psychologically and emotionally geared to either act in response to the minister's call to "come to the front" for any variety of reasons, or to earnestly pray for those who do.

Preacher or Priest?

What is the exact role of the minister who stands at the front—at "the altar"? Is his role not sacerdotal? He has just stood before this very congregation as a man of God, powerfully declaring Divine truth. All eyes are focused upon him and every ear is filled with his commanding voice. Emotions have been brought to a high pitch.

Does he not stand between the congregation and God, as did Aaron? Does he not, as it were, become the vocal mediator between God and sinners? He declares that if anyone wants or needs to come down to the front for any reason, that God will meet him or her there at "the altar." He stands, as it were, as did the Old Testament prophet or New Testament Apostle. His command or urging in the emotionally–charged atmosphere becomes the message of God in the minds of the people, just as it was in the preaching. Not to respond, he declares, is to refuse God, to quench his Spirit, to reject his grace and offer of salvation—or whatever else may be of a serious spiritual issue.

Both the minister and the people hold the voice of the minister and the voice of God to be one and same, do they not? Was not this true in the preaching? Was he not declaring God's Word faithfully with the alleged unction of the Holy Spirit? Did the Spirit of God leave this man when the sermon ended? It cannot be! Surely he is filled with Spirit as he declares, commands and urges people to respond to the "altar call."

He stands at "the altar," as the one man sinners must listen to and obey as he gives directions pertaining to salvation and spiritual commitment. *Vox sacerdotis, vox Dei*, "The voice of the priest is the

voice of God." The sacerdotal nature of the invitational system is unavoidable if one believes that there is any true spiritual reality to it at all.

The natural transition from the emotionally–charged sermon to the invitation is critical. The emotional pressure must be maintained. It is the high point—the most critical time—of the service. Why should anyone listen to or obey the commands of the preacher once he has finished his sermon? Because there is the belief that he remains a man of God with commanding spiritual authority, and the invitation becomes to those who believe in such, a spiritual imperative. That the invitational system is unscriptural and that this man has no biblical authority for what he then does or asks is of no consequence. The sermon and the invitational system have become one spiritual experience in the minds and emotions of the congregation.

Priest or Psychologist?

There is another approach to the role of the minister within the invitational system. Considering that this system is unscriptural, unspiritual, entirely pragmatic and merely psychological, is not the role of the minister more that of a psychologist than a priest? The man's presence and voice are commanding and demanding. He has just concluded a powerful, emotionally–filled sermon. The music or singing heightens the anticipation. The atmosphere is emotionally–charged. The minister is the focus of the congregation. He is the Man of God. His word is as determinative as when he was preaching. It is in his power and prerogative to woo, demand, urge or entreat and to direct. He has, at this point, tremendous power with and influence over those who are assembled before him if they, too, believe in the invitational system.

While one may not doubt the earnestness and utter sincerity of the preacher and the assembled people, for those who do not believe in this unscriptural, pragmatic system, he is viewed as stepping outside of Scripture and thus from any God–given authority.

All at this point, after the preaching and exhorting men to flee to Christ (Acts 2:40), is simply psychological and emotional, whatever the motive might be and however "spiritual" it might appear. It then becomes a matter of a strong, demanding or wooing personality seeking to bend the will of others to obey his demands. It is a contest of wills, and that is all—a contest of wills enforced by an alleged ability on the part of the presiding minister to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart as he publicly asserts that some are dishonest, insincere or grieving the Holy Spirit if they fail to respond! How does the minister know the person's heart any more than he knows his own heart? Does he have supernatural discernment? Or does he only *presume* to know the person's heart? He either possesses the Apostolic gift of Divine revelation and an inspired infallibility, or in his overly zealous, emotional state, he seeks to psychologically pressure his hearers to surrender to his will? We suspect it is the latter, and not the former. And does he not expect the congregation to agree with him in his ignorant, but bold assertions? This is certainly a sacerdotal approach.

Those in attendance find this a spiritual crisis only in their own minds and according to their own religious traditions. While the minister is free to speak, demand, accuse, intimidate or cajole, those who refuse to respond in the accepted traditional manner must remain silent and be viewed as reticent, inconsistent, dishonest and unspiritual, or even as grieving the working of the Spirit of God in that meeting. But to those, who hold to scriptural truth and not to this unscriptural system, it is simply the use of psychological pressure and manipulation which, to some, may even seem at times to border on abuse as others are made to feel dishonest or guilty if they do not respond.[354]

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[354] This writer recalls times when the minister has become abusive to pressure individuals to respond. E.g., "Why, I came forward and received Christ as my personal Savior the first time I heard the gospel! You are dishonest if you do not come down at this very moment!" This is a mild

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The Harmful Nature
of The Invitational System

Doctrine, Practice and an Unscriptural Methodology
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Any unscriptural system or methodology assimilated into Biblical Christianity does much harm. It does doctrinal harm because it brings into Christianity an incoherence or contradiction which is noticeably unscriptural. It necessarily opens the way for more and more doctrinal error to accommodate the unscriptural practice. Both faith [belief] and practice [Christian experience] are affected. It does everlasting harm to those who are victims of such an unscriptural methodology. Spurious conversions are the bane of modern Evangelical Christianity. Further, it does great social harm as society witnesses to the sad state of Christianity when professing Christians apostatize or bring the name of our Lord and his churches into disrepute.[355] Four troublesome issues are considered in closing:

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example; some accusations have been plainly personal and abusive. Such an accusative and presumptive attitude has been all too common in the experience of this writer.

[355] Cf. Robert L. Dabney, *Op. cit.*, pp. 557–574, who dealt thoroughly with the dangers and destructive nature of the invitational system as seen in his day.

A Hybrid Approach to Evangelism

First, the scriptural truth of salvation becomes increasingly mixed with error. While it may be possible to retain the truth of God's free and sovereign grace in salvation from the Scriptures, the tendency of the invitational system is toward a Pelagian system which centers on plenary human ability. Free will and free grace are utterly opposed to each other. A hybrid approach which seeks to align free grace to the invitational system must inevitably detract from the pure gospel of the grace of God. The message and the methodology must coincide. Even some sovereign grace preachers, anxious for visible results, tend toward an "easy–believeism" when the invitational system enters into their evangelistic methodology. The results of such hybrid evangelism have often been bitterly disappointing and at times, tragic.

Spurious Conversions

Second, the invitational system promotes spurious conversions. By its very nature, it promotes the idea that spiritual results may be immediately and infallibly known. Those under conviction of sin or who make an open profession may be hurried through the process of defective evangelistic methodology and given an assurance, when only the curiosity may be aroused or the conscience may only be troubled concerning a specific sin or sins and the agent in such conviction is not the Spirit of God.

Not all conviction of conscience, even though it may be great and grievous, is saving conviction which leads the sinner to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus (Jn. 8:9; Acts 26:9). Saving faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8–10) as is saving repentance (Acts 11:18).

True, saving faith is utter, unreserved commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Note: The technical formula "to believe into" Christ [πίστευειν εἰς] as found in Jn. 3:16 and other key passages, means utter, unreserved commitment to our Lord. Cf. H. E. Dana, and Julius R.

Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. New York: Macmillan, 1957, p. 105. There was no "easy–believeism" in the New Testament.

There is no question concerning the Lordship of Jesus Christ in salvation. Cf. Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9–10; 2 Cor. 4:5. In the latter two passages the predicate use of the double accusative should read "Christ as Lord." As God constituted the Lord Jesus Christ as "Lord" at his resurrection and ascension, no one can savingly come to him as anyone less. Coming under His Lordship is the beginning of a truly converted life.

The invitational system has the tendency to promote an "easy–believeism." There is a great difference between biblical conversion and religious "decisionism." Biblical conversion means the commencement of a transformed lifestyle. It is the immediate and inevitable manifestation of regenerating grace.[356] "Decisionism" by contrast, may stand as an isolated religious ritual or experience.

Biblical conversion is the necessary turning from sin to righteousness and godliness through faith and repentance by the grace of God. "Decisionism" or "easy–believeism" is a modern substitute for conversion, and is scripturally defective and inadequate as a saving experience.

Conversion is biblical; "decisionism" is scripturally defective. Doctrinally, conversion is necessitated by the awful reality and devastating results of sin; "decisionism" often fails to adequately comprehend and deal with this awful reality and devastation. Conversion is a thorough transformation of the personality; "decisionism" is a mere re–directing of the will. "Decisionism" reverses the scriptural and logical order, making regeneration the Divine response to one's religious decision, implying that man's will has remained unaffected by the Fall, and that he possesses plenary [full] ability, or the power of contrary choice—the ability to consistently choose contrary to his sinful, governing nature.

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[356] See "Regeneration and Conversion" in the third Part of this article.

Conversion is spiritual; "decisionism," as generally practiced, is psychological. Conversion is the beginning of a transformed life; "decisionism" as a system stands isolated from the dynamic of the Holy Spirit and the necessity of godliness. Conversion, in its biblical context, maintains and glorifies the grace of God; "decisionism" is anthropocentric in nature, and remains isolated from a necessary biblical and doctrinal context. Where is the necessary biblical and doctrinal context of regenerating grace, evangelical repentance, the believer's union with Christ, justification, adoption and sanctification?

> Note: See 2 Cor. 5:14–17; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:3–7; 2:4–7; 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10. Note Rom. 6:1–23. Union with Christ means both union in His death [the breaking of the reigning power of sin in the life] and union in his resurrection–life, which necessarily means the reality of the dynamic of the Holy Spirit in one's Christian experience. Through adoption believers receive the Holy Spirit who becomes the dynamic and enabling force in their lives and experience. See Rom. 8:12–16; Gal. 4:4–7. Every true believer has been and is in the process of being sanctified, the inevitable consequence of one's union with Christ: Rom. 6:6, 14, 17–18; 8:12–13; Col. 3:1–5; 1 Thess. 4:3,7; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9.

Conversion is saving faith and coming under the Lordship of Jesus Christ; "decisionism" holds that one may take Jesus simply as his Savior but not as his Lord. Conversion is comprised of both faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance from sin. A religious "decision" is an act of the will, usually in the context of the "invitational system" which is equated with "receiving Jesus as one's personal Savior." Physical movement and spiritual reality are considered to be one and the same. However, one may make physical movement without spiritual renewal, being simply emotionally stirred toward a psychological or emotional decision. Repentance is usually a nonentity, as one has the option of either living as a "carnal Christian," or at some later time "making Jesus 'Lord' of one's life"—a direct contradiction of Scripture.

The motivation for conversion is the awful burden of sin which drives the sinner to Christ for deliverance, forgiveness and

reconciliation with God; the motivation for a religious "decision" may be salvation, deliverance from various kinds of abuse or addiction, saving one's marriage or family, or finding meaning to and fulfillment in life. Conversion is necessarily preceded by a saving conviction of sin; a religious "decision" may be irrational [emotional, subjective, existential] or merely and simply intellectual.

The glorious realities of regeneration, conversion and a subsequent converted lifestyle [sanctification] are often reduced to a mere intellectual or emotional religious "decision" which derives its legitimacy from the time and place or context of its occurrence. Any evangelistic methodology which is based on religious pragmatism should immediately be suspect. Evangelism which culminates in a religious decision rather than the scriptural requirements of a converted life is certainly inadequate. Conversion is but the beginning of one's Christian experience, not a mere, isolated religious experience or ritual. Whether a mere religious decision or a true conversion experience, the subsequent life will bear testimony to the reality or non–reality of God's grace in a transformed life.

In our day, there are many spurious conversions—people professing faith in Christ and some even added to our churches without the sufficient manifestation of saving grace.

Note: In *The Oberlin Evangelist,* in 1875, Finney wrote, "If I had my time over again, I would preach nothing but holiness. My converts are a disgrace to religion, and if I had my time over again, I would preach nothing but holiness." Quoted by D. M. Lloyd–Jones, *Conversions: Psychological and Spiritual.* InterVarsity Press, 1974, p. 31. Finney's Perfectionist leanings caused him to think that more sanctification would keep his "converts" justified, but holiness is foreign to graceless individuals.

The Scriptures describe and warn against such things as a "temporary faith" (Matt. 13:20–21; Mk. 4:16–17; Lk. 8:13), a faith which "gawks at the sights" or the truth, but soon vanishes (Jn. 2:23–25), a merely theoretical faith which is held for a time for the sake of convenience (Jn. 12:42; Acts 26:27–28) and a mere intellectual faith (1 Cor. 15:1–2). Professing believers are exhorted to self–examination (2 Cor. 13:5). But if the invitational system is valid, as

its adherents claim, then all of those in the foregoing passages must be truly converted! Most of these had made some kind of "religious decision"! No one desires to promote spurious conversions. But if the invitational system is valid, then all those who respond must be considered as "saved."

"First–Time Decisions" and Rededication

Third, once these profess faith—have made a "first–time decision"—they are often insulated from further evangelistic probings of mind and heart. They believe themselves to be "saved," and if they do not shortly fall away (Matt. 13:20–21), continue in their empty profession of faith, although "they bring no fruit to perfection" (Lk. 8:7, 14). They are given an unscriptural assurance. If these fall into known sin or have doubts as to their alleged spiritual state, they are urged to once again "come to the front" at the "altar call" and "re–dedicate" themselves to God.

> Note: "Rededication" is another unscriptural ritual inherent in the invitational system. The only "rededication" known in Scripture was that of Zerubbabel's re–laying the foundation of Solomon's Temple (Ezra 3:10–13). This rite in practicality seems to correspond roughly to the Romish confessional in dealing with sin and making a new beginning, except there is no necessity of revealing or openly confessing sin. The simple act of a public "rededication" is usually sufficient.

No one can dare to suggest that their "first–time decision" was defective. After all, they have had the momentary, isolated experience, time and place to prove they are "saved."

To question one's salvation experience, derived through the invitational system, would discredit the entire system itself. These *must* be "saved," whether they manifest the characteristics of a true believer or not. If they do continue living in sin, they are usually conveniently considered as "carnal Christians" who are "saved," although their manner of life may prove to be overtly sinful. They can always "go forward" again and "rededicate" their lives or "make Jesus the Lord of their lives." Thus, they can go from being "carnal

Christians" to being "spiritual Christians." Can these things be squared with Scripture?

The idea that Christians may be either "carnal" or "spiritual" is a dichotomy which is unscriptural. The Corinthians were termed "carnal" (1 Cor. 3:1–4) because they looked to their human heroes rather than our Lord. They were not termed "carnal" because they were living unconverted lives.

The statement of the Apostle Paul in Romans 7:13 as being "carnal," is literally "made of flesh"—his sense of infirmity in the light of God's absolutely righteous and holy Law. Romans 8:1–11 is not a contrast between "carnal" and "spiritual" Christians, but rather between converted and unconverted persons. (It must be carefully noted that the entire section, Rom. 6:15–8:11, is concerned with the believer's relation to the Law of God. There is no division at 8:1, and therefore Rom. 7:13–25 does not end on a note of defeat, but rather in 8:1–11 on a note of victory).

Also inherent in this system is the idea that salvation is only from eternal punishment. There is often little or no thought given to the biblical reality that salvation is presently from the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:14–18) and ultimately from eternal punishment. This is also a denial of the believer's union with Christ and the necessity of a subsequently converted life (Rom. 6:2–6; 2 Cor. 5:14–17).

An Unscriptural Assurance

Finally, the invitational system promotes an unscriptural assurance of salvation. From the witness of the New Testament, we might affirm that a degree of assurance is normally the culmination of the conversion experience. It is inherently related to the very nature of saving faith itself.

The believing sinner, in the context of God–given faith and repentance (Eph. 2:4–10; Phil. 1:29; Acts 11:18; 18:27), through the comprehension of Divine truth (Jn. 17:17; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27), the witness of the Spirit of God (Rom. 5:5; 8:11–16) and the realization of the dynamic of Divine grace in the life (Rom. 6:1–14, 17–18; 8:11–16), possesses a reasonable certainty that he is a new creation

in Christ Jesus and rejoices in the same (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 5:1–2). He is made aware of God's unreserved love, which is constantly vouchsafed to him by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). This elementary assurance is:

Inferential—one may infer from various Scriptures that he is saved—that he has put his faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Jn. 3:16; 5:24; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9–10, 13, 17).

Evidential—one bears the marks of grace or exhibits the characteristics of a converted life: Does the essence of converting grace manifest itself in the life? (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Rom. 6:1–14; Gal. 5:16–18; 1 Jn. 3:4–10)? Are the principle and fruits of true, saving repentance evidenced in the life?

Is the reality of saving faith to any extent manifest in the life? (Acts 2:36; 8:36–37; Rom. 10:9–10). Is there a good conscience before God in the context of his inscripturated truth? A renewed conscience is to be governed by the Spirit and Word of God. Much emphasis ought to be placed on a renewed conscience, which answers to God's Spirit and is to be led by God's Word. This is quite distinct from a merely religious or legalistic conscience (Jn. 8:9; Acts 26:9), which, although it may be very powerful, is easily distorted. This conscience–work is an integral part of the Spirit's work in the believer's experience (Rom. 5:5; 8:11–16; 9:1; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; Heb. 9:12–14; 10:22). Is there a principle of heart–obedience to the Lord and his commands (Rom. 6:16; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Jn. 2:3–5)?

Is there an experiential godliness and conformity to the Word of God in the life which may be characterized to any given extent as "the practice of righteousness" (1 Jn. 3:3–10)? Is there any evidence of a praying heart or attendance to the private means of grace (Acts 9:11)? Has the reigning power of sin been broken in the life (Rom. 6:1–14, 17–18, 20, 22; Eph. 2:1–5; 1 Jn. 2:1; 3:9)? Is there a painful consciousness of indwelling sin and remaining corruption (Rom. 7:13–8:9; 2 Cor. 13:5)? Is there any evidence of the principle and

power of grace to mortify sin (Rom. 8:11–13; Gal. 5:16–18; Col. 3:5–10)?

Is there any reality to spiritual opposition in the life and experience (Matt. 6:13; Lk. 11:4; Jn. 17:15; Gal. 5:16–17; Eph. 4:27; 6:10–18; Phil. 1:27; 1 Tim. 3:6–7; 2 Tim. 2:26; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:7–8)? Is there a principle or practice of scriptural self–denial (Lk. 9:23; 14:25–33; 1 Jn. 2:15–17)? Is there any experience of Divine chastisement (Heb. 12:4–17)?

Has the tenor of the life been turned from the love and seduction of the world (Rom. 6:1–23; 8:1–9; 1 Cor. 3:1–4; 11:29–32; 1 Jn. 2:15–17; 5:16–17)? Is there any evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in the life and experience (Rom. 8:11–17, 26–27; Gal. 5:22–23)? Is the enabling, sustaining and restraining work of the Spirit at all in evidence (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Gal. 5:16–18)? Is there a desire for and evidence of true Gospel holiness in the life (2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 1:3–5; 4:1; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:14–15; 2:9)?

Is there any experiential progression in conformity to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9)? Is there a growing or progressive comprehension of the truth as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 17:3; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Eph. 2:10; 4:13–16; Col. 2:1–7; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; 2 Pet. 3:18)?

Is there a desire for and a practice of attending to the public means of grace (Heb. 10:25; 1 Jn. 3:14)? Is there any affinity for the people of God (1 Jn. 3:10–19; 4:7–11)? Is there any manifestation of a forgiving attitude which reflects the believer's union with Christ (Matt. 6:14–15; Lk. 17:3–4; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12–14)?

Internal or immediate—the witness of the Holy Spirit to the reality of one's spiritual life (Rom. 5:5; 8:1–16; 2 Cor. 3:17–18).

Note: A note of caution and explanation might be appropriate. The inferential aspect of assurance—the usual and only approach in most Evangelical circles—by itself might be presumption. The evidential aspect by itself might be mere legalism, and the internal or immediate by itself might tend toward a mysticism. But taken all together, these form a broadly–based, biblical assurance of faith.

Never in Scripture is one's salvation based on an isolated, momentary religious experience ["decision"], a time and a place. Yet this is the kind of unscriptural assurance which is fomented by the invitational system, and has become common in Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christianity.

When some do doubt, they are asked, "Were you not serious when you made your decision?!" Of course they were—no one would want to go to hell![357] Then they are told never to doubt. And if they do doubt, they are told with all authority, "You just point to the time, the place and the prayer, and call the devil a liar!" To doubt or to come to the conclusion that they were not "saved" when they made their isolated religious "decision" would discredit the entire invitational system.

Some, however, including this writer, were later converted long after they had made their "first–time decision." These see the baneful effects and know the emptiness of this system as it is commonly practiced.

Conclusion

This article has discussed some major reasons why we do not use the invitational system. This system is not neutral and thus optional; it is plainly unscriptural, and thus harmful.

Its history reveals its true psychological and pragmatic character, and how it puts both places and men into positions which are quite contrary to the Word of God by those who accept this unscriptural system.

We see how it is in principle and practice both sacramental and sacerdotal in nature. In their anxious zeal for immediate, tangible results, ministers may become demanding and even abusive in their appeals. Its evil fruits are often seen in the lives of those who have

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[357] Biblical salvation, however, is not merely from hell, i.e., the ultimate consequences of sin, but from the present, reigning power of sin. Many fear hell who still love their sin.

been seduced by its errors. As a system, it gathers to itself a host of other unscriptural beliefs and practices.

This is a stern lesson in the ability of the human religious nature to accommodate error through tradition and replace the truth of Scripture with a pragmatic and manifestly unscriptural system.

While we do not doubt the sincerity, earnestness, zeal and love for souls on the part of those who use this system, we must maintain as much as is humanly possible, by the grace of God, the principle of *sola scriptura*. The words of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah are noteworthy and ought to be carefully considered:

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love *to have it* so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:31).

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Prayer and Anointing with Oil
An Examination of James 5:13–15

Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Introduction

The question addressed in this article is, "Is it scriptural, in the context of James 5:13–15, to anoint with oil when the elders are called to pray for the sick at one's bedside?"

There are some biblical practices which are generally retained in modern Christianity, either through holding to biblical example and precedent or simply because of religious tradition.

This is true of the laying on of hands in deaconal and ministerial ordination or in group prayer for the sick (Acts 6:1–6; 13:1–4). There is no communication of the Holy Spirit as with Apostolic example in that era (Acts 8:14–17; 19:1–7), nor as alleged in either Romanism or High Protestantism. The laying on of hands among Evangelicals and Baptists at ministerial ordination or in prayer is simply symbolic or traditional—a setting apart of the individual to that particular work after Apostolic example (Acts 13:1–3), without the necessary impartation of certain charismatic gifts (1 Tim. 4:12–14), or when praying for the recovery of the sick.[358]

The Apostolic practice of fasting before or at ordination services has been largely omitted in modern Christianity (Acts 13:2–3; 14:23). The practice or non–practice of anointing with oil when the sick are prayed for is also largely a matter of tradition. It is the aim

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[358] 1 Tim. 4:14, μὴ ἀμέλει τοῦ ἐν σοὶ χαρίσματος, ὃ ἐδόθη σοι διὰ προφητείας μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου. It seems evident that Timothy received a charismatic gift at his ordination through both prophecy and the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

of this paper to situate the use or non–use of anointing with oil in a scriptural context and to note the issues both historically and doctrinally.

Scriptures

There are but two direct New Testament references to anointing with oil in the context of sickness:

Mark 6:7–13. [7] And he called *unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; [8] And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse….[12] And they went out, and preached that men should repent.[13] And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed *them*.

James 5:13–15. [13] Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. [14] Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: [15] And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Textual and Contextual Issues

There are several significant issues in the text and immediate context which may have a determining effect upon one's understanding of this subject: first, the immediate context reveals three conditions which call for proper spiritual reaction and behavior: first, if someone is undergoing a time of affliction, he is commanded or urged to pray [Κακοπαθεῖ τις ἐν ὑμῖν, προσευχέσθω]. The verb is a pres. mid. imp. Κακοπαθέω, a general term for something stressful, suffering hardship or adversity, a calamity, being troubled or afflicted. This could be mental, medical, physical, moral, financial, spiritual, religious or social. Prayer is urged rather than complaint, dissatisfaction or giving way to depression.

Second, if anyone is merry, he is urged to sing praises to God [εὐθυμεῖ τις, ψαλλέτω]. The verb is a pres. act. imp. This is a godly, scriptural outlet for joy, cheerfulness or happiness.

Third, if anyone is sick ["weak"] to the point of incapacitation [We might use the term "bed–ridden"], he is urged to call for the elders of the church [προσκαλεσάσθω τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας]. The aor. imp. connotes a sense of urgency and determination. Their visitation, or response to this summons in the context of v. 14–15, would include some inquiry into the cause, nature and extent of the sickness, as the church is directly or indirectly involved. It seems that the intercessory prayer and anointing with oil would largely depend upon the discernment and prerogative of the elders and the relation the individual had with the congregation.

There is nothing within the immediate and larger context which would limit such an action as prayer for the sick or anointing with oil to the charismatic era of Apostolic Christianity. Indeed, the entire context and the calling for elders seem to preclude such a limitation of the time–frame.

Both terms used for "sickness" connote "weakness." The term "sickness" in Mark 6:13 is ἀρρώστους, "weak, feeble, sickly." In James 5:13, the term is ἀσθενεῖ, which connotes weakness, incapacity or impotence. Such "weakness" may be mental, spiritual or physical. It seems here in the immediate context to be physical, but it could include the physical effects of something mental or spiritual.

See Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* I, pp. 490–493. See also Kees van Kralingen, "Anointing with Oil," *Reformation Today*, No. 237, September–October, 2010. This article is practical and balanced, from a Reformed perspective.

The idea of incapacity lends itself to the fact that the sick person calls for the elders of the church to come to his or her bedside for intercessory prayer. Further, the words "let them pray over him" [προσευξάσθωσαν ἐπ' αὐτὸν] assumes that the sick person is incapacitated or bed–ridden.

Summoning for the elders of the church [προσκαλεσάσθω τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας] to the bedside of the incapacitated

person would necessarily presuppose a felt need on the part of that individual, a subjective investigation as to the sickness itself, a prompting of the Holy Spirit and a desire to deal with the cause and nature of the incapacity, including the confession of sin if necessary. If any of these were lacking, the necessary biblical context for visitation and prayer would be precluded. As the elders were to "pray over him" [προσευξάσθωσαν ἐπ αὐτὸν] this would imply an immediate proximity and a laying on of hands, although not stated in the text. Such an action, though not commanded here with prayer, would be instinctive, as it accompanied other healings.[359]

Further, if such practices as praying and anointing with oil were only for the Apostolic Era and those with charismatic gifts, why call for the elders of the church? Why not call for those so gifted (1 Cor. 12:1–11, 28–31 esp. v. 9)? Would not calling for the elders as spiritual office–holders and leaders, still seem to set at naught the Spirit's diverse ministry through those who possessed the specific *charismata* of healing? Further, why limit the prayer and anointing to sickness? Why not the blind or crippled, the withered or maimed? It is presumed that the supernatural gift of healing would have effected cures among these also.

The entire context puts the prayer and anointing with oil in a private setting which has nothing in common with an alleged "healing service," which would be public in nature. To apply this situation to a public forum and invitation to be healed would invalidate the biblical context.

Mark and James are not exactly parallel, though both mention anointing the sick with oil. Mark 6:13 makes anointing with oil a major issue in the context of the miraculous casting out of demons and the healing of sickness. The construction uses a verb in an independent clause [καὶ ἤλειφον ἐλαίῳ πολλοὺς ἀρρώστους καὶ

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[359] Douglas A. Moo, "James," *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, pp. 176–177.

ἐθεράπευον]. The context would seem to put the healing of sickness in the realm of the miraculous together with casting out demons. James 5:14 makes anointing with oil a minor issue, framed in participular form, which is subservient to the main verb associated with prayer, and thus giving the emphasis to prayer [καὶ προσευξάσθωσαν ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἀλείψαντες [αὐτὸν] ἐλαίῳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου]. Because of these differences, some have separated the healing of Mark 6:13 from that of James 5:13–15.

The term for "anointing with oil" in both Mark [ἤλειφον ἐλαίῳ] and James [ἀλείψαντες [αὐτὸν] ἐλαίῳ] is ἀλείφω, which denotes to "anoint, rub, daub, smear." It is the usual or general term for anointing persons or things. The usual term for sacred and metaphorical anointing is χρίω. This has caused some to dismiss the idea of anointing with oil as a symbolic act of renewed consecration when done "in the name of the Lord" and in conjunction with specific prayer. Ἀλείφω is used for physical, literal anointing in the New Testament. It was necessary for James to use this term when referring to a literal anointing.

Taking the idea of "rubbing" or "daubing," some refer this act to the use of medicine—the prayer dealing with the spiritual aspect and the oil dealing with the medicinal aspects of the sickness.[360] However, in the LXX, ἐπιχέω, a term other than χρίω was used for the sacred anointing of a pillar by pouring oil upon it in connection both with a solemn vow on the part of Jacob (Gen. 28:16–22),[361] and the term ἀλείφω was used at least twice for the anointing of the

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[360] Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, "The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James," *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, pp. 660–661; A. T. Robertson, *Studies in the Epistle of James*, pp. 255–256; Donald W. Burdick, "James," *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, XII, p. 204.

[361] Gen. 28:18. [ἔστησεν αὐτὸν στήλην καὶ ἐπέχεεν ἔλαιον ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον αὐτῆς], ἐπιχέω, "to pour over." This was a solemn act of anointing, or a pouring out of oil, accompanied with a solemn vow on the part of Jacob.

levitical priests (Ex. 40:15 and Numb. 3:3).[362] In the Septuagint, it was used at times as an equivalent for χρίω.[363]

The anointing with oil in the context of prayer in the James passage would not have a sacramental sense, as the efficacy was in the intercessory petition, not the anointing. Indeed, it would work confusion to attribute a sacramental character rather than symbolic to the anointing with oil—an almost magical quality to a physical substance. The former was effectual; the latter was symbolic, and at most an act to bolster the faith of the incapacitated person. Could it not be in part an acknowledgement that all healing comes from God, that such healing derives from the work of the Holy Spirit and is subject to His prerogative?

Oil was a common medical element used for treating some, but not all types of sickness (Isa. 1:4–6). The "Good Samaritan" in our Lord's parable "poured oil and wine" upon [ἐπιχέων, pres. act. ptc., "to pour upon," *not* ἀλείφω, an anointing] the man's wounds in a medicinal manner (Lk. 10:33–34). However, if this "anointing with oil" merely referred to the acknowledgment of medical attention, it ought to be noted that rubbing with oil, although common, was not prescribed for every sickness.

Further, where would the oil be rubbed? Unless this act was symbolic and the anointing was upon the head—even if denoting medical issues—would it not be proper [though sometimes very

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[362] Cf. Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, I, p. 52. Note: Kralingen states correctly that the term χρίω was never used for physical anointing in the New Testament—but it was the common term for physical anointing in a sacred sense in the Old Testament. See Kralingen, *Op. cit.*

[363] The term ἀλείφω occurs twenty–eight times in the LXX. Douglas A. Moo, "The Letter of James," *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, pp. 238–242. He also points out, with others, that if James was referring to physical anointing, this is the term he would have used. Cf. also, Douglas A. Moo, *TNTC*, p. 179.

indiscreet] to apply it to the part of the body affected by sickness if such were visibly localized? Thus, even if the reference pointed to medicinal issues, the anointing itself would be symbolic.

If the cause of the disease were evident, and called for medical attention, then would it not have been best to call for the doctor and not the elders?

"Anointing with oil in the name of the Lord" [ἀλείψαντες [αὐτὸν] ἐλαίῳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου] would seem to put this act into the spiritual realm which would be consistent with prayer for a renewed consecration as a symbolic act, and would indicate more than the mere recognition of the necessity for medical attention. Anointing with oil while invoking the name of the Lord would make this an act of faith, a gesture commanded in Scripture as a symbol of putting the matter before the Lord in faith, and strengthening the faith of the one who is sick. [364]

"The prayer of faith" [καὶ ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως]. There are two diverse terms for "prayer" in this passage, v. 14, προσευξάσθωσαν ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸν and v. 15, εὐχη τῆς πίστεως. The first term [προσεύχομαι] is the general word for "prayer;" the latter term, εὐχη, denotes a specific request, a vow, and would be the most fitting term for an intercessory prayer for renewed consecration. This refers to the prayers of the elders, not to the faith of the incapacitated person. The burden to pray in faith is on the elders—that they come to the incapacitated person spiritually prepared, and representing a praying church.

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick [καὶ ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως σώσει τὸν κάμνοντα], and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." The words "shall save" [σώσει] can refer to both spiritual and physical

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[364] See Kurt A. Richardson, "James" *The New American Commentary*, pp. 232–233. Douglas A. Moo, after giving a very balanced survey of the various views, concludes that it was not medicinal, but a symbolic act of consecration. "James," *PNTC*, *Loc. cit.*

deliverance or restoration. This is an acknowledgment that some sickness is directly hamartiogenic.[365] If all conditions are met and it is God's will, there is a complete restoration, physically, spiritually and congregationally.[366]

Historical and Doctrinal Issues

There are a number of historical and doctrinal issues which have arisen because of this passage in James. These need to be discussed:

The first issue for consideration must be the erroneous doctrines which have derived from a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the James 5:13–15:

The Romish doctrine of Extreme Unction. This is the anointing of the vital organs and the extremities of a dying person with oil by a priest. This rite derived from this passage, but the situation and reason are not the same. The Scriptural account is for the recovery and restoration of a sick person, not the final rite of alleged forgiveness and comfort for a dying individual.[367]

The Eastern Orthodox Church uses a "rite of unction" or anointing with oil [Εὐχελαιον].[368] This differs from the Romish or Western Catholic Church in the following: first, the oil is not

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[365] *Hamartiogenic*, i.e., sin–engendered. All sickness may be traced indirectly to sin as characteristic of fallen, sinful humanity. Some sickness, however, is the direct result of sin.

[366] The assumed confession of sin in this context in vs. 15–16, "… and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed," may imply that there may be sin or offenses between this person and other members of the church which would have to be dealt with. If such were known, these would be dealt with before the elders would pray and anoint with oil.

[367] Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 445–450.

[368] Εὐχελαιον. This term is derived from the word "prayer, εὐχη, and ἔλαιον, oil. See Douglas A. Moo, *PNTC*, Op. cit.

consecrated beforehand, but at the given time by seven priests rather than bishops. Second, the unction or anointing is given for any serious illness, not solely reserved for the dying. The rite is performed in the church [sanctuary] if possible. Third, the rite is valid if at least three priests are present to officiate.[369]

The Anglican service of the "Visitation of the Sick" wherein "the sacraments of the body and blood of our Lord" ["sacred communion"] are administered by an Anglican priest and the doctrine of the "Sacrament of Comfort," which is administered by prayer and anointing with oil on the head or breast, deriving from this passage in James. Modern bishops, it has been lamented, no longer consecrate a holy oil for such a rite.[370]

The Romish, Eastern Orthodox and Anglican doctrines give a sacramental value to the anointing with oil rather than a symbolic significance. Yet they do retain the idea that the application of oil is an anointing.

The modern Pentecostal or Charismatic healing service also derives from this passage. The differences, however, plainly reveal the diverse nature of such a "healing service:" first, healing services are usually set apart as a distinct part of a public meeting. The passage in James is a distinctly private meeting held in a private home between the sick person and the elders of the local church. The sick person summons the elders; the elders do not invite the sick for public healing. Second, the prayer of the elders, "the prayer of faith," is the Divinely–ordained instrument for the healing or restoration of the sick person, neither the oil nor the person's own faith.

In such public "healing services," if a person is not healed, he or she is often told that he or she does not have the necessary faith to be healed. This is emotionally and spiritually devastating. Often the mental or psychological condition of the sick person is made much

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[369] See E. C. S. Gibson, "James," *The Pulpit Commentary*, XXI, p. 71.

[370] See. E. C S. Gibson, *Op. cit.*; Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of James*, pp. 232–234.

worse by the incapacitating nature of the physical sickness. One only has to consider the devastating effects of chemotherapy, various narcotic medications or the traumatic effects of serious injury, surgery or a debilitating disease to understand that the mental or spiritual condition may be already greatly deteriorated. The anointing with oil as an accompaniment to prayer may help the sick person to focus on the power of God, the Great Healer and Good Physician. It may help focus emblematically on the Holy Spirit, and it may thus become a visible means of grace through its symbolism.

In addition to the previous view, there are some in the modern Charismatic Movement who claim to possess the Apostolic gift of healing. We are not told that any of the elders had such a gift. It was their prayer of faith which restored the sick, not a supernatural charismatic gift which was limited to and worked only through certain supernaturally–gifted individuals.

Are the prayer and anointing with oil a guarantee that healing or recovery will inevitably take place? Not necessarily. It may be the will of God that an illness continue for his glory, as with the Apostle Paul, who, although he healed others, remained infirmed (2 Cor. 12:7–10). All healing comes from God and is a matter of his will (1 Jn. 5:14–15), whether he blesses the use of medical procedures or heals directly ["…the Lord shall raise him up…" v. 15].[371] Although we do not live in an era where miracles are predominant, yet the Lord at times is pleased to move and effect a sudden cure, a providential deliverance or a definite intervention into the affairs of men in answer to prayer. Prayer itself, by its very nature, anticipates a Divine answer!

With regard to healing or restoration, Sometimes the healing is immediate; at other times it is more gradual. The "prayer of faith," i.e., that prayer which is offered up in faith to God as the elders intercede for the sick person presumably rises from hearts and minds

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[371] Douglas A. Moo, "James," *TNTC*, pp. 184–185.

solemnly and fully prepared to pray for the given situation in faith. It may be presumed that the entire church would be in prayer for the elders on this mission and act of faith. It would be presumptuous—almost inconceivable—that the elders would approach the bedside of such a sick person without having solemnly prepared themselves both individually and corporately before approaching this preeminent act of faith.

There are some who hold that James 5:13–15 refers to the Apostolic Era and the temporary supernatural gifts or *charismata* which were given at that time for the establishment of the New Testament Church as the Divinely–ordained institution for this gospel economy.[372]

If James 5:13–15 has reference only to the Apostolic Era and the *charismata*, it is strange that although our Lord used mud made from spittle on one occasion (Jn. 9:1–7), and simply spittle on another (Mk. 8:22–26), and often laid his hands on the sick and infirmed (Matt. 8:1–3; Mk. 6:5; Lk. 4:40; 13:11–13), took them by the hand (Mk. 1:30–31; 5:39–42; 9:23–25) or simply spoke a word (Matt. 8:5–13; 9:1–7; Lk. 8:43–48; 18:35–43). He never once used oil in any act of healing. Neither did the Apostle Paul, although he was used by the Lord to heal many, at times through extra–ordinary miracles (Acts 19:11–12; 28:8–10). And there were times when Paul could not or did not heal those close to him who were sick and a burden to him, although he doubtless and characteristically prayed for their healing and restoration (Phil. 2:25–27; 2 Tim. 4:20).

The Apostle Peter never used oil to our knowledge, although he took those he healed by the hand (Acts 2:3–8; 9:36–41), and at times was enabled to perform miracles by passing through a multitude (Acts 5:12–16) or by simply speaking a word (Acts 9:32–35). We have no record that our Lord or any of the Apostles ever used oil in

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[372] Among those who espouse such a view: B. H. Carroll, *Interpretation of the English Bible*, XIII, pp. 47–50; John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, XII, pp. 139–140; E. T. Winkler, "James," *An American Commentary on the New Testament*, pp. 70–71.

anointing the sick, except in Mark 6:13. If this practice were limited to the Apostolic Era, then James 5:13–15 as a command stands as an anomaly to the usual Apostolic practice.

Some hold that the anointing with oil was medicinal, and that the oil symbolized the necessity of medical treatment.[373] Albert Barnes is of this opinion, but adds that because the elders of the church were called, the cure would not be miraculous, but simply "the use of appropriate means accompanied by prayer."[374] Others vehemently disagree, holding that James would have told the sick to call for the doctor and not the elders.[375] *Even if the anointing with oil only pointed to the necessity of medical treatment, its use was still symbolic, and the question is only concerning its purpose, not its efficacy.* Among those who would disagree concerning its symbolic medical properties, most consider the symbolism to be that of spiritual power, healing, recovery or focusing on the Divine presence, especially with the invocation of the Divine Name.

Some, as Sophie Laws, see the anointing with oil as an integral part of the process and one with the prayer, and so not to be disassociated from it as a separate issue. Cf. the use of the contemporaneous aor. ptc. Thus, according to such thinking, it neither refers to medicinal nor to symbolic significance.[376]

Calvin held that the anointing with oil was limited to the charismatic era of the Apostolic Age with its supernatural gifts. It was his judgment that such was not used indiscriminately, but

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[373] A. T. Robertson, *Loc. Cit.*

[374] Albert Barnes, *Notes: Hebrews–Jude*, pp. 91–92.

[375] B. H. Carroll, Loc. cit.; Robert Johnstone, *Lectures Exegetical and Practical on The Epistle of James*, pp. 402–404; Peter H. Davids, "The Epistle of James," *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, pp. 193–194.

[376] Sophie Laws, "The Epistle of James," *Black's New Testament Commentary*, pp. 126–127.

judiciously lest it suffer abuse.[377] John Gill follows suit.[378] Thomas Manton takes a similar view, associating this rite with the miraculous gifts of the Apostolic Era, though he stresses that the anointing with oil was symbolic of the cure. He also maintained that this rite was probably inherited from Jewish practice. He further stated that not everyone so anointed was healed, that "God gave out his grace and power as he saw good." He and John Trapp both mention a story about the use of prayer and anointing with oil in the time of Tertullian (c.170–220) by one Proculus, to effect a cure.[379] Trapp mentions that some in his day thought the rite was a continuous ordinance of the church.[380]

Although many of the Puritans followed the Reformers in their view that the anointing with oil was limited to the Apostolic Era and the age of the temporary miraculous gifts or *charismata*, Thomas Goodwin very strongly argued that this rite is a standing ordinance for the churches. He presented six arguments for its continuance and then sought to answer the major objections.[381]

James Adamson, with others, sees in the use of oil and the invoking of the name of the Lord a preventative to resort to pagan or merely Jewish practices, which abounded. Invoking "the name of the Lord" would make this an exclusively Christian practice.

See the discussion of the use of oil with prayer in Ralph. P. Martin, "James," *Word Biblical Commentary*, pp. 207–209. Martin further admonishes against coming to any definite conclusions concerning the exact significance of anointing with oil due to the scant evidence in the New Testament for the practice.

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[377] John Calvin, *James*, pp. 314–315.

[378] John Gill, "An Exposition of the New Testament," *Gill's Commentary*, VI, pp. 801–802.

[379] Thomas Manton, *Works*, IV, pp. 445–452; John Trapp, *Commentary on the Old & New Testaments*, V, p. 704.

[380] John Trapp. *Loc. cit.*

[381] Thomas Goodwin, *Works*, XI, pp. 458–462.

He further states that this use would have "a valuable psychological effect in the ritual," i.e., it would strengthen one's faith.[382]

Some, while dealing very thoroughly with James 5:13–15 remain uncommitted as to the exact nature of anointing with oil or a given historical time–frame.

Note: For examples of this view, see D. Edmond, Hiebert, *James*, pp. 294–296; Simon J. Kistemaker, "James, I–II John," *New Testament Commentary*, pp. 175–177.

Meyer, while holding that the anointing was the conductor which communicated supernatural power, viewed this as analogous to the laying on of hands.[383] While neither action would be necessarily miraculous in the present day, is there not a distinct parallel when the laying on of hands is considered symbolic in either praying for the sick or at an ordination service?

There are some, in addition to Romanists, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans and Charismatics, who have held that the anointing of oil, deriving from James 5:13–15, is valid for today. Thomas Goodwin has already been mentioned. This is true among certain pastors within Evangelical, Fundamentalist and Baptist ranks.

Fundamental Baptists, Landmark Baptists, Reformed Baptists and Sovereign Grace Baptists. Douglas A. Moo is of the opinion that this rite is valid for the present time. Cf. both *PNTC* and *TNTC*. In the latter Moo devotes a special section to the question of anointing with oil and healing, pp. 183–187.

History witnesses to several instances of healing in the life and ministry of Mr. Hanserd Knollys, A. M. (1598–1691), an eminent and influential Baptist minister both in New England and in England.

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[382] James. Adamson, "The Epistle of James," *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, pp. 197–198.

[383] H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the New Testament*, X, pp. 156–157, see footnote 1.

On one occasion, in the midst of a large group of ministers and believers, Mr. Knollys prayed for a blind woman and anointed her with oil. Her sight was restored. Although the record of the procedure is somewhat at variance with the passage in James, the incident has been noted by several historians.[384]

During a time of great illness, Mr. Knollys called for two eminent Particular Baptist preachers, William Kiffin and Vavasor Powell,[385] who came to him, prayed over him and anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord. He recovered.[386] William Kiffin with Thomas Patient, another eminent Particular Baptist minister, prayed for and anointed with oil a Christian sister in Smithfield, who recovered. This was also a well–known incident.

Such anointing with oil on the basis of James 5:13–15 was commonly practiced among the General Baptists in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They were careful to maintain a strict adherence to the Scripture in this practice. Prayer and anointing with oil was also practiced among the Welsh Baptists of the Middle Colonies in America during that era. Many of the Separatist Baptists in the middle and southern Colonies did the

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[384] The instances of the healings, including a somewhat detailed account of the woman's restored sight, is given by Jim Scott Orrick, "Hanserd Knollys," *A Noble Company: Biographical Essays on Notable Particular–Regular Baptists in America*, ed. By Terry Wolever. Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2006, pp.4, 15–17; Thomas Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, I, p. 338.

[385] Powell considered this a gospel ordinance from the following declaration in his Confession of Faith: "Visiting the sick, and for the Elders to anoint them in the name of the Lord, is a Gospel ordinance and not repealed, *James* 5:14. 15." Joseph Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, II, p. 214.

[386] J .M. Cramp, *History of the Baptists*, p. 438; Barry M. Howson, "Hanserd Knollys," *The British Particular Baptists*, Michael A. G. Haykin, Ed., I, pp. 41, 49; Ivimey, *Op. cit.*, p. 227.

same.[387] Thus, we have four of the most eminent Particular Baptists of the Seventeenth Century practicing this rite and witnessing to its effectiveness, and also two distinct groups of Baptists, both in England and in America who recognized and practiced it.[388]

Notes and Observations

A summary of thoughts and observations from the foregoing textual, historical and doctrinal issues:

The anointing with oil in Mark 6:13 and James 5:13–15 are diverse. Mark occurs in the context of miraculous healing in the casting out demons. Anointing the sick with oil was a major concern in their healing. James occurs in the context of intercessory prayer by the church elders and the anointing with oil is a secondary issue grammatically and contextually.

From interviews and research, it seems that the issue of anointing with oil as an accompaniment to prayer for the sick largely depends upon one's religious background and tradition.

Evidently few have seriously and personally studied the matter out and researched it biblically and historically.

Many among Evangelicals and Baptists have been prejudiced against such a practice because of the sacramental use of anointing with oil in the Romish and Eastern Orthodox Churches and the healing services of the Charismatics and various "faith healers."

There is nothing in the text or context which would indicate or necessitate that prayer and anointing with oil for the sick was limited to the Apostolic Era and the early decades of Christianity when the temporary *charismata* were given and exercised.

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[387] Earl Waggoner, "Shubel Stearns," *A Noble Company: Biographical Essays on Notable Particular Baptists in America*, pp. 9–10.

[388] Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches*, I, p. 411; J. J. Goadby, *Bye–Paths in Baptist History*, pp. 293–298; Terry Wolever, ed., Op.cit., p. 289.

If the practice were limited to the early decades of Christianity and the era of the *charismata* or temporary supernatural gifts, then why were not those who possessed such gifts of healing called? Calling for the elders of the church would place attention upon the church, its government and its involvement, and would seem to preclude the idea of an immediate, miraculous healing and rather become a call for recovery from sickness.

For an incapacitated person to call for the elders of the church for prayer and anointing would presuppose that this individual had been prompted by the Scriptures and by the Holy Spirit to commit to such an action. All this would presuppose a strongly felt need and would be indicative of a heart and mind submissive to the Scriptures and to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Every sickness has a spiritual and mental aspect, as well as a physical aspect.

Such a summons of the elders of the church would presuppose that the person's relation to the church [ἐκκλησία, assembly, congregation], both collectively and individually, was scriptural and without offense. The context (vs. 13–18) implies that every aspect has been taken into consideration. Such sickness may be providential chastisement which would bring the individual to the point of being willing to confess and make things right (1 Cor. 11:30–32; Heb. 12:4–14). This would also necessarily include any sin or offense against another church member or against the congregation as a whole.

Such a prayer meeting was not a public meeting, but a private one. Any public demonstration would invalidate the very nature of such a summons. Such a meeting would be the very opposite of a "healing service."

The prayer of faith, i.e., prayer offered up in faith, is given through the elders of the church. Supporting them in this act of faith is a unified and praying church. The elders themselves have been solemnly prepared for this meeting and anointing. They come to the bedside of the incapacitated individual in the fullness of faith, as

representatives of the church,[389] to intercede and seek the recovery of the sick. It must never be thought that such a "prayer of faith" can in any way manipulate God in some superstitious way or either circumvent or change his will. As all true faith is God–given, such prayer would be prayed in submission to God's will, in accordance with this scriptural mandate and in humble anticipation of a God–honoring answer.

The anointing with oil is symbolic, not sacramental. Whether for medical or spiritual reasons, the application of the oil was in the nature of an anointing.

The anointing with oil in the name of the Lord is a symbolic, physical act which accompanies prayer to strengthen the faith of the one anointed, an act of renewed consecration to the Lord, a giving of one's self up to the Lord and his restoring prerogative and power.

Although prayer and anointing with oil are commanded, the laying on of hands is not. Yet it is instinctive to lay hands on the sick when several surround and pray over such a person. *Is it not strange that, while the laying on of hands is not questioned, the anointing with oil is?*

The Lord has been pleased to use and bless this practice throughout the centuries. Eminent Christians, and Baptists among them, have prayed over the sick, anointed them with oil in the name of the Lord, and have witnessed their prayers answered and the sick recovered.

Conclusion

The primary and essential Baptist distinctive is not that we immerse converted persons. Rather, it is that we hold the Scriptures to be our sole rule of both faith [what we believe] and practice [how we live]. In any pursuit, debate, controversy, research or stand for

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[389] See B. H. Carroll, *Op. cit.,* p. 47; Dan G. McCartney, "James," *Baker Exegetical Commentary*, p. 253.

the truth as we understand it from the Scriptures, the one deciding factor is, "Is this biblical?" We must be willing to examine our own religious traditions and prejudices. We must constantly seek to conform ourselves to the Word of God, as properly and consistently exegeted and interpreted. We must understand that every doctrine possesses a history, and that history must be explored. Divine truth is coherent or non–contradictory, and we must seek to become so in our own grasp of Divine truth.

To avoid or oppose certain beliefs or practices simply because others with whom we do not agree practice such is never a sufficient or consistent reason. We may be robbing ourselves of some aspect of the truth which is scriptural. Are we fearful of examining our own views? Are we willing to change when faced with a better and clearer grasp of the truth? If we are not, then, to the extent that we turn from the truth out of expediency, fear or tradition, to that extent we lose the ability to discern truth from error.

It is the opinion of the author that the anointing with oil in the name of the Lord accompanying prayer for the seriously ill is scriptural, if all the scriptural criteria are met. He finds nothing which would limit this practice to the Apostolic Era and the early decades of Christianity with their temporary charismatic gifts.

While there are inherent dangers in every aspect of truth and practice within biblical Christianity, if all the scriptural safeguards and commands are followed there should be no tendency to move away from truth toward either the error of sacramentarianism or toward the other extreme in the Charismatic direction. Satan attacks wherever he can gain an opportunity. We should expect that when a church seeks to conform itself to the Scriptures, he will raise what opposition or confusion he can.

The anointing with oil is a lesser issue than the prayer of faith. It seems to be on the same level as the laying on of hands. Yet the Scripture commands the one and not the other. We find it strange that although many immediately object to the anointing with oil,

none object to the laying on of hands when praying for the sick! This simply points to the strength of religious tradition and prejudice.

For the elders, it is a serious, solemn matter to be called to pray over a seriously ill person and to pray in faith, without reservation and do so effectually. It is, perhaps, the greatest act of faith for the elders as a body. Such a visit presupposes much time spent in prayer and in scriptural and spiritual preparation. It also assumes a praying church represented through these elders.

The author believes that being called to the bedside of a seriously ill person for prayer and anointing with oil has been, is and will remain a relatively rare occurrence for the following reasons: first, some simply do not believe that this is biblical for our day, and will seek refuge in religious tradition or retreat from any practice which they deem questionable. Second, some are private and seek to keep all matters to themselves, including illness and personal suffering. Third, such a request would presuppose that the Holy Spirit is at work in a determining fashion to prompt that person to confess his sins, right himself in his relationship with the Lord and with anyone and everyone in the local congregation. The visit of the elders would be at their discretion should there be any question as to motive, unconfessed sin, or issues with anyone within the local assembly. Finally, the entire church is either directly or indirectly involved, as it is an informed and praying church which sends the elders to respond to the request of the sick, and it is a prayerful, sober representative group of elders who make such a solemn visit.

A Final Note

One's attitude and practice will be largely determined by his tradition. Whether some will be convinced or not, this paper will have served its purpose if our brethren are willing to consider the issues and make a fair judgment. To those who have experienced or witnessed such a time of prayer and anointing with oil, nothing need be said.

The author wishes to acknowledge the help he has received in various discussions with other pastors and elders who have come to a like conclusion and have had experience in this matter, and with some who disagree. Every discussion has been helpful and enlightening. The experience of the former has been parallel. Such times of preparation for such a visit, earnest prayer before ever making the visit, and the prayer meeting itself and the anointing with oil have all made great, serious and blessed impressions upon the lives and ministries of these brethren. In every instance, the prayer meetings have been awesome and edifying, and in every instance the recovery of the sick has become a reality.

The author has received the most written help from some of the commentaries and historical works listed in the footnotes, and is thankful that some have explored this issue as fully as possible. D. Edmond Hiebert and Douglas A. Moo must be mentioned for their careful exegesis. Mention must also be made of Daniel M. Doiani's excellent exposition of James 5:13–20 and the personal experience of his infant daughter's healing in his commentary on James in the *Reformed Expository Commentary* Series, pp. 189–204. The author especially recommends the article by Kees van Kralingen, "Anointing with Oil" in *Reformation Today*, Number 237, September–October, 2010, and the section by the Puritan Thomas Goodwin in his *Works*, Vol. XI, pp. 458–462. Finally, it has been both interesting and edifying to see the witness of some of our prominent Baptist forefathers and at least two distinct Baptist groups in the past, both in England and in the American colonies, to this practice.

The Murders at Sandy Hook School: Why?

A Study from Scripture, History,
The Second Amendment
and Personal Experience

The Columbine School mass murders, The Virginia Tech mass murders, the Aurora Theater mass murders and now, the Sandy Hook School mass murders, Why? What next? What can we expect?

In this article, we will explore the reasons behind the mass murders at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and related issues from a biblical Christian, intelligent, historical and personal perspective.

A Tragedy and a Crime

The mass shooting at the grade school in Newtown, Connecticut, was both a tragedy and a crime.[390] The young man was in illegal possession of the weapons he used. He murdered his mother then coldly and in an unprovoked manner murdered twenty five other people in a "gun free zone."

Everyone is asking "Why?" And various answers are being given. Liberals blame guns, as they always do. It has ever been relatively easy to demonize some object. As symbols of hate, crime, violence or sin, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, certain types of clothing, certain hair styles, behavior or guns—or even certain types of guns have been demonized as symbols of what is wrong with or harmful to society. Guns are tangible objects and can be easily blamed by the unthinking or those with ulterior motives. But guns must have someone to obtain, carry, load, aim and fire them; they cannot intimidate, fire, wound or kill on their own. They remain tools; just

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[390] Tragedies may be either voluntary or involuntary. Such a crime is necessarily voluntary—a responsible, culpable and often premeditated activity in breaking known laws or statutes for which the perpetrator must assume responsibility for the immediate act and its consequences. While many use the term "tragedy," few use the proper term, "crime."

as protective, beneficial, useful intimidating or harmful as the person who uses them.[391]

Religious leaders and psychologists point to the shooter's obvious "mental illness," and seek to promote a nebulous "love," as though evil or wickedness is the bane of only a few within society and not characteristic of fallen, sinful humanity as a whole. As biblical Christians, whose thinking is to be governed by a "revelational epistemology," which is grounded in the Bible and expressed in a "Christian Theistic World–and–Life View," what are we to think?

> Note: Epistemology is the science of truth and knowledge and truth claims. All assumptions or presuppositions must have a sufficient epistemological basis. Biblical Christians have the inscripturated Word of God [Divine special revelation] as the basis of their truth and knowledge.

There are three Greek terms for knowledge: γινώσκω, "come to know, become acquainted with, understand;" οἶδα, "perception, fullness of knowledge;" ἐπίσταμαι, "to understand, to fix one's thoughts upon, to be assured, know for certain." ἐπιστήμη, (noun form) is also used for both intellectual power, scientific knowledge and artistic skill. It is from this term that the word *epistemology* is derived. For scriptural examples of this term, cf. Mk. 14:68; Acts 10:28; 15:7; 18:25; 19:15, 25; 20:18; 22:19; 24:10; 26:26; 1 Tim. 6:4; Heb. 11:8; Jas. 3:13; 4:14; Jude 10.

> Note: A "World–and–Life View" is one's overall philosophy of life—one's "over–arching or meta–narrative" which is inclusive of one's concept of himself, the world about him, his relation to it and everyone else, and his concept of ultimate issues—all of which determine how he thinks, acts and instinctively reacts at a presuppositional level. A "Christian Theistic World–and–Life View" is

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[391] "[We] should not blame a gun itself for any crime or any acts of violence, any more than we can blame a pen for misspelling a word." Senator Wallace F. Bennett (R-UT), *Congressional Record*, May 16, 1968.

a comprehensive philosophy of life which derives from a consistent concept and implementation of Biblical truth.

Mental Illness and Human Nature

In every one of the recent mass shooting crimes, the shooter has been found or known to be "mentally ill," i.e., to be out of the norm mentally and socially. There were in every case previous danger signs that pointed to aberrant behavior and the possibility of violence.

> Note: A few days after the mass murders at Sandy Hook School, a crazed gunman in Rochester, NY, set three houses on fire to lure firemen to their death, shooting four, wounding two and killing two. He stated that killing people is what he loved to do. He had previously been imprisoned for beating his grandmother to death with a hammer.

This last episode was predictable, as it has been reported in the media[392] that his mother was in the process of having the young man committed to a psychiatric institution.

Is there a deeper reason for such atrocities than the objects or weapons themselves? We believe so. We further hold that the reason is even deeper than the alleged "mental illness" of the shooters, although their personal behavior and mental state contributed to their premeditated criminal actions:

First, the medical model for mental illness tends to make even the criminal a victim, rather than a culpable criminal in his actions. The recent acts of criminal violence perpetrated by such lone gunmen were premeditated acts which necessitated a given amount of intention and planning. These were not the alleged fatalistic results of a given genetic makeup, nor were they crimes of passion in the heat of the moment. They were reasoned actions for which the persons prepared themselves and for which they were personally responsible.

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[392] This was reported on Fox News.

Second, sin, evil, wickedness and unrighteousness or criminal tendencies and behavior are not the characteristics of the few—the abnormal, the sociopaths, the deranged or "depraved" among men. These are characteristics shared by all fallen, sinful mankind. Every human being is depraved by nature.[393] Man was created as the image–bearer of God, and as such he has within him an instinctive [Divinely–given] sense of right and wrong, even though he is now fallen and sinful by nature.

Rom. 2:12–16. [12] For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; [13] (For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. [14] For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: [15] Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) [16] In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

The Fall distorted the image of God in man but did not destroy it, i.e., man did not become an animal or amoral; he continues to be a rational [intelligent], morally–responsible being with an instinct for right and wrong, a being with a conscience. Biblically, unfallen Adam was "normal" as God created and intended him to be, but since the Fall, every human being, as fallen and sinful, is "abnormal." To judge any individual by the "normality" of fallen, sinful mankind is to engage in a relativism which is ultimately irrational and unbiblical.

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[393] "Depraved," from *de*, thoroughly, and *pravus*, crooked. This does not mean that man is as bad as he can be [absolute depravity] but that every part of man's fallen nature is permeated by sin [total depravity] and that he is under the controlling influence or reigning power of sin (Cf. Rom. 6:1–23).

What is the Root Source of Murder?

Only the Biblical Christian has the true answer to this question. It is not the weapon. It is not the occasion, provocation or the opportunity. It is the person himself. The root cause lies in the sinfulness of the individual human heart, which exists in a state of depravity under the reigning power of sin and the influence of the Evil One:

> **Prov. 4:23.** Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

> **Prov. 23:7.** For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he…

> Matt. 15:18–20. [18] But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. [19] For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: [20] These are the things which defile a man… [394]

> **1 Jn. 3:15.** Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.[395]

> **Eph 2:1–3.** [1]And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; [2] Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: [3] Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.[396]

It is the heart or the inner being of the fallen, sinful human personality, which is dominated by sin and characterized by sinful

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[394] Cf. also John. 8:34, 40, 44; Jas. 4:1–4; 1 Jn. 3:8, 10, 12–15.

[395] All murder begins in the heart or inner being. This is why the Moral Law of God as expressed in the Decalogue forbids the very thought or inclination as well as the overt act. Cf. Lev. 19:16–18; Matt. 5:27–28; 1 Jn. 3:15.

[396] "according to," [κατὰ], which occurs twice has the sense of "dominated by" or "under the controlling influence of." The words "by nature the children of wrath" [ἤμεθα τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς] denote being by nature under Divine wrath.

thoughts, motives, inclinations, actions and words which is the true source of murder. The overt act is but the manifestation of the state of the heart.

Behind the murders and those who seek to understand the motivation, inclination and perpetration of such violent actions there remains a dysfunctional characteristic of every member of this fallen, sinful human race that is inescapable apart from Divine grace. This truth is inherently characteristic of both the psychiatrist and the criminologist, the criminal and the one who enforces the law, the psychologist and the sociopath:

> **Rom. 1:18–22.** [18] For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [κατεχόντων] the truth in unrighteousness; [19] Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. [20] For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse [ἀναπολογήτους]: [21] Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God [γνόντες τὸν θεὸν οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν], neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations [ἀλλ᾽ ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν], and their foolish heart was darkened [καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδία]. [22] Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools [φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν]…

Mark the following from this passage, which reveals the nature and character of all fallen, sinful mankind:

(v. 18). Rather than face Divine disapprobation and his ungodly and unrighteous condition, man habitually suppresses this reality in his sinfulness.

(v. 19–20). The two–fold witness of his inner being [as the image–bearer of God] and the external witness that every fact is a created fact which declares the reality and power of God, renders him utterly inexcusable before God for his sinfulness.

(v. 21). We mark the universal truth of the noetic effects of sin.[397] When faced with the truth of God and reality, man refused to acknowledge God as he is, but in unthankfulness has turned away in rebellion, and, as a consequence, he has become futile in his reasonings[398] and darkened has become his incapacitated heart.[399]

(v. 22). In the very act of professing himself to be wise he has become a fool. This is marked in almost every area of fallen, sinful mankind, despite the claims to superior reasoning, alleged social evolution and the rise of technology and the abundance of laws.

The remainder of Romans chapter One (1:25–32) reveals the results of the depravity of man's nature in its religious (v. 23–24), scientific (v. 25), immoral and perverted tendencies (v. 26–27) which result in Divine judgment through complete familial and social disintegration (v. 28–32). The wording in the original language stresses that these are characteristic of fallen, sinful man in his rebellion against God and His Truth.

Note: Rom. 1:23–25, Through idolatry, fallen, sinful man seeks to drag God down to his level and pervert his nature and character—a world of and an attempt at fantasy. They are such ones as who [οἵτινες, qual. pers. pron.] exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and side–stepped [παρά] the Creator in order to worship creation. Sinful men then attribute Divine attributes to creation.

The crime of mass murder is simply characteristic of a society under Divine judgment; a society which has cast off God and thus all legitimate moral barriers. And in the case of America, a society

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[397] The noetic [from νοέω, to think]. Noetic refers to how the mind–set or mental disposition has been affected by the Fall.

[398] Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:17–19. An intellectual, moral and spiritual futility.

[399] "Incapacitated" [ἀσύνετος], senseless, unable to put things together, hence a fragmented and inconsistent or incoherent World–and–Life View.

which has legitimized and even legislated immorality and perversion, sought to destroy the family and to separate God from reality by tradition, judicial mandate and legislation.

Mark carefully Rom. 1:28–32. As our society has reprobated [ἀδόκιμον, disapproved of] God in its thinking, God has given us over to a reprobate [disapproved] mind to practice those things which are characteristic of sinful rebellion, utter immorality and perversion, social disintegration and self–destruction. There is even an insatiate desire to vicariously experience the worst of wickedness (v. 32):

> These are such ones as who [οἵτινες] fully comprehending [ἐπιγνόντες] the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

At every point in this lengthy diagnosis of the human heart in both the irreligious and religious (Rom. 1:18–3:20), fallen, sinful mankind are considered as fully responsible and culpable for their state and actions. This is true of both the openly religious who possessed the Scriptures [the Jews] and the pagans, who lived and died without the Scriptures:

Rom. 3:9–12 summarizes the issue:

> [9] What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;[10] As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: [11] There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.[12] They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

> Note: Rom. 3:12. "they are together become unprofitable [ἠχρεώθησαν]." The term denotes "useless." The Heb. of the source (Psa.14:3) is נֶאֱלָחוּ, tainted, corrupt, used of soured milk or spoiled food, and so utterly useless, irreparable, and only fit to be discarded.

And the final description of fallen, sinful humanity in this dark, descriptive passage? Rom. 3:15–18. "Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: And the way of

peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes."

This aptly describes our present violent and wicked society— "feet swift to shed blood….no fear of God before their eyes"—and thus the denial of moral absolutes. We have become a fragmented and disintegrated society without moral barriers. What good are more laws when society itself has become lawless?

The Nature of American Government and Statist Education

The national government established by our Constitution with the Executive, Judicial and Legislative branches presupposed the natural evil of man, and the need for checks and balances in representative human government—what we had at our national commencement—a Constitutional Republic. We are, however, becoming more irrational and relativistic and less able to govern ourselves. The tendency now is toward controlling people because the people are becoming uncontrollable—the inevitable path toward a socialistic Police State.

There are other salient issues socially, educationally and historically. The statist government schools are not only prohibited from teaching religion, and hence, any consistent God– consciousness ["the fear of God"] and morality, but have been increasingly characterized by postmodern philosophy, with its deconstruction and reconstruction of language [no ultimate meaning or authority], relativism [no absolutes] and existentialism [extreme subjectivism and self–centeredness].

Religious pluralism has all but destroyed any remaining Christian or biblical base. Morality, or rather amorality is grounded in the relative character of mere human consensus. This has resulted in a questioning of and disrespect for authority, a self–centered, subjective perception of self–esteem which opposes all outward opposition, and an attitude of irresponsibility for one's actions—a "victim mentality." The end result of such a trend is toward an atheistic state and an ultimate nihilistic attitude.

The idea of evolution,[400] as proscribed by the statist educational system as truth, is not benign; it is rather the vehicle for both atheism and the destruction of moral behavior and responsibility. If evolution is assumed to be true, then atheism is the legislated philosophy of the State. There is no God, and hence, no moral absolutes. If man is an animal, then human history is meaningless, there was no Fall, and thus, no sin and no future Day of Judgment, and so, no ultimate accountability. If man is an animal, then he can be expected to behave as one—to act on animal impulses and to deny any existence of moral values.

But what saith the Scripture? "…it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). *There is nothing after death, no "after this" in modern secularized, materialistic American thinking*—no Day of Judgment, no ultimate accountability before a righteous, just and holy God.

The Past Century and Personal Experience

Some thoughts on our history. The following is not an attempt to provide an answer, but simply to describe the downward secularized trend of our American society within the last generation and its fruits. Some of us can remember growing up in a relatively decent, conservative environment in America. Guns and hunting were a way of life in rural and suburban America. In the school parking lot, there were often pickup trucks with gun racks with rifles or shotguns openly exposed in the back window because the students would hunt, either before or after school. No one ever considered using a gun to kill another person or student.

We were taught and expected to be responsible for our actions. Teachers physically disciplined students for misbehavior and no one

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[400] Evolution is not a theory, but an idea, as it is not based on observable phenomena according to the modern, scientific critical or empirical method. It is rather posited as a matter of faith, and hence either must be classed with religion or seen to be irrational in the face of facts.

objected; it was expected. Self–discipline largely characterized most of society. Gangs were largely comprised of adults who were career criminals, and notable crimes usually only existed in certain slums of crowded inner–cities and were non–existent in most communities. Recreational drugs were almost non–existent and even drunkenness among young people was relatively rare.

Many years ago, as a credentialed public school teacher,[401] I carried firearms into classes as part of history lessons on Western expansion, the Mountain Men and the fur trade, along with Bowie knives and tomahawks. I also physically disciplined students when I had another teacher as a witness, and witnessed several acts of physical discipline myself while other teachers administered corporal punishment. This worked very well, and is itself biblically–based.[402] It is presumptuous to out–think God!

Many people went to church on Sundays. Prayer was offered at most public functions and in the schools at athletic games, graduation exercises and commencement services and award gatherings. We were taught to respect our country, our flag, our elders, parents, teachers, churches and law enforcement.

There was such a thing as sin, acknowledged even by the irreligious. Aberrant or immoral behavior was looked upon as a great scandal. Everyone seemed to look out for the property and children of others. Schools and parents worked together for the good of the community. It was a scandal when someone cheated during an exam. Honesty and morality were largely presupposed among most folks.

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[401] The author earned an MA in Education and possesses both life–time Elementary and Secondary Educational Credentials in the State of California.

[402] Prov. 13:24. He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. Prov. 22:15. Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. Prov. 23: 13–14. Withhold not correction from the child: for *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

We had chores to do after school—and if we needed money, we worked for it. Discussing and generally abiding by traditional moral values was simply a part of life.

That era was not utopian,[403] but it reflected to a given degree a Christian and moral base, and was far better, safer, more community–oriented, moral and much more conservative than what we have now since the postmodernity of the 1960s with the sexual revolution, amorality, open perversion, recreational drug use and the rapidly rising crime rate.

Now, everything seems to have changed. Few attend church at all. Sunday, which was once the Lord's Day, is now a time for recreation or dissipation. There seems to be no time for religious instruction or worship. The family in most cases is dysfunctional and fragmented. Increasingly, the State has become the Parent.

Recreational drug use is commonplace throughout our society and in some states legalized. Homosexuality is not only accepted today, but mandatorily taught in the California school system from kindergarten through high school by vote of the California State Legislature. A practical atheism, with all its attendant wickedness characterizes our society, even among those who profess to be "Christian"[404] in some traditional sense. God, morality, the Bible, the central place of the family, a close sense of community—these now seem "old fashioned" and held in contempt.

In reality, we see that God has been excluded from our society and from reality by sinful human consensus, legislation and the

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[403] *Utopia* was a fictional writing by Sir Thomas Moore (c. 1516) about an ideal community. It in reality means "no place," from the Gk. οὐ, no and τόπος, place. There is no utopian society, and every attempt must fail due to the sinful state of the individual human heart.

[404] Cf. Psa. 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God…" [אֵין אֱלֹהִים] *'eyn Elohim*. The term אֵין means to come to naught, to be nothing. Lit: "God is nothing, of no account, inconsequential."

statist school system. Without the truth of God, there can be no consistent morality, and without a consistent [biblically–based] morality and within the province of evolution, man sees himself as an animal, driven by instincts, controlled by passions and ultimately unaccountable, except to himself. He desires and believes he has achieved autonomy. "Autonomy," from αὐτος, self, and νόμος, law, lit: a law unto one's self, complete independence of all restraint. Man has always wanted what the Serpent offered for man—to be his own god and determine for himself what is right or wrong—complete autonomy from God and his Word. What man achieved was and is slavery to sin.

What can be expected in such a society? We have largely become ungovernable and increasingly under Divine retribution.

Entertainment

Entertainment is a major factor in American life today. TV is a major influence, and much of the entertainment is either outright sexually immoral or increasingly violent. As a society, we entertain ourselves watching dishonesty, murder, rape, criminal activity, immorality, perversion and various forms of violence for our viewing pleasure. The villain is often made the hero, and the hero trained. Video games are mostly violence–oriented, and young boys spend hours playing and amusing themselves at war or killing. There is even a current video game entitled "Kindergarten Killer."

What can we expect? Can we expect that what is absorbed by the heart and mind will not express itself in thought and action? Are we wiser than God (Prov. 4:23; 23:7)? Can a nation which feeds itself on violence and wickedness for entertainment escape the consequences? Are we so far removed from the sexual licentiousness and perversion of Pompeii or Corinth or the Roman Coliseum and the brutality of the gladiatorial contests? Are we self–deceived and do we mock God? Can we sow and not reap the same? "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7)?

The Testimony of History

History does have meaning, and it teaches us that this downward path of sinfulness and social disintegration has characterized most civilizations before us, and is vividly illustrated, for example, in Israel's history of apostasy in the Old Testament, the decedent history of Rome and the modern morally declining and atrocity–filled histories of Germany, Russia, China, Cambodia, Africa, etc. Again, all true and right government must begin with personal government, and personal government must begin with regeneration.

If we are left to ourselves under Divine judgment and "every man does that which is right in his own eyes," America will become more chaotic and the only humanistic answer will be a Police State—totalitarianism—which negates any real personal freedom. When man seeks to be his own god, he must dominate everyone else. And this will necessarily be a godless and graceless domination of the State as Parent and as God. Totalitarianism is the only ultimate answer of man when he seeks to be his own god.[405]

First, the State asserts its superiority and "compelling interest" over all individual matters,[406] then it regulates both religion and morality. Religious bodies and churches are increasingly restricted in their influence. Legally, churches exist in American society as "charitable institutions," not religious entities or assemblies of believers. The latter is then based on human consensus or social mores [moral relativism], then *the State takes the moral realm into the realm of "civil rights," and so legislates immorality and*

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[405] One simply has to read Plato's *Republic,* the blueprint for all totalitarian government*,* to see the totalitarianism of fallen, sinful man and its justification.

[406] The great difference between the Bible and the United States Constitution is "Thus saith the LORD" as opposed to "We, the people…"

perversion.[407] Dare we think that Almighty God will overlook this blatant rebellion against his created and revealed moral order?

The Truth about "Assault Weapons"

Something must be stated about the demonization of certain firearms. An assault weapon is not a certain type of firearm with certain distinctive features or functions such as muzzle breaks, high capacity magazines, color or military configuration. To think this is to completely misunderstand the nature of the issue. Cain rose up and murdered Abel because God accepted Abel's sacrifice and refused his.

> Note: Gen. 4:3–10. [3] And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. [4] And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: [5] But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. [6] And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? [7] If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. [8] And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. [9] And the Lord said unto Cain, Where *is* Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: *Am* I my brother's keeper? [10] And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

The first human blood was shed in religious persecution. Cain probably used an assault weapon, i.e., some implement—rock, knife, spear, club—with which he assaulted Abel and murdered him. What is an "assault weapon"? It is an object used to assault another person. It may be a rock, a knife, a length of pipe, a baseball bat, a slingshot, a bow and arrow, a firearm, a vehicle or some "weapon of mass destruction" such as poison gas or an explosive charge.

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[407] Making moral issues "civil rights" issues has given to our nation same sex marriage and "gay rights" activism as civil rights—it has removed our God–given moral barriers.

The present focus in American society is on guns. These have been painted as inherently "evil" by the liberal media. In Middle Eastern countries, where any male is considered undressed without his AK 47,[408] the preferred assault weapons of mass murders are suicide vests, explosive–laden vehicles, planes or I.E.Ds,[409] and in some cultures, which forbid firearms, simply a knife.

Note: The Osaka School Massacre took place on June 8, 2001, at Ikeda Elementary School, an elite primary school affiliated with Osaka Kyoiku University. A former janitor, Mamoru Takuma used a kitchen knife to murder 8 young children and wound 13 others and 2 teachers. He was diagnosed with a paranoid personality disorder. The Houla Massacre in Syria, 2012, of 108 persons, a third of them children, executed by knives and gunfire. In Zhengzhou, China, twenty-two school children and a villager were injured in a knife attack at the gate of a primary school in central China's Henan Province. Several other knife mass attacks have occurred in China's schools in recent years.

Should all firearms be banned in our society, those who would plan such mass murders would resort to another means, possibly— probably—even more deadly—poisoning water, food sources or the air, or use bombs, arson, vehicles, etc. One only has to recall the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995, the first attempt to bomb the World Trade Center with an explosive–laden vehicle in 2001, or the local man who recently doused his live–in girlfriend with gasoline and set her ablaze.

And does anyone dare to think that criminals or the gangs which terrorize our inner cities, accounting for most of our crime and killings, will voluntarily give up their firearms and drug–dealing? In attempts at "Gun Control" [read "Gun registration and

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[408] The AK 47 is the Kalashnikov Model 1947 semi to fully automatic rifle. It is estimated that some 100 million of this type or family have been manufactured. It is the preferred personal weapon of terrorists and predominates in Third World countries.

[409] I.E.D. stands for "Improvised Explosive Device," usually an artillery shell or other explosive which is triggered by an electronic detonator.

confiscation"], only the law–abiding citizens will be disarmed; criminals will still be armed and society will necessarily become even more unsafe and lawless. This is the simple fact of history.

Gun registration and subsequent confiscation will not control evil or crime in our society. *Mark the words of an ardent gun control advocate* who had an ulterior motive: "This year will go down in history. For the first time, a civilized nation has full gun registration. Our streets will be safer, our police more efficient, and the world will follow our lead into the future!"[410]

The following is from an article taken from the internet in 2009:

In 1929, the Soviet Union established gun control. From 1929 to 1953, about 20 million dissidents, unable to defend themselves, were rounded up and exterminated. In 1911, Turkey established gun control. From 1915 to 1917, 1.5 million Armenians, unable to defend themselves, were rounded up and exterminated.

Germany established gun control in 1938 and from 1939 to 1945, a total of 13 million Jews and others who were unable to defend themselves were rounded up and exterminated.

China established gun control in 1935. From 1948 to 1952, 20 million political dissidents, unable to defend themselves, were rounded up and exterminated.

Guatemala established gun control in 1964. From 1964 to 1981, 100,000 Mayan Indians, unable to defend themselves, were rounded up and exterminated.

Uganda established gun control in 1970. From 1971 to 1979, 300,000 Christians, unable to defend themselves, were rounded up and exterminated. Cambodia established gun control in 1956.

From 1975 to 1977, one million educated people, unable to defend themselves, were rounded up and exterminated. Defenseless people rounded up and exterminated in the 20th Century because of gun control: 56 million.

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[410] Adolph Hitler, 1935, on *The Weapons Act* of Nazi Germany.

In addition, very few speak or write about the persecution, imprisonment and killings of Christians and non–Muslims in countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, Iran, Madagascar and several African nations where the official government is either radically Islamic or Muslims form a majority.

It is statistically factual that that crime rises greatly in a disarmed society and falls when the citizenry is armed. Until the sinfulness of the human heart is curtailed, contained and cured through gospel grace, wickedness will reign among fallen, sinful mankind. Remember, human government begins with self–government and self–government begins with regeneration.

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The Second Ammendment
and our Founding Fathers on Firearms

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"A well–regulated militia, being necessary for the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

Many of those who promote so–called "Gun Control" [read: "gun registration and confiscation"] have a much deeper motive—the transformation of America into a Socialist State. *Mark these words from Sarah Brady of Handgun Control, Inc.*:

> "Our main agenda is to have all guns banned. We must use whatever means possible. *It doesn't matter if you have to distort the facts or even lie*. Our task of creating a socialist America can only succeed when those who would resist us have been totally disarmed."[411]

This quotation reveals a prevalent attitude on the part of liberals who pride themselves in being very broad in their views, when the exact opposite is true when something opposes their agenda. "Gun Control" [read: "gun registration and confiscation"] advocates have

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[411] *Sarah Brady*, Chairman, Handgun Control Inc, to Senator Howard Metzenbaum. *The National Educator*, January 1994, p. 3. [Italics ours].

usually manifest a very bigoted mentality and behavior when faced with the facts.

Firearms have always been an integral part of American life and characteristic of free citizens. The purpose for the Second Amendment in the *Bill of Rights* of *The Constitution of These United States* is not primarily for hunting purposes or recreation, or even for self–protection,[412] but for the preservation of a Free State, i.e., for the people to be armed against the possibility of an oppressive government.

The Second Amendment stands as the very bastion of both personal and corporate freedom. The Militia, as the Founding Fathers wrote, consists of every able–bodied man, i.e., the people, not the state. The Second Amendment focuses on the difference between being a citizen and a subject, a truly freeman and the slave of a totalitarian regime.

Following are some of the statements of our Founding Fathers during and after the forming of *The Constitution of These United States of America*:[413]

"One loves to possess arms, though they hope never to have occasion for them."[414]

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[412] Self–protection, hunting and recreational shooting *are* legitimate activities enjoyed by Americans as a free people under law.

[413] These quotations are public domain. These and many more can be found on the Internet and on websites such as www.guncite.com; capn_ball@cap-n-ball.com. Cf. Halbrook, Stephen P. "The Right of the People or the Power of the State Bearing Arms, Arming Militias, and the Second Amendment". Originally published as *26 Val. U. L.Rev. 131-207, 1991*.

[414] Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 1796. The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, (Memorial Edition) Lipscomb and Bergh, editors.

"It is the duty of the patriot to protect his country from its government."[415]

> When governments fear the people, there is liberty. When the people fear the government, there is tyranny. The strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against tyranny in government.[416]

> The constitutions of most of our States assert, that all power is inherent in the people; that they may exercise it by themselves, in all cases to which they think themselves competent, (as in electing their functionaries executive and legislative, and deciding by a jury of themselves, in all judiciary cases in which any fact is involved,) or they may act by representatives, freely and equally chosen; that it is their right and duty to be at all times armed…[417]

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."[418]

[The Constitution preserves] the advantage of being armed which Americans possess over the people of almost every other nation...(where) the governments are afraid to trust the people with arms.[419]

> Before a standing army can rule, the people must be disarmed; as they are in almost every kingdom in Europe. The supreme power in America cannot enforce unjust laws by the sword; because the whole body of the people are armed, and constitute a force superior to any band of regular troops that can be, on any pretense, raised in the United States. A military force, at the command of Congress, can execute no laws, but such as the people perceive to be just and constitutional; for they will possess the power, and jealousy will

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[415] Thomas Paine (1737-1809), American Revolutionary, Founding Father and Author.

[416] Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the US Founding Father who drafted the *Declaration of Independence*, 3rd US President.

[417] Thomas Jefferson to John Cartwright, 1824. Memorial Edition 16:45, Lipscomb and Bergh, editors.

[418] Benjamin Franklin, *Historical Review of Pennsylvania*, 1759.

[419] James Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, Number 46.

instantly inspire the inclination, to resist the execution of a law which appears to them unjust and oppressive.[420]

Who are the militia? Are they not ourselves? Is it feared, then, that we shall turn our arms each man against his own bosom. Congress have no power to disarm the militia. Their swords, and every other terrible implement of the soldier, are the birthright of an American...[T]he unlimited power of the sword is not in the hands of either the federal or state governments, but, where I trust in God it will ever remain, in the hands of the people.[421]

[W]hereas, to preserve liberty, it is essential that the whole body of the people always possess arms, and be taught alike, especially when young, how to use them; nor does it follow from this, that all promiscuously must go into actual service on every occasion. The mind that aims at a select militia, must be influenced by a truly anti-republican principle; and when we see many men disposed to practice upon it, whenever they can prevail, no wonder true republicans are for carefully guarding against it.[422]

[W]hen the resolution of enslaving America was formed in Great Britain, the British Parliament was advised by an artful man, who was governor of Pennsylvania, to disarm the people; that it was the best and most effectual way to enslave them; but that they should not do it openly, but weaken them, and let them sink gradually...I ask, who are the militia? They consist of now of the whole people, except a few public officers. But I cannot say who will be the militia of the future day. If that paper on the table gets no alteration, the militia of the future day may not consist of all classes, high and low, and rich and poor...[423]

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[420] Noah Webster, An Examination of the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution, Philadelphia, 1787.

[421] Tenche Coxe, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 20, 1788.

[422] Richard Henry Lee, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 20, 1788.

[423] George Mason, The Virginia State Constitutional Convention, 1788.

"[T]he people are not to be disarmed of their weapons. They are left in full possession of them."[424]

> That the people have a right to keep and bear arms; that a well-regulated militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is the proper, natural, and safe defense of a free state; that standing armies, in time of peace, are dangerous to liberty, and therefore ought to be avoided as far as the circumstances and protection of the community will admit; and that, in all cases, the military should be under strict subordination to, and governed by, the civil power.[425]

> …the privilege of every citizen, and one of his most essential rights, to bear arms, and to resist every attack upon his liberty or property, by whomsoever made. The particular states, like private citizens, have a right to be armed, and to defend, by force of arms, their rights, when invaded.[426]

> Even a world–renown nationalist who is remembered as a pacifist could see the evil of a disarmed population: "Among the many misdeeds of the British rule in India, history will look upon the act of depriving a whole nation of arms, as the blackest."[427]

Final Thoughts

Will gun control measures [read: "gun registration and confiscation"] enacted by the government be the necessary and final answer? No. Will psychological counseling or psychiatric treatment be the final solution? No. Gangs will remain illegally armed, still terrorize and shoot innocent bystanders and members of rival gangs. Killers will still murder. Criminals will still remain armed and

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[424] Zacharia Johnson, arguing that the new Constitution could never result in religious persecution or other oppression because of the right to keep and bear arms. Virginia Constitutional Convention, 1788.

[425] From The Virginia delegation's recommended Bill of Rights, 1788.

[426] Roger Sherman, during House consideration of a Militia Bill (1790): *14 Debates in the House of Representatives*, ed. Linda Grand De Pauw. (Balt., Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 92-3.

[427] Mahatma Gandhi, in *Gandhi, An Autobiography*, p. 446.

unreformed. It is an unarmed population of law–abiding citizens who will be increasingly victimized.[428]

The ultimate answer lies in subduing the sinfulness of the individual human heart. Apart from spiritual renewal [regeneration and conversion] through the gospel there is only one answer: the control of all people by the government—totalitarianism, a Socialistic Police State. The State becomes both God and Parent—the trend of sinful human history. Of course, we Americans never seem to learn from history!

There are two issues which, perhaps, few have considered. This indirectly concerns the mass murders at Columbine, Virginia Tech, the Aurora Theater and Sandy Hook; it directly concerns the nature and character of Almighty God himself as revealed in his Holy Word: first, the issue of abortion. The mourning of our nation for this tragedy and horrible crime at Sandy Hook School is understandable, yet *it is selective, and in this sense it seems almost hypocritical to some*. What of the fifty million abortions—human lives taken violently in surgical procedures, dismembered, vacuumed from the womb and brutally killed even when partially born because they are "inconvenient" or unwanted?

Who weeps and mourns for these? That human life begins at conception is beyond doubt (Psa. 139:13–17). We as a nation and society have as much or more blood on our hands as Nazi Germany under Hitler, Soviet Russia under Stalin or Pol Pot in Cambodia![429] Yet we conveniently set this aside because the Supreme Court of our nation judged that a human fetus is not a human being or

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[428] The crime rate has risen in every civilized nation which has implemented "gun control," i.e., confiscated firearms from its citizenry, e.g., Great Britain and Australia are recent examples.

[429] It is estimated that under Hitler, approximately 6 million Jews and others were exterminated. Under Stalin, it is estimated that "tens of millions" perished in the purges. Under the Pol Pot regime, at least 2 million were exterminated.

independent human life before birth.[430] This was and is not a scientific or religious judgment, but one of convenience and sinful human consensus. Can we actually believe that Almighty God will not hold us accountable for such mass murder? National sins cry out for national judgment. If you doubt this, read on.

Second, we are a nation under Divine judgment for our sins—both personal and national sins. Atrocious and violent acts are to be expected. These will increase, despite more legislation or more "gun control" [read "gun registration and confiscation"]. We have abandoned God; he has given us over to ourselves, and this is the result—a result which has been witnessed repeatedly throughout human history.

When mankind became wicked to a given extreme, God sent the Flood in time and history and exterminated the entire human race with the exception of one family.[431] This included countless babies and little children as well as adult sinners. Yes, *God is absolutely just and righteous, and he does and will judge sin, and in his righteous judgment he kills people, even infants and little children.*[432] He did so with Korah, Dathan, Abriam and their families, including their "little ones" when the heads of these families rebelled against his Law, the leadership of Moses and the Divine choice of Aaron as High Priest (Numb. 16:1–33).[433] God commanded Achan and all his family, including his children, to be stoned to death (Josh. 7:1–26, esp. v. 24). The LORD God also commanded the utter extermination of the Canaanites, including their children and infants, because of their wickedness (Ex. 23:27; Deut. 20:16–17; Josh. 6:21).

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[430] The United States Supreme Court, Roe vs. Wade, 1973.

[431] Gen. Chapters 6–8; 2 Pet. 3:1–6.

[432] If all who die in infancy are saved by God's grace through the atonement, then even the Flood was, to them, an act of mercy.

[433] Numb. 16:27. וְטַפָּם, "and little ones," from the root טַף, meaning to take little, tripping steps, i.e., "toddlers."

In the Covenant made with Israel, God promised both great blessings for obedience and the most severe judgments, "dark providences," "natural" and "man–made" disasters and plagues for unfaithfulness and disobedience (Deut. 28:1–68). Almighty God rules this world in all spheres, including the spiritual, religious, mental, moral, social, military and political—and he is sworn to punish sin! It would be utterly and morally inconsistent with the God of the Bible *not* to punish both individual and national sins.

People are asking, "Where is God in all this?" "How can a God of love allow such things?" For some, who are ignorant of Scripture and unbelieving, this becomes "the problem of evil," i.e., how can evil exist in a world created and governed by an omnipotent, yet beneficent or loving God. To consider evil as existing independent of God is to rob him of his omnipotence; to question his inherent goodness is to disbelieve the revelation of his holy and righteous character in Scripture. He is the triune, self–disclosing God of Scripture, not the "Allah" of Islam, who is utterly arbitrary in either goodness or tragedy.

God has a sufficient reason for evil to exist and rules over it to bring about his glorious end. This is the clear teaching of Scripture (Psa. 76:10; Isa. 45:5–7; Dan. 4:17, 35; Acts 4:27–28; Rom. 8:28; 9:9–24). Any other view is simply unbelief and disbelief.[434] Dark providences—often in the form of "natural" or "man–made" disasters," disease,[435] wars and pestilence or plagues are revelations of Divine judgment upon persons or societies which have abandoned God and his truth (Deut. 7:20; Josh. 24:12; Judg. 9:23; 2 Kgs. 17:25; Job 2:10; Psa. 148:8; Isa. 10:5–15; Rom. 1:18, 26–27).

> Note: The Flood of Genesis 6–7 and the ten plagues sent upon the gods of Egypt (Ex. 12:12) are historical examples of Divine power and wrath. The wars of extermination by Israel were for the

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[434] For a full discussion of the so–called "Problem of Evil," see the author's booklet by this title.

[435] This is certainly true of sexually transmitted diseases. AIDS is a modern, graphic example of providential, Divine judgment.

sinfulness of the Canaanites. The invasion and utter destruction of both Israel and Judah were because of their sins against God. Sexual transmitted diseases are the judgment of God upon the sexual promiscuity and perversion of society (Rom. 1:26–27).

God judges both individuals and nations for their individual, corporate and national sins. In times of national judgment, everyone suffers and some are killed. There are no exceptions for little children or even for Christians. These suffer, starve, are tortured and die along with the rest of society. The self–revealing, triune God of Scripture is perfect in all his Divine attributes. These Divine attributes are not contradictory, but exist in perfect harmony. We cannot separate God's love from his holiness, righteousness and justice. God's love is a righteous, just and holy love. God's wrath is a righteous, just and holy wrath. God's grace and mercy are wholly and utterly undeserved.

The lawlessness, immorality, perversion, violence, crime and murders in our society are simply manifestations of God's just and deserved judgment on a society which he has or is giving over to itself and its wickedness. The present wickedness of our society necessarily means both present judgment and a future Day of Judgment when everything without exception will be tried before the Moral Law of Almighty God (Matt. 12:36; Rom. 3:19–20; Rev. 20:11–15).

What we need in the light of such tragedies and wicked criminal behavior is a national Day of Prayer, Humiliation and Repentance before God for our national and personal sins.[436] The true, biblical gospel must be preached in power from our pulpits rather than the present trend toward worldly success and entertainment. And we must pray for revival among our churches and a spiritual awakening within our society (2 Chron. 7:14). The moral climate must be

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[436] It is noteworthy that great men of God and people in general prayed, confessed their sins and also the sins of their ancestors and nation (1 Kgs. 8:15–60; Neh. 1:5–11; 9:1–2; Dan. 9:3–20).

restored in our nation, country and society. Before any great revival, the spiritual, moral and social climate seemed to be irreparable, but society itself was transformed and morality elevated, even among the unconverted. God sends both judgment and revival.

> Note: See Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield.* London: Banner of Truth, 1970–1980. I, pp. 19–32. For a thorough study of the effects revivals historically upon societies, see the author's *Lecture Notes on Revivals of Religion*. P.I.R.S. Publications, Morgan Hill, CA. 2012. Lecture Two: Bibliographies, pp. 34–54.

But in a world where the pervading view is secular, sinful, fragmented and atheistic, the answer seems to be more "gun control" [read: "gun registration and confiscation"] and even a greater attempt at a pervasive and government–controlled mental health program. None of this will change the sinfulness of the individual human heart or hold back the judgment of God upon our secularized, atheistic, fragmented, wicked society. Unless we repent, the times will grow worse, more violent and Divine judgment will necessarily increase.

> **Ex. 20:5.** for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; [6] And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

> **Psa. 9:17.** "The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God."

> **Jer. 17:9–10.** The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.

> **2 Chron. 7:14**. If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

> **Hab. 2:14.** For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

The Pulpit:
The Moral Conscience of the Nation?

Is the pulpit the moral conscience of the nation? There are Christians, pastors, theologians and religious writers in our day who blame the American pulpit for our present moral crisis. We are told that if ministers had preached the true gospel, declared God's Word and the Moral Law against the increasing evil of the times, we might not be in the sad state we witness today. Can such a charge be true? We are this opinion.

There are several considerations: first, there is national judgment for national sin, and often the righteous must suffer with the wicked (Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24–28; Dt. 7:1; 18:12; Lam. 1:1–5:22). The nation of Israel serves as an example of a given nation which was judged for its sins. God devastated his own covenant people by bringing upon them various enemies (Judg. 2:11–16; 3:12–14; 4:1–3; 6:1ff; 13:1), and finally, the Assyrians and Chaldeans, nations more wicked and fierce than themselves (Isa. 10:5–15; Lam. 1–3; Hab. 1). Although no other nation was in such a covenant relationship with God as was Israel, yet this moral principle remains applicable to every nation (Psa. 9:17).

Note: Psa. 9:17. Heb: כָּל־גּוֹיִם; LXX: πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. The text designates all nations, making this a universal principle in the Divinely–ordained moral order.

History witnesses to the fact that a nation degenerates first spiritually, then morally, and then socially and finally, politically. Morality by necessity must have a spiritual foundation; otherwise it is based on either tradition or the relativism of mere human consensus. Society, once morally blind and utterly relativistic, will morally and politically bow to the tyranny of the majority. There needs to be a national moral conscience, and this by necessity must be spiritual. What other source than men of God who care called to faithfully proclaim the truth?

Divine judgment has never been averted simply because a nation has considered itself to be in a special relationship with God. The modern American idea of "God and Country" is presently without sufficient foundation. So is the idea that God will bless America regardless of her national sins.

We are officially a secularized society. God and morality have only a token place. A government which refuses to capitally punish murderers (Numb. 35:32–33) or sanctions and even sponsors abortion and homosexuality cannot in any sense be considered immune to Divine judgment. As to the former, man was created in the image of God, and this image is inseparable from the most elemental human life (Psa. 139:13–16). Abortion is murder. As to the latter, homosexuality is a perversion of the God–ordained order and brings down Divine wrath (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:21–32). To think that God will bless America despite her national sins is to think that God is devoid of moral character and his Word is irrelevant; it is to believe in the "god" of one's imagination (Rom. 1:18–25). It is the pulpit's responsibility to proclaim the one true God and his moral character.

Second, is it legitimate to apply the situation of Israel (2 Chron. 7:14) and the Old Testament prophets, who were to decry Israel's national sins (Isa. 58:1), to our national history and present situation?

Note: See James Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, Vestavia Hills, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2003, Chapter Three, "The Preacher as a Patriot," for the rationale of preaching against national sins.

On the one hand, we are not a covenant people as was Israel, yet on the other, this nation is unique in history, as it was largely founded on Christian principles which we have utterly abandoned as a secularized society.

Although not all of our Founding Fathers were Christians, yet every one of them, Christian or Deist, presupposed the moral character of God, and most assumed the veracity of the Bible and the authority of the Moral Law as expressed in the Ten Commandments.

Our Founding Fathers knew that this form of government—a constitutional republic—would not be practicable apart from the truth and morality of Christianity. Surely, such a nation must be judged severely, according to the light it has received!

Third, our Lord describes Christians in general as "the light of the world" and "the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13–14):

Note: Matt. 5:13–14. References to believers as "light" and "salt" implies that Christianity is to be a preserving and illuminating, exposing element within society. They are to make a discernible moral difference.

This certainly implies that as Christians, we are to have a determining effect upon the society in which we live. Further, the behavior of believers toward one another and toward men in general is to have a profound effect upon this world (Matt. 5:14–16; Jn. 13:34–35; Phil. 2:14–15; 1 Pet. 2:11–15). A godly remnant may serve to keep back national judgment upon a given people. Had there been ten righteous men in Sodom, the judgment of God would have been averted (Gen. 18:20–32).

Fourth, the history of the American pulpit has been varied. There have always been men of God who would not compromise the truth of the Bible. The Gospel has been faithfully preached and the Law of God declared so that a biblical morality has been impressed upon many congregations. God has blessed this country with times of revival and spiritual awakening repeatedly, even in the worst of political and economic times. One has only to consider the first and second "Great Awakenings" (1734–50, 1793–1840) which changed the moral climate of this country and the British Isles, as well as the "Great Prayer Revival" of 1857–58 which came during the great financial crash of 1857, the great revival which occurred during the War Between the States in 1861–65, or the Welsh Revival of 1904, which changed the moral climate of Wales.

Note: See Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening*. Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1842. 433 pp.; Edwin S. Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England*. Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965. 173 pp.; Samuel I. Prime, *The Power of Prayer*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1991 reprint of 1859 ed. 265 pp.; J. Edwin Orr, *The Event*

of the Century: The 1857–1858 Awakening. Wheaton: The International Awakening Press, 1989. 383 pp.; W. W. Bennett, *The Great Revival in the Southern Armies.* Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, reprint of 1876 ed. 427 pp.; J. William Jones, *Christ in the Camp.* Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, reprint of 1887 ed. 624 pp.; Effion Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904.* London: Evangelical Press, 1974. 213 pp.; R. B. Jones, *Rent Heavens: The Revival of 1904.* London: Stanley Martin & Co., Ltd. 1930. 118 pp.

But there has also been a slow process of Spiritual degeneration and consequent secularization. The frontier Methodist revivals of the early 1800s gave us "perfectionist" teachings which modified the reality of the Christian experience.

The "New Measures" of Charles G. Finney began the slide into the "easy–believeism" and "decisionism" of our day with its psychological conversions and unscriptural methodology. Liberalism has enabled unconverted men to occupy influential pulpits. Dispensationalism has added its inherent antinomianism to this admixture, and silenced the preaching of the Moral Law in evangelical thinking.

It has also brought into some Christian circles the idea that one should not become involved in the political or even the social process because of the imminent return of the Lord. In this generation, evangelical Christianity has largely become a "pop culture" far removed from godly worship and the faithful preaching of the Word of God. Sin is now almost irrelevant, holiness is optional, worship has largely become entertainment, social programs have become divorced from a gospel motivation, psychology has replaced theology and worship teams have replaced the Gospel preacher.

The fault of such degeneration and departure from the Word of God must be laid at the feet of those whose call it is to faithfully proclaim the Word of God. As goes the pulpit, so goes the pew. The New Testament Gospel Preacher is the successor to the Old Testament prophet. He is to faithfully declare the Word of God to the

people in the power of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 58:1; Hos. 6:5; Jn. 16:8–11).

The preachers of the New Testament spoke out about public crime (Acts 2:22–23; 3:14–15), the open immorality of national leaders (Mk. 6:16–20) and were not slack to point to the prevalent sins of governors (Acts 24:24–25). That the fault lies with the pulpit may be seen in the following principle: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:31).

We stand more in need of revival and spiritual awakening in this day than at any previous time of our national history. The truth of God must be declared from the pulpit; it is our great responsibility—and from the pulpit to the people of God, and from the people of God to society.

Paul at Athens:
Presenting a Christian Theistic World–and–Life View

Introduction

Some passages of Scripture have a traditional history in which there are misunderstandings which must be corrected. Paul's address to the philosophers at Athens is no exception. When properly understood, this address marks the high–water mark of Gentile evangelism to the educated Greek mind with its philosophical bent.

The text for this study is found in Acts 17:14–34. It describes Paul's nocturnal escape from Berea, his sea voyage to Athens and his ministry there, which culminated in his address before the Areopagus. In this short address, he presented Christianity in terms of a Christian Theistic World–and–Life View.

This lecture will touch on three subjects which are interwoven throughout this lecture, each of which should be edifying, necessarily controversial, and ought to be transforming: first, a discussion of Apologetics [ἀπολογία][437] or an intelligent defense of the faith before the unbelieving world. It is vital that we have a biblical, intelligent and coherent approach to defending the faith. This passage, we believe, is the *locus classicus* of New Testament apologetics.

Second, an exposition of Acts 17:16–34. This necessarily includes Paul's daily ministry in Athens for many weeks and then his final apologetic and evangelistic presentation of his World–and–Life View before the Athenian Court.

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[437] The term ἀπολογία [from ἀπό, "off, from," and λογία, "something spoken, a word," and so to speak from a given position to defend it] and its cognates occ. 20 times in the NT: ἀπολογία, 8 times in Acts 22:1; 1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Cor. 7:11; Phil. 1:7, 17; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Pet. 3:15. ἀπολογέομαί 10 times. Ἀνἀπολογητος, twice: Rom. 1:20; 2:1.

Third, a presentation of a Christian World–View, i.e., a consistent biblical philosophy of the world, life and reality which centers in the self–disclosing, triune God of Scripture—technically, a Christian Theistic World–and–Life View. This inclusive approach is opposite to the modern tendency to truncate our Christian faith into a few fundamental doctrines.

Again, these three subjects will be woven together throughout this lecture, which we will consider in two major divisions: The issues and misunderstandings which are answered in the context, and Paul's "arrest," address and its results.

The Issues and Misunderstandings
which are Answered in the Context

Apologetics: Evidentialism and Presuppositionalism

Christians are commanded to give an answer for their hope,[438] to contend for the doctrinal content of biblical Christianity,[439] and to defeat the logical arguments of their opponents by the enabling grace or power of God.[440] Such an intelligent defense of the faith is "Apologetics."

There are two diverse approaches to Christian Apologetics: Classical or Evidential Apologetics and Presuppositional Apologetics. We hold that the latter was the Apostle's approach and is found in this passage. A brief description of each is necessary to our discussion:

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[438] 1 Pet. 3:15. The term "answer" is ἀπολογίαν, or "apology." This statement emphasizes the sanctified manner, content and attitude of the Christian apologist.

[439] Jude 3, ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι τῇ ἅπαξ παραδοθείσῃ τοῖς ἁγίοις πίστει, i.e., "earnestly contend for the –once–delivered–unto–the–saints faith." The term "faith" in this context refers to the doctrinal content of New Testament Christianity.

[440] 2 Cor. 10:3–5. "…the pulling down of strong holds…" λογισμοὺς καθαιροῦντες, lit: "logical arguments dismantling."

Evidential Apologetics, also known as "Christian Evidences," is a two–stage attempt at defending the Christian Faith, seeking to find common ground with unbelievers in alleged "brute" or "neutral scientific" facts. The first step is the attempt to prove the probability of the truth of Scripture through various external evidences: archeology, history, comparative religions, logic, philosophy, scientific discoveries, or religious psychology, etc.

In short, to reason to the Scriptures from external evidences or "facts" on which the believer and unbeliever can agree. The second step: having proven this probability, seeking to persuade the hearer[s] to receive the facts of the Bible and the gospel message from the Scriptures. Thus, Evidentialism reasons *to* the Scriptures, allowing that there are "brute" or "neutral, alleged scientific facts" on which the believer and non–believer can agree.

There are, however, several unavoidable and insurmountable issues and objections to this apologetic approach: first, we cannot prove to the unbeliever with absolute certainty from any external evidence that the Scriptures or the "facts" they contain are true. The evidentialist is left at the most to deal in vague probabilities. Every "fact" is interpreted by one's presuppositions. In reality, every "fact" is a created fact, and defined by God (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11). This the unbeliever cannot submit to by nature, but rather habitually suppresses any truth which conflicts with his own presuppostions.

See Rom. 1:18. He "holds" [τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων, habitually suppresses] the truth in unrighteousness, even the truth which God has vouchsafed to him as His image–bearer, rendering him rational, morally–responsible beings, Rom. 1:18–20; 2:11–16. He is, as such, utterly inexcusable, lit: without an apologetic [ἀναπολογήτους], Rom. 1:20.

Further, the unbeliever is beset with the noetic effects of sin, which blinds him to truth.[441] He is not only lost and undone; he is also dishonest and sinful.

Second, whatever evidence we put forth will necessarily have more credibility than the Bible. The entity which is credentialed will never assume ascendency over that which gives it credbility. This is inescapable.

Third, the Scriptures are filled with the failure of evidences to transform the hearts of men [e.g., the exodus and wilderness journey of Israel, the various Old Testament miracles and manifestations of Divine power, the miracles of our Lord, and fulfilled prophecies]. There is a place for Christian evidences in endorcing Divinely–revealed truth, but never to credential Divine truth.

Presuppositional Apologetics reasons *from* the Scriptures. It presupposes the authority and self–attesting or self–authenticating nature of Divine revelation. The Word of God is declared with all authority! The presuppositionalist does not deal with the probabilities of external evidence, but rather with the clear declaration of Divine truth. What men need is not evidence—or more evidence—but regenerating grace! The mind–set needs to be changed, the eyes opened and the presuppositions need to be aligned to God's Word. The presuppositionalist trusts in the power of God and His grace to transform his hearers' hearts and minds.

It may be asked, however, that if the believer and unbeliever cannot agree on "the facts," then what common ground is there for a point–of–contact in which an intelligent exchange [a conversation at

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[441] From νοέω, mind or mind–set, how the Fall affected the thinking of man. See Rom. 1:21. These are futile in their reasonings [ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν] and darkened became their incapacitated hearts [ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδία]. The term "foolish" is ἀσύνετος, connoting the inability to add things together with resultant meaning.

the presuppositional level when each speaks from his faith–based beliefs] can take place?

In answer to this question and objection, it may be stated that although there are no "brute" facts on which the believer and unbeliever can agree, there is a three–fold point–of–contact. There is a point–of–contact in the following: first, man is created in the image of God and possesses an innate sense of deity. Although now fallen and epistemologically incapacitated [suffering from the noetic effects of sin], he still instinctively knows sufficient truth to suppress it [κατεχόντων] and be without an adequate defense [ἀναπολογήτους] (Rom. 1:18–20).

Second, the work of the law is indelibly embedded in man's inner being, making him, even in his fallen, sinful condition, a rational being, intellectually and morally responsible. This law–work has a direct relation to his conscience (Rom. 2:11–15).

Third, although he professes to be autonomous in his thinking, he still unconsciously acts upon certain God–created facts and principles or laws which he takes for granted while suppressing the truth.[442] While the believer will confess that his presuppositions are faith–based, the unbeliever seeks to deny such, attempting to attribute his presuppositions to empirical evidence and scientific "facts."

This three–fold point–of–contact provides a basis for argumentation and conviction. God must open the heart or mind for the unbeliever to savingly receive the truth.

The approach of the Apostle Paul before the Areopagus was clearly and completely presuppositional. This is the first recorded confrontation between Christianity and Greek philosophy! Although on this particular occasion before the Areopagus, he never referred to

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[442] Unregenerate man still lives and acts in God's created universe, according to the self–evident laws of gravity, physical life and death, social and religious institutions, human nature and the innate necessities of his existence.

Scripture, or mentioned our Lord by name, every statement was thoroughly scriptural and based upon his previous ministry in the agora. It is vital that we understand both the circumstances and his purpose on this occasion.

The Apostle Paul sought to "Play the Philosopher" at Athens and Failed

We are told that Paul sought to play the philosopher at Athens and failed, and arriving at Corinth, vowed that he would never do so again.

Note: Cf. John Eadie, *Paul the Preacher*, p. 325; R. B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Westminster Com.], London: Metheuen & Co., 1901, p.320. Eadie and Rackham were followed by several commentators in this view of the Apostle's address to the Athenian Court.

1 Cor. 2:1–5. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. [2] For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. [3] And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. [4] And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: [5] That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Our answer to this allegation is that it is simply not true! At Corinth, Paul would not acquiesce to the prejudice and desires of those who came to Corinth[443] to indulge themselves in sin and wickedness and seek to be entertained by philosophers and orators—he kept to the simple truths of the gospel in fear of gaining false converts.

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[443] Corinth and Pompeii were the two most wicked cities in the Roman Empire, given over especially to sexual sins. The very name "Corinth" was verbalized [Κοριντηιανίζω], as a synonym for debauchery.

Paul was well–studied in Greek philosophy from his earliest days in Tarsus,[444] and also from his rabbinical training "at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts 22:3). Paul was evidently the rabbi of the Cilician Synagogue at Jerusalem at the time he debated Stephen (Acts 6:9–7:58). Paul's own writings and preaching reflected Stephen's words on several occasions, including his Athenian address. Jewish rabbis of that era had to be well–studied in Greek philosophy. He merely and without apology declared the truth to his hearers in language they could understand! *At Athens, we see the Apostle Paul at his best, not at his worst—as we shall see!*

<div align="center">
The Apostle never quoted the Scriptures,
Preached the Gospel
or even named our Lord in this Address
</div>

The key to this address before the Areopagus [Athenian Council of Twelve leading philosophers] and the important people of Athens, is found in v. 16–18. This passage, describing his daily ministry in the agora, lasted for several weeks. It provides, we believe, the key to his final address before the Athenian Court.

Now, an exegesis and exposition of this passage: first, there were constant encounters between Paul and these philosophers which finally led to his apprehension and address before the Council. The Stoics were pantheists; the Epicureans were atheists who denied creation. Note the language used: "Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, continued to encounter him." (τινὲς δὲ καὶ τῶν Ἐπικουρείων καὶ Στοϊκῶν φιλοσόφων συνέβαλλον αὐτῷ). συνέβαλλον (imperf.),[445] "continued to encounter him" over a length of time, implying that a crisis was eventually reached over his

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[444] Tarsus in Cilicia, together with Alexandria and Athens, was one of the three great university cities and centers of learning in the ancient world. From his earliest years working cilicium [a dark goat's hair fabric used for clothing and tents] in the agora with his father, Paul heard the various philosophers deliver their orations among the colonnades [stoa].

[445] The Gk. imperfect tense, used throughout this passage, refers to a continual or intermittent past time.

teaching (v. 19–22). "And some said, What will this babbler say?" (καί τινες ἔλεγον, Τί ἂν θέλοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν;). ἔλεγον (imperf. + pres. inf.), "were saying, continued to say." "What would this 'babbler' say, if he really had anything to say?" ἂν with the opt. mood.[446] This implies both the utter contempt of these philosophers and their utter inability to comprehend the elements of Paul's message.

Second, their derogatory description of both Paul and his message: "this babbler," ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος. The term σπερμολόγος was originally used of a bird that hopped about and picked up seeds here and there, often out of manure; later, of one who frequented the agora and picked up pieces of discarded scraps and sold them; and then of pseudo–philosophers, eclectics, ignorant plagiarists, mere collectors of words, re–thinkers of borrowed sayings, who gathered scraps of thought in a second–handed way from various religious and philosophical systems and patched them together in a hap–hazard way—an "intellectual scavenger."[447]

Third, the consternation of other philosophers, who hung on the words "Jesus" and "the resurrection." "Other some, he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods…" (οἱ δέ, Ξένων δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεὺς εἶναι), Mark the emphatic position: One who seemed to preach or declare foreign minor deities or secondary gods, "because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection." (ὅτι τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν εὐηγγελίζετο). Mark again the emphatic position and the imperf. vb. He seemed to be preaching "a male god" (τὸν Ἰησοῦν) and "a female goddess" (τὴν ἀνάστασιν). "Jesus" is masc., and "resurrection" feminine, or even possibly "healing" and

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[446] Gk: a fourth class conditional sentence with the Optative Mood, which assumes the condition to be untrue.

[447] See Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready*, p. 246.

"restoration!"[448] It is noticeable, however, that they had to acknowledge his unmistaken zeal and authority! (καταγγελεὺς, one who declares with authority).

Note carefully that even these allegedly educated philosophers could not comprehend the simplicity of the gospel because of their pagan and polytheistic presuppositions!

Paul preached the gospel daily for several weeks before his address to the Areopagus. He had repeatedly laid down the scriptural truth of the gospel daily (v. 17) [κατὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν, each and every day]. In his address before the Areopagus, he simply put "Jesus" and "The Resurrection" in their proper historical and redemptive context—in the presentation and context of a Christian Theistic World–and–Life View!

His "Arrest," Address and Its Results

His "Arrest." (v. 19–21)

These philosophers literally took hold of him [ἐπιλαβόμενοί, aor. ptc.][449] and brought him before the Areopagus, the Council of Twelve philosophers who sat in judgment on any new philosophy or religion promulgated at Athens. This was not a formal arrest in which he was accused with a view to imprisonment or death, as in the case of Socrates centuries before [c. 399 BC] as he appeared before this same Council and was forced to drink the poison hemlock for teaching new doctrines. This was an inquiry to satisfy their curiosity, as we are told that all Athenians loved to hear, debate and

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[448] Cf. F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, footnote 21, p. 351, quoting F. H. Chase, who suggests that these may have associated Ἰησους with ἴασις, "healing" and Ἰησω, the goddess of health. This is a distinct possibility in the context of such terms as σωτηρία and σωτήρ ("salvation" and "Savior," denoting restoration to health).

[449] Acts 17:17, ἐπιλαβόμενοί τε αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν ῎Αρειον πάγον ἤγαγον λέγοντες... They physically took hold of Paul and led him before the Athenian Philosophical Council of Twelve.

discuss the latest ideas [ἀκούειν τι καινότερον], lit: "the newer thing" (v. 21).

Paul's Address before The Areopagus (v. 22–31)

This short and succinct address was essentially the presentation of a Christian Theistic World–and–life View to pagans who were philosophical in bent, religiously polytheistic or atheistic, and had no knowledge of the Scriptures. This is the first recorded confrontation between biblical Christianity and Greek philosophy.

We cannot imagine Peter the fisherman or any of the other apostles standing before this multitude and educated audience of philosophers and intellectuals. But in Divine providence, we see Paul, a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37; 22:25–29); Paul from Tarsus of Cilicia, that ancient center of learning; Paul, the converted Jewish Rabbi, well–versed in all the ancient philosophies of the day; Paul a "World Traveler and Citizen," at home in any given situation; Paul in his element and at his best, speaking in language well–understood by his audience. What followed must be of the utmost interest!

An Outline of Paul's Approach

We now consider the approach of the Apostle and his major points as he takes his stand:

Note: Σταθεὶς, aor. ptc.,"having taken his stand," i.e., Assuming the stance of an orator, with his left hand holding the lapel of his toga across his chest and his right hand extended in formal fashion. Occ. 6 times in NT. Always precedes a definite declaration. Paul could be intensely dramatic and demonstrated the greatest oratorical ability when necessary (Acts 13:16; 14:1; 21:40; 26:1, 24–29).

In this last passage, Paul used a rare word which denoted an intelligent, carefully–chosen, highly–sensitive term for a religious or philosophical discourse [ἀποφθέγγομαι, translated as "speak forth"], which only occ. 3 times in the NT (Acts 2:4, 14; 26:25). In the context (Acts 2:24–26), Paul not only answered the Governor Festus, but answered Herod Agrippa II's play on words with one of his own in the most dramatic fashion. No one could surpass the Apostle Paul when he rose to oratorical heights! While exhibiting the

utmost humility and sincerity, Paul yet evidenced the power of an inspired intellect and a lifetime of training.

First, his point–of–contact in v. 22–23. He commences with *Man: his Innate sense* [δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμᾶς][450] *and yet ignorant worship of the Divine Nature*. Note the neut. [ὃ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν].[451] He acknowledged their extremely religious nature [thirty thousand shrines in Athens, including an ancient altar "to an unknown god" with its faded inscription].[452] Paul reveals that he had thoroughly passed about the city carefully observing their devotions. His judgment was not prejudiced or ignorant. He skillfully uses these as a point–of contact. He addresses them as rational, religious, morally–responsible human beings who, he will later state, are the image–bearers of God.

Second, in v. 24–25, he moves to *A Declaration Concerning The One True God*. [ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ, οὗτος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὑπάρχων κύριος οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ οὐδὲ ὑπὸ χειρῶν ἀνθρωπίνων θεραπεύεται προσδεόμενός τινος, αὐτὸς διδοὺς πᾶσι ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα]. He declares God to be both personal and the eternal, non–ending Source, Support and End of all things, completely Self–sufficient and absolutely sovereign in his providential government.

Third, in v. 26–28 Paul reveals *The Relationship of God to the Human Race*. The human race is a created unity. This was profound,

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[450] δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμᾶς, "extremely religious," an ambiguous term. Paul wanted to keep their attention, and acknowledges their innate religious expressions.

[451] Paul uses the neuter, referring to the Divine nature, not to the person of God. He states, in contrast that what they ignorantly worship he declares to them with the utmost personal knowledge and authority [ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν]!

[452] εὗρον καὶ βωμὸν ἐν ᾧ ἐπεγέγραπτο· Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ. Pluperfect, referring to an action or state existing from one point to another in time past.

as the Athenians viewed themselves as a special people of the gods, superior to all others. God has ordained the rise and fall of each succeeding civilization, and has revealed himself in human history in order that men might grope [ψηλαφήσειαν][453] after him, though in him we all live and move and have our being [ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν]. This emphasizes the noetic effects of sin. He then asserts that man is the image–bearer of God, using terms which are familiar to them, .i.e., the "offspring of God," and quoting several minor Greek poets, including Aratus and Cleanthes.[454]

Finally, in v. 29–31 he reaches *The Conclusion: Repentance because of Certain Righteous Judgment.* Paul brings his address to a close. Man's innate knowledge of the Divine demonstrates that his idolatry is inexcusable—he knows better! Now that Jesus, the Son of God has become incarnate, suffered, died and been raised again, and the gospel is preached, all men are commanded to repent! The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead guarantees the final judgment of all men! He now had put both "Jesus" and "the resurrection" in their proper historical and redemptive context, and had done so in a masterful way.

Paul did not seek any alleged "neutral ground" as a point–of–contact. He did not engage in any exercise of discussing "Comparative Religions" or arguing from "evidences." Indeed, he and his hearers did not really agree on any of his major assertions.

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[453] ψηλαφάω, to grope, as one who is blind or in the dark. Cf. Rom. 1:21, ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδία.

[454] Paul quoted or referred to Epimenides (Acts 17:29 and Titus 1:12), Menander (1 Cor. 15:33), Aratus, and Cleanthes. F. W. Farrar recognizes at least fifty specimens of Greek rhetorical expressions in the writings and addresses of Paul. See Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, I, p. 290.

Mark the Contrasts

Between Paul and his hearers was a clash of world–and–life views at the presuppositional level. This is true whenever there is an Apologetic and evangelistic confrontation. One belief–system clashes with another. Note the contrasts:

- (v. 17–18, 22–23). They held themselves to be highly intelligent, and thought they were dealing with him in a rather patronizing manner from a superior knowledge and position. Paul told them that they were actually ignorant in their worship of deity, despite their unusual religious convictions and observances.

- (v. 23–25). They were polytheists, Paul was a Christian theist[455]—and declared to them the one true God—an ever–present, personal and absolutely sovereign God!

- (v. 23–25). The Epicureans held to the eternity of matter and were practical atheists. Paul declared that God is personal, and also the Creator, Sovereign Lord and providential Governor of the universe.

- (v. 23–25). The Epicureans held that the universe was produced by the random concourse of atoms; Paul declared the Divine creation of an ordered universe.[456]

- (v. 24–25). The Stoics were pantheists. Paul stated that God is distinctly and intimately personal, and separate from his creation.

- (v. 25). The Epicureans held that the gods were detached from and unconcerned about the world with its problems and suffering. Paul declared that God is intensely personal, and upholds and governs the created universe to the minutest details.

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[455] Christian theism presupposes not simply the possibility or probability of a god, but the very triune, self–disclosing God of Scripture.

[456] The term "world" is κόσμος. [ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ], the created universe. Thus, every fact is a created fact. He uses the word "being," referring to the Lord [ὑπάρχων, eternally subsisting].

- (v. 25). The Greeks held that the gods needed men and their religious service ["worshipped," θεραπεύεται];[457] Paul declared that God is absolute, sovereign, omnipresent and immanent, and the providential Governor of His ordered universe. Man cannot add anything to him by way of service.

- (v. 26). The Athenians believed that they were a special people above all others [The Athenians prided themselves in being "indigenous"]; Paul asserted the unity of the human race.

- (v. 26). The Epicureans believed in chance; the Stoics in fate. Paul asserted a theological view of history and Divine providence in the location, limitation, advantages, rise and fall of nations and succeeding civilizations.

- (v. 26–27). Paul declared that the hand of God is seen throughout history that men might seek him.

- (v. 27). These philosophers claimed a high intelligence, perception and knowledge; Paul portrayed them under the noetic effects of sin, blindly groping after a sense of the Divine nature—the very God who is omnipresent and immanent.

- (v. 28). Some of these considered themselves to be the product of an evolutionary process; Paul declared that men are created in and thus reflect the image of God.

- (v. 28–29). They were idolaters, Paul pointed out the folly and perversion of idolatry as a sinful misrepresentation of the one true God. He declared that they ought to know better—he was appealing to the innate God–consciousness in man by virtue of his being the image–bearer of God (Rom. 1:18–20; 25; 2:11–16).

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[457] The one true God is not worshipped [θεραπεύεται] with men's hands as though man could minister to God and fulfill any needs. "Worshipped" is the source of our word "therapy." Does *your* God need therapy?

- (v. 30–31). They had a philosophical, *a*moral concept of virtue; Paul declared the moral self–consistency of God—his absolute righteousness and a day of righteous and final judgment!

- (v. 30–31). They denied any resurrection; Paul asserted the reality of the resurrection and the necessity of the final Day of Judgment. Note that he did not discuss various theories of the possibility or probability of the resurrection [evidentialism], but simply and powerfully declared the truth!

- (v. 22–23, 30–31). They considered themselves as having appeased or propitiated all gods, even those "unknown;" Paul declared that God commands all men everywhere to repent!

The Results (V. 32–34)

The results of Paul's defense [Apologetic] and presentation of a Christian Theistic World–and–Life View were varied, as in most apologetic confrontations with unbelievers. Yet the Spirit of God was effectually at work in some: first, some continued to mock. The word "mocked" ['Ακούσαντες δὲ ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν οἱ μὲν ἐχλεύαζον] (imperf.) includes gestures as well as vocal disgust and jeers. This was both antagonistic and disrespectful, but to be expected when arguing or listening instinctively at the presuppositional level. Second, others were more serious, but procrastinated [οἱ δὲ εἶπον, 'Ακουσόμεθά σου πάλιν περὶ τούτου]. The truth had evidently made at least a passing impression on their minds and in their hearts. Finally, some, cleaving to him, believed [τινὲς δὲ ἄνδρες κολληθέντες αὐτῷ ἐπίστευσαν][458] (pres. ptc. + aor. vb). As one commentator observed, "No sermon which wins souls is a failure!"

Summary and Conclusion

The Apostle's short and profound address before the Aeropaus at Athens marks the first recorded confrontation between biblical

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[458] V. 34, κολληθέντες, lit: "glued" themselves to him. Such is the evidence of saving faith and the truth.

Christianity and Greek philosophy. After weeks of daily evangelism in the agora and continued confrontations with the Stoics and Epicureans, Paul is led before the Areopagus or Athenian Council of Twelve, which sat in judgment on any new philosophy or religious teaching. The motive was evidently curiosity, not condemnation, imprisonment or death, as it had been centuries earlier.

Paul takes his stance as an orator and in a brief, pungent, clear and authoritative manner presents Christianity in the form of a World–and–Life View, a presentation which was completely understandable to the Greek mind. He put "Jesus" and "the resurrection" in their historical, redemptive context, rising to the heights of gospel truth. Although some mocked him openly and with evident agitation, and others procrastinated, some adhered to him in faith.

We have every reason to believe that these men and women who were converted were baptized and formed into an assembly.

This address was not a failure as some have supposed, but was the culmination of a lengthy ministry, found Paul at his best and in his native element, and was fruitful in a most unlikely place. It remains, we believe, the *locus classicus* of New Testament apologetics.

The Foundational Nature of Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning God created the heaven
and the earth" Genesis 1:1

Thus commences the inscripturated Word of God. This is most significant! Indeed, if rightly considered, it is profound when we look beyond the mere historical nature of this verse. This opening statement is more than a mere historical statement concerning the origin of the universe or a proof–text against evolution. It is a declaration which is determining for all which follows in Scripture. It becomes vital for our understanding of the entirety of God's inscripturated Word.

Is the Bible inspired? Is it infallible? Is it inerrant? If so, then, as the very Word of God, it is necessarily the ultimate authority, self–consistent and coherent throughout. What we find in the opening statement must prove consistent through to the very conclusion of Scripture. And what do we find? We find, succinctly and without controversy, six realities which establish the character and content of all Scripture:

First, a presuppositional principle. Scripture commences in a presuppositional stance. The Bible never seeks to "prove" the existence of God; this is presupposed from the very beginning. This principle is foundational. Man was created in the image of God as a creature of faith and therefore as a presuppositionalist, and placed in a world already created and defined by God. He was, in other words, created to "think God's thoughts after him," i.e., to give the same meaning to everything that God had given to it. To do otherwise is sin. This presuppositional principle is absolutely determining for mankind. Our presuppositions, taken together as forming our world–and–life view, necessarily determine our thoughts, motives, words and actions. Indeed, all facts are interpreted by one's presuppositions. This is absolutely inescapable. Ultimately, therefore, everything derives from a principle of faith—one's belief–system—whether one is a believer or an unbeliever.

Second, the Bible necessarily begins with a declarative or revelatory statement concerning the power and work of God. This principle also characterizes Scripture throughout. Man by nature always begins with his needs; God always begins with a declaration in his self–revelation, whether it be creative or redemptive. Creation itself is part of this Divine revelation. It reflects His power and Godhood, and exists to reveal his glory.

Third, the self–existence of God, or his absolute independence from his creation. To say "…God created…" is to hold that God is not part of his creation. He is above and beyond it, separate from it; and so not dependent upon it in any way. Man cannot add anything to God, nor can he take away anything from him—except in his own depraved imagination, which has no effect upon objective reality whatsoever. This principle separates true and false religion.

Fourth, the absolute sovereignty of God over his creation. This the Scriptures consistently maintain. God is infinite, omnipotent, immanent and transcendent. Man is finite, and beset with creaturely limitations. Man must never detract one iota from God, attribute to him finite attributes or human limitations, or detract from his glory. His perfections are necessarily immutable. Any perceived limitation or inconsistency in the Divine nature is only subjective and irrational, and derives from an innate principle of unbelief and sinful hostility.

Fifth, every fact is a created fact. This necessarily means that there are no "brute" facts, i.e., uninterpreted or "neutral" facts in the universe. Because every fact is a created fact, all the ground, literally and figuratively, belongs to God. There are thus no "neutral" facts to which unbelievers or science can appeal. There is no "neutral ground" on which the believer and unbeliever can meet for a meaningful exchange. There is common ground, but this is in the context of man being the image–bearer of God, having God's Law indelibly inscribed upon his heart, and existing in the context of created facts which he unconsciously takes for granted. This truth is determining for worship, for the preaching of the Gospel, for the

defense of the faith, for the Christian life and for a Christian philosophy of education. It must be remembered that all facts are necessarily interpreted by one's presuppositions.

Finally, a revelation of the Creator–creature distinction. God is the Creator; man is his creature. Man is not in the process of becoming God, and God must not be humanized. From the opening statement to the closing declaration, the Bible maintains this Creator–creature distinction. Man has always, is now, and forever will be, utterly dependent upon God for his very existence and everything which pertains to it. There is not, nor can there ever be, any actual human autonomy—any independence from God—not in time, not in history, not in a state of sin, not in a state of grace, not on earth, not in heaven and not in hell.

These six revealed realities are foundational for the Christian philosophy of education. Indeed, these are foundational for all worship, theology, apologetics and for every aspect of the Christian life. As Christians, we are always challenged at the point of our faith, and our faith is always challenged at its point–of–contact with the Word of God. This was true of Adam and Eve. They were tempted at the point their faith was grounded in the Word of God. Every challenge or attack and every temptation comes to believers at this very same and crucial point as it did to our first parents—and for the very same reason—to separate us from the Word of God.

Our faith, if it is biblical, is not irrational; it is necessarily intelligent and consistent, as it is God–given. This God–engendered faith primarily enables us to believe that the Bible is the very Word of God inscripturated. Everything else flows from this one vital reality—our comprehension of and response to the gospel, our understanding of Bible doctrine, our growth in grace, spiritual maturity and our service for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the vital connection between the Scriptures and faith. The Bible is the foundation of our "revelational epistemology," our sole rule of both faith and practice—and, whatever the challenge or attack, this is the ground which must be held at all costs. To love its Author, to study it thoroughly, to live in humble obedience to its mandates and to

maintain its absolute authority and truthfulness before an unbelieving world, is the primary calling and task of every Christian. It is in this comprehensive context that we must consider the Christian philosophy of education.

An Observation on Contemporary Worship

Texts

Gen. 4:3. "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD."

Lev. 18:21. "And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through *the fire* to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the LORD."

1 Kgs. 18:26, 28. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made…..And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

2 Kgs. 3:15. "But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him."

Lev. 10:1–3. And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This *is it* that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

1 Pet. 1:15–16. "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; [16] Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

Note: The biblical concept of "holy" in both Testaments [קָדוֹשׁ, ἅγιος] is that of separation. Separation from all false worship and worldliness is certainly essential to gospel holiness and worship. The Divine command is stringent and emphatic for an ever–increasing holiness in every area of our lifestyle [ἅγιοι ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ γενήθητε]

1 Jn. 2:15. "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."[459]

"Contemporary worship," usually characterized by "praise services" of singing choruses, various bodily movements, clapping and free expressions of personalities, etc., is sweeping evangelical Christianity. Even some Reformed congregations have imported such into their worship. Some who would otherwise be considered as strongly orthodox now hold to the non–cessationist view of the various gifts of the Holy Spirit which characterize Charismatic Christianity. Centuries–old distinctions have become blurred. Distinctions once considered necessary because grounded in biblical and doctrinal truth have been increasingly set aside.

Some churches have gone to the extreme of modern "Rock 'n Roll" and "Heavy Metal" music to keep or increase their congregations. "Worship teams" have replaced the simple congregational hymn–singing of our godly forefathers. Music in itself, it is stated, is neutral; only the lyrics are significant.[460] Thus, many incorporate the music of the world with all its characteristics into the church's worship. But such music is the expression of an immoral drug culture with all its debauchery, social rebellion, occultism[461] and anti–Christ philosophy. Music in itself is not neutral, even as noted in the playing of the minstrel for Elisha.

Indeed, music possesses the power to move the soul, enter the heart and change the mood by its very nature, even without lyrics! So–called "Christian Rock Groups" look to their counterparts in the world as their mentors and idolize them! This is nothing less than the world's invasion of the church; the apostasy of Christianity in our

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[459] 1 Jn. 2:15 would certainly prohibit the importation of the world into the church, especially in its worship.

[460] John Blanchard and Dan Lucarini, *Can We Rock the Gospel?* pp. 71, 200.

[461] *Ibid.*, pp. 75–103.

time. No other term can describe this sinful, demoralizing, seductive trend. Many reasons and excuses have been and are being given, but none can hold up to scriptural scrutiny.

There is a principle which stands at the root and foundation of worship. It is determinative of any and all worship, whether it be true or false: *the nature of the God necessarily determines the nature of his worship*. This is logical, necessary and determinative—and scriptural.

Cain understood that the Lord had instituted the principle of blood–sacrifice, but he ignored it, and sought to worship God on his own terms. He sought to approach the Lord with his own rebellious, self–centered ideas, and thought that the Lord had to accept what he offered from his own imagination and self–will. The Lord refused. He demanded simple obedience, not pragmatism, innovation or the free expression of one's sinful, self–absorbed personality—such was rebellion and apostasy.

Molech, the Canaanitish and Ammonitish god, demanded the human sacrifice the first–born by fire. Nothing else and nothing less would satisfy this pagan deity. Israel was prohibited in the most stringent terms not to become involved in such debauchery and apostasy.

Ba'al was the sun–god; he was worshipped throughout the Middle East as the god of fire, the god of storm and the god of rain, etc. His followers were given to all forms of sexual immorality and perversion, dervishes, ecstasies and blood–letting, and, at times, to human sacrifice. The word "Ba'al" meant "Lord," and was used also of the God of Israel—but the two were distinguished by their natures and the mode of worship each demanded. One was *Yahweh*, the one true God; the other, the false "god" of pagan superstition.

As no one could attempt an admixture of pagan or self–will worship with the worship of *Yahweh*, so one cannot combine the music of the world—a music grounded in unsanctified emotions, sexual immorality, drug abuse, social rebellion, occultism and an Anti–Christ philosophy—with the worship of our self–revealing,

triune God who has declared, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me." Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire—they worshipped from their own free expression, on their own time and with their own energies and hearts—an anthropocentric worship—but they did not offer in obedience. God killed them. The nature of the God necessarily determines the nature of his worship. Our worship must reflect the nature of the Lord God of Scripture—it must be scriptural, sanctified, obedient, holy and reverent. Modern, contemporary worship is more akin to that of Cain, Molech and Ba'al than the pure and obedient worship of *Yahweh*.

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Exegetical Notes from *The PIRSpective*[462]

"The Sinner's Prayer"

Luke 18:13

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

There are three textual issues in this verse upon which the entire Parable of the Pharisee and Publican hang—yet are either omitted or vaguely rendered in our English Bible. The first is the definite article before "sinner" [τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ]. The Publican did not merely see himself before God as "a sinner," but emphatically "*the* sinner." He saw himself as the very epitome—the embodiment—of sinfulness before God! It is this articular or arthrous use which stands in such stark contrast to all of the self–righteousness and self–deception of the Pharisee.

The second is the use of the imperfect tense for "smote" which is followed by the present participle "saying," strongly emphasizing a repetitive action [ἔτυπτεν τὸ στῆθος αὐτοῦ λέγων]. He evidently repeatedly smote his breast, constantly crying out to God until he had peace. What a vivid commentary on the true and scriptural— "The Sinner's Prayer"!

The third issue are the words "O God, be merciful to me" [ὁ θεός, ἱλάσθητί μοι]. The words "be merciful" refer to being propitiated or appeased. Before the two men had entered the Court of Israel in Herod's Temple, they had each given a blood sacrifice to the priest, and by faith on the part of one and mere presumption on the part of the other, approached God in prayer as the priest, unseen by them in the Court of the Priests, offered the blood. The Publican by faith pleaded blood atonement for reconciliation to a righteous,

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[462] *The PIRSpective* is the Theological Quarterly of the Pacific Institute for Religious Studies.

just and holy God. Our Lord declared that this man went down to his house justified.

"The Sinner's Prayer" is something to consider. It must be spontaneous, not something rehearsed or stated in a mechanical way. It may be repeated in soul–agony filled with an awful consciousness of overpowering sin until peace is spoken to the heart and soul. Who said that "The Sinner's Prayer" is a one–time statement? It is a cry of faith which has its foundation in the atoning blood and culminates in finding peace with God.

The Fool

"The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God."
Psa. 14:1; 53:1

"…Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof…"
2 Tim. 3:5

This statement occurs twice in Scripture, both in the Psalms. There are at least three considerations, the first, religious and cultural, the second textual and the third, theological: first, who is the fool? *Nabal* [נָבָל] describes the person who is senseless to religious, spiritual, moral and ethical realities. Thus, he is disgraceful. This is nothing less than a practical atheism expressed in the life and actions. Does the Psalmist speak of a pagan or an Israelite? Of an Israelite. The pagans were very religious, and their culture evidenced their religion and conformed to the character of their "god." Many Israelites, however, lived as if God were not the all–encompassing, Living Reality. They lived a practical atheism.

Second, there is a textual consideration. "Hath said the fool in his heart, nothing is God" [אָמַר נָבָל בְּלִבּוֹ אֵין אֱלֹהִים]. The term אֵין means "to come to naught, to come to nothing, to become utterly irrelevant." The emphasis is upon the character of the person and upon his idea that God is utterly irrelevant. This heart–conviction manifests itself in a practical atheism—living as though God were utterly irrelevant.

Third, there is a theological consideration, a sad state which was and is true of many of God's professing people, not only among Israel, but among many today—one may outwardly profess and conform to some of the externalities of religion, but inwardly and then outwardly deny its power. Mark this in the passage from 2 Timothy: ἔχοντες μόρφωσιν εὐσεβείας τὴν δὲ δύναμιν αὐτῆς ἠρνημένοι… "Continuing to retain [ἔχοντες, pres. ptc.] a mere form or semblance [μόρφωσιν] of godliness, but its power [emph. pos.] having long ago denied and continue to deny [ἠρνημένοι, perf. ptc.]."

Dialoguing with the Devil

Genesis 3:1–3

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said [אַף כִּי־אָמַר אֱלֹהִים],[463] Ye shall never ever eat of every tree of the garden [לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִכֹּל עֵץ הַגָּן]? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat [מִפְּרִי עֵץ־הַגָּן נֹאכֵל][464] of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not ever eat of it [אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ], neither shall ye ever touch it [וְלֹא תִגְּעוּ בּוֹ], lest ye die [פֶּן־תְּמֻתוּן].

This is a vitally important passage in the history of the human race: first, the serpent speaks about God in the abstract [אֱלֹהִים], not using the title "the LORD God" [יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים], which is used throughout Gen. 2:4–3:23, i.e., from the very beginning of the human race and the Creator–creature relationship. This introduces the first theological exchange about God, as though God could be

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[463] אַף; Is a particle connoting either doubt or surprise. The following neg. לֹא with the imperf. expresses a perpetual prohibition. This should be grammatically noted throughout this passage.

[464] The woman omitted the word "freely," expressed very strongly by an inf. absol. [אָכֹל תֹּאכֵל] in Gen. 2:16. She failed to grasp the goodness of the Lord.

considered in the abstract and not as the all–encompassing, living Reality in whose context "we live and move and have our being."

Second, the serpent's question, introduced with a feigned surprise [אַף], purposely twists the prohibition to include all the trees of the garden, seeking to draw out the woman's relation to the Word of God. Her answer betrays her lack of understanding and opens the way for the serpent's utter denial of God's truth in verse 5. She fails to comprehend God's goodness, i.e., that they may freely eat [תֹּאכֵל אָכֹל] (Gen. 2:16) of the fruit of the trees. Then she unwittingly descends to the serpent's level, i.e., rather than "thinking God's thoughts after Him," she is now seduced into thinking the serpent's thoughts after him—she calls the Lord God simply "God" [אֱלֹהִים], an almost unconscious mirroring of the serpent's reference to God in the abstract.

Third, the woman gives equal force to her own thinking as she did to the very word of God. With a woman's natural care and concern, she adds a further prohibition. This is the beginning of all religion tradition, in which the word of man assumes equality with Divine truth, then tends to lessen or obscure the word of God. Having given so much force to her own idea, she lessens the Divine sentence from the infinitive absolute, "thou shalt surely die" [תָּמוּת מוֹת, "dying you shall die," the strongest possible expression][465] to "lest ye die." This inevitably follows the entrance of human religious tradition.[466]

In this passage we may mark the subtlety of the devil, the ease with which he seduced the woman, the unwitting failure to perceive Divine goodness, the danger of misunderstanding the word of God, the beginning of all religious tradition and the consequent lessening

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[465] מוֹת תָּמוּת, inf. absol., occurring here before the verb, intensifies the abstract idea of the verb, and has the force of "certainly" or "surely."

[466] Matt. 15:6, "…Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

of the Word of God. Either Adam failed to properly catechize his wife or she failed to listen carefully, and he further failed in providing adequate headship in the critical hour of temptation. The Fall was first hermeneutically twisted (v. 1), then conversationally seductive (v. 2–5) and finally overtly sinful in action (v.6–7). We must seek to know and understand the Word of God as thoroughly and carefully as possible. Every word is vitally important![467]

The First Effects of Sin

Genesis 3:8–11

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

Religious tradition is extremely strong. Once something is taken to be true, a whole theology may attach itself to a given interpretation or misinterpretation of a given passage of Scripture. Such is the case in Genesis 3:8–10. It has been traditionally held, taught and preached that The Lord God would come down and fellowship with Adam in the cool of the day, and that this calling out to Adam was a wooing or calling for fellowship and communion. Countless sermons have been preached to this effect.

We posit an altogether different interpretation which is much more suited to the context and the meaning of the words: first, the

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[467] Matt. 4:4, γεγράπται, literal translation: "It stands written [with undiminishing authority], not upon bread alone shall live the man, but upon every word proceeding through the mouth of God" [οὐκ ἐπ' ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ παντὶ ῥήματι ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ]

term "heard" denotes a continuous voice, sound or noise.[468] Second, the term for "walking" is intensive–reflexive, and means "to pace back and forth."[469] Third, rendering "in the cool of the day" entered the English Bible from the *Latin Vulgate* of Jerome (c. 406 AD). Jerome got this idea from the LXX [*Septuagint*, or Greek Old Testament, c. 246 BC], which interpreted the phrase to mean the middle of the afternoon,[470] when a breeze would pass over the desert. Note that the Old Testament Scriptures were translated from the Hebrew into Greek in Alexandria, Egypt. The phrase was an interpretation, not a translation from the LXX, which was, in turn, an interpretation, not a translation, of the Hebrew. The literal translation of the Hebrew is "in the wind or storm of the day."[471] The term "storm" is the probable meaning, and is most suited to the context.

> Note: The Heb. has eight different terms for "storm" [סוּפָה, storm wind, Job 21:18; שַׂעַר, shuddering, tempest, Job 27:21; מְרוּחַ סֹעָה, a rushing wind, Psa. 55:8; סוּפָה, storm wind, Psa. 83:15; סְעָרָה, tempest, storm wind, Psa. 107:29; זֶרֶם, cloud burst, Isa. 4:6; שׁוֹאָה, devastation, Ezk. 38:9; יוֹם, wind storm, Song Sol. 2:17; Zeph. 2:2.[including יוֹ, Cf. Holladay, *Concise Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of OT*, p. 131. The Akkadian [Ancient Assyrio–Babylonian] used the

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[468] וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ , Imperf., denoting a continuous action. אֶת־קוֹל, a voice or sound. They heard a continuous sound. The voice of the Lord is often described as thunderous. Thunder and Lightning are often described in Scripture as "the voice of the Lord." They heard the thunderous, threatening voice of the Lord God.

[469] The word "walking" [מִתְהַלֵּךְ] is Hithp. ptc., denoting an intensive, reflexive, constant action, "pacing back and forth." LXX: ἤκουσαν τὴν φωνὴν κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ περιπατοῦντος [pres. ptc, "moving about"] ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ.

[470] ...ἤκουσαν τὴν φωνὴν κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ περιπατοῦντος ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τὸ δειλινόν... "they heard the voice of the Lord God walking about in paradise in the mid–afternoon."

[471] לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם, in a windstorm.

cognate term for both day and storm. Cf. the study in Pratico & Van Pelt by Jefferey Neihaus, Prof. OT, Gordon–Conwell, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 397–399. The LXX uses the five following terms: λαῖλαψ, storm hurricane; καταιγίς, squall, storm; ὑετός, rain; χάλαζα καταφερομένη, i.e., as hailstones beating down, Isa. 28:2; συντελείᾳ, destruction.

Thus, Adam and Eve hid themselves out of both fear and shame, for the Lord God had come down into the garden in a violent windstorm. Creation, which before was quiet and peaceful, was rent with a manifestation of Divine anger. The following verses bear this out.

The answer of Adam reveals the reason he hid himself from the face of the Lord God—he was afraid because of the thunderous voice of the Lord God and because he was still naked. His attempt to cover himself by fig leaves was futile. He was still overcome with a sense of his nakedness before God—a sense of shameful nakedness. The term "Thy voice" is in the emphatic position before the verb, and the emphasis is also upon his yet present state of nakedness.[472]

The response of the Lord God in v. 10 is in the form of an intense interrogation, which, anthropomorphically connotes both surprise and dismay at Adam's disobedience.

Note: The Divine cross–examination forced the truth from the man to face his own responsibility for his open defiance and rebellion against the Word of God. [מִי הִגִּיד לְךָ כִּי עֵירֹם אָתָּה]. "Who declared unto you that naked you are?!" הִגִּיד, Hiph. perf. "to cause to know," and so "to declare, to announce." עֵירֹם אָתָּה, emph. pos. and indep. Pers. pron. אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לְבִלְתִּי אֲכָל־מִמֶּנּוּ אָכָלְתָּ׃ הֲמִן־הָעֵץ]. From the tree of which I commanded thee not to eat of it—hast thou eaten?! אָכָלְתָּ masc. sing. A direct and personal interrogation.

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[472] The man's response emphasizes his fear of the voice of the LORD God [אֶת־קֹלְךָ שָׁמַעְתִּי בַּגָּן וָאִירָא כִּי־עֵירֹם אָנֹכִי וָאֵחָבֵא׃]. "Voice" in emph. pos. and the fact that "naked I am!" (indep. pers.pron.). LXX: γυμνός εἰμι So he hid himself.

The interpretation which reveals the reaction of the Lord God coming down in holy and righteous indignation in a violent windstorm to confront Adam, Adam's fear and shame, and the Lord God's terse interrogation seems to draw the correct picture of this first and stern encounter with sinful man. The subsequent evasiveness and self–victimization of Adam, who blamed his wife, furthers such an interpretation.

Christmas Tradition and the Inn

Luke 2:7

"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

Tradition is difficult to discard, as it becomes entrenched in people's thinking and even theology may be based upon it. This is the case with Luke 2:7. Christian tradition pictures Joseph and Mary being refused at a local inn,[473] and the baby Jesus having to be born in a manger in a cold, outside cave or stable. The facts speak otherwise: first, the language seems to imply that Mary was her own midwife. But Joseph and Mary had the child in a house with the best accommodations available. Second, the words translated "because there was no room for them in the inn" [διότι οὐκ ἦν αὐτοῖς τόπος ἐν τῷ καταλύματι] refer to the guest chamber of a house.

Most houses had guest chambers[474] or upper rooms[475] and living rooms where the family ate and slept. Attached to the living quarters was a stable *in the house* for the protection of the animals on a slightly lower level. The manger, filled with provender was located at the end of the living room. Joseph doubtless had family and

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[473] Cf. Luke 10:34. The Good Samaritan brought the injured man to an inn [πανδοχεῖον], i.e., a public house for the reception of strangers.

[474] καταλύμα, a guest chamber within a home.

[475] ἀνάγαιον, an upper room.

friends in Bethlehem. When they arrived for the taxing, the guest chamber was already occupied, so they had to stay in the family living quarters, which had a hay–filled manger at one end, leading down to the stable.

The traditional thought of being forced out into the street and cold night air by an inn–keeper is simply the thought of Western Christian tradition, not Middle Eastern culture or fact.[476] We must beware of basing theology or teaching on mere tradition.

Our Lord's Education

John 7:15

"…How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

The question of the Jews is very significant: πῶς οὗτος γράμματα οἶδεν μὴ μεμαθηκώς; A literal translation would read: "How [does] this one[477] grammar know, having never ever been discipled?" The word "grammar" is emphatic by position and so is the focal point of the question.[478] The term "taught" means "discipled,"[479] i.e., our Lord was, to them, a self–taught Rabbi who had never "sat at the feet" of an acknowledged teacher. He had no formal or advanced education and was not the product of any

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[476] For a full discussion of houses with the mangers and stables at the lower end of the living quarters, see Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008, pp. 25–37.

[477] οὗτος, "this one," a term often used derogatorily, and was often so–used of our Lord throughout his earthly ministry.

[478] Both Greek and Hebrew make much use of word–order to emphasize words, phrases or clauses. The English has no such linguistic device and thus misses most of the emphatic constructions in the New Testament.

[479] μεμαθηκώς, "discipled," perf. ptc. The perfect tense [the English has no perfect tense] connotes an action which continues in a given state, and so we translate "having never ever learned."

Rabbinical school—and had a Galilean accent—yet he knew the biblical text.

Note: "To sit at the feet of" a given teacher meant advanced training. Saul of Tarsus was probably the Rabbi of the Cilician Synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9–10; 7:58) and had been trained, or sat "at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts 5:34; 22:3).

It seems strange that many men either preparing for or already in the gospel ministry have a great aversion to studying the original languages. These either believe that the English Bible is sufficient, that the study of the Greek and Hebrew is unnecessary, or that an array of various versions, study Bibles or commentaries will provide adequate information. It remains that there is absolutely no substitute for a thorough study of Greek and Hebrew. The minister limited to his English Bible has, at most, a secondary knowledge of the Word of God—the very Word which he is supposed to know as intimately as possible!

Our Lord spoke and taught in Aramaic, yet he knew the Hebrew Scriptures and often used the Septuagint or Greek Old Testament. From the Lord Jesus Christ himself, to the inspired Apostles to the present time, the greatest and best of ministers have availed themselves of the original languages of Scripture. Who would knowingly go against the entire gospel ministry from our Lord to the present time? Let nothing hinder the serious minister from being faithful to his call!

The Apostle Paul as an Expository Preacher

Acts 17:2–3

"And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

The ministry of the Apostle Paul was two-fold: first, preaching to or discoursing with the Gentiles, as he did with the philosophers at

Athens. Second, his practice in the synagogue where he carefully and fully opened and expounded the Scriptures.

> Note: Cf. Acts 17:16–18. Paul discoursed and discussed the truth of the gospel daily for several weeks at Athens before his final address before the Areopagus in v.19–34. He fully preached the gospel daily during this time. The main verbs in v. 18 are imperf., denoting continual encounters with these philosophers [συνέβαλλον… ἔλεγον…εὐηγγελίζετο]. They failed to comprehend his message because of their polytheistic presuppositions, thinking that "Jesus" and "Anastasia" were male and female gods. The names, in effect were thought to promote healing and restoration!

> This demonstrates the necessity of completely explaining the truth in preaching. In his final address he did not open the Scriptures, although every assertion was solidly grounded in biblical truth. He built upon his previous ministry, presenting a Christian Theistic World–and–Life View and setting both "Jesus" and "the resurrection" in the context of final judgment.

Acts 17:1–3 is vital to understand the preaching and approach of the Apostle Paul in his synagogue ministry. The Jews and proselytes in the synagogues both knew and used the Hebrew [Aramaic] and Greek [Septuagint][480] Old Testaments. Their high regard for the Scriptures was largely traditional, but bordered on the superstitious.

Mark the words, "as his manner was" [κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰωθὸς], i.e., "according to his customary practice." What follows in verses two and three reveal his customary approach as he preached in the synagogues. The main statement is …διελέξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν, διανοίγων καὶ παρατιθέμενος… The main verb is aor. and is further elucidated by the two following pres. ptcs., i.e., "He discoursed with or to them from the Scriptures, by means of completely opening and setting forth" the death and resurrection of Christ and proving that Jesus was the Christ.

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[480] The LXX [Septuagint, or Greek Old Testament] was the common version of the Greco–Roman Era in which the Κοινή Greek was the common language.

Note: διανοίγων, "to open thoroughly, to completely open the understanding." This necessitated both a careful exegesis and both a doctrinal and practical exposition of the text.

Such preaching or discoursing was focused on a careful exegesis and exposition of the text, from which proofs were then drawn.

Note: παρατιθέμενος, "to place beside or set forth," thus to demonstrate from the Scriptures that the Christ had to suffer (Cf. Lk. 24:25–27, 44–46), and the One whom Paul was preaching is [emphatically] the Christ [καὶ ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστὸς [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς ὃν ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν]. Paul proceeded from the text to the doctrine, and then to the application.

There is a great need in our day to carefully and consistently open the Scriptures and deal completely and faithfully with the text. Much modern preaching uses the text of Scripture as a mere point-of-departure so the minister can branch out into various areas of Christian experience, tell stories or bring people some type of religious decision.

Although the Apostle Paul was evidently practical and experiential, he first carefully opened the text and expounded its doctrinal teaching. The doctrine and preaching should flow from the text. This is the burden and blessing of expository preaching. Let the inspired Apostle be our example!

The Term "World" in John 3:16

"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."

The interpretation and significance of the term "world" in John 3:16 seems to vary with one's theological presuppositions concerning the atonement. Arminians and Pelagians, holding to either an inconsistent or consistent universalism, hold that the word "world" refers to the entire human race, either actually or potentially.

Note: a consistent universalism holds that because Christ died for all men without exception, all men will infallibly be redeemed. An inconsistent universalism teaches that although Christ died for all

men, not all will be redeemed. Man's "free will" must be exercised to make the atonement effectual. These hold that Christ died to make all men savable, or to redeem them potentially.

Others hold that the word denotes the entire world or created universe, considering our Lord as the "Second Man" and "Last Adam"—that he redeemed all creation. Calvinists have had various approaches, arguing the nature of an effectual atonement, and so some have limited the term "world" in some sense. We should beware of a subtle *eisegesis* because of our doctrinal presuppositions.

Note: Eisegesis [εἰσηγήσις] is reading into the text a meaning which is foreign to the text. It is the opposite of exegesis [ἐξηγήσις], or bringing out the proper meaning of the text in the original language.

Is there a consistent method of approach which both does justice to the text and to the word "world"?

First, consider the various terms translated as "world" in the English Bible. There are three: αἰῶν, "age;" οἰκουμένη, "inhabited earth;" and κόσμος, "order, arrangement," the word used in John 3:16 [οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον…].

Note: The study of synonyms is vital to understanding the variety of several terms which may be translated by only one word in the English. There are two terms for "love," six for "power" and nine nouns and five verbs for "servant" and "serve," each connoting something entirely distinct.

This final term is used in a great variety of ways in the New Testament: statements using the term "world" in a redemptive context, such as John 3:16; 7:29; and 1 John 2:2. It may also denote the created universe (Jn. 17:5), the general public in a limited sense (Jn. 12:19), mankind as alienated from God and characterized by sin (Jn. 3:19), the world as the realm of evil, the state of flux and sin that characterizes human existence and seduces from God (1 Jn. 2:15–17), and finally, of mankind as composed of both Jew and Gentile (e.g., Rom. 11:12).

It is in light of this final usage that such statements as John 1:29; 3:16–17; 4:42 and 1 John 2:2 might be properly understood without

doing injustice either to the text or to the truth and reality of the atonement's vicarious or substitutionary nature. This is especially relevant when considering the Jewish exclusivism which characterized the religious thinking of the biblical era and afterward.

Second, the basic principles of biblical interpretation necessarily include the principle of context. But context has varied aspects. There is the larger context, which may include the entire corpus of a given author, a given book, chapter or paragraph. The more immediate context involves the syntax of the given statement. There are also the historical, cultural, religious and psychological as well as the theological context.

Finally, bringing into play the term used, κόσμος, which may mean a variety of things, and the larger and more immediate context, can we determine the exact nature of the use of "world" in John 3:16?

We suggest the following: the larger context is an intense conversation between our Lord and Nicodemus. We need to consider the latter's World–and–Life View as a Jew, a Pharisee, and one steeped in Judaistic exclusivism. In their conversations, our Lord had continually devastated the religious presuppositions of this Pharisee and Ruler of Israel. Nicodemus had to come to terms with a hither unknown truth—regeneration, and become personally and intensely involved in this conversation. At every point, he was devastated and even chided by our Lord.

Note: Nicodemus is irresistibly and personally drawn into the conversation immediately (v. 2–4). He is thinking of an external religion couched in terms of rites, rituals and ceremonies; he is faced with true, spiritual religion. He seems not to understand, but our Lord rebukes him: σὺ εἶ ὁ διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ταῦτα οὐ γινώσκεις; "You are 'The Teacher' of Israel, and these things you do not understand?!" Our Lord implies that the mystery of "being born from above" [γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν] and "of water and the Spirit" [γεννηθῇ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος] should have been known to him (Cf. Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 11:19–20; 36:25–27).

When our Lord declared the truth of salvation by faith and used the brazen serpent analogically (Numb. 21:4–9), Nicodemus seemed to grasp the truth, but in the very next statement, he was once again devastated. "For God so loved the world…!" The emphasis falls upon the word "loved."

Note: οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, lit: "For so loved God the world…" The word–order is verb–subject–object, thus the emphasis falls upon the verb "love."

But it is the term "world" which shakes Nicodemus. He is a Jew, a descendant of Abraham, bears the covenant–sign of circumcision, a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, steeped in his Jewish exclusiveness. He was traditionally blinded to such broad and inclusive invitations as Gen. 12:1–3; 22:18; Psa. 66:4; Isa. 45:22. To hear that God loved the "world," i.e., that his redemptive love extended beyond the Jews to include the Gentiles, the *goiym*, was unthinkable. He had always believed that the only interest God had in the world was to judge it. Our Lord then corrected this misapprehension in the next statement: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved!"

The term "world" throughout this intense exchange refers to sinful mankind, to the lost and benighted Gentiles as well as the self–righteous Jews. Considering the biased presuppositions of Nicodemus and our Lord's corrective and evangelistic approach, we have an interpretation which is consonant with the context, the terminology and the entire incident.

The Devil is a "Methodist"

Ephesians 6:11

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. "

The early members of the Oxford "Holy Club," especially John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, led very disciplined lives in their legalistic religious devotions. For this behavior they

were given the nickname of "Methodists." This designation eventually became the official name of an entire denomination.

This term originally derived from the Greek μέθοδος, "method, pursuit of knowledge."[481] A related term is μεθοδεία, "methodology, pursuit by design, craft."[482] Used negatively in the New Testament as "scheme, deceive, to use cunning." This latter is used of the devil and is translated as "the wiles of the devil" [τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου]. Taking the meaning in a general sense, it is proper to speak of "satanic methodology." The devil rarely if ever uses a direct approach; his method is to act in a cunning way to deceive. Biblical examples demonstrate this satanic methodology by which he deceives through his cunning.

In Genesis 3:1–7, the devil as the serpent succeeded in seducing Eve by "allowing her to correct his [alleged] misstatement" and offering to her and Adam autonomy. He attacked Job on every possible level—physically, spiritually, parentally, maritally, socially, mentally and filially—and every onslaught seemed to be from God and was designed to set Job against the Lord.

Satan moved David in fear to number Israel, and thus rely on the strength of his army rather than on the Lord and His might and protection (2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chron. 21. Note that 2 Sam. 24:1 attributes the cause to the Lord, 1 Chron. 21:1 to Satan). He appealed to the covetous nature of Judas (Jn. 12:4–6; Matt. 26:14–16). In Matthew 16:21–23, he appealed to Peter's highest spiritual sense, concern and motive. The devil appealed to the covetousness and pride of Ananias and Sapphira and they tempted the Spirit of the Lord to their own destruction (Acts 5:1–11).

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[481] Liddell–Scott, Greek–English Lexicon.

[482] μεθοδεία occurs twice in the NT: Eph. 4:14 and 6:11. In the former text it is translated in the KJV as "lie in wait to deceive" [πρὸς τὴν μεθοδείαν τῆς πλάνης].

The devil has limited power, but his methodology is to use our fears, natural tendencies, weaknesses or even our highest and greatest spiritual concerns to seduce us to sin. He is a "methodist," although not of that ancient denomination. We know his methodology, his *modus operandi* from the Scriptures, and should not be "ignorant of his devices."[483]

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[483] "Devices," οὐ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὰ νοήματα ἀγνοοῦμεν, νοήμα denotes mental perception, thought, purpose, or design (2 Cor. 2:11).