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MAN IN GOD’S IMAGE: *What Does It Mean?*

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The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, is the highest example showing that man was made in God’s image: (1) Christ came in the form of a man, not some other organism; (2) Christ was God; and, (3) Jesus, though man, was the perfect image of God in man. “God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . . who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person . . . when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb 1:1-4). Therefore, man is in the image of God, but Christ is the *express* image of God, the *perfect, complete* image. On the contrary, man is an incomplete, fallen image of God; even before the Fall, man did not have all the abilities of Christ. For Christ, being God, was “the brightness of [God’s] glory, and Christ, being man, was “the express image of [God’s] person” (1:3).

The realization that man’s entire being is in God’s image can bring joy. For example, John was joyous because he was intimately knowledgeable about Christ, the perfect image of God in man. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us . . . And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:1-4). John had “seen,” “looked upon,” and “handled” Christ; John knew well the *physical* aspects of the image of God in Christ. John continually spoke of the fellowship and love that Christians can have in Christ; John knew well the non-physical or spiritual aspects of the image of God in Christ. Therefore, Christians can have greater love, fellowship, and joy (1) by knowing Christ better (Christ being the perfect image of God in man); and (2) by knowing their own nature better (man is in the image of God, though now an imperfect image).

MAN’S ENTIRE BEING IS IN GOD’S IMAGE: BODY, SOUL, SPIRIT

Man’s *totality* in the image of God is shown in the Genesis creation account. First, *God first created inanimate matter and energy*. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth [matter] . . . And God said, Let there be light [a kind of energy]: and there was light” (Gen 1:1-3); man’s physical body is composed of these things. Secondly, *God secondly created animal*

consciousness ("soul"). "And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth" (1:21); man has consciousness, as do animals; thus man has some kinship with animals (e.g. pets). Thirdly, *God thirdly created human self-consciousness* ("spirit"). "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (1:27); thus only man is self-conscious (i.e. aware of self and God); of all creatures, only man can think about himself as an object of others' thought.¹

The Genesis references are characterized by use of *בָּרָא* (*bara*), which is translated "created" and means "creation from nothing." Therefore, only man has in himself all *three* aspects of the creative works of God. The following conclusions are determined: (1) Man is a trinity, as is God (cf. Gen 1:26, "let us"); (2) Man's total being is in God's image; (3) As the persons of the godhead are *distinct yet inseparable*, so are the three aspects of man's being; *man is not a "tripartite" being, but a unity with three aspects*; and, (4) All proper dealings with man should be founded on this fact that man is a unity (e.g. holistic medicine that includes the emotional and physical well-being, cf. Prov 17:22; psychology that considers nutritional health in addition to mental health; ministerial counseling teaching physical health as an aid to spiritual health).

The biblical teaching that man exists as an image of a Creator higher than himself is opposite the humanist teaching that man is autonomous. For example, Erich Fromm believed, "a value such as love for one's neighbor is not viewed as a phenomenon *transcending* man; it is something inherent and *radiating from* him. Love is not a higher power which descends upon man nor a duty which is imposed upon him; it is his own power by which he relates to the world and makes it truly his."² If man by his own nature emanates such god-like qualities, then man must be inherently good, and indeed this is the humanist position. "The position taken by humanistic ethics that man is able to know what is good and to act accordingly on the strength of his natural potentialities and of his reason, would be untenable if the dogma of man's innate natural evilness were true."³ However, if man is inherently good, there is the possibility of his eventually achieving godhood, a yearning manifested in projects such as the search for extraterrestrial intelligence and the growth of Eastern religions in the West.⁴ In contrast to man's schizophrenic desire to avoid God by means of humanism and to yet become God by means of extraterrestrial contact and mysticism, the biblical teaching that mankind is

¹ Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record* (San Diego: Master Books, 1976), 39-40, 69, 73.

² Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself* (New York: Rinehart, 1947), 23, as quoted in Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology as Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 19.

³ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁴ Jonathan Henry, "Ye Shall Be As Gods: The Modern Search for Extraterrestrial Life," in ed. Henry Morris, *When Christians Roamed the Earth: Is the Bible Believing Church Headed for Extinction?* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2002), 160-92).

made in God's image is a call to dependence on the One Who created humanity.

MAN'S BODY IS IN GOD'S IMAGE

Man's body is the image of God because man is a unity, whose entire being is in God's image.

What more and more theologians have been coming to recognize in recent decades is that the biblical word *image* needs to be taken seriously. Human beings reflect God; and a reflection takes in the entirety of one's being. In other words, man is the nearest God could come to creating a replica of himself within the limitations he had set himself, those of an earthly, physical being. . . . "When we try to define the image of God, it is not enough to react against a crude literalism [idolatry] by isolating man's mind and spirit from his body. The Bible makes man a unity: acting, thinking and feeling with his whole being. . . ." If this exegesis is correct, then the glory of God as reflected in man does *not* consist simply in the fact that he has (analogous to God, presumably) a highly complex brain. . . . Rather, the glory of God is reflected in man in his entirety. We should not despise the physical aspect's of man's being. If one takes this view, then it makes sense to believe that there is already a faint reflection, that God has already started on his work of creating a replica, as far back as the beginnings of embryonic life."⁵

The conclusion should be made that man's body is uniquely special.

The Biblical Christian does not value man because, unlike the brutes, he has some special addendum called a "soul," but simply because he is man, created in the image of God. . . . *The image of God is not the soul or the reason or any special part of man but is man himself—the whole man.* Therefore the Christian should not focus his attention so much on the intellectual and spiritual aspect of human personhood. Rather with David we should praise God for the marvelous work that is the whole man (Psalm 139:13-16). David here doesn't praise God for an immortal invisible spiritual soul, but he praises God for how intricately his *body* was wrought, for how *he* was knitted together in the womb. David here refers to himself and to his body interchangeably. . . . (In fact the soul isn't even mentioned).⁶

Based upon this assessment, there are several implications. First, man's body is special and not like that of animals, even though it is chemically similar. Second, the "specialness" of man's body is possessed by any human body, even the smallest embryo in the earliest, most "imperfect" stages of development ("Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written," Ps 139:16). Embryo experimentation or abortions of human bodies destroy the image of God in the body. They are

⁵ Richard Higginson, "The Case Against Embryo Research," *Ethics and Medicine* 1 (1985): 11.

⁶ Forrest W. Schultz, "The Ecological Dimensions of Human Viceregency" (unpublished Th.M. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1971), 39-40.

therefore wrong in God's sight. Third, man does not have a dual nature consisting of a "lofty" spirit and a "gross" body.

Another feature of Biblical anthropology . . . is the doctrine of the constitutional unity of human nature. . . . Soul/body dualistic anthropologies . . . involve an exaltation of spirit and a denigration of matter. All that is good, noble, beautiful, virtuous, and rational in man is attributed to his "spiritual" essence—his "soul," while all that is base, ignoble, ugly, vicious, and irrational is ascribed to his physical essence—his body—his "animal" nature—his "natural" desires. . . . For over a century now evolutionists have been attributing social problems to man's supposed animal ancestry. Man hasn't yet evolved sufficiently above the level of the brute, they say. But long before Darwin from the most ancient times men have sought to trace their peccadilloes to their "animal" nature.⁷

Indeed, all pagan religions (e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Romanism) have exalted the spirit and abased the body, with disastrous consequences.

OBJECTIONS TO TEACHING THAT MAN'S BODY IS IN GOD'S IMAGE

Objection #1: "The body is just a mortal prison house that man escapes at death." In response to this, consider the following: "Because man is a unity, all aspects of his being, including the somatic [i.e. the body] are integral, indispensable dimensions of his whole being. The body is not a mortal prison house in which the immortal soul is now trapped, but is a *sine qua non* [absolutely necessary] for human living. Bodily material existence is to be regarded as a joy for the Christian, not a curse."⁸

First, man in his body can do in a limited way things that God can do in an unlimited way. Second, man uses his arms, ears, eyes, feet, etc.; *the productive use of one's body to serve God can be a source of real joy*. For instance, man can use his body in a way that animals cannot; animals can meet only immediate physical needs; man can use his body to meet non-physical needs (e.g. eyes see a need, ears hear a need, feet go to the need, arms and mouth meet the need); types of non-physical needs that animals cannot meet include a salvation message, emotional comfort, encouragement, and altruistic physical help (cf. Jas 2:15-16). Third, the fact that man can use his body to meet the same kind of needs that God can meet is the reason that anthropomorphisms have meaning.

In contrast to man, "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). He is, however, often described in the Bible as having *body parts with unlimited capabilities* (see Table 1 for some examples). Anthropomorphisms in the Old Testament outnumber those in

⁷ Ibid., 35-36.

⁸ Ibid., 36.

the New Testament. The reason is significant, for in the New Testament, Christ was God in the flesh (“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” John 1:14). In view of the significance of man’s body, the biblical Christian looks not for escape from the body, but for an *incorruptible* body, even as Paul yearned for a new body. “We shall all be changed . . . and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption” (1 Cor 15:51-53).

Objection #2: “In the flesh dwelleth no good thing” (cf. Rom 7:18). In response, the physical was created first (Gen 1:1), then the spiritual (2:7). However, the Fall was *spiritual* and the curse on the (physical) ground came afterward (3:17). Forrest noted: “Of course, in our present fallen state there is much misery and suffering in the body. But this is not the fault of matter or nature per se but is the result of the Fall of the originally good first human couple due to a *spiritual* rebellion against their Creator. . . . Therefore, man should not conceive of his task as that of conquering his ‘lower’ or ‘animal’ passions, and in turn a hostile material world, but rather he should see that he is engaged in a spiritual war.”⁹ Second Corinthians 10:3-4 negates the false idea that human beings are at war with their bodies: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [fleshly or physical].” Ephesians 6:12 states, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but . . . against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Indeed, Jesus was clear that wickedness proceeds from the fallen (spiritual) heart of man, not from the body. “For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders. . . . All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21, 23).

Objection #3: “The body is the source of problems.” There are several responses to such an objection. First, the body is not really the source of human problems, as previously mentioned. Indeed, the redeemed will one day have glorified bodies. Far from being a source of problems, the redeemed must have a body to enter a glorified state. “One of the heresies which has afflicted the Christian church . . . is the heresy of regarding matter, that is material substance, as the source of evil. It has appeared in various forms. . . . John, for example, had to combat it in the peculiarly aggravated form of denying the reality of Christ’s body as one of flesh (1 John 4:1-3).”¹⁰ Schultz stated similarly.

The transition to the eternal state is not accomplished by the ‘spiritual’ soul divesting itself of a burdensome material body, but rather it involves a glorification of the entire human person - body as well as intellect, emotions, will, conscience, spirit, and whatever else it is that comprises our being. Our existence in the New Creation, like

⁹ Ibid., 36-37, 38-39.

¹⁰ John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 179.

our existence in the present one, is a bodily existence. The Scriptures do not posit an immortality of the soul, but a resurrection of the body. . . . Although body/soul dualism has sometimes been maintained or justified for the noble purpose of demonstrating our survival after physical death, this is totally unnecessary as well as very misleading, because that survival is assured not by an inherently indestructible immortal soul but by God's promise to resurrect us to eternal life.¹¹

Furthermore, the human body, and the New Creation in general, will be in many ways similar to the original perfect creation, but with even greater capabilities in glorified bodies than Adam and Eve had in their perfect bodies. Indeed, Christ in His risen, glorified—but fully *physical* (Phil 3:20-21)—body demonstrated the nature of the glorified body for the redeemed, and there were many similarities with present human bodies and those of Adam and Eve before the Fall. For example, Christ in His glorified body could speak (Matt 28:19-20), handle objects (Luke 24:30), eat food (24:43), and be recognized as He was before His death (John 20:27). When the redeemed are granted glorified bodies, they will serve God *on earth* (Rev 21:1; 22:3) and *in time* (22:2).

However, the glorified bodies of the redeemed will clearly have greater capabilities than our present bodies or even the sinless bodies of Adam and Eve. Christ in His glorified body revealed what these capabilities would be. In His glorified body, Christ was not subject to gravitational forces (1 Thess 4:17). Jesus said glorified bodies would be “as the angels of God in heaven” (Matt 22:30). This was a very revealing comment, for angels (1) can travel very fast (Dan 9:21; 10:12), (2) are spiritually and physically strong (10:13), and, (3) “excel in strength” (Ps 103:20). The Bible states that the new bodies will be sinless (Rev 22:3), will not be subject to death (1 Cor.15:53, Rev 20:14), and will be like Christ's immortal body (1 John 3:2). Christ in His glorified body could (1) pass through closed doors (John 20:19), (2) move rapidly from earth to heaven and back (20:17, Acts 1:9-11), and, (3) “ascend up far beyond all heavens” (Eph 4:10). Finally, realization that the body is not itself evil, but is truly in God's image, can bring real joy.

Unfortunately Christian anthropology for the most part . . . has been more influenced by the Greek body/soul dichotomy than by Holy Scripture. . . . When one experiences the full force of . . . liberation from oppressive dualistic anthropology, he can read Scripture with fresh eyes and enter into the joyous celebration of the mysteries and wonder of his own life and of the lives of God's other creatures. . . . We will then be liberated from the suffocating practice of trying to hunt for the ‘spiritual’ meaning to apply to the “spiritual” realm, and thereby overlooking the vast riches of meaning for everyday real life and experience in God's natural world. . . . Finally, the unity of man's essence will lead the Christian to a concern for all of his life. He will therefore not spurn the body and the natural world as something evil or alien to his real self. He knows that God has intended for him to live in the body in this natural world which is

¹¹ Schultz, “Ecological Dimensions,” 37, 42.

his home. He rejoices at the beauty, wonder and awe of his own body and of the myriads of creatures in nature.¹²

With this view, one has more respect for his body and for others, more kindness toward all God's creatures (God *delights* in all of them, Ps 104:31), and increased real-world application in Bible study (e.g. the "Ecology Psalm," Ps 104). To summarize, man's body is important since it is a creation of God. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43-44). Lazarus' physical life was important. In his vision of Christ, John recognized that Christ was "like the Son of Man" (Rev 1:13) (i.e. His physical body and appearance were retained into the future, as will be those of the redeemed).

Though man's body is important, it is not to be worshipped. Though man's body is in God's image, image worship is idolatry. Bible passages reference how "the flesh profiteth nothing" and "the spirit bringeth life" in response to Greek, Roman, and modern tendencies to idolize the body. These same passages emphasize the present day conflict between flesh and spirit, due to the fact that spiritual redemption can be implemented at salvation, but physical creation is still under sin. As mentioned, one day the physical bodies of the redeemed will be glorified and free from sin. The eternal rest of the New Covenant includes having a body, a fact discussed in the Book of Hebrews, especially chapter four.¹³

MAN'S CONSCIOUSNESS ("SOUL") IS IN GOD'S IMAGE

Animals have consciousness ("soul"), but man's consciousness goes beyond that of animals and seems reflective of God's attributes. Though man's reflection of God has been tarnished by the Fall, man *by conscious thought* reflects God's activity in many ways. For example, God created variety, and man also generates variety.

It seems safe to assume that God enjoys variety. . . . He didn't stop with a thousand insect species; he conjured up three hundred thousand species of beetles and weevils alone. In his famous speech in the Book of Job, God pointed with pride to such oddities of creation as the mountain goat, the wild ass, the ostrich, and the lightning bolt. He lavished color, design, and texture on the world, giving us Pygmies and Watusis, blond Scandinavians and swarthy Italians, big-boned Russians and petite Japanese. People, created in His image, have continued the process of individualization. . . . In China women wear long pants and men wear gowns. In tropical Asia people drink hot tea and munch on blistering peppers to keep cool. Japanese fry ice cream. . . . Many Asians

¹² Ibid., 40, 41, 46.

¹³ Mark Van Bebber, and Paul S. Taylor, *Creation and Time* (Mesa, AZ: Eden Communications, 1994), 72-73; Jonathan Henry, "A Critique of Progressive Creationism in the Writings of Hugh Ross," *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 43 (June 2006): 20; idem, "Critique of Progressive Creationism: Part 2" [article online] (Creation Concepts, 2006, accessed 25 August 2008) available from <http://creationconcepts.org/resources/PC-2.pdf>.

begin a meal with a sweet and finish it with a soup. . . . I am struck anew by the world's incredible diversity.¹⁴

Unlike animals that have been programmed instinctively to exhibit a seemingly infinite variety of behaviors, man *purposefully designs* variation. This diversity is manifested physically, but is generated first of all inwardly, by the action of the consciousness.

Furthermore, God shows purposeful behavior, and so does man. "A number of well-known biologists, such as Mayr, [have tried] to eliminate the concept of teleology [i.e. the idea that all designs show a divine purpose] from biology altogether. However, this is difficult to do. Animals, especially man, *do* show purposeful behavior. In fact, as Monod has argued, 'purposeful behavior is essential to the very definition of living things.'"¹⁵ God has a purpose for all things, and His purposes are always good (e.g. Rom 8:28). Man does not always have a purpose for everything he does, and sometimes man's purposes are evil. This shows that presently man is a *fallen* image. Nevertheless man's purposeful planning goes beyond that of animals, since man can plan for non-physical, abstract reasons. The existence of planning and strategy in living systems is impossible to ignore. Even the deliberate attempt of evolutionists (who would like all things to happen by chance) to eliminate the concept of strategy in living systems *is itself a purposeful strategy*.

The term "strategy" has become common currency among biologists of various persuasions. . . . We read of bio-chemical strategies exhibited by marine invertebrates and reproductive strategies . . . in desert plants! . . . The term is . . . philosophically grossly misleading, as it implies that a process has occurred which is the very antithesis of the evolutionary concept of chance and necessity. Let us therefore agree on the strategy to expunge this nasty little word forever from our biological vocabulary. . . .¹⁶

As another comparison, God began with simple things and built complex things. Man also does this. In the creation, God began by making a world that was "without form and void" (i.e. was formless and void of structure). Subsequently, God began a structuring sequence: on Day 1, He created light (Gen 1:3); on Day 2, He made the atmosphere and ocean (1:7); on Day 3, He formed the dry land (1:9, 11); on Day 4, He placed the sun, moon, and stars in the sky (1:16); on Day 5, He put marine dwellers in the ocean and birds in the sky (1:21); and, on Day 6, He placed animals and insects on the land (1:24). Finally, God created man and gave him dominion over the perfectly structured and complete creation (1:26-28). In the Christian life, God begins by redeeming

¹⁴ Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 32.

¹⁵ John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (New York: Oxford, 1986), 133-34.

¹⁶ Gideon Louw, "Biological Strategies," *Science* 203 (9 March 1979): 955.

a life having no genuine direction or structure. Then the Christian is strengthened and his life becomes structured in a godly way. “And beside all this [i.e. salvation], giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:5-8).

Man also begins with the simple and moves toward the complex, as in the growth of mathematics in ancient Greece. “After the dissolution of the Pythagorean school [several centuries before Christ], the study of geometry was continued by many other Greek schools. It is a basic principle of mathematics (as, it seems, of the human mind) to build more and more complicated structures out of simple ones. So from the straight line and the circle, which have such pleasing . . . properties, the Greeks were able to construct more complex curves.”¹⁷ Man’s ability to generate structure goes beyond that of animals. Animals can generate complex physical structures, but only man can organize things that are abstract such as mathematics, music, or spiritual qualities.

Another manner in which man is in God’s image is seen in the godhead. The persons of the godhead have fellowship with each other; man has a similar need for fellowship with other men and with God. The persons of the godhead talk with each other, as (1) at the creation of man (“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” Gen 1:26) and (2) at the tower of Babel (“And the Lord said . . . Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language,” 11:6-7). Unlike animals, man talks to other human beings, not only for physical information, but also for emotional needs. Man’s need for fellowship goes beyond the physical needs of animals. Man often talks concerning problems, or of desperation for company, and even though this shows that man’s image is fallen, it also manifests a human difference over against animals.

As yet another comparison, the spoken word of God has power; man’s spoken word can also do great good or great harm. God’s spoken word brought the universe into existence. Man’s tongue also has power to direct events and to destroy. “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. . . . But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith we bless God, even the father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude [image] of God” (Jas 2:6-9). These verses again emphasize that man is a fallen image.

¹⁷ Stefan Hildebrandt and Anthony Tromba, *Mathematics and Optimal Form* (New York: Scientific American Books, 1985), 36.

Nevertheless, the power of man's tongue goes far beyond the sounds of animals. No animal has started wars, destroyed reputations, started revivals, or led anyone to Christ.

As yet another comparison, it may be noticed that similar to God's character having many aspects, so also man shows more than one side in his character. The names of God reveal various aspects of His complex nature (see Table 2). Man also has a complex nature. But man's fallen condition makes his emotions, behavior, and motives often contradictory and sometimes completely inexplicable. Paul addressed the difficulty of loving people when one does not understand why they do the things they do. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor 13:12). Compared to human behavior, animal behavior seems fairly predictable. The pet always welcomes its owner home after a day at the office, but the human family members might have unexpected issues! Animals are simply not so subject to changes in motives and emotions as man. This predictability is why pets are therapeutic for the emotionally distressed person.

Another parallel is that God is cloaked in unapproachable glory. Man was also clothed in a similar way before the Fall. God presently dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim 6:16). Man's original clothing (or covering) was like God's, but man lost this aspect of God's image in the Fall; now he has to wear "substitute" clothing. "And they were both naked [in the sense of not having coverings of cloth], the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. . . . And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. . . . Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen 2:25; 3:7, 21). In a *literal* sense, all humanity has "fallen short of the *glory* of God" (Rom 3:23). Animals today are actually more completely clothed than man, because animals did not lose their coverings in the Fall. It is God's will that every creature be covered; the redeemed will be clothed in heaven in robes of white (Rev 15:6, 19:14). By God's grace, even the "substitute" clothing man wears now is a vehicle for the variety that man, like God, so much enjoys. Man's pre-Fall covering has been restored miraculously at times: (1) Moses' face shone with light as he descended Mt. Sinai (Exod 34:29-33) and (2) Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration shone with God's glory (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:3). Other similarities relating man's image to God's character exist. God and man both make laws. God's law is constant and invariable; this is true for (1) spiritual law (Ps 19:7; 119:92) and for (2) natural law (e.g. the law of gravitation). Man can make human laws, but they are changeable. Again, one can observe that although man is a reflection of God, the reflection is imperfect and fallen, and human laws are sometimes evil.

As God is omniscient, man was once endowed with vast mental powers that probably would appear virtually unlimited compared to present human intellect. Adam, for example, named all land animals on the day he was created, and also realized that, anatomically, emotionally, and spiritually, none was a perfect companion. “And out of the ground the Lord formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them. . . . And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him” (Gen 2:19-20). Now that the image of God in man is fallen, man must receive knowledge “precept upon precept, line upon line . . . here a little, and there a little” (Isa 28:10). Man can think God’s thoughts after him. No other creature can do this, but scientists have reflected on the reflection of Divine thought in the human mind. Johannes Kepler wrote in 1599: “To God there are, in the whole material world, material laws, figures and relations of special excellency and of the most appropriate order. . . . Those laws are within the grasp of the human mind; God wanted us to recognize them by creating us after his own image so that we could share in his own thoughts.”¹⁸ Matthew Maury, the “father of oceanography,” said the following at the dedication of the University of the South in 1860.

When I . . . discover the truths of Revelation and the truths of science reflecting light the one upon the other, how can I, as a truth-loving, knowledge-seeking man, fail to point out the beauty and rejoice in its discovery? . . . I feel, with the astronomer of old, “as though I had thought one of God’s thoughts,” and tremble. Thus, as we progress with our science, we are permitted now and then to point out here and there in the physical machinery of the earth a design of the Great Architect when He planned it all.¹⁹

Finally, God is eternal; so is man. Fallen man throughout history has demonstrated his yearning for eternity in some unusual ways. The Egyptians built huge pyramids for their kings to preserve them for a resurrection. “Millions of stone blocks were used to protect the bodies of the dead kings. Walled-up passages, all sorts of architectural tricks to keep out predatory intruders, were devised. . . . The king, though dead, was still a king—and if the *ka* returned into the body to reanimate it for participation in the underworld, obviously he would need the ornaments, the luxurious ritualistic and personal articles [stored there].”²⁰ The Egyptian belief in a resurrection in some ways was similar to the biblical teaching of everlasting life for the redeemed. Their belief may have been a corrupted memory of primeval revelation that man had

¹⁸ Carola Baumgardt, *Johannes Kepler: Life and Letters* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 50.

¹⁹ Diana Fontaine Maury Corbin, *A Life of Matthew Fontaine Maury* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1886), 178-79.

²⁰ C. W. Ceram, *Gods, Graves and Scholars* (New York: Vintage, 1986), 165-66.

from earliest times (e.g. Job 19:25-26). The pyramids are certainly among the greatest structures ever built by man. Indeed, the Great Pyramid of Cheops (ca. 2500 BC) *is* virtually the largest known structure. Therefore, “[t]he great pyramids which Egyptian kings built as their tombs are from one point of view an engineering triumph, from another they represent a vast waste of effort. . . .”²¹ Nevertheless, if the pyramids were so unnecessary, why build them? *Unless, that is, religious beliefs such as faith in a resurrection were an overpowering motivation.*

In modern times, there is an appeal in theories that promise a removal of the constraints of space and time. Relativity theory, for example, promises that if one travels fast enough, time slows and aging is delayed—a kind of secular “eternal life.” Hewitt explained, “We can get our heads fairly well into relativity yet still unconsciously cling to the idea that there is absolute time and compare all these relativistic effects to it; recognizing that time changes this way and that way for this speed and that speed, yet feeling that there is still some basic or absolute time. . . . This is understandable; we’re earthlings. But the idea is confining.”²² However, the question must be asked, “Why is the idea of absolute time necessarily confining?” *Unless, that is, man really is supposed to live forever, a fact imperfectly glimpsed even by fallen man.* Of course, the Bible teaches that the redeemed, in their glorified bodies, will in the New Creation overcome the very constraints of space and time that fallen man has continually sought to conquer on earth. The redeemed will one day acquire the very freedom from death promised (unsuccessfully) throughout history by the various imaginings of man.

MAN'S SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS (“SPIRIT”) IS IN GOD'S IMAGE

The Entire Uniqueness of Man's Self-Consciousness (“Spirit”)

Man's self-consciousness is not duplicated by anything in the plant or animal kingdoms. Only man has the ability to “step outside of himself” and have awareness of himself as a being who is the object of the thoughts of others. Only man has hopes, aspiration, ambition, and anticipation, or embarrassment. As a manifestation of this aspect of the image of God in man, God has dominion over all creation; man also aspires to dominion. Since man's Fall from dominion, complete dominion has been impossible to achieve because of the curse on the ground; and fallen man has often avoided the possibility of having even partial dominion. Is this because of the responsibility to God

²¹ Lyon Sprague de Camp, *Lost Continents: The Atlantis Theme in History, Science, and Literature* (New York: Dover, 1987), 132.

²² Paul G. Hewitt, *Conceptual Physics* (Boston: Little, Brown, Boston, 1983), 566.

accompanying dominion? For example, to have dominion over the earth, man must fill it. However,

Man has not yet filled the earth, in accordance with God's command; nevertheless, many people are unduly alarmed over the so-called population explosion, urging government controls of various sorts to slow down population growth. We can be sure that God's command (repeated, incidentally, after the Flood) was made in full knowledge of the earth's ability to support a large population (note Genesis 9:1), and it has never been rescinded. Even at the present level of man's technological knowledge, the earth could support a much larger population than it now holds. . . .²³

[T]here is quite a bit of evidence in the studies of animal populations that, when a given group increases in numbers to the optimum number for its own ecological niche, the population stabilizes—not because of a struggle-for-existence conflict, but by virtue of built-in psychological or physiological mechanisms which somehow slow down the reproductive activity of the population. It is possible that God would do the same with the human population. Another possibility is that, had man not failed his probation in Eden, he would have eventually been allowed to colonize other planets as his population grew.²⁴

Thus man has not fulfilled his dominion responsibilities, and also retreats from this responsibility.

Evidence indicates that Venus and Mars, while not created with any life, once harbored conditions that would have been congenial for any human beings arriving there.²⁵ Since then, conditions on these planets have degraded, just as the Earth has suffered because of the curse on the ground (Gen 3:17). Venus and Mars are now hostile to life. Nevertheless, man's strong yearning for space travel is partly from his God-given desire for dominion. At any rate, space exploration may in fact be accomplished by the redeemed in the ages to come.

Those who share in the resurrection of the just will have resurrection-bodies which, though truly real and physical, will yet be "as the angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30). They will be immortal and incorruptible bodies, not subject to death and deterioration, as are our present bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). Similarly, just as the angels, they will no longer be subject to either the gravitational or electromagnetic forces of the cosmos. When the Lord comes, we "shall be caught up together" (1 Thessalonians 4:17), "to meet the Lord in the air." We shall have a body "like unto his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21) and, thus, like Him, will be able easily to "ascend up far above all heavens" (Ephesians 4:10). Not being subjected to the forces of the physical world, our movements will not be controlled by them, and thus our "spiritual

²³ Jonathan Henry, "Did Death Occur Before the Fall?: A Further Critique of Progressive Creationism in the Writings of Hugh Ross," *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 43 (December 2006): 165; idem, "Global Population Past and Present" [article online] (Creation Concepts, 2007, accessed 25 August 2008) available from <http://creationconcepts.org/resources/POPULATE.pdf>.

²⁴ Morris, *Genesis Record*, 76.

²⁵ Henry, "Critique of Progressive Creationism: Part 2."

bodies" (1 Corinthians 15:44) can move with velocities far exceeding the speed of light. Consequently, inter-galactic travel will be perfectly feasible for redeemed men in future ages, just as it is for the angels even in this present age. It may well be a fitting activity and responsibility for men in the eternal future to explore and develop the infinite universe that came from the creative mind of the omniscient God."²⁶

Even today, space exploration is a legitimate outworking of man's dominion, showing that he is made in God's image.

A question that arises in considering human vice regency is "how far beyond the planet Earth does the dominion of man extend?" . . . The mandate of Gen. 1:26ff. grants to man the dominion over all the earth and its creatures: it is silent concerning outer space. Psalm 8 which mentions the stars is ambiguous concerning the scope of man's viceregency. Verse 3 considers the heaven, moon, and stars as the work of God's fingers. Then verse 6 addresses God saying, "Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." If the psalm had ended there, it could be reasonably concluded that man's dominion is intended to extend [throughout] the entire universe. But the following verses which list some of these 'things' include only terrestrial animals with no mention of anything extraterrestrial. . . . [But] in its quotation in the epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 2:6-8) the scope is expanded to include the entire universe. . . . "For in subjecting all things to him he left nothing unsubjected to him. . . ."

It is interesting that the quotation of Psalm 8 is ended by the author of Hebrews at the conclusion of verse 6 of the Psalm, which states, "thou hast put all things under his feet," thus omitting the qualifying verses 7 and 8 of the psalm. The author of Hebrews then appends his own qualifying statement that nothing is left unsubjected to man. . . . If this be so, then such projects as exploration and colonization of other planets and galaxies would appear to be justified, indeed, required. The abilities man possesses even in his fallen state in a fallen cosmos have enabled him to perform that truly astounding and thrilling feat of landing on the moon. If man had never sinned, he probably by now would be so far advanced in science in general and space exploration in particular as to boggle the minds of even the most imaginative science-fiction writer. . . . The advent of the space age helps deepen our appreciation of the Psalmist's words: "Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor."²⁷

Fallen man attempts to envision galactic travel by invoking relativistic slowing of time. "Einsteinian relativity also enters the picture. Move fast enough, according to this theory, and time on board the spacecraft slows down dramatically. . . . This clearly introduces new possibilities: if time slows down for astronauts on board a very fast-moving rocket, then the prospects for voyages to the stars—both nearby and remote—suddenly look much rosier."²⁸ The redeemed in the new creation, however, will recover these very abilities for which modern man yearns. Man will be a perfect image of God, with perfect

²⁶ Henry M. Morris, *The Remarkable Birth of Planet Earth* (San Diego: Creation-Life Publishers, 1972), 64.

²⁷ Schultz, "Ecological Dimensions," 164-66.

²⁸ David Darling, "Star Trek Part Two: To Distant Shores," *Astronomy* 15 (April 1987): 97-98.

dominion. The following scenario *envisioned by fallen man* may be a reality for the redeemed, as the redeemed acquire the powers for which fallen man has always grasped. “Humans will undoubtedly move outward into space, first colonizing some nearby worlds. . . . And then the stars. . . . This scenario has no end. Imagine a stage [in which] any distance inside the universe is attainable within months, days, or even hours.”²⁹ Another point of comparison is that God created the spirit of man (Gen 1:27; 2:7); man also procreates the spirit. God’s creation of spirit in man was *instantaneous*. Man’s ability to procreate the spirit is by the act of conception. Only man can procreate the spirit (self-consciousness), since no animal possesses this aspect. Man’s ability to procreate self-consciousness is now fallen, that is, the product of human conception is a fallen nature and a sinful, dying body.

A further comparison is that as God delights in His creation, so does man. Throughout the Bible there is the teaching that God delights in what He made. For example, Psalm 104:31 declares, “The Lord shall rejoice in his works.” Man also affirms his own creations, as God did with His own in Genesis 1:31 (“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good”). No animal has ever approved of its creations; this response is unique to man among all creatures, because man has *self-consciousness*. Moreover, as God is longsuffering, man procrastinates. God is longsuffering always in perfect wisdom. Second Peter 3:9, for example, reads, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Man also ought to be longsuffering, and the redeemed person can truly be. “But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering” (Gal 5:22). Nevertheless, in addition to the failure to be longsuffering as God is, fallen man often delays or procrastinates when he should not.

On the other hand, procrastination itself is not always undesirable. After all, God in 2 Peter 3:9 is, in a manner of speaking, “procrastinating.” It has been said, “The key to positive procrastination lies in harnessing, for useful purposes, this creative ability. . . . Procrastination gets us to communicate with one another. Parents, avoiding work, spend time with their families. . . . There are other benefits to productive procrastination. It can lead you to gain better information prior to making a decision. It allows some problems to go away by themselves with the passage of time.”³⁰ While one should not delay unnecessarily, patience and longsuffering in themselves are an aspect of the image of God. The Lord is patient towards man (2 Pet 3:9). Similarly, humanity

²⁹ Ibid., 99.

³⁰ Gary M. Galles, “The Power of Positive Procrastination,” *Reader’s Digest* 131 (August 1987): 9-10.

is to wait on the Lord. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Ps 27:14).

As yet another comparison, God is changeless, but everything in man yearns for changelessness. However, the creation is fallen, and though everything in humanity cries for life and permanency, yet all around life is constant change and decay. Man desires refreshing change, yes, but like that of Genesis 1, and not the change of decay and death. God provided such change in the day/night cycle and other created cycles in nature. The frustration of humanity at change in the fallen world results from the discrepancy between the way God made man (i.e. to be eternal) and the fallen, decaying world in which man lives. However, the frustration of humanity at change shows that man was created in God's image. The redeemed in the new creation will not decay or die. There all will be permanent. There will be change, but it will be the change wrought by continuously serving and learning more about God as the redeemed serve Him in perfection. Though entropic changes are products of sin and, as such, are temporary, nevertheless false systems such as Buddhism and the New Age teach that such change is an everlasting feature of existence. "The outstanding characteristic of the human situation . . . which is suffering or frustration . . . comes from our difficulty in facing the basic fact of life, that everything around us is impermanent and transitory. 'All things arise and pass away,' said the Buddha, and the notion that flow and change are basic features of nature lies at the root of Buddhism."³¹

As another comparison, God does not want evil to triumph, and neither does man. Even fallen man enjoys stories in which the "good guys" win and evil defeated. Ironically, man is constantly evil because he is fallen, yet few people want evil to triumph. Even those who are trying to work their way to heaven are trying to reach *heaven*, not hell. Dramas in which evil wins, as the outcome of a "fatal flaw" in the characters, are *tragedies*; these are not seen as good. People often dislike tales of failure. "When one of the TV networks aired a mid-1980's expensive remake of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, the critics lauded it as a dramatic triumph, but it bombed in the Nielsen ratings. Most of us prefer to hear about heroism in the face of great odds, about the strong-willed who survive when their world is blown away with the wind, about people's determination to rise again from the ruins."³²

Another similarity is that God does His work, and man can also do God's work. God has ordained that some of His work, such as presenting the Gospel, shall be done by man. God presents the Gospel in His Word; and man presents the Gospel by his word and his life. The need for gospel proclamation is the result of the Fall, but man would have done God's work even in a sinless

³¹ Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (New York: Bantam, 1984), 85.

³² Phyllis Schlafly, "A Non-Feminist Movie Heroine," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* 21(December 1987): 4.

world, exercising perfect dominion as God's "viceregent" (cf. Ps 8). In the new creation, the image will be restored, and "we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim 2:12).

Finally, marriage is a reflection of God's image in man. Marriage is unique to man; the concept is meaningless for animals. Indeed, the reason for marriage is to reflect additional aspects of the image of God. "Let us make man in our image . . . male and female" (Gen 1:27). God placed some of his traits primarily in the male (fatherhood, discipline/judgment, etc.). Other traits are primarily in the female (life-giving, nurturing, mercy/tenderness, etc.). When husband and wife come together, in complementarity they manifest the image of God in a unique way. However, marriage is intended to be the ultimate human fulfillment of the unity and harmony for which all yearn with other people. Journalist John Nance visited the Tasaday, an allegedly primeval Filipino tribe, in 1971. He made a film about them in which he narrated, "The people's soft smiles and gentle embraces spanned thousands of years of cultural change and technology. The communion of Stone Age and space age folk acknowledged differences but affirmed that human beings, wherever and whoever they may be, are vastly more alike than different. . . . The Tasaday are us and we are them, all members of the human family. In their simplicity and peacefulness and love the Tasaday invite us to join them in calling all men one man, all women one woman."³³ Many of these initial impressions of the Tasaday were later revealed to be ill-founded,³⁴ but nonetheless, Nance here expressed the common yearning of all men for oneness and harmony, an aspect of God's image in man—and a reflection of the godhead's perfect unity. Movements such as one-world government projects and the ecumenical agenda are flawed manifestations of the yearning for human unity.

CONCLUSIONS

Each of man's aspects—body, consciousness, and self-consciousness—is made in God's image. However, none of these aspects exists apart from the others, so that the *whole man, all of man*, is in the image of God. No other form of life shows the image of God in body, soul, and spirit. Only man is in God's image. Nevertheless, the image is now fallen and in many aspects is corrupted. For the redeemed in the new creation, the image of God in man will be perfectly restored. Therefore, the Christian yearns as in Revelation 22:20, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

³³ Robert Hemley, *Invented Eden: The Elusive, Disputed History of the Tasaday* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 41.

³⁴ Gerald Berreman, "The Incredible 'Tasaday': Deconstructing the Myth of a Stone Age People," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 15 (1991): 3.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Some Anthropomorphisms in the Bible*arm*

Ps 77:5	<i>Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people</i>
Ps 89:10	<i>Thou . . . scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm</i>
Isa 53:1	<i>to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?</i>
John 12:38	<i>to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?</i>

ear

Isa 59:1	<i>Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear</i>
Dan 9:18	<i>O my God, incline thine ear, and hear</i>

eye

2 Chron 16:9	<i>for the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth</i>
Job 28:10	<i>His eye seeth every precious thing</i>
Ps 32:8	<i>I will guide thee with mine eye</i>
Ps 33:18	<i>the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him</i>
Prov 15:3	<i>the eyes of the Lord are in every place</i>

face

Gen 4:13-14	<i>and Cain said . . . thou hast driven me out . . . and from thy face shall I be hid</i>
Exod 33:20, 23	<i>and he said [to Moses], Thou canst not see my face . . . And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen</i>
Numb 6:25	<i>make his fact shine upon thee, and be gracious</i>
Deut 34:10	<i>And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew fact to face</i>
2 Chron 7:14	<i>If my people . . . shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face . . . then will I hear</i>

feet/footstool

Isa 66:1	<i>Thus saith the Lord . . . the earth is my footstool</i>
Ps 18:5, 9	<i>In my distress I called upon the Lord . . . and darkness was under his feet</i>
Acts 7:49	<i>Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool</i>

hand

Isa 48:13 *Mine hand . . . laid the foundation of the earth*
 Isa 50:2 *Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem?*
 Isa 64:8 *But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay,*
 and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand

mouth

Ps 119:72 *The law of thy mouth is better unto me than . . . gold and silver*
 Matt 4:4 *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word*
 that proceedeth out of the mouth of God

Table 2. Some of God's Names

Name	English Name	Aspect Revealed	Sample Reference
El, Elah, Elohim	God	Deity	Gen 1:1
Jehovah	LORD	Self-existence ³⁵	Exod 34:6
Adon, Adonai	Lord	Mastery ³⁶	Gen 15:2
El Shaddai	Almighty God	Sufficiency ³⁷	Gen 17:1
El Elyon	Most High Most High God	High priesthood	Gen 14:8
El Olam	Everlasting God	Eternality	Gen 21:33
El Gibber	Mighty God	Omnipotence	Isa 9:6-7
Jehovah Elohim	LORD God	Pre-eminent existence ³⁸	Exod 34:6

³⁵ In the sense of being the First Cause and the source of all else that exists (used in Gen 2:4, “the LORD God made the earth and the Heavens”).

³⁶ In the sense of headship, as in the husband/wife relationship (used in Gen 15:2 in connection with God’s relation with Abraham).

³⁷ In the sense of being able to provide (used most often in the Book of Job).

Adonai Jehovah	Lord God	Highest headship	Gen 15:2
Jehovah Sabaoth	LORD of hosts	Power to judge ³⁹	1 Sam 1:3

³⁸ First use is in Genesis 2:4, *after* God had declared man's dominion over the earth. Therefore, man was over the earth, but God is over man.

³⁹ Often used in books describing judgment (e.g. Jeremiah), but not often in others, such as Psalms.

THE NEW COVENANT AND EGALITARIANISM:

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The role of women in the church and the home has become one of the most debated issues of recent Christianity. The war of words revolving around this topic, particularly as it relates to the offices of the church, has been public and often contentious. *Time* referred to this upheaval as “the second reformation.”¹ Advocates for expanded roles for women opine that this issue could possibly represent one of “Christendom’s great and historic transformations.”²

Whether or not this proves to be true is yet to be seen. Nevertheless, if one were to evaluate this statement based solely on the gallons of ink dedicated to the egalitarian position, it is clear where the smart money would go. Thomas Schreiner, a complementarian,³ recently expressed his frustration at the deluge of articles and books dedicated to advancing this transformation.

Sometimes I wonder if egalitarians hope to triumph in the debate on the role of women by publishing book after book on the subject. Each work propounds a new thesis that explains why the traditional interpretation is flawed. Complementarians could easily give in from sheer exhaustion, thinking that so many books written by such a diversity of authors could scarcely be wrong.⁴

While one can easily empathize with Schreiner, a careful review of the literature reveals that there are surprisingly few arguments that are genuinely new.⁵ Indeed, the majority of the arguments offered in defense of the egalitarian position are entirely predictable.

¹ Richard N. Ostling and Jordan Bonfante, “The Second Reformation,” *Time* (23 November 1992): 53.

² *Ibid.*

³ “If one word must be used to describe our position, we prefer the term *complementarian*, since it suggests both equality and beneficial differences between men and women. We are uncomfortable with the term ‘traditionalists’ because it implies an unwillingness to let Scripture challenge traditional patterns of behavior, and we certainly reject the term ‘hierarchicalist’ because it overemphasized structured authority while giving no suggestion of equality or the beauty of mutual interdependence” (John Piper and Wayne Grudem, “Preface,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem [Wheaton: Crossway, 1991], xiv).

⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, “William J. Webb’s *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*: A Review Article,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 7 (2002): 41.

⁵ One prominent exception to this trend is the book which Schreiner reviewed: William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001). Unlike the majority of his predecessors, Webb conceded that complementarians have read the Bible correctly. Instead, he contended that contemporary Christianity needs to move beyond to “regressive ethics” of the Bible by following

THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY

Many egalitarians simply dismiss the testimony of Scripture as mere social constructs. Lillian Klein, for example, assumed that the Bible was “created by educated men in positions of authority and power.”⁶ Therefore, the Scripturally mandated distinctions between men and women found their origins, not in the mind of God, but in the sinful propensities of mankind.

It seems safe to conclude that, in general, constraints on women are created by physically dominant males. Physical dominance leads, sooner or later, to psychological dominance, whereby the woman accepts her place as dominated and cooperates in it. Female acceptance of male dominance results in social and cultural subservience, and “might” had indeed made “right. . . .”

Biblical literature describes such a culture, one in which males are dominant and females largely accept their position as subservient.⁷

Such an understanding is clearly outside the bounds of orthodoxy. Not only is this position at odds with the Bible’s witness concerning itself, but also it suggests that the Bible actually teaches behavior that is ethically indefensible.

In contrast, evangelical egalitarians endeavor to interact with the Bible on its own terms. In the preface to a collection of essays entitled *Discovering Biblical Equality*, Ronald Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis stated that the scholars represented are “united by two convictions: that the Bible is the fully inspired and authoritative Word of God, and that it teaches gender equality in church, home, and society.”⁸ Many evangelical feminists, eager to distance themselves from their more liberal counterparts, continually stress this claim.

Taking the Bible seriously, evangelical egalitarians argue that the traditional understanding of biblical gender distinctions is neither traditional⁹ nor biblical. While some evangelical egalitarians merely argue from biblical precedent,¹⁰ apparently believing that a correctly interpreted example trumps

the trajectory found internally in the Canon to a higher, “redemptive” ethic that goes beyond the pages of Scripture.

⁶ Lillian R. Klein, *From Deborah to Esther: Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), ix.

⁷ *Ibid.*, ix-x.

⁸ Ronald W. Pierce, “Preface,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 11.

⁹ For example, Robert G. Clouse, “Introduction,” in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, eds. Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989), Janette Hassey, “Evangelical Women in Ministry a Century Ago: The 19th and Early 20th Centuries,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*; Ruth A. Tucker, “The Changing Roles of Women in Ministry: The Early Church Through the 18th Century,” in *ibid.*

¹⁰ Linda L. Belleville, “Women Leaders in the Bible,” in *ibid.*

explicit statements on the subject, others do the hard work of exegesis, endeavoring to stay true to the author's original intent. As might be expected, much has been written on certain key passages, such as 1 Timothy 2.¹¹ Unfortunately, arguments over the technical meaning of such texts has led to the charge of "proof-texting" by some egalitarians.¹² Thus, they assert, a more broad-based, theological approach is needed to resolve this issue. Thompson contended,

Both those who favor women in ministry and those who oppose women in ministry can find suitable proof texts and suitable rationalizations to explain those texts. But if our discussion is ever to move beyond proof texting, we must integrate these texts into a theology of ministry. I suggest that the starting point for such a theology of ministry lies in the God who gives gifts for ministry and in the God who is no respecter of persons.¹³

PETER'S SERMON AT PENTECOST

As a result of this desire to integrate a theology of ministry with exegesis,¹⁴ one of the texts often brought to bear in defense of egalitarianism, particularly among Pentecostals, is Peter's use of Joel 2 in Acts 2. J. Lee Grady established the underlying assumption in using this text:

If preaching were to have been limited to men only, Joel would not have mentioned daughters in his prediction. He would have said instead, "In the last days, I will pour out My Spirit upon you, and your sons will prophesy while your daughters serve quietly in the background and pray for the men." That is not what the Bible says. It clearly states that women will preach. They will lead. They will be on the front lines of ministry. Like Deborah, they will take the church into enemy territory and watch as the Lord gives victory. Like Esther, they will not keep silent. Like Phoebe, they will co-labor with apostles to establish churches in unevangelized regions. If this is the clear

¹¹ For example, Linda L. Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11–15," in *ibid*; Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), Douglas Moo, "What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11–15," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*.

¹² One reason for this charge may be the difficulty in avoiding what appear to be explicit prohibitions against women in ministry. Pinnock's observation is worth noting: "The radical feminists and the traditionalists both argue that such texts are not feminist in content, and I suspect that their view, agreeing as it does with the 'plain sense' reading so widely held, will prevail and not be successfully refuted by biblical feminists. Of course, the biblical feminist interpretation is possible; the problem is that it does not strike many people, either scholarly or untutored, as plausible" (Clark H. Pinnock, "Biblical Authority and the Issues in Question," in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986], 55).

¹³ Marianne Meye Thompson, "Response to Richard Longenecker," in *ibid.*, 94.

¹⁴ The obvious flaw in such an approach is that it neglects what should be primary. Theology must flow from careful exegesis, not the reverse.

One of the key elements of the previously stated syllogism is that “prophesying” in Joel 2 and Acts 2 is the equivalent of preaching. The *IVP Women’s Bible Commentary* teaches,

prophecy was less to do with prediction of the future and more to do with acting as the mouthpiece of God. Prophecy was a teaching ministry in which the prophet declared the word of the Lord. Women, equally with men, are equipped by the Spirit in this new phase of the kingdom for prophetic teaching ministry. And here at least there is no hint that this ministry must be exercised only among women, any more than men only among men.²¹

This conception of “prophesying” is commonly repeated by egalitarians. For example, Howe maintained that prophecy contains the elements of both Christian teaching and preaching. She defined “prophecy” as the “teaching or preaching communicated orally to a congregation in a language understood by those present.”²²

Fundamental to this understanding is the connection, whether explicitly stated or assumed, between the OT prophet and the NT pastor. Keener wrote, “Today most people think first of pastors when they hear the word ministers, but in the Old Testament the most common form of ministry with respect to declaring God’s word was the prophetic ministry.”²³ He cited the examples of Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14), Isaiah’s wife (Isa 8:3), Anna (Luke 2:36), and Philip’s four virgin daughters (Acts 21:9) as prophetesses. He concluded, “The New Testament church’s witness (cf. Acts 1:8) is characterized by the Old Testament prophetic mantle (in a general sense), irrespective of class, gender, age, or (most surprisingly to the Jerusalem church) race.”²⁴

It is important to remember that, while the previously stated syllogism may be logically valid, it is not at all certain that it is true. There are several assumptions underlying the premises that need investigation. Is it indeed true that Joel 2 has been fulfilled, either completely or partially? Is “prophesying” as used in Acts 2 the same as preaching and teaching? Is the “prophesying” predicted by Joel the equivalent of the office of pastor? Does God ever restrict the use of his gifts? Does equal giftedness demand identical functions?

PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE

²¹ Rosemary M. Dowsett, “Acts of the Apostles,” in *The IVP Women’s Bible Commentary*, eds. Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 609.

²² E. Margaret Howe, *Women & Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 59.

²³ Craig S. Keener, “Women in Ministry,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, eds. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

It is the purpose of this article to demonstrate that *any understanding of Acts 2 to substantiate egalitarian claims regarding female clergy is mistaken*. This article will attempt to demonstrate that the original intent of neither Joel, Peter, or Luke included comment on the offices of the church. While it is possible that there has been a *partial* fulfillment of Joel 2, the “prophesying” predicted is not the office of pastor, but is instead a general term that does not negate other Scriptural prohibitions regarding female teaching. Additionally, it is hoped that this article will serve as a model of proper methodological rigor when dealing with issues of the New Testament’s use of the Old, and the meaning of words in their context.

EXAMINATION OF THE PREMISES

*Is Joel’s Prophecy Fulfilled?*²⁵

Few passages have generated so much discussion and disagreement among conservative scholars as Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, particularly his quotation of Joel 2:28–32. The complication that has generated such controversy was expressed succinctly by Fruchtenbaum: “Virtually nothing that happened in Acts 2 is predicted in Joel 2.”²⁶ Joel did not even suggest that people would be speaking in supernaturally-generated foreign languages. Conversely, the sun was not turned to darkness nor was the moon turned to blood.²⁷ There is no evidence of signs and wonders either in heaven or on earth that consisted of blood and fire and billows of smoke. Likewise, if old men dreamed dreams of an unusual sort, Luke did not record it. The closest evidence of visions are those of Saul and Ananias in chapter nine and of Cornelius and Peter in chapter ten. However, both sets of visions are considerably removed in time from Peter’s pronouncement in chapter two that the events on the day of Pentecost were related to the prophecy in Joel. Indeed, there are only two uncontested points of contact²⁸ between these two passages: God did certainly outpour His

²⁵ This section is an expanded and emended selection of an article that originally appeared as Bruce A. Baker, “Luke’s Use of the Old Testament, Part 2,” *Conservative Theological Journal* 7 (December 2003): 286-307.

²⁶ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1996), 844.

²⁷ Although not mentioned in the text, Bruce found literal fulfillment of these two signs in the events surrounding the crucifixion. “More particularly, little more than seven weeks earlier the people of Jerusalem had indeed seen the darkening of the sun, during the early afternoon of Good Friday; and later in that same afternoon the paschal full moon may well have risen blood-red in the sky in consequence of that preternatural gloom” (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 62).

²⁸ There are some who find other points of contact. Pohill, for example, insisted that the “clearest indication that the entire 120 received the Spirit at Pentecost is Joel’s inclusion of

Spirit, and those that called on the name of the Lord were saved.

The proposed solutions to this problem are as numerous and varied as the number of commentators who have addressed it. Longenecker suggested that, while the citation was made emphatic by Peter's introductory formula, the entire section was quoted

because of its traditional messianic significance and because its final sentence ("And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved") leads logically to the kerygma section of his sermon. But Peter might not have known what to make of the more physical and spectacular elements of Joel's prophecy, though he probably expected them in some way to follow in the very near future.²⁹

Ryrie reached a similar conclusion stating, "what is recorded in Acts 2:19–20 is simply a connecting link between the two key points in his argument."³⁰

This simply will not do, for it implies that the middle section of the citation serves little if any purpose. The precedent of the New Testament including only the relevant portions of Old Testament passages has been fairly well established in other New Testament texts.³¹ Longenecker explained:

To an extent, of course, all the speeches in Acts are necessarily periphrastic, for certainly the original delivery contained more detail of argument and more illustrative material than Luke included.... Stenographic reports they are not, and probably few ever so considered them. They have been reworked, as is required in any précis, and reworked, moreover, in accord with the style of the narrative. But recognition of the kind of writing that produces speeches compatible with the narrative in which they are found should not be interpreted as inaccurate reporting or a lack of traditional source material. After all, a single author is responsible for the literary form of the whole.³²

Therefore, even if Peter did quote the entire passage for his sermon merely to get from one point to the other, it is likely that Luke would have omitted the

daughters as well as sons—all were prophesying" (John B. Polhill, *Acts* [The New American Commentary] [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992], 109). This is at best an argument from silence that cannot be supported from the text. Luke was not explicit about who was prophesying. While it is technically possible that women were speaking in tongues (since the masculine gender used throughout the narrative is the common way to describe a crowd), the only mention of women among the believers is fifty days previous (1:14). Therefore, it is not at all certain that women were among the believers on the day of Pentecost.

²⁹ Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *John—Acts* (Expositor's Bible Commentary) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 276. See also, Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).

³⁰ Charles C. Ryrie, "The Significance of Pentecost," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112 (October--December 1955): 335.

³¹ Consider Jesus' use of Isaiah 61:1–2 as a primary example. When He read this text in the Nazareth synagogue, Christ read the portion that proclaims the "year of the LORD's favor," but abruptly stopped before reading about "the day of vengeance of our God."

³² Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," 230.

extraneous portions. When one remembers that “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,” (2 Tim 3:16) the motivation for finding usefulness in Acts 2:17–20 increases dramatically.

Alexander, recognizing that the prophecy does not correspond to the events, suggested that the prophetic language is to be taken metaphorically. Referring to the prediction of visions and dreams he wrote, “As we do not read of such effects at Pentecost, the terms of the prediction must have been understood by the apostles as figures or types of extraordinary spiritual influence, and not as the precise forms in which the promise was to be fulfilled.”³³ As for the sun turning to darkness and the moon to blood he contended, “[t]hese are prophetic figures for great and sudden revolutionary changes. . . . Before that day, the change shall be as great as the dissolution or extinction of the heavenly bodies would be in the frame of nature.”³⁴

Hackett argued that the judgment section of Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in AD 70.³⁵ Such momentous events were popularly thought to be announced by signs in the heavens—the greater the event, the greater the sign. Therefore, Hackett concluded, “what the prophet would affirm is that disasters and judgments were coming such as men are accustomed to associate with the most terrific auguries; but he does not mean necessarily that the auguries themselves were to be expected, or decide whether the popular belief on the subject was true or false.”³⁶

While understanding the supernatural predictions of Joel as a metaphor has the advantage of assigning some meaning to the text, this approach still has many difficulties. *First*, there is no correspondence in the text between the events pictured in Joel and what actually occurred. Specifically, there is no mention in Joel about speaking in supernatural tongues nor is there evidence in Acts about supernatural dreams. Even taking the prediction as an extended metaphor, there is no word picture that can be assigned to the most striking event of the day, namely the speaking of supernaturally generated foreign languages native to the visitors to Jerusalem. *Secondly*, there is no agreement among commentators concerning the meaning of the various word pictures. Bruce³⁷ and Pohill,³⁸ for example, found the celestial events at the crucifixion while Hackett assigned them to the destruction of Jerusalem. *Finally*, there is

³³ Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols. complete in one ed. (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Company, 1875; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956), 63.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁵ Alexander also affirmed this position.

³⁶ H. B. Hackett, *Commentary on Acts* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1882; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), 48.

³⁷ Bruce, *Acts*, 62.

³⁸ Polhill, *Acts*, 109-10.

no linguistic key given in the text to identify what should or should not be taken metaphorically. Indeed, Luke recorded no application of the prophecy whatsoever. As Kistemaker noted, “[h]e refrains from stating that this prophecy was fulfilled at the time of Jesus’ death on the cross when darkness came over the land for three hours. . . . Furthermore, Luke does not indicate that at Pentecost God fulfilled Joel’s prediction of the signs and wonders. . . . But on none of these occasions did the people see signs in nature as Joel predicted them.”³⁹ Nevertheless, a clearly supernatural event was occurring as this address was being given. Therefore, Joel’s predictions cannot automatically be assigned to the status of metaphor simply because they are supernatural in character. Thus the only reason for their classification as such is that they simply did not occur and, well, one must do something with them. Ultimately, excepting the two points of similarity just mentioned, one must conclude with Ryrie that “[t]he events prophesied by Joel simply did not come to pass.”⁴⁰

However, the real difficulty of this passage lies not in the events predicted, but rather in the introductory formula: “this is that which was spoken” (τοῦτό ἐστὶν τὸ εἰρημένον). There are only four possible views as to the meaning of this phrase. *First*, this phrase could point to a complete and final fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. *Second*, this phrase could be taken to mean that the events recorded in Acts 2 were merely analogous to or illustrative of Joel’s prophecy (this is *like* that). *Third*, there is the possibility of a mediating position between these two where Acts 2 is the partial or initial fulfillment of Joel, with complete fulfillment coming at a later date. *Fourth*, the introductory formula could indicate a peshet formula where Joel’s understanding of the prophecy was irrelevant to the events at Pentecost. The significance assigned to the introductory phrase is really the key factor in understanding the way Luke (recording Peter’s sermon) referenced Joel, and therefore how much relevance it has to the question of women in ministry.

Some contend that this introductory phrase is an example of a peshet formula.⁴¹ Since peshet is not concerned with the actual text being quoted but

³⁹ Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (New Testament Commentary) (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990).

⁴⁰ Ryrie, “Significance of Pentecost,” 334.

⁴¹ “[Peshet] does not seek to explain a text so much as it seeks to show where a text fits. . . . The presupposition is that the text contains a mystery communicated by God that is not understood until the solution is made known by an inspired interpreter. With peshet, the starting point for understanding is not the Old Testament text but a historical event or person. By viewing a text in the framework of an event, a peshet interpretation provides a solution to the mystery involved in understanding. In effect, peshet says, ‘This [event or person] is that [of which the Scripture speaks].’ For example, the Qumran Peshet on Habakkuk understands the judgment spoken against Babylon (Hab. 2:7–8) to refer to a wicked priest in Jerusalem” (Klyne Snodgrass, “The Use of the Old Testament in the New,” in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, eds. David Allen Black and David S. Dockery [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001], 218).

rather with the revealing of a divine mystery,⁴² interpreting this passage as peshet resolves all problems. The signs mentioned are a mystery that the divine interpreter expounded. Therefore the lack of obvious fulfillment is to be expected.

While this author was unable to find any egalitarian who subscribed to—or even addressed—this position, one would suspect that it would be soundly rejected. For if the prophecy cannot be understood without Peter’s (or Luke’s) interpretation, and none was given (at least with regard to women in ministry), then their argument loses any support that this passage might give. After all, if one is able to dismiss the other signs in the prophecy as mysterious code-words that have nothing to do with any sort of normal interpretation, how can one take the phrase “your sons and daughters will prophesy” with any literal understanding?

However, a larger, and more obvious, problem with position remains. Stated simply, the introductory formula: “this is that which was spoken” (τοῦτο ἐστὶν τὸ εἰρημένον) is *never found in extra-biblical literature as a peshet formula*. The best linguistic evidence for taking Peter’s statement as peshet was provided by Helyer: “Although Acts 2 does not have the exact, linguistic equivalent for the typical introductory formula used in the Qumran pesharim . . . , it does have a phrase close to one occasionally employed at Qumran.”⁴³ In other words, Peter’s phrase was not the typical introductory formula or even used occasionally. The best that can be said is that it is *close* to one that is *occasionally* used. In spite of such meager evidence, the contention that Peter’s introductory statement was a peshet formula is often presented as fact.⁴⁴

The question that demands to be asked at this point is why one would appeal to peshet with such an utter lack of any corroborating textual witnesses. Helyer’s answer is enlightening: “In any case, Acts 2 demonstrates essentially the same exegetical method as at Qumran, namely, a contemporizing of the prophecy in the new-covenant community. Defined broadly, this falls within

⁴² Snodgrass considered Acts 2:17 “the most obvious example” of peshet (Ibid). It is worth noting that this position makes strange alliances indeed! Compare progressive dispensationalist Darrell L. Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Christ,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church: The Search for Definition*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 47 n16, with traditional dispensationalist Zane C. Hodges, “A Dispensational Understanding of Acts 2,” in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, eds. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 168.

⁴³ Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Students* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 238.

⁴⁴ “Through the introductory *peshet* formula—this which has happened is that which was spoken of in Scripture—Pentecost is interpreted as the fulfillment of the promise that in the end times God will pour out his Spirit on all flesh” (A. T. Lincoln, “Pentecost,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997], 904).

the orbit of peshet.”⁴⁵ In other words, what was predicted by Joel did not happen and one must have some explanation for that fact. If one defines peshet broadly enough he can eliminate the problem. However, the appeal to peshet is unnecessary in this case. A far simpler explanation is available.

Wallace referred to the type of semantic relationship used in this introductory statement as a convertible proposition,⁴⁶ where the subject (τοῦτό) and predicate nominative (τὸ εἰρημένον) have an identical referent.⁴⁷ This means that the subject and predicate nominative are interchangeable *grammatically*. This author suggested, however, that this in no way implies they are interchangeable in *reality*. This is illustrated by numerous instances in the Greek New Testament where a convertible proposition is used to show an equivalence that is less than total. For example, Jesus used a convertible proposition in the words of institution at the Last Supper: this is my body (τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά Luke 22:19), this is my blood (τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά Mark 14:24). Unless one is willing to insist upon the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, it is clear that grammatical equivalence does not demand actual equality. In the same way, 1 John 4:10 and 2 John 1:6 both contain the phrase, “this is love” (τούτω ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη), yet each assigns a different definition.⁴⁸ The only way to avoid a blatant contradiction is to conclude that each of these convertible propositions either states an example of love or provides merely a part of the total definition of love.

Based on these examples, it is reasonable to conclude that Peter may have used the convertible proposition in Acts 2:16 in a similar way: that is, either to introduce an example or similar event to what was occurring, or to announce a partial fulfillment of the total prophecy. Indeed, while both of these options have merit, one seems to answer the essential questions better than the other.

Unger opted for the first alternative,⁴⁹ contending that the outpouring of

⁴⁵ Helyer, *Jewish Literature*, 238.

⁴⁶ Convertible propositions exist when both the subject and the predicate nominative meet one of the three conditions for being the subject, namely, the substantive is either a pronoun, is articular, or is a proper name. “This construction indicates an identical exchange. The mathematical formulas of $A = B$, $B = A$ are applicable in such instances.” Thus it is equally true to this passage to write “this is that which was spoken” or “That which was spoken is this” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 41–44).

⁴⁷ This is not always, or even normally, true. The predicate nominative “normally describes a larger category (or state) to which the S[ubject] belongs” (ibid., 41).

⁴⁸ “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10). “And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands” (2 John 1:6).

⁴⁹ Ryrie also affirmed this alternative: “He quotes Joel to point out that as Jews who knew the Old Testament Scriptures they should have recognized this as the Spirit’s work. In other words, their own Scriptures should have reminded them that the Spirit was able to do what they

the Spirit at Pentecost was a similar spiritual phenomena to the expected outpouring of the Spirit at the establishment of the kingdom. Therefore, Peter used Joel as an illustration to show that it was not drunkenness or emotional excess that was being observed. “As a matter of fact, to avoid confusion, Peter’s quotation evidently *purposefully* goes beyond any possible fulfillment at Pentecost by including events in the still future day of the Lord.”⁵⁰

This alternative has the positive quality of explaining why none of the events other than the opening and closing statement of the prophecy occur in Acts 2. There is, however, a fundamental problem with this solution. While the manifestations in the heavens did not occur, God did outpour His Spirit and everyone who called on the name of the Lord was saved. Of course, one could argue that the final prediction has always been true. God in His mercy has always responded with grace to those who call upon His name.

But what of the first prediction? The Spirit was not outpoured on every individual, but it is unlikely that this is what Joel meant anyway. Couch maintained that the phrase *all flesh (kol basar)* “occurs thirty-two times” outside Joel and is most often used as a reference to the “Gentiles alone.”⁵¹ According to Kaiser, “the preponderance of usage favors the meaning of ‘all mankind’ . . . without distinction of race, sex, or age.”⁵² What is important to note is that both authors confirmed that the issue is the type of people described rather than the number of individuals affected. Therefore, Joel’s original intent was to demonstrate that the Spirit would be outpoured upon all types of people, regardless of sex or race. To state that this is merely an illustration of what will happen in the future does not adequately deal with the fact that a portion of the prediction actually occurred (at least in part).

The second option, maintaining that Acts 2 is a partial fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, is the better approach. Kaiser argued that Joel 2:28–32 is an example of a generic prediction.⁵³ Following Beecher,⁵⁴ Kaiser contended that a

had just seen” (Ryrie, “Significance of Pentecost,” 334–35). See also Clifford Rapp Jr., “Acts 2 and Pentecost,” in *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, gen. ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 34.

⁵⁰ Merrill F. Unger, “The Significance of Pentecost,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 122 (1965): 177.

⁵¹ Mal Couch, ed., *A Bible Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 148.

⁵² Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Promise of God and the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit: Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:16–21,” in *The Living and Active Word of God: Studies in Honor of Samuel J. Schultz*, eds. Morris Inch and Ronald Youngblood (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 119.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 122. Barker labeled this concept “progressive fulfillment,” while Bock designated this as “already, not yet.” It has also been called “inaugurated eschatology.” See Kenneth L. Barker, “The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*; and, Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Christ.”

generic prediction “ushers in not just a climactic fulfillment but a series of events, all of which participate in and lead up to that climactic or ultimate event in a protracted series that belongs as a unit because of their corporate solidarity. In this way, the whole set of events makes up one collective totality and constitutes only one idea even though the events may be spread over a large segment of history by the deliberate plan of God. The important point to observe, however, is that all of the parts belong to a single whole. They are generically related to each other by some identifiable wholeness.”⁵⁵ Like other prophecies in the Old Testament (such as the two advents of Christ or the Day of the Lord), Joel predicted a series of events that can be viewed as a single idea. Therefore, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as well as at Samaria and Caesarea are part of the preliminary fulfillment to the promised outpouring associated with Christ’s second advent. “But these events and the subsequent baptisms of the Holy Spirit that take place whenever anyone receives Christ as Lord and Savior and is thereby ushered into the family of God are all mere harbingers and samples of that final downpour that will come in that complex of events connected with Christ’s second return.”⁵⁶

If Pentecost was only a partial fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, why then did Peter quote the entire section? Kaiser, following Hengstenberg, found the answer in Acts 2:40—“With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’”⁵⁷

Accordingly, Hengstenberg correctly concluded that Peter had deliberately used these words from Joel 2:30-31 in order to bring before his hearers a proper respect for the God who could right then and there deliver them from threatened judgments to come.

⁵⁴ “Writers have applied the term ‘generic prophecy’ in more ways than one. According to one idea a generic prediction is one which regards an event as occurring in a series of parts, separated by intervals, and expresses itself in language that may apply indifferently to the nearest part, or to the remoter parts, or to the whole—in other words, a prediction which, in applying to the whole of a complex event, also applies to some of the parts. . . . Others speak of the successive or the progressive fulfillment of a prediction. An event is foretold which is to be brought about through previous events that in some particulars resemble it. The prediction is to be thought of as fulfilled, though inadequately, in the first event of the series, and as more or less adequately fulfilled in each succeeding event, but as completely fulfilled only in the final event in the series. Another form is that only the final event is foretold, but that this incidentally includes the foretelling of some of the means by which it is accomplished, that is, of some of the intervening events that lead up to it” (Willis Judson Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* [New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1905; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963], 130–31).

⁵⁵ Kaiser, “Promise of God,” 110.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁵⁷ “Peter employed the threatening, which was, in the first instance, to be realized against the covenant people, to terrify his hearers into a participation of the promise which alone could deliver them from the threatened judgment; and that he succeeded in this appears from the ‘fear fell on every soul,’ in ver. 43” (E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, trans. Reuel Keith [London: Francis and John Rivington, 1847; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1970], 549).

For that was exactly the connection made by Joel. Thus while there has not yet been any fulfillment of vv 30-31 in that they await our Lord's second advent, nevertheless Peter used this truth in the same way that Joel used it in his day: It was an incentive to call on the name of the Lord.⁵⁸

What is important for the purposes of this article is that the most viable interpretive options establish at least a partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. What is unclear is exactly how much of this prophecy has been fulfilled, and how much waits for a future day. Thus, while it seems clear that the Holy Spirit was outpoured on all kinds of flesh, it remains an open question as to whether or not the prophesying and dreaming are for this age or for a coming one. Thus, the minor premise of the syllogism stated earlier is far from certain. It seems unwise, at least to this author, to contradict other explicit teachings of Scripture concerning the place of women in the church with such tenuous evidence as provided in Acts 2.

ARE WOMEN PROPHETS THE SAME AS WOMEN CLERGY?

Authorial Intent and Implicature

As has been stated earlier, the intent of this article is to respond to evangelical egalitarians who endeavor to interact with the Bible on its own terms: specifically those who maintain that "the Bible is the fully inspired and authoritative Word of God."⁵⁹ With this limited audience in mind, it seems best to begin a discussion of authorial intent with a summary of E. D. Hirsch's understanding of this subject, since he appears to have become the starting point for many (if not most) conservative evangelicals.

Hirsch maintained, "[t]o banish the original author as the determiner of meaning [is] to reject the only compelling normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation."⁶⁰ If this were not true, any alleged interpretation could be considered equally correct alongside any other interpretation regardless of whether they reached mutually exclusive conclusions or not. Hirsch's proposition is so fundamental to genuine understanding that "one must temporarily assume this hermeneutical principle is true in order to successfully deny its legitimacy."⁶¹

It should be noted that, according to Hirsch, the meaning of the author is exclusively a matter of conscious intention and only coincidentally of words.

⁵⁸ Kaiser, "Promise of God," 121.

⁵⁹ Pierce, "Preface," 11.

⁶⁰ E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 5.

⁶¹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "A Response to Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, eds. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 441.

Stated another way, random words without an author have no meaning. For example, suppose a toddler in a nursery were playing with alphabet blocks and placed the blocks in a particular order so that they read “CHANGE ME.” This “text” would be at most a curiosity, since the toddler has not learned to communicate at that level. There would have been no conscious intention. Hirsch contended, “A word sequence means nothing in particular until somebody means something by it or understands something from it. There is no magic land of meanings outside human consciousness.”⁶² In this case, there is nothing to understand because there was no conscious intention behind the random formation of the letters into words.

Since meaning is a matter of direct intention and only coincidentally of words, it follows that intention may be expressed without the use of direct propositional statements. In other words, it is possible to communicate more than what is actually said. This type of interaction occurs all the time. A case in point occurred just this morning. While in the process of making a pot of tea in the study, a woman working temporarily in the office was asked, “Do you like tea, Nancy?” She smiled and responded, “I have already made coffee in the office.” Relying strictly upon the lexical definitions of the words themselves, this answer seems to be a non-sequitor. The first statement is a request for information concerning her fondness for tea. Her response changed the subject to the presence of a different drink without addressing the subject of the inquiry. Strictly speaking, one statement has little to do with the other. Nevertheless, when the context of the interaction is brought to bear, it becomes clear that the question was really asking if she would like some of the tea that was being brewed. Her answer was a polite refusal, since she already had a cup of coffee. Therefore, the answer implied a truth (she did not desire any tea) that was, strictly speaking, unstated. The intention of the author was communicated not merely through words, but through a context-specific response known as an implication or (more technically) an implicature.⁶³

Meadowcraft correctly observed, “[a]n implication is something drawn from the text when particular contextual assumptions are brought to bear on a text. An implication is entirely the manufacture of the reader, and as a result there is potentially no limit to the implications that can be drawn from a text.”⁶⁴ This being said, it follows that any implication that cannot be shown to be

⁶² Hirsch, *Validity in interpretation*, 4.

⁶³ In the prior statement, the responder “implicated” that she did not want any tea; that she did not want any tea was the “implicature.” In his William James lectures presented at Harvard in 1967, H. P. Grice coined this nomenclature. These lectures appeared in several journal articles and were finally published (in revised form) in H. P. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁶⁴ Tim Meadowcraft, “Relevance as a Mediating Category in the Reading of Biblical Texts: Venturing Beyond the Hermeneutical Circle,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (December 2002): 623.

intended by the author loses the *authority* of that author; if the implication cannot be connected in some way to the author's intended meaning, then communication has stopped. Information is not flowing from the author to the reader. Instead, the reader merely supplies meaning for himself. Any implication drawn in this way transfers authority from the author to the reader, and thus violates any claim to authorial intent.⁶⁵

How then does one determine what implications are intended by the author as opposed to the fanciful whims of the interpreter? More to the point, could justification for female clergy be a legitimate implication from Acts 2:17–18? Since Peter did not explicitly state that women may be pastors, is this unstated position in fact an authentic intention of the author?

Grice suggested that a “Cooperative Principle,” expressed in four basic “maxims” of conversation, is the key to identifying an author's intended implications.⁶⁶ Grice asserted that these rules are followed by people generally, in order to make communication efficient and understandable. The “Cooperative Principle” simply states that people contribute whatever is required by the accepted purpose of the conversation. The four “maxims” that specify how to be cooperative are as follows:

- *Maxim of Quality*: Make a contribution true, so that one does not communicate what is believed to be false or unjustified.
- *Maxim of Quantity*: Make a contribution as informative as required without contributing more than is required.
- *Maxim of Relation*: Make a contribution relevant.
- *Maxim of Manner*: Make a contribution perspicuous. Avoid obscurity and ambiguity. Strive for brevity and order.

These maxims may be illustrated in a number of ways and are not limited to conversation. For example, suppose a mother was helping her daughter bake a cake. When the daughter asks the mother for a cup of flour, the mother would hand her daughter the flour instead of soap (relevance), one cup instead of three cups (quantity), clean flour instead of flour that had been

⁶⁵ Strictly speaking, inferences of this sort do not measure to Grice's understanding of implicature. He limited the kind of inferences that may be considered implicatures to those that are “intended to be recognized as having been intended” (Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* [Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics] [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983], 101).

⁶⁶ This discussion of Grice's cooperative principle is a summation of the explanation found in Wayne Davis, “Implicature,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2005 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta (accessed 18 March 2006) available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2005/entries/implicature>.

spilled on the floor (quality), and would hand her the flour rather than placing it somewhere difficult to find (manner).

Grice acknowledged that people do not always follow these guidelines to the letter. Communication can be a sloppy business. Instead, it was Grice's contention that in ordinary conversation people assume that these principles are being affirmed at some deeper level, regardless of whether they are being followed or not.⁶⁷ In the case at hand, however, this is not an issue. One must assume that Peter, moved by the Holy Spirit, intended to communicate in a clear and concise manner. Such communication would necessitate adherence to the specific maxims stated above and to the cooperative principle generally. Therefore, one should be able to apply these maxims to Peter's sermon in order to ascertain if the proposition "women may be pastors" is a legitimate implication of the text.

Peter most certainly met the *Maxim of Quality*. There is no indication that anything he said was false or unjustified. This being said, it is difficult to determine exactly what Peter said with regard to women. It is most certainly true that women will at some time prophesy. That much, at least, is clear. Exactly when that time is, however, is open to debate. If one assumes for the sake of argument that Peter was stating that women would now prophesy from this point forward—an assumption that is not at all certain—then one must assume that Peter was speaking truthfully. The problem is that he did not define what prophecy is in this sermon. That subject will be addressed later.

When one considers the *Maxim of Quantity* with regard to women clergy, it seems as if Peter's sermon is not cooperative (in the Gricean sense) if Peter meant to speak to the subject. Positively, he did mention a change in the role of women. It should be noted that this change is not with regard to whether or not women will prophesy.⁶⁸ There were many women prior to this time that did exactly that. Instead, it appears that this would be an indiscriminate outpouring of the Spirit so that many women would fulfill this role. Indeed, it is possible to read Acts 2:18 to state that all women will prophecy that receive the outpouring of the Spirit. Negatively, however, Peter did not mention the church, church polity, the issue of male or female authority in any setting, or even spiritual giftedness to individual believers. Discussions of the *charismata* await the writings of Paul. If Peter had meant to sanction women pastors then he did not meet the requirement of the *Maxim of Quantity* since he did not

⁶⁷ It is this basic assumption that has made the interpretation of Acts 2:15–21 so difficult. One assumes that Peter was quoting Joel in a way relevant to the events around him, and that he was using Joel in a justified manner. The fact that Joel's prophecy seems to lack correspondence to what actually occurred is the major problem of the passage.

⁶⁸ Women called "prophetess" prior to Pentecost include Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14), Isaiah's wife (Isa 8:3), and Anna (Luke 2:36).

provide all the information necessary. It is worthy of note that, other than quoting Joel, Peter avoided the subject of women completely.

When one considers the subject of Peter's sermon, the subject of women clergy proves to be completely irrelevant to the topic at hand. If the *Maxim of Relevance* is one qualification that must be met to ensure a legitimate implication, then one must conclude that no such implication is given. As has been suggested above, Peter's sermon was a warning sermon about judgment that could fall at any moment because of Israel's rejection of the Christ (Acts 2:40). The subject of church polity or the role of women was not even considered in the body of the sermon. In spite of the fact that the church was inaugurated at this event, the idea of the local church is completely unknown to everyone who was listening to the sermon. It is true that the disciples had heard passing references to the church from the lips of Jesus (Matt 16:18; 18:17). Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely, given their notorious lack of understanding of even the explicit teachings of Jesus (Mark 9:31–32), that they would have had even a general understanding of the subject. Knowing this to be true, the idea that Peter intended to imply a specific teaching about women's roles in the church is equivalent to the mother handing her daughter the soap, when asked for the flour. The truth is simply this: no relevance can be found to justify the implication that Peter is implying a truth about women clergy.

Finally, Peter's sermon does not conform to the *Maxim of Manner* if he intended to communicate truth concerning the role of women in the church. If Peter had been even remotely perspicuous with regard to the topic of women in the church, one doubts that this discussion would even be occurring. Obscurity and ambiguity are hallmarks of this text if, in fact, Peter had intended to discuss the subject of women in the church.

It is clear that intention can be communicated without the use of explicit statements. Meaning is only coincidentally connected with words. This being said, the guidelines in such cases for determining authorial intention, when applied to Peter's sermon in Acts 2, indicate that Peter *did not* intend to teach on the subject of women clergy in the local church.

The Meaning of "Prophecy"

Grice was quite careful to limit the use of the term "implicate" so that it referred primarily to speakers.⁶⁹ It is speakers who implicate based upon the content of what was said in cooperation with the context in which it was said. It should be noted, however, that other forms of inference might be drawn from texts based solely on their logical or semantic content. These types of inferences include logical implication, entailment, and logical consequence.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 104 n5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

Stated in another manner, different statements uttered at different times and in wildly differing contexts may be combined in such a way as to form a theological construction. Therefore, truths may be drawn from the Scriptures that are not explicitly stated, but are, nevertheless, true representations of what the Bible teaches.⁷¹

This type of argumentation seems to be the main line of defense for the egalitarian position. As has been previously stated, one of the main forms of such argumentation is the following syllogism:

Major Premise: The gift of prophecy includes teaching and preaching.

Minor Premise: The fulfillment of Joel 2 at Pentecost gave
the gift of prophecy to both men and women.

Conclusion: Both men and women may teach and preach.

The minor premise of this syllogism is hardly certain. But what of the major premise? Does the gift of prophecy have within its semantic domain the idea of teaching and preaching, especially as these ideas relate to leadership in the local church? An examination of the New Testament understanding of προφητεύω is required to answer this question.

When searching for a definition, Kaiser's dictum was a helpful reminder: "[S]trict attention must be paid to the Bible's own definition of its terms as found in context. Too often there is an easy substitution of contemporary values for these terms."⁷² With this in mind, there seems to be only one primary passage in which the Bible comes close to defining προφητεύω in the local assembly: 1 Corinthians 14. Consider the following statements from this chapter:⁷³

"But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort" (14:3).

"... he who prophesies edifies the church" (14:4).

"For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged" (14:31).

In these three verses, Paul indicated that the purpose of prophecy is the strengthening (οἰκοδομήν) and edification (οἰκοδομεῖ), encouragement (παράκλησιν), comfort (παραμυθίαν), and instruction (μανθάνωσιν) of the

⁷¹ The most notable example of a theological construction would be the doctrine of the Tri-Unity of God. While the relationship between the persons of the Godhead is not explicitly stated, it is inferred through a careful combination and harmonization of various texts.

⁷² Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 120.

⁷³ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *New International Version* (NIV), 1984.

church. Even a cursory reading of the New Testament reveals that these activities are not the sole duty of the pastor. Instead, all believers should be involved in these pursuits. For example, believers are admonished to build themselves (ἐποικοδομοῦντες) in the faith (Jude 20), to encourage (παρακαλέω) one another (2 Cor 1:4; 1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13; 10:25), and to comfort (παραμυθεῖσθε) the fainthearted (1 Thess 5:14). Believers are to teach (διδάσκοντες) one another in all wisdom (Col 3:16). It seems, therefore, that these aspects of the gift of prophecy are practiced by the person in the pew as well as by the person in the pulpit.

Special note must be taken of the word for “instruction”—μανθάνωσιν. Some might argue (correctly) that, while another word for teaching is used in a “one another” passage, this word is not. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to conclude that this infers a special office for the practice of instruction. First of all, μανθάνωσιν is found only here in the New Testament. The root from which it is derived—μανθάνω—is a general word for learning or discovering something. It is outside the semantic domain of this verb as to how something was learned. Learning in this way may be formal instruction (Rom 16:17), but more often is through example (Matt 24:32 and 1 Cor 4:6 are just two instances). In those few cases where this word is used in connection with women, the emphasis is upon the submission and quietness of the woman, not in her exercise of this function (1 Cor 14:35; 1 Tim 2:11).

What makes “prophecy” different from general encouraging speech is its origin. Prophecy originates, not with the speaker, but with God who inspires the speech. This idea of inspiration is used with regard to Old Testament writers (Matt 11:13; 15:7; Mark 7:6; 1 Pet 1:10—the prophets who prophesied, προφητεῦσαντες) in addition to some from that era who were not admitted to the canon (Jude 14). When the Holy Spirit came upon some individuals, they also prophesied (Luke 1:67; Acts 19:6) since prophecy is a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor 14:1). It is interesting to note, however, that speech which had supernatural origins was not always recognized by the speaker, as in the case of the High Priest (John 11:51). Even those who were not believers understood that prophecy had supernatural origins. When the guards blindfolded Christ and then hit him, they demanded, “Prophecy to us Christ. Who hit you?” This last instance makes clear that prophecy did not always concern the future, but was concerned with a message divinely revealed.

The standard Greek lexicons support this understanding of προφητεῦω. For example, the Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich lexicon (BDAG) defined προφητεῦω as “1) to proclaim an inspired revelation, 2) to tell about someth[ing] that is hidden from view, 3) to foretell someth[ing] that lies in the

future.”⁷⁴ Louw and Nida defined the word as “to speak under the influence of divine inspiration, with or without reference to future events.”⁷⁵

In addition to its supernatural origin, prophecy is different from preaching in its lack of preparation. The typical sermon takes hours to prepare (at least for this preacher). Prophecy, in contrast, seems to be a spontaneous event. First Corinthians 14:30 addressed the situation of a person who was seated in the congregation who received a prophetic revelation, apparently without warning. That person was to stand and deliver the message, while the person who was speaking was to be seated. This type of spontaneous revelation is apparently what came upon Agabus when he “stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world” (Acts 11:28). Schreiner concurred with this understanding of prophecy and made a further distinction concerning the content of what was presented. “Prophecy is passive gift in which oracles or revelations are given by God to a prophet. Teaching, on the other hand, is a gift that naturally fits with leadership and a settled office, for it involves the transmission and explanation of tradition.”⁷⁶

When one considers the biblical evidence, it appears that “prophecy” is a general term that is used to describe speech of a supernatural origin. This speech has several purposes and is exercised by the common believer. Consequently, there seems to be nothing in the biblical (or lexical) definition that supports the major premise of the syllogism in question. The gift of prophecy does not include teaching and preaching as a leadership function.

The Relationship between New Testament and Old Testament Prophets

Fundamental to the egalitarian understanding of “prophecy,” whether explicitly stated or assumed, is a connection between the Old Testament prophet and the New Testament pastor. Two separate claims are made in this regard. *First*, women prophets exercised leadership roles in the Old Testament including teaching and preaching. Bilezikian provided an example of this type of argument. “The prophetic ministry was the highest religious function in the Old Covenant. . . . Although statistically the majority of old-covenant prophets were male, the Bible refers to several prophetesses and describes them as exercising

⁷⁴ Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. προφητεύω.

⁷⁵ J. P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), § 33.459.

⁷⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 190.

the same kind of authority in the religious sphere as their male counterparts (Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and so on).⁷⁷

Second, the Old Testament mantle of “prophet” has fallen upon the New Testament pastor. Keener’s understanding (as stated earlier) is typical. The New Testament minister is the modern equivalent of the Old Testament prophet. “The New Testament church’s witness (cf. Acts 1:8) is characterized by the Old Testament prophetic mantle (in a general sense).⁷⁸

When one examines the Old Testament evidence concerning women prophets, it is difficult to understand how egalitarians can arrive at their conclusions. A careful reading of the appropriate texts reveals that the women prophets mentioned most commonly did not exercise leadership functions, but merely (!) delivered the word of the LORD to the males leaders already in place. For example, Huldah was not king or even priest. Instead, the king and priest sought her specifically for a word from God (2 Chron 34:22–29). In this regard, she acted in accordance with the New Testament definition already given: she spoke a divinely inspired word that, in this case, brought repentance and revival.

The case of Deborah is somewhat easier to see from an egalitarian point of view. It is said that she was “judging” (שֹׁפֵט) Israel (Judg 4:4). The standard Hebrew lexicon provided two possible definitions for שֹׁפֵט: 1) “*act as law-giver, judge, governor* (giving law, deciding controversies and executing law, civil, religious, political, social; both early and late),” and 2) “*decide controversy, discriminate betw[een] persons, in civil, political, domestic and religious question.*”⁷⁹ If Deborah was acting as a judge or governor then there would be an Old Testament example of a woman in leadership. The problem for this position is the explanation of what judging means in Judges 4:5: “the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided” (שֹׁפֵטָהּ). Based on this understanding, it seems the second definition is the better choice.

Two items are worthy of mention at this point. *First*, the text is silent on how she became the one to decide disputes. While it is clear she was a prophetess, there is no mention of God placing her in the position of judge. It could be that the people came to her because of her prophecies, evidently assuming that their cases would be decided correctly. While it might have the sound of blasphemy in the United States, it remains true that the will of the people is not always the will of God. *Second*, the setting in which she was judging was informative. Israel was suffering under the oppression of a Canaanite king. This foreign oppression is a direct result of their sin—“After

⁷⁷ Gilbert G. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 69.

⁷⁸ Keener, “Women in Ministry,” 30.

⁷⁹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), s.v. שֹׁפֵט.

Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the LORD. So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin” (Judg 4:1–2). What makes this context instructive is a comparison with the declaration of God’s judgment announced in Isaiah 3. In this judgment passage, God declared that He would remove, not only food and water, but also good leadership.

See now, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, is about to take from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support: all supplies of food and all supplies of water, the hero and warrior, the judge and prophet, the soothsayer and elder, the captain of fifty and man of rank, the counselor, skilled craftsman and clever enchanter. I will make boys their officials; mere children will govern them. People will oppress each other— man against man, neighbor against neighbor. The young will rise up against the old, the base against the honorable. A man will seize one of his brothers at his father’s home, and say, “You have a cloak, you be our leader; take charge of this heap of ruins!” But in that day he will cry out, “I have no remedy. I have no food or clothing in my house; do not make me the leader of the people.” (Isa 3:1–7)

Later in the same passage God announced woe upon the wicked, and disaster upon the people. An example of this disaster was that “women rule over them” (Isa 3:12). Understanding the context of Judges 4, it seems likely that female leadership (if indeed Deborah was leading the people in some way) was actually another sign of God’s displeasure instead of any politically correct sensibilities on the part of the Almighty.

Finally, one must wonder why God did not allow Deborah herself to lead the army after Barak refused to proceed without her. Why did God not just use Deborah in the first place to accomplish deliverance? Why did she call a man to lead Israel into battle? Surely the same God that used an oxgoad (Judg 3:31), a tent peg (4:21), trumpets, jars and torches (7:20), a millstone (9:53), and the jawbone of a donkey (15:15) as instruments of deliverance could use a woman such as Deborah! God had already proven He could use people regardless of age or physical condition to accomplish His purposes.⁸⁰ One must wonder why, when God expressed His displeasure at Barak’s response, He gave the honor to a woman who could not be confused as a leader of the people. While one cannot be sure, it seems that God’s intent, now that His chastening hand was being removed, was to remove any hint of female leadership from Israel since such leadership was a sign of his judgment upon a sinful nation.

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE

There is simply no evidence that the gift of prophecy endows its recipient with additional authority that is not shared by every member of the congregation. Even in the unlikely event that the Old Testament prophetic mantle is placed

⁸⁰ Remember Abraham, Sarah, Moses, and Caleb!

understanding of the role of women. Any modern claim for female clergy based upon this passage lacks authorial intention and therefore lacks apostolic authority.

When one investigates an issue such as this, which has arisen primarily due to the changing political social climate of modern society, it is easy to hear a ring of truth in the words of Kierkegaard.

The matter is quite simple. The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand we are obliged to act accordingly. Take any words in the New Testament and forget everything except pledging yourself to act accordingly. My [God], you will say, if I do that my whole life will be ruined. How would I ever get on in the world?

Herein lies the real place of Christian scholarship. Christian scholarship is the Church's prodigious invention to defend itself against the Bible, to ensure that we can continue to be good Christians without the Bible coming too close. Oh, priceless scholarship, what would we do without you? Dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Yes, it is even dreadful to be alone with the New Testament.⁸²

⁸² Taken from *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*, comp. and ed. Charles E. Moore (Farmington, PA: Bruderhof Foundation, 2002), 201–03. The selections are taken from *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, 7 vols., eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967–78), 3:270–73, as quoted in Daniel J. Treier, "Theological Models for Going 'Beyond the Bible' Biblically." Paper presented at the Midwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Grand Rapids, MI, March 2006.

EFFORTS TO DISPROVE THE BIBLICAL JESUS

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Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, “Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.” So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day (Matt 28:11-15).

Trying to disprove the biblical Jesus is nothing new. Matthew recorded that immediately after the news broke in Jerusalem that Jesus’ body was missing, Jewish leaders formulated a story to invalidate the resurrection. Could the biblical account be a conspiracy cover-up by Jesus’ disciples? Could the account, in Matthew 28:11-15, be a later insertion by church fathers to promote Jesus’ resurrection, knowing full well that He did not rise? Or was the early church simply deceived by following an early tradition begun by Jesus’ early followers? Such questions have prompted numerous scholars throughout the centuries to continue to search for Jesus’ bones, hoping that one day something will be uncovered.

For a long time now past theologians and philosophers have continued formulating theories that seek to explain other ways of understanding the biblical Jesus who they strip from His religious garb. This trend continues in the present as the media, numerous movements, and a plethora of published manuscripts have sought to redefine the historical and biblical Jesus with a no-frills Jesus who was but a mere man without special powers or mission. It seems that every Easter in the last five years, new books, with old ideas nevertheless, surface with one goal: *disprove the biblical Jesus*.

This article will briefly surface each of these past and present approaches and show that upon further inspection they have led folks further from the truth instead of bringing one closer to understanding the biblical Jesus. By understanding these approaches, believers will be better prepared to judge where these “new” trends originate and thereby see them for what they are: *efforts to disprove the biblical Jesus*.¹

¹ Since few have time to read all of the volumes that hinder for the most part instead of help the uninformed, part of this author’s intent is to aid the pastor, student, and teacher to reach conclusions without having to spend hours reading all these volumes. Hence, such aid will allow one to be better prepared to make an informed decision when it comes to “new” trends. In a

PAST EFFORTS TO DISPROVE THE BIBLICAL JESUS

Though many have tried to redefine the biblical Jesus during the first 1,500 years after His life, the real “explosion” came after the Reformation.² This explosion came in ten new philosophical approaches to the Bible that evolved through time. These ten are inductivism, materialism, rationalism, deism, skepticism, agnosticism, romanticism, idealism, evolution, and existentialism.³ Today numerous books draw directly from one or more of these philosophies that seek to redefine the biblical Jesus and at times go beyond that and create their own radical theories.

Inductivism. Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626), a lawyer, orator, writer, philosopher, and scientist, became Lord Chancellor in England in 1618 and published his magnum opus *Novum Organum* in 1620.⁴ Basically in this work Bacon postulated that experiment and experience are the bases for discovering truth, which became known as the *inductive* method. Obviously this view resulted in separating science from faith, which would later lead to a mythological understanding of Scripture and perhaps influencing the writings of David F. Strauss and Rudolf Bultmann.⁵ Under this new system, science is in conflict with Scripture. The inductive method is not wrong, for

modified way, parts of this article appears in René A. López, *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined: Did Jesus Rise Physically?* (Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2008), 253-67.

² F. David Farnell succinctly noted this very thing through the anti-supernatural philosophical bias that has always existed. He wrote, “Philosophical opposition to the supernatural is not new. Paul encountered such in Athens (Acts 17:16-34), for his biblical worldview included the resurrection of the material body, but that of his philosophical listeners had no room for the supernatural. Philosophy’s clash with Christianity in the New Testament appears in Colossians, 1 John, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation 2–3. It emerged early in the post-Apostolic church and continued through the Middle Ages. It was not until the Reformation corrected hermeneutical abuses of philosophy that a resolution of the problem surfaced. But just after a hundred years after the Reformers, philosophy reasserted itself to haunt the church” (“Philosophical and Theological Bent of Historical Criticism,” in *The Jesus Crisis: The Inroads of Historical Criticism into Evangelical Scholarship*, eds. Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998], 85). See also, Norman L. Geisler, “Inductivism, Materialism, and the Rationalism: Bacon, Hobbes, and Spinoza,” in *Biblical Errancy: An Analysis of Its Philosophical Roots*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 11-19. By noting the helpfulness of Farnell’s essay in this section it does not mean this author completely endorses all the chapters in the *Jesus Crisis*.

³ These are not exhaustive but are the ten major philosophical systems foundational to Thomas Hobbes, “Leviathan,” in *Great Books of the Western World*, 60 vols., ed. Robert M. Hutchins et al. (Chicago: William Benton, 1952). Usually historical criticism is opposed to an orthodox view of the Bible. These views are thoroughly explained by Farnell, “Philosophical and Theological Bent,” 85-131.

⁴ See Francis Bacon, “Novum Organum,” in *Great Books of the Western World*, 30:133-34.

⁵ Farnell, “Philosophical and Theological Bent,” 121.

how else does one examine facts but to test them? Instead of interpreting science to oppose Scripture, one should understand both as working harmoniously with each other. But under this new system, science sits in judgment of Scripture and is the exclusive arbiter of truth, and it accepts Scripture as a valid judge only on spiritual matters.

Materialism. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) worked for Francis Bacon for a while and became the promoter of materialism as explained in his work *Leviathan*.⁶ He said all reality consists of matter and the visual, and that the spiritual realm is nonexistent. Going one step further than Bacon, Hobbes ultimately ended in diminishing the Scriptures' relevancy and authority for everyone. Hence Farnell correctly concluded, "Reason now ascends the throne"⁷ in a total sense.

Rationalism. Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677), who was Jewish born, was expelled from the synagogue for his heretical views.⁸ Repulsive to Jews and Christians alike, Spinoza was described at times as a "hideous atheist." In reality he was a "rationalistic pantheist,"⁹ which is not technically the same thing. Rationalism interprets all things through reason, not experience, as the primary means to understanding. Natural science is an a priori system by which to measure all truth, and truth is discovered through mathematical equations. This philosophy led to the Enlightenment period. However, unlike many philosophers of that period (e.g. Descartes and Leibniz), Spinoza believed God was in all things (pantheism). Therefore one could not have a loving personal relationship with such a God since He is part of the essence of all creation. Thus Spinoza's system defined "religion as 'the Mind's intellectual love of God.'"¹⁰ Such ideas obviously reveal why he was not popular with Jews and Christians since it contradicts Scripture that teaches God is not like a man nor are His thoughts as those of man (Numb 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Isa 55:8-9)

Deism. Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648), whose ideas were later advanced by Charles Blount (1654-93), believed that God is separate from creation but that He does not intimately interact with it. Like other philosophical movements, Deists reject any claims to supernatural revelation since God does not reveal Himself in any way other than through creation. Thus

⁶ Hobbes, "Leviathan," 41-49.

⁷ Farnell, "Philosophical and Theological Bent," 89.

⁸ Benedict de Spinoza, "Biographical Note, Benedict de Spinoza," in *Great Books of the Western World*, 31:354.

⁹ Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 185-86. These terms are noted by Farnell, "Philosophical and Theological Bent," 89.

¹⁰ Farnell, "Philosophical and Theological Bent," 89.

natural law, rejecting all forms of miracles, reigns supreme¹¹ and runs counter to Jewish and Christian thought.

Skepticism. David Hume (1711-76), though influenced by the three major Enlightenment philosophies of rationalism, deism, and empiricism that preceded him, went beyond them to postulate that all reality exists in the mind and is perceived through the five senses.¹² He influenced many future theologians such as David F. Strauss (1808-74), F. E. D. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Ernst Renan (1823-92) and Adolph Harnack (1851-1930). As Farnell wrote of Hume, “We perceive the data of our senses, but cannot know that there is anything beyond. In Hume’s thought, one could not even prove the existence of the human self.”¹³

Agnosticism. Influenced by Hume’s system, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) went beyond it in trying to synthesize the philosophy of empiricism and rationalism into one system: agnosticism. Nothing, he said, is knowable for sure. Kant distinguished external experience and reality as something existing outside of self, apart from one’s internal mechanism that subjectively interprets this reality based on personal bias. Thus the receptor of the mind processes external experiences it perceives, according to its own mechanism. That is, “the mind does not perceive these things as they actually are in themselves, for the mind reshapes what it perceives. . . . In other words, the mind conditions (perhaps better ‘colors’) everything that it encounters. . . . One can know only what appears (*phenomenal*), not what really is (*noumenal*). The thing-in-itself is unknowable.”¹⁴ Such statements are self-defeating and nonsensical, because if the proposition (nothing is knowable) were true, it predicates something that can be known. But how can it be known when the very statement negates what it purports to know? All religious people who believe God communicates through supernatural revelation reject such a system (including *skepticism*) because it denies the foundation by which a system can be validated and believed, namely, *that God communicates knowable truth based on people’s ability to perceive it for what it really is.*

¹¹ Ibid., 94. Men like Matthew Tindal (1655-1733), John Toland (1670-1722), Anthony Collins (1676-1729), and others also followed this system of thought.

¹² Ernest C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 612. David Hume stated, “The idea of substance as well as that of a mode, is nothing but a collection of simple ideas, that are united by the imagination, and have a particular name assigned them, by which we are able to recall, either to ourselves or others, that collection” (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Ernest C. Mossner [New York: Penguin, 1969], 63).

¹³ Farnell, “Philosophical and Theological Bent,” 97, 99. John Locke (1632-1704), George Berkeley (1685-1753), and others also followed the same system.

¹⁴ Ibid., 100; cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Vasilis Politis (New York: Everyman, 1993), 30-68; Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 96.

Romanticism. F. E. D. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is the person most identified with this movement.¹⁵ In response to the intellectual and unemotional philosophy derived from the Enlightenment, Romanticism emphasized feelings, sensualism, fantasy, experience, the individual over the universal, and freedom of expression against the order and the controlled. Farnell summarized the incompatibility between Romanticism, the Bible, and the Jesus of Scripture:

In summary, for Schleiermacher the Bible may not be propositional authoritative revelation or historically accurate, but it still conveyed religious “experience” relevant to people. He did not speak about the Jesus of history but about the Christ of faith and about the search for the “historical Jesus.” In terms of historical-critical interpretation, “what it means to me in my present situation” (namely, eisegesis and application) was more important for Schleiermacher than the original meaning of Scripture (exegesis and interpretation).¹⁶

Idealism (transcendentalism). G. W. Hegel (1770-1831) was the most influential advocate who promoted *absolute idealism*, which states that mental and spiritual values are more essential to life than matter.¹⁷ Idealism became “the opposite of realism—the view that things exist independently of being perceived—and of naturalism that explains the mind and spiritual values via materialism. . . . In other words, history, nature, and thought are aspects of the Absolute Spirit coming to self-consciousness.”¹⁸ How that happens seems to be mystical. Again, it is impossible to know the historical-biblical Jesus in this system apart from a reconstruction of the available data, but Hegel and its followers eliminated all miracles and advocated that virtue is the ultimate end of religion that enters the mind by means of the Spirit in mystical form.

Evolution. Charles Darwin (1809-82) popularized this philosophy through two major works, *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871).¹⁹ However, he was not the originator of the evolutionary theory since the naturalistic philosophies espoused by him existed long before him.²⁰

¹⁵ Other promoters of this view include Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) and Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843).

¹⁶ Farnell, “Philosophical and Theological Bent,” 103, 106.

¹⁷ Proponents of this philosophy also include Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) and Friedrich W. J. von Schelling (1775-1854).

¹⁸ Farnell, “Philosophical and Theological Bent,” 107.

¹⁹ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection; or, the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life* (n.p.: n.p., 1859; reprint, New York: J. A. Hill, 1904); Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: J. Murray, 1871).

²⁰ Farnell correctly acknowledged the origins of Darwinian thought. “To a large extent, the hypothesis of evolution resulted from a presupposition exclusion of God and religion from science and stemmed from the philosophies prevalent immediately before and during the Enlightenment (for example deism, agnosticism, uniformitarianism—‘the present is the key to the past and’—and atheism” (“Philosophical and Theological Bent,” 110). For a more detailed

Evolution ignores God in assessing reality and asserting that everything that exists (i.e. matter) stems from a natural process that arose by chance and evolves from a simple form of life to a more complex organism. This system has permeated the scientific community. However, it has also influenced theological thought by rejecting the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible and interpreting a gradual development of biblical revelation that stems from the simple to the more complex.²¹

The evolutionary view resulted in rejecting the uniqueness of monotheism (one God), supernatural revelation, and ultimately the biblical Jesus. Hence Wilhelm Bousset (1865-1920) advocated that biblical concepts evolved and were based on ideas stemming from other religions (e.g. Egyptian, Babylonian, mystery religions, and other ancient myths).²² However, this system contradicts the second law of thermodynamics, which states that all things go from a state of order to disorder. Also evolutionary philosophy ends in a system that believes—without evidence—that all matter appeared out of nothing by chance. The mathematical possibility of this occurring is staggering and is hard to accept. Indeed, it takes more faith to believe in that system than in a system that holds that all design must have a Designer.

Existentialism. Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55) is considered the father of existentialism. Unfortunately, defining existentialism is not easy because others like “Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) represent the theistic branch. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976,

discussion, see John C. Hutchinson, “Darwin’s Evolutionary Theory and 19th-Century Natural Theology,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (July—September 1995): 334-54.

²¹ This is known as the Documentary Hypothesis theory in which scholars seek to determine how the Scriptures were formulated by determining how different terms and phrases were employed and who wrote them. Evolutionary theology, however, ultimately led to the well-known form-critical analysis of the New Testament popularized by Karl L. Schmidt (1891-1956), Martin Dibelius (1883-1947), and Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976). Form-critical analysis espouses that the Christian community gradually developed the four Gospel accounts from the simplest form—including oral accounts—to a more complex written account.

²² See Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970). Conceptual parallels appear in a number of pagan religions with that of Christianity. However, many of these parallels are not identical; neither is Christianity dependent on their religious neighbors for their theology. Indeed, in many cases (e.g. the mystery religions) it can be shown that the opposite is true. For a thorough and excellent treatment showing similarities and distinctions between pagan and Christian religion and thereby demonstrating Christianity’s uniqueness, see Gregory A. Boyd, *Jesus Under Siege* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1995), 43-62, and J. Ed Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer, and Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Mislead Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 219-62.

and Albert Camus (1913-1960) represent the atheistic branch.”²³ Kierkegaard believed that biblical truths are attained through subjective means, and he disregarded objective means as a path of arriving at religious truth. This, however, does not mean he did not believe in objective truth but that this form of it could not aid one in becoming a person of faith. Therefore Kierkegaard wrote, “And so I say to myself: I choose; that historical fact means so much to me that I decide to stake my whole life upon it. . . . That is called risking; and without risk faith is an impossibility.”²⁴ His paradoxical position describes where his views end in regard to the historicity of the Bible and Christ: “Kierkegaard never denied that Christianity was objectively or historically true, but he felt that the results of historical research are uncertain. Though asserting his personal belief in the historicity of the Bible and Christ, he maintained that objective truth is not essential to Christianity.”²⁵ Perhaps he believed this way since faith was a step beyond historical facts that could not be proven absolutely. However, to believe in something absolutely one does not need to touch or study it in a laboratory. Many people believed George Washington existed and was the first president of the United States, but no one alive saw or touched him in an absolute way. Historical evidence exists that proves this. Part of the problem occurs when many fail to differentiate between the distinctive senses of “history.”

One can appreciate Kierkegaard’s fervor for having faith and desiring to experience a personal relationship with God and/or Christ. Yet how can one enter into such a relationship or experience Christ apart from the only objective means (the Bible) that conveys that truth? The contradiction is obvious.

RECENT EFFORTS TO DISPROVE THE BIBLICAL JESUS

All of these philosophical thoughts have somehow influenced contemporary writers. Today many of these movements and authors directly seek to redefine the biblical Jesus by posing radical theories with meager evidence to support them. These include the (1) *Jesus Seminar* movement; (2) the *National Geographic* television program about the *Gospel of Judas* that supposedly clarifies the relationship between Jesus and Judas, who was wrongly accused of

²³ For a thorough discussion of these views, see Frederick Copleston, *Contemporary Philosophy, Studies of Logical Positivism and Existentialism* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972), 148-200, as cited in Farnell, “Philosophical and Theological Bent,” 113-14.

²⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, trans. and ed. Alexander Dru (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 185.

²⁵ Farnell, “Philosophical and Theological Bent,” 115. For more on these issues, see Kierkegaard, *Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, 109 and, Paul R. Sponheim, *Kierkegaard on Christ and Christian Coherence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 173-264.

betraying Jesus; (3) Bart Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus*; (4) James D. Tabor's *The Jesus Dynasty*; and, (5) Michael Baigent's *The Jesus Papers*.²⁶

The Jesus Seminar began in 1985 with its founder and chairman Robert Funk along with a group of more than seventy liberal New Testament scholars.²⁷ Its purpose was to determine which words of Jesus in the Gospels were actually His. As a result of a vote from these scholars, using colored beads, they decided which were the authentic words of Jesus. Each of the beads had a color that meant something. For example, *red*: "That's Jesus," *pink*: "Sure sounds like Jesus," *gray*: "Well, maybe," and *black*: "There's been some mistake."²⁸ Ultimately this resulted in publishing a volume *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, which concluded that 82 percent of what Jesus supposedly said was not authentic, 18 percent was somewhat doubtful, and only 2 percent of what the New Testament Gospels record were what Jesus actually said.²⁹ Furthermore the Seminar did not regard the New Testament as superior to any other literature of the church or other writings of the day (the Gospel of Thomas is the fifth Gospel as noted in the book title).³⁰ The Seminar used seven rules called "pillars" in deciding what to accept as

²⁶ Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005); James D. Tabor, *The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family and the Birth of Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006); Michael Baigent, *The Jesus Papers: Exposing the Greatest Cover-up in History* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006). Though not as recent as these other contemporary works intent on redefining the historical and biblical Jesus, there are numerous others including: Earl Doherty, *Challenging the Verdict* (Ottawa: Age of Reason, 2001); John D. Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper SanFrancisco, 1994); Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (San Francisco: Harper SanFrancisco, 1993); M. Baigent and R. Leigh, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* (New York: Summit, 1992); John D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990); Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); M. Baigent, R. Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York: Dell, 1983); Ron Cameron, *The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Texts* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982); H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament II: History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); J. M. Robinson and H. Koster, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

²⁷ See note 31 for a better idea of how many scholars are involved. The *Jesus Seminar* gives the misguided impression that the majority of scholars agree with them. Actually it is just the opposite.

²⁸ Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, eds. R. Funk and J. V. Hills (New York: MacMillian, 1993), 37.

²⁹ Boyd, *Jesus Under Siege*, 88.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, 24; Funk, Hoover, and Seminar, *Five Gospels*, 1-36, acknowledge this same conclusion.

authentic. While all seven pillars have numerous logical flaws and have been thoroughly evaluated elsewhere,³¹ two of these rules will be answered to demonstrate the unscholarly, biased, and flawed system of these scholars.³²

How can modern scholars existing more than two thousand years after Jesus be better judges in determining Jesus' authentic words than Jesus' contemporaries who wrote the Gospels? Efforts made by contemporary scholarship that seek to better understand the ancient world are good. But to dismiss early witnesses as easily as the Seminar does is severely problematic. Furthermore, the church fathers, who lived just one to two hundred years after Jesus, testified to the authenticity and authorship of the four Gospels. Unless solid evidence appears to contradict this, one should not dismiss their testimony.

Jesus Seminar scholars reverse the criteria in how to judge the authenticity of a historical document. They assert that *the Gospels are unhistorical until proven otherwise*. That is like saying in the jurisprudence system that a person is guilty until proven innocent. If one used these criteria, he would be left doubting the majority of all historical documents now possessed. Hence on both of these issues Gregory A. Boyd concluded:

These twentieth-century scholars imagine that they are in a better position to compose the Bible than was the early church of the second and third centuries. If that strikes you as a bit presumptuous, you are not alone. After all, the early church knew all of this

³¹ Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus*, 39-50; Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 46-51; Craig L. Blomberg, "Where Do We Start Studying Jesus?," in *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*, eds. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 19-22.

³² Clearly the *Jesus Seminar* gives the impression by the constant use of the word "scholar" that anyone disagreeing with their conclusion is unscholarly. However, the opposite is true. "As a matter of fact, a great many scholars, from a wide variety of persuasions, disagree with elements of this highly controversial list of 'pillars.'" Furthermore the *Seminar* also gives the impression that they represent the majority of scholars but they do not. "Indeed, the conclusions of the Jesus Seminar participants are usually representative only of the left-most fringe of the New Testament scholarship" (Boyd, *Jesus Under Siege*, 89-91). Hence, "Sometimes, for example, the phrase 'some two hundred scholars' has occurred. To someone unacquainted with the immensity and complexity of higher education in America, two hundred scholars may seem an impressively large number. In fact, however, it is a very small number when placed against the number of New Testament scholars alone who are involved in the work of SBL (at least half of the 6, 900 members of the organization), let alone the thousands more with substantial scholarly training in the New Testament who for personal or ideological reasons do not take part in the society's activities. And even the number *two hundred* is somewhat misleading, since it includes all of those who were part of the Seminar's proceedings in any fashion—by receiving its mailings, for example, or reading its reports" (Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* [San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996], 2). See also pages 1-27 for another thorough analysis of the *Jesus Seminar* movement and its founders.

literature well, and was in a much better position than we are to know who wrote it and to judge its accuracy. . . . And despite the presumptuous claims of the Jesus Seminar, most historical scholars argue that the burden of proof should generally lie with the historian who wants to argue that what an ancient document is reporting is *not* true. A historian, in other words, must generally prove that an ancient account is *wrong*, not that what an ancient document reports is *right*.³³

The discovery of the *Gospel of Judas* was made public on Thursday, 6 April 2006, when the National Geographic Society held a press conference at its headquarters in Washington, DC. This was a little more than a year before *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* was aired on the Discovery Channel on 4 March 2007. In a packed room of more than one hundred news personnel the society announced the discovery of the *Gospel of Judas*. Three days later on Sunday, 9 April 2006, a two-hour documentary on the National Geographic channel was televised. Why all the hype? This new document not only asserted that Judas Iscariot was Jesus' best disciple, who was taught by Him in private more than the others,³⁴ but it also revealed that Jesus urged Judas to betray Him so that Jesus could exit the flesh (physical body) and enter the spirit realm.³⁵

While the document is authentic (i.e. it was written around the fourth-century AD and is not a contemporary forgery), numerous facts argue against its being a book authorized by the apostles. *First*, the church fathers never mentioned such a book. *Second*, this Gospel is written in Coptic, whereas Greek is the language of all four canonical Gospels recorded in the first century AD. This betrays a late date—to which all scholars agree—and one of the reasons why it could not have been approved by the apostles. *Third*, the *Gospel of Judas* followed a practice called “pseudonymity” (falsely attributing a name to a document that was actually written by someone else). Obviously this was done in order to gain acceptance by the public. *Fourth*, the *Gospel of Judas* sounds like a document with a similar name that Irenaeus, around AD 180, condemned.³⁶ If this is the same document, then this work was already

³³ Boyd, *Jesus Under Siege*, 24-25, 91 (italics original).

³⁴ Evans, *Fabricating Jesus*, 242, acknowledged this as well.

³⁵ See Ben Witherington III, *What Have They Done with Jesus? Beyond Strange Theories and Bad History—Why We Can Trust the Bible* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 7, also saw this dichotomy of flesh and spirit. Evans explained the details involving the discovery: “At the best investigators can determine, a leather-bound codex (or ancient book), whose pages consist of papyrus, was discovered in the late 1970s perhaps in 1978, in Egypt, perhaps in cave. For the next five years the codex, written in the Coptic language [Egyptian language written in Greek letters], was passed around the Egyptian antiquities market. In 1983 Stephen Emmel, a Coptic scholar, . . . concluded that the codex was genuine (that is, not a forgery) and that it probably dated to the fourth century. Subsequent scientific test confirmed Emmel’s educated guess” (*Fabricating Jesus*, 240). The *Gospel of Judas* actually appears in pages 33-58 in the book (Codex Tchacos) that contains three other tractates.

³⁶ Irenaeus wrote, “They [the Gnostics] declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things [i.e., that Cain and others derived their being from above and did not

condemned by the late second-century AD. While the document can illuminate the church's historical context when Gnosticism flourished, it contributes nothing to understanding more about Jesus or Judas since this document does not date to the first century AD. As Ben Witherington III concluded, "To say otherwise is an argument entirely from silence, not from hard evidence."³⁷

Misquoting Jesus was written by Bart D. Ehrman in 2005. In this work, he reiterated much of the material of an earlier work of his, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (1993).³⁸ Basically Ehrman believes humans corrupted the text of the Scriptures. He wrote, "The Bible began to appear to me as a very human book."³⁹ He believes that errors in the extant copies of the Scriptures discredit the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. Though there are only copies, the function of textual criticism is to compare the 5,700 complete New Testament copies available, plus over 10,000 more copies in Latin, and more than one million quotations from church fathers to arrive at a very precise reading of the original documents.⁴⁰

Ehrman asserted that more than minor differences exist.⁴¹ For example, he cited 1 John 5:7b, which has an alternative reading based on a scribal alteration of the text.⁴² However, one can readily arrive at the original reading—when more than one reading appears—by simply doing some comparisons. Furthermore, contrary to Ehrman, in such places where alternative readings occur *no major doctrines are at stake*. Hence Witherington said, "There is a reason that both Ehrman's mentor in text criticism and mine, Bruce Metzger, has said that there is nothing in these variants that really challenges any Christian belief: they don't. I would like to add that other experts in text criticism, such as Gordon Fee, have been equally emphatic about

suffer injury], that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the *Gospel of Judas*" (*Against Heresies* 1.XXXI.1).

³⁷ Witherington, *What Have They Done with Jesus?*, 8.

³⁸ Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace also noted, "These criticisms were made of his earlier major work, *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, from which *Misquoting Jesus* has drawn extensively. Yet, the conclusions that he put forth there are still stated here without recognition of some of the severe criticisms of his work the first go-around" (*Reinventing Jesus*, 112). For a complete bibliography of both of Ehrman's books, see note 25. See also chapter 10 where Bart D. Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus* was examined.

³⁹ Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 11.

⁴⁰ This topic was discussed in chapter 10. For answers to a similar argument, see Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus*, 65-73, 275.

⁴¹ Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 208.

⁴² See Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus*, 113-14.

the flawed nature of Ehrman's analysis of the significance of such textual variants."⁴³

In *The Jesus Dynasty* James D. Tabor sought to define the historical Jesus by postulating that Jesus' true royal dynasty continued through James, his brother, and not Paul (hence the book's title). Tabor claimed that Paul, not James, elevated Jesus to divinity.⁴⁴ Tabor used an inconsistent criterion in interpreting passages by choosing those that support his premise, ignoring those that do not, and superimposing his own meaning on others.⁴⁵

Tabor occupies a faculty position at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and is a trained theologian (with an interest in archaeology) who received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Chicago. Tabor has interesting and helpful archaeological information. His book was well written and easy to read. As Witherington wrote, "Absent from this study are wild theories about Gnostic gospels being our earliest and best sources about the life of Jesus. . . . Equally refreshing is Tabor's willingness to take serious the historical data not just in the synoptics but also in the Gospel of John."⁴⁶ However, this author shares the same concern as that of Evans who wrote, "I worry about nonexperts who read it and fail to see how tenuous some of the speculation and conclusions are."⁴⁷ Interestingly, though Tabor differed from Baigent and Brown on numerous points,⁴⁸ all three of them claimed that twenty-first-century theories

⁴³ Witherington, *What Have They Done with Jesus?*, 7. Since Ehrman studied in two locations—which teach the approach explained here—Evans was baffled by Ehrman's position and concluded: "I must admit that I am puzzled by all this. If not at Moody Bible Institute, then surely at Wheaton College, Ehrman must have become acquainted with a great number of textual variants in the biblical manuscripts. No student can earn a degree in Bible and not know this. Yet Bible students are not defecting in droves. I am also puzzled by Ehrman's line of reasoning. For the sake of argument, let's suppose that the scribal errors in the Bible manuscripts really do disprove verbal inspiration and inerrancy, so that the Bible really should be viewed as a *human book* and not as *God's words*. Would we lose everything as a result? No. Moderate and liberal Christians have held essentially this view for a century or more. The real issue centers on what God accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth" (*Fabricating Jesus*, 27-28). For more on Ehrman's position see *ibid.*, 28-33, and Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus*, 110-17. See also chapter 10 that discusses Ehrman's position further.

⁴⁴ Tabor, *Jesus Dynasty*, 273-74.

⁴⁵ Others have also noticed Tabor's dubious approach (Witherington, *What Have They Done with Jesus?*, 299-300; Evans, *Fabricating Jesus*, 217-20).

⁴⁶ Witherington, *What Have They Done with Jesus?*, 293.

⁴⁷ Evans, *Fabricating Jesus*, 217.

⁴⁸ Contrary to Baigent and Brown, Tabor admitted that Jesus could not have faked His death. He believes this event has biblical and historical support. Citing Mark 16:6; Matthew 28:1-7; and Luke 24:2-5, he concluded, "None of these theories appear to have any basis whatsoever in reliable historical sources. I think we need have no doubt that given Jesus' execution by Roman crucifixion he was truly *dead* and that his temporary place of burial was discovered to be empty shortly thereafter" (Tabor, *Jesus Dynasty*, 229-30, italics original). Of course, Tabor's citing the biblical account of the Resurrection does not mean he interpreted it as Jesus rising

are closer to the truth than the New Testament records written in the first century AD.

Since Tabor began with a premise that discounted the supernatural, many of Jesus' miracles were explained by natural means.⁴⁹ For example, he argued that Jesus could not have been born of a virgin since virgins do not bear children.⁵⁰ And Jesus could not have risen physically from the dead since dead people do not rise bodily. Tabor simply followed a philosophical bias called "uniformitarianism" (the present is the key to the past).⁵¹ His method of research to validate a biblical account is extremely flawed. Here are some examples. John the Baptist was also one of two Messiahs.⁵² But this position clearly contradicts the Baptist's own admission in John 1:20, "I am not the Christ." Tabor, however, failed to mention this text. This is not surprising since Tabor viewed numerous accounts in John's Gospel (especially accounts in chapters 1 and 3) as having been altered later by Christians.⁵³ When presenting evidence why Matthew's name appears in the Talpoit tomb along with Jesus' bones and therefore belonging to Jesus' family, Tabor accepted Luke's account as evidence that Mary's genealogy merged with the line of Levi, thereby showing how a person named Matthew could appear in Jesus' family tomb.⁵⁴ This shows how selective and inconsistent were his methods, and how his bias permeated the entire book. He repeatedly accepted one reading of a New Testament text above another without explanation.

While denying the virgin birth Tabor also believes Mary became illegitimately pregnant by a Roman soldier named Pantera, and that she ultimately had sex with not one but three men.⁵⁵ Part of Tabor's supposed evidence comes from a second-century philosopher named Celsus who wrote against Christianity, whose work *Contra Celsum*, was quoted in various places in a rebuttal by Origen, a church father of the third century AD. He also believes a tombstone inscription bearing the name Pantera discovered in 1859 in Bingerbrück, Germany, may possibly be the father of Jesus who at one time lived in Sidon. Hence he believes Mark 7:24 suggests why Jesus secretly visited that city ("And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it"). He also supported this by noting that some church fathers⁵⁶ accepted the point

physically. Instead he believes Jesus' body was moved to the city Tsfat outside of Galilee (ibid., 233-38).

⁴⁹Witherington also made the same observation (*What Have They Done with Jesus?* 293-295).

⁵⁰Tabor, *Jesus Dynasty*, 59.

⁵¹See note 19.

⁵²Tabor, *Jesus Dynasty*, 137, 243.

⁵³Ibid., 43, 135, 140.

⁵⁴Ibid., 56-57.

⁵⁵Ibid., 64-72, 76-77.

⁵⁶Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 78.VII.5; Epiphanius (AD 315-403).

about Pantera. Evans, however, said, “Tabor thinks this supports the historicity of the tradition. Otherwise, why would the church fathers such as Epiphanius take it so seriously? But Epiphanius and later Christian writers are simply trying to fend off slur, and to do so they throw out various proposals, some having more merit than the allegations themselves.” Indeed, Evans correctly concluded that one cannot allege from fourth-century rebuttals that an earlier tradition for Pantera proposed by Celsus existed other than the time that Celsus himself lived (in the second century AD).⁵⁷ Tabor has presented no archaeological evidence whatsoever to link Pantera to Jesus. Discovering a Roman tombstone and proposing various outlandish theories does not qualify as credible evidence. These are highly improbable views that go against all the enormous weight of evidence that tilt the scale in the other direction. Tabor also believes in a *spiritual* rather than a *physical* resurrection,⁵⁸ similar to what *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* documentary and *The Jesus Family Tomb* book claim.⁵⁹

Tabor accepted the premise of the *Jesus Seminar* (without mentioning it) that equally recognizes the second-century Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* as equal to or perhaps better than the other Gospels.⁶⁰ He suggested that there is a “cryptic” clue in Saying 105 that echoes Jesus’ illegitimate birth: “One who knows his father and his mother will be called *the son of a whore*.”⁶¹ It has been acknowledged by numerous scholars that the *Gospel of Thomas* was written too late (in the second half of the second-century AD) to give a clear picture of Jesus, is replete with mystic and condemned Gnostic teachings, and was never accepted as an apostolic Gospel, as the first four hundred years of church tradition clearly demonstrates.⁶² To be fair, however, Tabor did not believe all Gnostic accounts are equally valid since he considered the “Infancy Gospel” and other manuscripts that purport to have Jesus’ lost years as late and legendary (second to fourth centuries AD) and as being entertaining other than informative.⁶³ Tabor’s book has helpful archaeological information, but he

⁵⁷ Evans, *Fabricating Jesus*, 218.

⁵⁸ Tabor, *Jesus Dynasty*, 230-37.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 232. Interestingly, Tabor seemed to admit this. “In Judaism to claim that someone has been ‘raised from the dead’ is not the same as to claim that one has died and exists as a spirit or soul in the heavenly world. What the gospels claim about Jesus is that the tomb was empty, and that his dead body was revived.... He was not a phantom or a ghost, though he does seem to ‘materialize’ abruptly, and at times is first unrecognized, then suddenly recognized by those who saw him. But Paul seems to be willing to use the term ‘resurrection’ to refer to something akin to an apparition or vision” (*ibid.*).

⁶⁰ Concerning the *Gospel of Thomas*, he said: “It is clearly the most precious lost Christian document discovered in the last two thousand years” (*ibid.*, 63).

⁶¹ *Ibid.* (*italics original*).

⁶² Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel Code: Novel Claims about Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Da Vinci* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 96-109.

⁶³ Tabor, *Jesus Dynasty*, 86. However, he contradicted himself since he accepted the prior quotation from the *Gospel of Thomas* as a valid historical reference that he thought

failed miserably as a theologian-lawyer who presented a very weak case. Many of his theories are more than speculative and biased; they are unsubstantiated and incredible.

The Jesus Papers appears as Michael Baigent's latest book similar to his conspiracy-fraught tomes of the *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (1983) and *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* (1992). Baigent holds a M.A. degree in mysticism from the University of Kent in England. He claimed that Jesus survived the crucifixion and wrote a set of letters in AD 45 denying His deity. Baigent said these letters were buried for two thousand years and were finally unearthed in 1960 from a cellar in a house in Jerusalem. Baigent professed to have seen these letters that are lost today.⁶⁴ "What evidence does he have?" one may ask.

Baigent alleged that a number of people saw the letters, but he has not produced any evidence of such individuals. Why should anyone believe Baigent's story? Baigent admitted he does not read Aramaic.⁶⁵ However, he wanted everyone to believe that he knows for certain what the letters said. The only way he could know the contents of the letters is to have them translated. And if they were translated, how would he know if the translators were lying since only a few people were able to examine the contents of these alleged letters?

It is impossible for any papyrus letter to survive two thousand years in a cellar of a house in Jerusalem, as Evans correctly noted. "I might also mention that Baigent neglects to mention that archaeologists and papyrologists will tell you that no papyrus (plural: papyri) can survive buried in the ground, in Jerusalem, for two thousand years. The only papyrus documents that have survived from antiquity have been found in climates, such as the area surrounding the Dead Sea and the sands of Egypt. No ancient papyri have been found in Jerusalem itself. Jerusalem receives rainfall every year; papyri buried in the ground, beneath houses or wherever decompose quickly. So whatever Baigent saw, they were not ancient papyri found beneath somebody's house in Jerusalem, and they were not letters Jesus wrote."⁶⁶

If the other points are detrimental to Baigent's case, this last point entirely negates the bizarre assertion that Pilate conspired with Jesus to fake the crucifixion.⁶⁷ Why? It is because, as Witherington explained, "Baigent's work . . . requires that [he] explain away all the evidence we have from Paul (our earlier New Testament writer), from the canonical gospels, from Josephus, and

illuminated Jesus' illegitimate birth. He also accepted late traditions in other places as well (ibid., 64-72, 233-38). A similar observation was made by Witherington, *What Have They Done with Jesus?*, 230.

⁶⁴ Baigent, *Jesus Papers*, 269-70.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 269, 271.

⁶⁶ Evans, *Fabricating Jesus*, 216.

⁶⁷ Baigent, *Jesus Papers*, 126-32.

from Roman sources (such as Tacitus and the later Suetonius) that Jesus suffered the extreme penalty and died from crucifixion under and at the hands of Pontius Pilate.” Hence, “Not many people are taking seriously Baigent’s attempts at revisionist history. It goes against every shred of first-century evidence, Christian or otherwise, that we have about Jesus’s [*sic*] demise.”⁶⁸

The Lost Tomb of Jesus documentary and *The Jesus Family Tomb (JFT)* book were two recent attempts made to disprove that Jesus rose physically. In 1980, a family tomb was discovered in Talpiot, a suburb of Jerusalem, where Jesus’ name appears with five other biblical names related to Him in one way or another. On 26 February 2007, a major press release given by two well-known figures in the film industry claimed to have possibly discovered the lost family tomb of Jesus of Nazareth. Oscar-winning James Cameron (of the *Titanic* [1997] and director and producer of other blockbusters like *The Terminator*, *True Lies* [1984], *Aliens* [1986], *The Abyss* [1989], *Terminator 2* [1991]) and Emmy-winning Simcha Jacobovici together produced a documentary claiming Jesus’ family tomb was found.⁶⁹ This aired—not only nationally but also worldwide—on the Discovery Channel on Sunday, 4 March 2007, at primetime. The documentary drew millions of viewers. Also related to the documentary a (now *New York Times* best seller) book by Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino entitled *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Discovery, the Investigation, and the Evidence That Could Change History* was published by HarperSanFrancisco on 1 March 2007. Since then a year has passed. They have now renamed the subtitle, revised, and updated the book by adding comments by Jacobovici and answers to objections by James D. Tabor.⁷⁰

This news, however, does not surprise scholars—though it may shock the uniformed public—since this was yesterday’s news newly repackaged by savvy men. Since the Jesus family tomb was found in Talpiot, Jerusalem, in 1980 there was clearly no attempted cover-up, as they had implied, since media coverage and publications soon followed the discovery. Clearly the inscription name *Mariamne* does not refer to Mary Magdalene but to another Mary of the first century. Almost all scholars unanimously disagree with the documentary and book that this ossuary contained the bones of Mary Magdalene. Indeed, there are two better readings of this inscription that were not disclosed by the

⁶⁸ Witherington, *What Have They Done with Jesus?*, 7.

⁶⁹ James D. Tabor (of the *Jesus Dynasty* book) is a trained theologian on faculty at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte who also advised the team on historical and theological matters. Charles R. Pellegrino (a bestselling author of *Her Name, Titanic*) is a paleobiologist and documentary filmmaker who also aided Cameron and Jacobovici.

⁷⁰ Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Evidence Behind the Discovery No One Wanted to Find* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2007), 213–34. A thorough response to Tabor’s answers to objection are addressed in Appendix B of López, *Jesus Family Tomb Examined: Did Jesus Rise Physically?*, 269–75.

Jesus Family Tomb advocates. *Mariamne e Mara* could refer to the same person containing two names. Mara is a contraction for Martha and could be the second name.⁷¹ Steven J. Pfaan interpreted this inscription as two names belonging to two separate women. It was common to place the remains of more than one person in an ossuary.⁷² By this piece of their puzzle crumbling, the rest of their premise falls apart since all other pieces hinges on this one.

DNA testing disproving motherly kinship between the *Jesus son of Joseph* ossuary and the *Mariamne* ossuary does not prove anything since no other DNA testing was done to compare *Mariamne* with other ossuaries. Even more bizarre is considering that Jesus was married since no evidence exists to validate such a claim. Other possibilities concerning the DNA were not considered regarding the Jesus and *Mariamne* ossuaries, which hinder the documentary theory. *Mariamne* could be this Jesus' half-sister, cousin, or a beloved servant who was interred in the family tomb.

The tenth ossuary was never “missing.” Since Amos Kloner documented the ossuary as plain and non-inscribed, they treated it like other plain ossuaries by placing it outside the courtyard of the Israel Antiquities Authority and together with other plain ossuaries. Furthermore the statistical analysis is only as good as the assumption behind the formulas used to create it. That is, if one piece of the formula fails, it all falls apart. According to the *Jesus Family Tomb* proponents, *Mariamne* has to be Mary Magdalene. *Jesus son of Joseph* has to be Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus had to be married and fathered a son named Judah. Jose has to be Jesus' brother. Mary had to be His mother. Unfortunately for them, once other information was disclosed it showed the improbability of their hypothesis.

Judaism and the early Christian church also exhibited the common expectation of a future bodily resurrection. Hence the Gospel accounts that mention Jesus' resurrection should not be understood as speaking of a spiritual resurrection, especially when the Gospels record that Jesus ate and was touched by people. Interpreting Jesus' resurrection as spiritual misreads the very point Paul made in 1 Corinthians 15:44. Once *The Jesus Family Tomb* theory becomes exposed to careful scrutiny all Bible students will discover where the real conspiracy lies.

⁷¹ Amos Kloner, “A Tomb with Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem,” *Atiqot* 29 (1996): 17; Levy Yitzhak Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel*, eds. Ayala Sussmann and Peter Schertz (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1994), 222-23.

⁷² Stephen J. Pfaan, “Interview by Darrell L. Bock of Stephen J. Pfaan to Help Identify Inscriptions” [online] (accessed 4 April 2007) available from <http://media.bible.org/mp3/bock/profpfaan030807.mp3>.

CONCLUSION

The historical quest to disprove the biblical Jesus and search for His bones that started two thousand years ago continues to thrive today. Although many have tried redefining Jesus as He appears in the first-century AD as attested in the New Testament documents, the real increase of this attempt came after the Reformation, as seen in the ten philosophical approaches discussed earlier (inductivism, materialism, rationalism, deism, skepticism, agnosticism, romanticism, idealism, evolution, and existentialism). A number of books today have adopted one or more of these philosophies and sought to redefine the biblical Jesus through bizarre and radical theories void of any scholarly evidence. This is the current context and atmosphere where pastors, Bible students, professors, and families are being exposed. That is why now, more than ever, one must be prepared by discerning the *efforts to disprove the biblical Jesus*.

**THE PERSPICUITY OF SCRIPTURE: *Rehearsing the Testimony
from Christian History of Those Who Consistently Held to the View
as Foundational to Their Evangelical Hermeneutic***

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A survey of those evangelicals who have written concerning the history of hermeneutics will quickly reveal that most, if not all sources available in print today, cover the history of those who were, in the eyes of each evangelical historian at least, deficient in their hermeneutic approach to scriptures.¹ They seem to assume that the typical Old Catholic-Roman Catholic-Reformation record of Christian history best represents what Christ was doing in His church through the centuries since Pentecost. They assume a sort of evolution of Christian doctrine, requiring theological debates and ecumenical councils to clarify important dogmas, as if believers cannot easily see important dogmas in Scriptures.

However, such an assumption discounts two biblical truths about Christian history. One is the philosophy of history given by the wisdom of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 1:9-11.

That which has been *is* what will be,
That which *is* done is what will be done,
And *there is* nothing new under the sun.
Is there anything of which it may be said,
“See, this *is* new”?
It has already been in ancient times before us.
There is no remembrance of former *things*,
Nor will there be any remembrance of *things* that are to come
By *those* who will come after.²

It would be consistent with this wisdom to expect that each generation would live though, in the main, similar expressions of the normal human experience as recorded by Solomon in the rest of the book of Ecclesiastes. History would be cyclical not evolutionary. In relation to church history, one

¹ Farrar provided a good illustration of an evangelical historian of hermeneutics who viewed all before him and his age as deficient. He introduced his work by saying, “We shall see system after system—the Halakhic, the Kabbalistic, the Traditional, the Hierarchic, the Inferential, the Allegorical, the Dogmatic, the Naturalistic—condemned and rejected, each in turn, by the experience and widening knowledge of mankind” [Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1886), xi].

² Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the *New King James Version* (NKJV), 1982.

would then expect that cycles of revival, ritualization, reform and revival again would be the norm until Jesus returns.

A second biblical truth is that Christ has not failed in His promise to build His church (Matt 16:18), including the corollary truth that He is faithfully giving to it gifted men who train the saints with sound doctrine (Eph 4:11-16). Since this corollary also must be true, Christian history should be traced by the lives and ministries of such men who rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Tim 2:15), and not traced by those entangled in political intrigue and with a false gospel. The men who Christ gave in each century since Pentecost, like the apostles, would have understood clearly Scripture's teaching concerning the essentials of the Gospel for salvation and the essentials of sound doctrine for growing in grace. They would have held to the hermeneutic tenet, the perspicuity of Scripture, which underlies the grammatical, contextual hermeneutics of evangelicalism.

Other examples throughout Christian history could be given of those who taught that the Holy Scriptures are clear enough in essential faith matters. This article has selected to provide briefly the testimony concerning the perspicuity of Scripture as held by 1) the Apostle Paul, 2) the pre-Nicene presbyter, Irenaeus, 3) the Armenian sect of the early Middle Ages, the Paulicians, 4) the pre-Reformation preacher, Peter de Bruys, and 5) the reformation Baptist, Balthasar Hubmaier. It is not the design of this study to do a thorough expose of Scriptures' teaching concerning its own perspicuity.³ Moreover, for the purpose of this historical survey, the working definition for the perspicuity of Scripture will be as follows: "Scripture is clear enough that the ordinary believer can read and understand it by observing the grammatical and historical elements of the text."⁴

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

The Apostle Paul was responsible for approximately 25% of the New Testament Scriptures (excluding the Book of Hebrews). His thirteen epistles give a fair view of his attitude toward the perspicuity of other written revelation from God, which he had at his disposal, including not only the Old Testament writings of the prophets, but also what was becoming available as New Testament Scriptures. He also demonstrated that he assumed the perspicuity of his own writings (i.e. his own contribution to the corpus of Scriptures).

³ For an excellent article providing a good start to begin research for such an expose, and which includes a brief historical summary of some of the debate concerning the doctrine of perspicuity, see Larry D. Pettegrew, "The Perspicuity of Scripture," *The Masters Seminary Journal* 15 (Fall 2004): 209-25.

⁴ J. Terry Young, "Bible, History of Interpretation," *Holman Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Trent C. Butler (Nashville: Holman, 1991) (Electronic Edition, Parsons Technology, Inc., 1998).

Paul quoted from the Old Testament over 90 times.⁵ Such quotation is about one third of all the quotations that the New Testament records from the Old Testament. However, he recognized too that the writings of other apostles, along with his own, were being added as inspired Scriptures (cf. 1 Tim 5:18; 1 Cor 14:37; 15:3-4; Eph 3:1-3). In one particular passage, Paul quoted from both the Old Testament and New Testament to reinforce his teaching concerning the financial support of eldership in the church. In 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Paul said, “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, “*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,*” and, “The laborer *is* worthy of his wages” (the first quote is from Deuteronomy 25:4 and the second from Luke 10:7).

This instance demonstrates a fine example of the appropriate use and understanding of both the Old and New Testaments for believers living in today’s dispensation. Commands from the Old Testament Mosaic covenant have only an indirect, secondary use, and have become a source of complementary principles to New Testament commands. New Testament commands of Christ given through his disciples are primary, and are to be plainly understood and obeyed (cf. Matt 28:20). Paul could not have drawn upon those two quotations for support unless he expected Timothy to clearly see their connection with what he was teaching him. Paul was using these two texts as support in a perspicacious manner to help him make his point because he believed in the perspicuity of Scripture. All New Testament passages, in fact, that quote from Old Testament passages without adding further explanation are apostolic evidence to their belief in the perspicuity of those Scriptures.

The Apostle Paul addressed the issue of perspicuity of God’s revelation directly in a number of key passages. He admitted that knowledge and prophecy concerning such revelation is only partial until “that which is perfect” arrives (1 Cor 13:9). Yet partial revelation does not necessitate ambiguity in what is partially revealed, but it does confirm that Paul believed that the Scripture does not deal with every issue comprehensively. Moreover, it must be conceded that what is left unrevealed allows for speculation, and speculation itself is by nature unsubstantiated and therefore ambiguous (even though many scholars like to pretend that their speculations are clear and dogmatic). In the same context, Paul added, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face” (13:12). This statement especially appears to counter the view of a perspicacious revelation in Scripture. The translation of this verse, however, is

⁵ Hulitt Gloer, “Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament,” *Holman Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Trent C. Butler (Nashville: Holman, 1991) (Electronic Edition, Parsons Technology, Inc., 1998).

somewhat deficient, for it is better understood as “now we see through a glass, at an enigma” (or a puzzle).

And though Scripture, by the nature of its composition over many centuries, by various authors, addressing various contexts, does not present a systematic development of God’s truth, a composite picture of what God has revealed on any subject relating to life and faith can be assessed through the diligent study of the major morphemes related to each subject. Greater clarity of biblical truth would also come when biblical counsel is practiced in life, for some understanding only comes through experience. So, though the Apostle Peter admitted that some of the Apostle Paul’s epistles have “some things hard to understand” (2 Pet 3:16), Peter related the misunderstanding of such contexts not to Paul’s lack of perspicuity in writing, but to some readers’ lack of education and lack of willingness to submit to what Paul has taught. A child cannot understand an adult textbook without knowing the vocabulary and context. A rebel cannot understand the realities of faith without submitting to them. The Apostle Paul said clearly about the perspicacious nature of his writing—“For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end” (2 Cor 1:13). Some of his writings may be hard to understand, but they are not impossible to understand.

THE PRE-NICENE TESTIMONY OF IRENAEUS

The apostolic age had not even ended and there were those who already were twisting Paul’s epistles and other Scriptures “to their own destruction” (2 Pet 3:16). In addition to indicating that these false teachers were misunderstanding and mishandling the Words of God, Peter intimated that Scriptures taken in a normal, untwisted, and clear fashion would provide the necessary understanding for salvation and Christian experience. After the apostolic age, these two paths, the one with a literal hermeneutic and the other with a non-literal hermeneutic, would continue to be traveled. As previously mentioned, evangelical Christian history has typically preserved, until the Reformation period, the writings of those who traveled the direction of a non-literal, non-normal hermeneutic (e.g. based upon the allegorization principles of Origen, Augustine, and Aquinas). However, there have always been those who traveled the other path of the normal hermeneutic, based upon grammar and context. Irenaeus, a presbyter from the Province of Gaul, was one such pre-Nicene traveler.

When it is assumed that the integrity of Irenaeus’ message was truly preserved, his main writing, *Against Heresies*, becomes a significant inside view of the theological and hermeneutic battles that raged among professing Christians during the last quarter of the second century. Irenaeus used the

battlefield of theology proper in which to confront the main competing doctrinal system of his day, which was known as Gnosticism. Especially in his first two books, Irenaeus demonstrated his thorough understanding of the Gnostic theology. Then in each of the remaining three books, relying upon the perspicuity of the Scriptures, his grasp of apostolic tradition, and his reason, Irenaeus exposed the inconsistency of anyone trying to call Gnostic teachings about God and Jesus Christ truly Christian.

When the use of these three weapons (Scriptures, apostolic tradition, and reason) are traced through the five books of *Against Heresies*, one will soon see that it is the Scripture that is for Irenaeus the main authority with which he fought the Gnostic heresy. Some may find it surprising how this second century presbyter from Gaul had such a fully developed view of Scriptural authority and such a comprehensive grasp of Scriptural material, especially the New Testament Gospels and Epistles. He actually used the term “New Testament” four different times to describe comprehensively the corpus of apostolic writings.⁶ It is clear that Irenaeus knew and used an apparently fixed, well-defined collection of New Testament apostolic writings, to which nothing may be added and from which nothing is to be deleted.⁷ “Irenaeus uses every book in the New Testament, except Philemon and III John.”⁸ Additionally, he mentioned by name the authors of each of the four Gospels.

When quoting or alluding to each of the “epistles” of Paul, Irenaeus often utilized the name of its receiver (e.g. Galatians, Romans, Corinthians, etc.). All of this shows that Irenaeus had easy access to the study of these writings, and that the gospels and “apostolical epistles,”⁹ as he called them, were recognizable as Scriptures not only to him, but also were increasing in their use, as Christianity was spreading. For Irenaeus, the Scriptures indeed were most important in his defense of the truth, for they were to him “the Sacred Scriptures,”¹⁰ “the authoritative Scriptures,”¹¹ “divine Scriptures,”¹² and

⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.XV.2, 4.XVII.5, 4.XXVIII.2, 5.XXXIV.1 [online](Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed 28 July 2008) available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.toc.html>. Some may argue understandably that the context in 4.XVII.5 renders the use of “New Testament” at that place to refer to the new covenant of God with man through Christ’s substitutionary atonement and reaffirmed at the Lord’s Table.

⁷ Ellen Flesseman-Van Leer, *Tradition and Scripture in the Early Church* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Company, 1954), 132. Reference is there made to 5.XXX.1, which reads, “there shall be no light punishment [inflicted] upon him who either adds or subtracts anything from the Scripture. . . .”

⁸ John McRay, “Scripture and Tradition in Irenaeus,” *The Restoration Quarterly* 10 (1967): 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2.XXVII.1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.XXX.6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2.XXXIV.4.

“the ground and pillar of our faith.”¹³ It is especially this last attribution which Irenaeus gave to the Scripture (“the pillar and ground of our faith”) where he demonstrated clearly his view that Scripture is a basic and final authority.

The context of this important phrase is at the beginning of Irenaeus’ third book. In the prologue of this book he stated his clear purpose for it.

But in this, the third book I shall adduce proofs from the Scriptures, so that I may come behind in nothing of what thou hast enjoined; yea, that over and above what thou didst reckon upon, thou mayest receive from me the means of combating and vanquishing those who, in whatever manner, are propagating falsehood.¹⁴

For Irenaeus, the sufficiency and invincibility of these proofs are because their derivation is from an infallible source that is also perspicuous, even to unbelieving Gnostics (that source is the Sacred Scriptures). The Gnostics too utilized the Scriptures as an authority from which to “derive proofs for their opinions.”¹⁵ Irenaeus described their hermeneutic method as follows:

They gather their views from other sources than the Scriptures; and, to use a common proverb, they strive to weave ropes of sand, while they endeavour to adapt with an air of probability to their own peculiar assertions the parables of the Lord, the sayings of the prophets, and the words of the apostles, in order that their scheme may not seem altogether without support. In doing so, however, they disregard the order and the connection of the Scriptures, and so far as in them lies, dismember and destroy the truth.¹⁶

For by the fact that they thus endeavour to explain ambiguous passages of Scripture (ambiguous, however, not as if referring to another god, but as regards the dispensations of [the true] God), they have constructed another god, weaving, as I said before, ropes of sand, and affixing a more important to a less important question. For no question can be solved by means of another which itself awaits solution; nor, in the opinion of those possessed of sense, can an ambiguity be explained by means of another ambiguity, or enigmas by means of another greater enigma, but things of such character receive their solution from those which are manifest, and consistent and clear.¹⁷

With his denunciation of this Gnostic hermeneutic method, Irenaeus began to reveal his own. Scripture for him has “order” and “connection,” and though it has ambiguities, resolution for these are found only in passages which are “consistent and clear.” Such an understanding of the perspicuity of Scripture is not just for believers, for he said, “. . . the entire Scriptures, the prophets, and the gospels, can be clearly, unambiguously, and harmoniously

¹³ Ibid., 3.I.1.

¹⁴ Ibid., 3. Preface.

¹⁵ Ibid., 1.III.6.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1.VIII.1.

¹⁷ Ibid., 2.XI.

understood by all, although all do not believe them.”¹⁸

However, for Irenaeus, though Scriptures “can be . . . understood by all,” the discovery of this understanding takes time and effort. It is to be facilitated by a “sound mind,”¹⁹ “daily study,”²⁰ a personal heart commitment to Jesus Christ,²¹ and a dialogue “with those who are presbyters in the church, among whom is the apostolic doctrine.”²² And even with all this aid, Irenaeus recognized that some of Scripture’s ambiguities must be left “in the hands of God, and that not only in the present world, but also in that which is to come, so that God should for ever teach, and man should ever learn the things taught by God.”²³

This mention of the benefits of a “sound mind” and “presbyters . . . [with] the apostolic doctrine,” are good examples of how Irenaeus viewed reason and tradition in relation to the Scriptures. They were important, but they were only confirmatory testimonies to the clarity and authority of the Scriptures. The Gnostics had twisted the Scriptures “from a natural to a non-natural sense.”²⁴ Irenaeus demonstrated that sentences and thoughts, as any other writings, need to be kept in their proper context. To remove them from these various contexts enables these heretics to “bring forward any kind of hypothesis they fancy.”²⁵ He illustrated this by utilizing verses divorced from various contexts in Homer and strung together to support a new understanding that is much different than the meaning found in their original positions.²⁶

The hermeneutical principle of perspicuity survived in Gaul beyond Irenaeus’ time, and will certainly require more research, but a cursory investigation of certain non-magisterial, non-sacramental groups in Spain (e.g. Priscillianists, and the British Isles; the Celtic Christians, and even in Gaul; the Cathari), uncover medieval testimonies to those who had a simple faith in a normal understanding of Scripture, without any necessary hierarchal or

¹⁸ Ibid., 2.XXVII.2.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2.XXVII.1.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 4.XXXII.1. This commitment is stated as “this man will first of all ‘hold the head [that is Christ], from which the whole body is compacted and bound together, and, through means of every joint according to the measure of the ministration of each several part, maketh increase of the body to the edification of itself in love.’” See also 1.IX.4. where Irenaeus most likely was referring to the Scriptural truths about Christ that a convert receives and confesses publicly himself at his baptism.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 2.XXVIII.3. Irenaeus had just affirmed in the preceding paragraph that there is no deficiency in the Scriptures because of these ambiguities. Neither should their existence cause the things clearly about God revealed in Scriptures to be replaced by a search “after any other god.”

²⁴ Ibid., 1.IX.4.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

ecclesiastical interpretation.

THE PAULICIAN TESTIMONY FROM THE MIDDLE AGES

On the eastern outposts of the Roman Empire, other non-catholic groups were surviving beyond the ostracization of the Council of Nicene. They also were maintaining a hermeneutic that maintained an apostolic evangelicalism, based on a perspicacious view of the Scriptures. One such group was the Paulicians. J. G. G. Norman summarized their identity as an “evangelical anti-hierarchal sect originating in the seventh century (possibly earlier) on Rome’s eastern borders in Armenia, Mesopotamia and N Syria.”²⁷ Concerning their history, he wrote:

Their founder was probably Constantine-Sylvanus (c.640) of Mananali, a Manichaean village near Samosata, who labored at Cibossa for twenty-seven years before being stoned to death (c.684). His persecutor, Simeon, was himself converted and became Constantine’s successor, only to be martyred (690). The sect was protected by Emperor Constantine Copronymus (741-775), himself probably a Paulician. Numbers increased greatly, especially under Sergius-Tychicus (801-35). Savage persecution under Empress Theodora (842-75), in which some 100,000 were martyred, developed into a war of extermination. . . .

In 973 John Zimisce transported a great colony to Thrace, effectually introducing their thought to Europe. They continued to exist in scattered communities in Armenia, Asia Minor, and the Balkans, influential at least until the twelfth century, even spreading to Italy and France. Probably they developed into and amalgamated with sects like the Bogomiles, Cathari, and Albigenses.²⁸

Most of what has been preserved concerning them is in the testimony of their enemies from Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. This testimony of them as a heretical Manichaean or Marcion sect is suspect, though still widely held today, even among evangelicals.²⁹ Though their writings were systematically destroyed when discovered, a manual representing what their church polity may have generally been through the centuries of their influence in the Middle Ages was recovered at the end of the nineteenth century. It was

²⁷ J. G. G. Norman, “Paulicians,” in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 755.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Though introducing them as “evangelical,” Norman accused them of “rejecting the OT, like Marcion.” He added, “Some, but not all, were dualists, though they repudiated Manichaeism” (Ibid.). Philip Schaff, whose church history was standard during the twentieth century called the Paulicians a “radical heretical sect . . . essentially dualistic, like the ancient Gnostics and Manichaeans, and hence their Catholic opponents called them by the convenient and hated name of New Manichaeans; though the system of the Paulicians has more affinity with that of Marcion” (*History of the Christian Church* [Cedar Rapids, IO: Parsons Technology 1999] [Electronic Edition STEP Files, Parsons Technology, Inc., 1998], 4:12.131).

translated and critiqued impartially by the Oxford fellow, Fred. C. Conybeare, who was a skeptic towards Christianity, though not the historicity of Christ.³⁰

The manual was called *The Key of Truth*, and it provided an opportunity for the Paulicians to present what they believed in their own words, and especially demonstrated how they based those beliefs upon a normal interpretation of the Scripture—an interpretation possible only because of the Scripture’s perspicuity. Though *The Key of Truth* presents an Adoptionist Christology, and a soteriology that seems somewhat sacramental (as most modern Protestantism), it emphasized repeatedly the evangelical necessity of personal repentance and faith before salvation can be received. For instance, the manual began with a lengthy discussion concerning the necessity of repentance and faith.

St. John [the Baptist], firstly preached unto them; secondly taught; thirdly, induced them to repent; fourthly, brought them to the faith; and after that cleansed them in the flesh from stains. And then our Lord and Intercessor, the Lamb of God. Bestowed on them spiritual salvation. Thus the universal and apostolic church learned from our Lord Jesus, and continued so to do, as is clear in their Acts and especially in the traditions of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which he imposes on the universal and apostolic church, saying, Mark xvi. 15: “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creatures. Whoever shall believe, shall be baptized, shall live; and he who shall not believe, shall be judged.”³¹

Note how the Paulician document stated, “as is clear in their Acts and especially in the traditions of our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Their view of the perspicuity of Scripture concerning, at least the Gospel of salvation, is self-evident.

A number of the pages and whole chapters are missing from this important orphaned witness of Paulician doctrine in their words, but enough is available to counter some of the main accusations that are still being leveled against them concerning their view of Holy Scripture. The common view of both Roman Catholic and Protestant scholarship is “the Paulicians accepted the four Gospels, fourteen Epistles of Paul [which included Hebrews], the three Epistles of John, James, Jude, and the Epistle to the Laodiceans, which they professed to have.”³² “They rejected the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament.”³³

³⁰ R. E. Nixon, “Conybeare, Frederick Cornwallis,” in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 260.

³¹ Frederick C. Conybeare, trans. and ed., *The Key of Truth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898) (unabridged facsimile edition, *Elibron Classics Series* [Adamant Media, 2004]), 72-73.

³² Johann Jakob Herzog, “Paulicians,” in *A Religious Encyclopedia or Dictionary of Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal, and Practical Theology*, 3rd ed., ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1894), 2:1776-77, as cited at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paulicians>.

³³ *Ibid.*

“They rejected St. Peter’s epistles because he had denied Christ.”³⁴ *The Key of Truth*, however, gave two explicit quotations from 1 Peter, both used perspicuously in support of their doctrine.

The first, in reference to their belief about Satan, was a quote from 1 Peter 5:8 and introduced with the following: “And a member of the holy universal and apostolic church, St. Peter, in his first catholic Epistle saith. . . .”³⁵ The second quote from Peter’s epistle was to be used during the prayer of ordination, taken from 1 Peter 5:2 and it was introduced similarly as the other quotation just given.³⁶ It is obvious from this evidence that the Paulicians recognized and used the Epistles of Peter as Holy Scripture. They also believed in the Old Testament revelation as God’s Word. One important passage not only demonstrates this but also stands in utter contrast to the view that Paulicians were dualists, Gnostic, or Marcionites.

In a section entitled, “Concerning the Creation of Adam,” one reads:

First, the heavenly Father, the true God, fashioned (or created) the heavens with all that belongs thereto, and the earth with all its kinds; he equipped them. As is clear in the inspiration of God (i.e. in the inspired Scriptures). Again, the benevolent God, seeing that all things were good, was pleased to make a king over all beings . . . as is proved by the sense of the word which says: ‘Let us make man in our image and likeness.’ Thus in a twinkle of an eye he, by a single word, fashioned heaven and earth. But also by a single word he fashioned (or created) the old Adam, made him king and ruler of all creatures.³⁷

It is thus evident that Paulicians regarded the Old Testament as “inspired” and the God of the Old Testament as “benevolent.” It is also apparent that they interpreted this one passage literally, with no indication of allegorical nuance. It must be conceded that what remains from *The Key of Truth* does not quote from the Old Testament anywhere else, though it references other Old Testament figures and events as historical.³⁸ However, it must be noted that this document is missing large portions that may have included other Old Testament quotations. Additionally, it was a manual of church polity, which naturally would be primarily concerned with New Testament instruction, since the foundation of the church was not laid until Christ began it by His Spirit with His apostles at Pentecost (cf. Acts 11:15-16). However, what is more certain is the theory that the Paulicians were a good witness throughout the Middle Ages of those who held to a Scripture whose

³⁴ Adrian Fortescue, “Paulicians,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* [online] (New Advent, accessed 8 December 2007) available from <http://newadvent.org/cathen/11583b.htm>.

³⁵ Conybeare, *Key of Truth*, 83

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 118, 121.

Gospel truth could be clearly understood by a normal reading and natural interpretation.

THE PRE-REFORMATION TESTIMONY OF PETER OF BRUYS

Most Protestant church histories refer to John Wycliffe as the “Morning Star of the Reformation,” and the first to promote *Sola Scriptura* for the interpretation of Christian doctrine. Robert Clouse illustrated,

He has been called “the Morning Star of the Reformation.” Certainly his belief that the Bible was the only authoritative guide for faith and practice would substantiate this claim. In other ways he was a proto-Protestant. He denied transubstantiation, attacked the institution of the papacy, repudiated indulgences, and wished to have religious orders abolished.³⁹

It would require another article to critique the reasoning behind the wholesale rejection by major ecclesiastical historians that any non-Roman Catholic, or ex-Roman Catholic, baptistic evangelical testimony existed before the Reformation period. False accusations aside, however, it appears the followers of Peter of Bruys were such a testimony, a whole two centuries before John Wycliffe.

Regarding Peter of Bruys, *The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church* stated that he was a

medieval dissenter and originator of the Petrobrusians. Born at Bruis in southeastern France in the middle or latter part of the eleventh century. Appeared as a reformer in the Roman Catholic church about 1105. A pupil of Peter Abelard. Peter’s chief aim seems to have been to restore Christianity to its original purity and simplicity. Rejected infant baptism, transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the mass, church buildings, ecclesiastical ceremonies, the veneration of the cross, and prayers for the dead. About 1140 seized and burned at St. Gilles as a heretic. After his death his followers joined Henry of Lausanne, the so-called Henricans, all of whom were later absorbed by the more widespread and better organized Waldenses.⁴⁰

Unfortunately no writings, which could be attributed to Peter of Bruys, have survived. Knowledge of his teaching is based mainly upon one treatise by his contemporary Roman Catholic antagonist, Peter of Cluny, known as Peter the Venerable. Even finding a translation of this other Peter’s Latin tractate, *Contra Petrobrusianos Hereticos*, in English is very difficult. Baptist historian William Cathcart, provided what appears to be his own translation of the most

³⁹ Robert Clouse, “Wycliffe,” in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 1064.

⁴⁰ Elgin Moyer, “Peter of Bruys,” in *The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church*, ed. Earle E. Cairns (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 322.

important accusations from Peter the Venerable's view of Peter of Bruy's teaching.

The importance of preserving and providing such a testimony in English for today necessitates that the core of Cathcart's translation of Peter the Venerable be reproduced within the context Cathcart gave to it.

At the beginning of his pamphlet he [Peter the Venerable] states the five heads of the heresy of the Petrobrusians. In the first he accuses them of "denying that little children under years of responsibility can be saved by the baptism of Christ; and that the faith of another (*alien am fidem*, the faith demanded from popish sponsors when a child was christened) could benefit those who were unable to exercise their own (faith); because, according to them, not another's faith, but personal faith, saves with baptism, the Lord saying, 'He who shall believe, and be baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned.'" This is the abbot's first and heaviest charge against these ancient Baptists. This accusation means that the Petrobrusians refused to baptize children because they were destitute of faith. The charge is repeated frequently by the abbot of Cluny.

"The second *capitulum* says that temples or churches should not be built, and that those existing should be torn down; that sacred places for praying were unnecessary for Christians, since God when addressed in supplication heard equally those who in a warehouse and in a church deserved his attention, in a market-place and in a temple, before an altar or before a stable."

By this we understand that the Petrobrusians did not believe in the sanctity of bricks and mortar, and probably thought that as Romish churches were nests of idols and scenes of blasphemous superstition, their destruction would be no crime.

"The third *capitulum* requires holy crosses to be broken and burned, because that frame, or instrument, on which Christ, so fiercely tortured, was so cruelly slain, is not worthy of adoration, or veneration, or of any supplication; but to avenge his torments and death, it should be branded with disgrace, hacked to pieces with the sword, and consumed in the flames."

The Petrobrusians detested the worship of the crucifix, and prayers offered to it, and, like the Scotch Covenanters, they urged its destruction as a Christ-dishonoring idol.

"The fourth *capitulum* denied not only the reality of the body and blood of the Lord, as offered daily and constantly in the sacrament (Eucharist) in the church; but judged that it was absolutely nothing, and should not be offered to God." In this opinion all Protestants concur.

"The fifth *capitulum* holds up to ridicule sacrifices, prayers, charitable gifts, and the other good works performed by the faithful living for the faithful departed." Peter then states that he had answered "these five heads," or heresies, "as God had enabled him." He might have added a sixth *capitulum*, that the Petrobrusians wanted Scripture for everything and not the sayings of the fathers. This is admitted in his discussion of their errors.⁴¹

That the Petrobrusian doctrine was evangelical is clear. That such doctrine is based on a normal reading of Scriptures without the need for

⁴¹ "Petrobrusians," in *The Baptist Encyclopaedia*, 3 vols., ed. William Cathcart (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881; reprint, Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2001), 2:912-13.

allegorical or traditional explanation is also clear. This is what the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture concerns, and the Petrobrusians appear to be a pre-Reformation witness to it. It would be helpful if all Peter the Venerable's critique were available to see more fully, at least from the opinion of their enemy, and how they depended only upon the Scriptures for the defense of their beliefs.

THE REFORMATION TESTIMONY OF BALTHASAR HUBMAIER

The so-called Reformation period of the sixteenth century was a time when the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* was being widely presented and debated. Many now esteem Luther, Zwingli and Calvin from that period as the premiere champions of Scripture's "last word" in matters of faith and doctrine. However, a closer examination will reveal that Balthasar Hubmaier's was at least equal to their strength in promoting the final authority of God's Word for man's life. One may easily conclude from his writings that Hubmaier was perhaps even more consistent in his understanding of the Bible than these better-known theologians of that time.

Hubmaier understood *sola Scriptura* seriously, even more than Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, as is especially seen in his whole-hearted commitment to the biblical doctrine of believer's baptism. Balthasar soon found himself in the vice of persecution, being squeezed by Reformers on the one side and Catholics on the other. Instead of providing Hubmaier with more years to continue writing excellent Biblical exposition like those that have survived, God chose to write Hubmaier's testimony indelibly into the pages of history by the flames of martyrdom which consumed his body at Vienna, 10 March 1528. "Three days later, his wife who had followed him faithfully in all his wanderings, was quietly drowned in the Danube as a heretic."⁴²

In the course of writing many of his treatises, many which were of an apologetic nature, Hubmaier scattered thoughts on how the Scriptures should be interpreted. These thoughts on interpretation can be categorized into eight basic rules.

1. Perspicuity - "illuminating the darker texts of Scripture with the clearer."⁴³
2. Simplicity - "present the text in the simplest way of all."⁴⁴
3. Humility - "only looks to God, beseeches him for understanding, judges for himself according to his simple Word."⁴⁵

⁴² G. R. Potter, "Anabaptist Extraordinary Balthasar Hubmaier, 1480-1528," *History Today* 26 (June 1976): 381.

⁴³ Balthasar Hubmaier, *Classics of the Radical Reformation*, trans. and ed. H. Wayne Pipkin and John H. Yoder (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), 53; cf. 105, 119, 322.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 112; cf. 113, 190.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 321.

4. Compilation - “sets all the Scriptures of one kind of matter wholly and completely together, and after that, to introduce a perfect final judgment.”⁴⁶
5. Value - “let the Scriptures of both Peter and Paul remain in equal weight teaching, truth, power, and effect.”⁴⁷
6. Preponderance - “the exceptional case does not rob the general truth of the Scriptures.”⁴⁸
7. Progressive Revelation - “there is now a higher stage in the New Testament than in the Old.”⁴⁹
8. Contextual Agreement - “place the preceding and the following words together into a whole judgment, so that you then obtain a perfect understanding of the Scriptures.”⁵⁰

The first rule listed is perhaps the main tool of interpretation that Hubmaier used, for he constantly referred to his arguments as having been based upon “clear Scriptures” or the “bright and clear Word of God”.⁵¹ He also rebuked his rivals for arguing against him with “no clear Scripture” or “no clear Word of God”.⁵²

How such a man of the Word could be so maligned, tortured, and then murdered by those that profess to follow Christ and profess to follow that same Word is unconscionable! Even modern non-Baptist historians of Christianity still malign him, or at least they relegate Hubmaier to the so-called “Radical Wing” of the Reformation. The following is an overview of this typical opinion.

- *The Catholic Encyclopedia* – “Like Luther, Zwingli, the originator of the Reformation in Switzerland, soon found more radical competitors. In 1525 some of his associates separated from him and preached rebaptism and communism. The party found two capable leaders in John Denk and Balthasar Hubmaier.”⁵³
- *MSN Encarta* – “In the early 1520s, several religious leaders began to preach against Church and social practices in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria. Among them were the Zurich-born Konrad Grebel, the Bavarian Hans Denck, and the German Balthasar Hubmaier. Somewhat younger than Zwingli and Luther, they were caught up in the wars of the peasants and of the empire under the Habsburgs. . . . Because they rejected the hierarchy of the Church and the authority of civil

⁴⁶ Ibid., 327; cf. 428, 489-90, 514.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 369.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 486.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 508.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 517.

⁵¹ Ibid., 181, 92; cf. 24, 25, 26, 34, 39, 80, 98, 134, 148, 180, 223, 277, 280, 390, 425, 433, 484.

⁵² Ibid., 162, 258; cf. 174, 180, 181, 185.

⁵³ N. A. Weber, “Anabaptist,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols., ed. Charles G. Herbermann, et al. (New York: Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1913), 1:446.

bodies in religious matters, they were accused of sedition and heresy, persecuted, and often martyred.”⁵⁴

- *The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church* – “. . . [Hubmaier] wholeheartedly joined the Anabaptist movement in 1523. Entered sympathetic agreement with Thomas Muntzer who kindled the Peasants’ War, also became a profound mystic. . . . The Zwinglians, as well as the Catholics, strongly opposed him and his radical movement.”⁵⁵
- *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (atypical positive reference) – “The most biblical Anabaptism appeared and flourished in . . . south Germany, where Balthasar Hubmaier and Hans Denck were leaders.”⁵⁶

What is unfortunate to note also is that the recent popular “church” histories by Justo L. Gonzales and Bruce L. Shelly do not even mention Balthasar Hubmaier once. If twentieth century “church” historians can dismiss an influential and biblical evangelical preacher who had a following of thousands,⁵⁷ how many such faithful witnesses like Hubmaier may have truly existed in each century before him?

It is time for all current evangelicals who believe and practice the biblical teaching of believer’s baptism to reclaim Balthasar Hubmaier’s testimony as an important minister of God’s Word during the sixteenth century, and a more faithful witness to *sola Scriptura* and the perspicuity of Scripture than even the famed Luther, Zwingli and Calvin. As Eddie Mabry remarked:

Scripture for Hubmaier, as for Luther and Zwingli, was the only authority for faith and practice in the church. However, Hubmaier’s use of scriptural authority is not quite the same as that of the other two reformers. Hubmaier has a somewhat of a Taborite view of Scriptural authority. In order for any doctrine or practice to be valid, it must be obviously and clearly stated in, or supported by, Scripture. The doctrine has to be plainly stated on the pages of Scripture, or it cannot be taught or practiced. . . . He does not use the dialogic [sic] style of Anslem, the *sic et non* dialectic style of Peter Abelard, or the question-objection-response style of St. Thomas Aquinas. Hubmaier, rather, uses the proposition-proof style of the medieval preacher. He presents his propositions, then draws his proof from the Scripture (and from Scripture only, and not from the Scripture and the Fathers or doctors of the Church).⁵⁸

⁵⁴ “Anabaptists” [online] (MSN Encarta, accessed 28 July 2008) available from http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761565611/anabaptists.html.

⁵⁵ “Hubmaier, Balthasar,” in *The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church*, eds. Elgin Moyer and Earle E. Cairns (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 197.

⁵⁶ Robert Clouse, “Anabaptists,” in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 38.

⁵⁷ E. H. Broadbent recorded, “in Nikolsburg, in Moravia, Hubmeyer was very active as a writer, printing some sixteen books. During his short stay in the district about 6,000 persons were baptized and the numbers in the churches rose to 15,000 members” (*The Pilgrim Church* [Grand Rapids: Gospel Folio, 1999], 175).

⁵⁸ Eddie Mabry, *Hubmaier’s Understanding of Faith* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1998), 27ff.

When it came to baptism, Luther violated his own *sola Scriptura* stance. He said, “There is not sufficient evidence from Scripture that one might justify the introduction of infant baptism at the time of the early Christians after the apostolic period. . . . But so much is evident, that no one may venture with a good conscience to reject or abandon infant baptism, which has for so long a time been practiced.”⁵⁹

Zwingli also violated his view of *sola Scriptura* concerning baptism when he said, “Infants could not listen [to the word], but it does not follow that consequently they were not baptized. We have nowhere the prohibition not to baptize infants of believers unless they hear and believe. I require a prohibition forbidding.”⁶⁰ Hubmaier rightly replied to such inconsistency by saying, “Then I will demand of you that you show me a clear word that forbids purgatory, monks, nuns, cowls, tonsures, and says the mass is not a sacrifice.”⁶¹

Calvin was somewhat more subtle in his violation of *sola Scriptura*, but equally as guilty. In answer to the objection that Scripture does not teach infant baptism, after an extended theological proof trying to link the Old and New Covenants, Calvin said:

Every one must now see that paedobaptism, which receives such strong support from Scripture, is by no means of human invention. Nor is there anything plausible in the objection, that we no where read of even one infant having been baptized by the hands of the apostles. For although this is not expressly narrated by the Evangelists, yet as they are not expressly excluded when mention is made of any baptized family (Acts 16:15, 32), what man of sense will argue from this that they were not baptized? If such kinds of argument were good, it would be necessary, in like manner, to interdict women from the Lord’s Supper, since we do not read that they were ever admitted to it in the days of the apostles.⁶²

Calvin conceded that infant baptism is not “expressly” taught in the New Testament. He then attempted to use the lack of Scriptures concerning female communion as further support that the lack of clear Scriptures for infant baptism is also unnecessary. However, later Calvin rejected infant communion with the same type of argument which he would not accept against infant baptism (i.e. infants must be old enough to examine themselves before they are

⁵⁹ *Luthers Werke XXVI* (Weimar), 67, as quoted in Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* (Sarasota, FL: Christian Hymnary, 1991), 203ff.

⁶⁰ *Ulrich Zwingli: Selected Works*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 163.

⁶¹ “Hubmaier,” *The Wycliffe Biographical*, 214ff.

⁶² John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845) (Electronic Edition STEP Files, Parsons Technology, Inc., 1997), 4.16.8.

allowed to partake of it). Against infant communion, he said, “This distinction is very clearly pointed out in Scripture.”⁶³

These popular magisterial “Church” reformers, Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, were not as consistent as Hubmaier in holding that sound doctrine, such as the necessity of baptism being based on a perspicacious Scriptures for their final authority. Was it because they could not bring themselves to test their own religious experience, their own infant baptism, by the clear Word of God as Hubmaier had? They had unfortunately retained the misunderstanding that Christ worked primarily through Roman Catholicism during the last dozen centuries and therefore must have instituted and approved of infant baptism. True, they recognized the need to reclaim the Scriptural truth of *sola fide* for salvation, yet they were unwilling to recognize that *sola fide* is clearly taught in Scripture as a prerequisite for receiving the sign of salvation, that is, baptism (cf. Matt 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 1 Pet 3:21).

Hubmaier committed himself to what he clearly read in the Scripture, no matter where it would lead him. It led him naturally to believer’s baptism, to which he submitted in obedience to Scripture’s clear injunction. It also led him and his wife to martyrdom. Hubmaier had learned “not to think beyond what is written” (1 Cor 4:6) no matter the cost! He was a true minister of the Word of God in the sixteenth century and a more consistent voice for the perspicuity of Scripture during the Reformation period.

CONCLUSION

This brief survey of church history hopefully has sufficiently provided evidence of a significant testimony in each generation since Pentecost of men and movements that faithfully held to the perspicuity of Scripture as foundational to their evangelical hermeneutic. These are not the only witnesses from Christian history who declared that the Scripture is clear enough for any sincere reader of it to understand if he just utilizes a normal grammatical, contextual approach, as one would with any other book. The task remains to promote the evidence of others who taught the perspicuity of Scripture, such as the Apostle John, the pre-Nicene apologist Tertullian, the Celtic church during the Medieval period, the pre-Reformation Taborites, and the reformer Simon Menno. Such a considered effort to preserve and promote the hermeneutic of those who “got it right” will go a long way to strengthen the confidence of believers to understand the Word of God at its face value for the truth needed for salvation and basic sound doctrine. It also brings greater honor to the Savior who demands all to come personally to Him through faith without human mediation.

⁶³ Ibid., 4.16.30.

BOOK REVIEWS

Old-Earth Creationism on Trial, by Tim Chaffey and Jason Lisle. Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008. 207 pp., paperback, \$12.99.

Chaffey and Lisle have written a fine book that examines and refutes the claims of old-earth creationists. Chaffey earned a Master of Divinity at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and Lisle earned a PhD in astrophysics from the University of Colorado. Both authors are young-earth creationists. The authors place old-earth creationism on trial and find it faulty in its hermeneutics, science, and logic. The most refreshing part of the book is its stress on the ultimate authority of the Bible and the necessity of the historical-grammatical hermeneutic. The authors devoted two chapters to this topic. They recognized that the debate over the age of the earth is really about biblical authority. They cited the writings of well-known and respected evangelical scholars such as Charles Hodge, Gleason Archer, Norm Geisler, and Hugh Ross thereby finding in each case that the desire on the part of these old-earth creationists to reconcile science and the Bible forced them to change their hermeneutic. Of course, changing one's hermeneutic based on the ever changing conclusions of science is unwise since it will inevitably require the hermeneutic to change again when the scientific conclusions change.

This book addresses old-earth theories such as the gap theory, day age theory, theistic evolution, the framework hypothesis, and progressive creationism demonstrating that each is non-biblical and based on poor science and faulty logic. The authors made effective use of Van Til's presuppositionalism as taught by Greg Bahnsen. They demonstrated that science is not possible without the biblical worldview. The fact that any scientist can use logic or apply natural laws based on the order of the universe requires a biblical worldview that contradicts their naturalistic worldview. "Scientists presuppose that the universe obeys logical, rational laws, and that the human mind is able to discover and understand these laws and make predictions about how the universe will be in the future. Without these assumptions science would be impossible. . . . The non-Christian also assumes a rational, orderly universe. But the non-Christian cannot *justify* these concepts within his own worldview; he cannot account for what he is doing" (p. 108).

Later chapters demonstrate why old earth creationism is bad science. Here the authors addressed the problems with scientific dating, annual rings on trees, distant starlight, expansion of the universe, and a local as opposed to a universal flood. They concluded, "It is important to realize that all of them [arguments for an old earth] stem from the faulty and secular assumptions of naturalism and uniformitarianism or in some cases faulty logic" (p. 152). The authors are convinced that "Old-earth creationists have embraced the

assumptions of unbelievers, and have become like them—refusing to believe the clear teachings of Scripture” (p. 155). This changing of one’s hermeneutic to allow for an influence outside the Bible is not unfamiliar to dispensationalists who see this same error made by covenant theologians who refuse to understand the promises to the nation of Israel literally based on a prior commitment to a supposed covenant of grace. Indeed, the hermeneutical arguments presented would make excellent case studies when teaching the historical-grammatical methods of interpretation.

The authors close with some recommendations. Both sides need to practice academic integrity. Old-earth creationists must learn to base their theories on the Bible rather than fallible men whose theories are constantly changing. This is sound advice. And personal attacks are unnecessary and unbiblical. The last recommendation is that old-earth creationists must work to develop a theological position that is consistently supported by the Scriptures. How refreshing! This book is written in a very readable and understandable style even when presenting scientific evidence for the support of a young earth. This reviewer is appreciative of the author’s desire to treat their opponents fairly. “It is a very natural tendency to be defensive when our deeply held views are challenged. But we must all resist this temptation and pursue the truth, and be willing to change our thinking when and where we are shown to be in error . . . debate, even on emotional and controversial issues, can lead to tremendous spiritual growth for the church.” After reading this book, no one need be embarrassed about the young earth position because of poor arguments from faulty hermeneutics, bad science, or poor logic.

Jeff Heslop, dean, Tyndale Learning Center (Mason, OH)

The Salvation Controversy, by G. Michael Cocoris. Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 2008. 163 pp., paperback.

This is a much-needed book for the church today. Cocoris addressed the subject of salvation with wisdom and understanding. He performed an excellent work at answering the question “What is really required for salvation?” With the many books and radio programs discussing the topic of Lordship Salvation, Cocoris’ book could not have come at a more opportune time. Cocoris explained the salvation controversy as follows: “this controversy revolves around three aspects of salvation, namely, the *condition* for salvation, the *certainty* of salvation and the *consequences* of salvation” (p. 11). The controversy in most cases is usually not concerning the fact that salvation is by faith, but between the definition of faith and what is meant by being a disciple. Cocoris responded excellently at comparing the three positions: “True Grace,” “Decisionism (Cheap Grace),” and “Lordship Salvation.”

John 20:31 reads, “but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” Throughout his gospel, John taught that the only requirement for salvation is to believe. The question is, “What must one believe to be saved?” according to John 20:31, one must believe that Jesus “is the Christ, the Son of God.” Cocoris commented, “Does not the expression ‘the Son of God’ include His deity (Jn. 1:1) and humanity (Jn. 1:14)? The term ‘the Christ’ includes His death and resurrection” (p. 22). Throughout the first part of the book, titled “The Condition of Salvation,” Cocoris explained each position thoroughly. The author employed Scripture to expound on the “True Grace” position and to explain biblically, how “Decisionism” and “Lordship Salvation,” cannot possibly be accurate. In this section, Cocoris expounded upon the passages used by each position to help understand what the Bible truly teaches about what it means to be a believer and what it means to be a disciple. Discussions included: the Gospel of John, the Roman road, repentance, Revelation 3:20, Lord, disciple, and the rich young ruler.

Included in the salvation controversy is the assurance of salvation. Cocoris addressed this in the second part of the book. In 1 John 5:13, the teaching is that the believer can know whether he possesses eternal life. “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.” In this section, Cocoris raised the question “What is the basis of assurance?” The Bible teaches that it is by the work of Christ and the Word of God that one can receive assurance of salvation. When Christ died on the cross He did everything necessary for salvation. Cocoris wrote, “On the cross, He cried, ‘It is finished!’” (Jn. 19:30). Our sin debt was paid in full. We can be assured of eternal life because Jesus died for our sins” (p. 64). John 3:15 states, “whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.” Therefore, to be assured of salvation, the believer must take God at His word.

The last and by far the longest section in the book addressed the “Consequences of Salvation.” In this section, Cocoris explored the results of this salvation. He stated, “The argument is that since real faith is God’s gift, real faith will always manifest itself in observable works. Therefore, the first issue that needs to be addressed is whether God gives faith” (p. 72). The “Lordship Salvation” position seems to put salvation and discipleship together. They claim that since God “gives” them salvation, the ones who are saved will exhibit transformation. In this section, Cocoris explored and expounded upon the passages that the “Lordship Salvation” position utilizes to support the view.

“Lordship Salvation teaches that *real* faith *always* demonstrates observable works. All believers produce fruit” (p. 85). This implies that those that hold to the True Grace position have a false faith. The “True Grace” position holds to “faith alone through grace alone.” Cocoris examined several passages primarily in James and John that the “Lordship Salvation” position

utilizes to defend why they place so much emphasis on works. “According to the Lordship Salvation interpretation of the New Testament, since justification and sanctification are inseparable, since real faith always produces observable works and since believers always endure to the end, therefore, by their fruits, you shall know them (Mt. 7:16)” (p. 103). Cocoris stated that the verse used for this defense was not in context, since this verse was addressing false prophets (cf. Matt 7:15a). In this section concerning the fruits in a believer’s life and the significance, Cocoris explained the Matthean passage and others.

The last two chapters conclude the author’s discussion of salvation. He provided a historical perspective concerning salvation and where the idea of faith in addition to works arose. Cocoris provided examples from John Calvin, Theodore Beza, William Perkins, and many others. He thereby demonstrated how the idea of “Lordship Salvation” began with the popularization of the use of 2 Peter 1:10. “The current controversy concerning salvation within evangelicalism revolves around three issues: the condition (requirement) for salvation, the certainty (assurance) of salvation and the consequences (results) of salvation” (p. 145). In this short but very commanding work, Cocoris answered many questions regarding this apparent controversy. This book is recommended for the serious Bible student in addition to the average layperson, as it is important that all understand *The Salvation Controversy*.

Justin Watkins, college pastor, Arlington Community Church

The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 200), ed. G. Van Belle. Leuven: Peeters, 2007. xxxii + 1003 pp., paperback, 70 Euro.

This volume is comprised of papers read at the 54th session of the international *Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense* (27-29 July 2005) in Leuven, which was sponsored by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, the Université Catholique at Louvain-la-Neuve, and the Fund for Scientific Research. The subject of the Colloquium is reflected in the title of this work, “The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel.” The work is divided into two sections, “Main Papers” and “Offered Papers,” which approach the Fourth Gospel from various aspects; it is concluded with an index containing abbreviations, authors, and biblical references. The contributors are “renowned professors, post-doctoral and doctoral researchers in the field of Johannine studies” (p. xv), who presuppose the unity and theological coherence of the Fourth Gospel, but are not evangelical in the sense of the movement formed decisively by the Protestant Reformation. The Colloquium was concluded by a panel discussion, which was reported by Van Belle as follows: “some speakers were inclined to neglect the literary and historical critical background to the fourth gospel. This is an evident

trend among many authors: they read the gospel synchronically, on the basis of the text as we have it, and are inclined to ignore its complex genesis and evolution” (p. xxx). Van Belle emphasized the need for biblical studies “to always comply with the essential demands of academic research” (ibid). According to the editor, this means the necessity of continuing the tradition of historical-critical research in which his own thinking was formed, as he was confronted with new methods (p. xxxi). The fourteen “Main Papers” include: contributions on the sign of the cross; narrative and theological significance of the death of Jesus; interpretation of the passion of Jesus in the farewell discourses; the role of Pontius Pilate in the death of Jesus; a study of God, Jesus, Satan, and human agency; two studies concerning the Lamb of God; the Markan and Johannine theology of the cross; the anticipations of the passion of Jesus; the ethical perspective of the Johannine Gospel; the Johannine history and theology as “lifting up and glorification of the Son of Man;” the tradition, history, and theology of the death of Jesus in John’s Gospel; the aspects of “laying down” of life; and, the role of the Jews in the death of Jesus. The thirty-eight “Offered Papers” include contributions on thematic readings and studies of particular texts from the Gospel of John. There is a veritable wealth of biblical scholarship in this volume and it has tremendous documentary value for those seeking to interact with Johannine research. The investment for this collection is worthwhile and will provide much more gratitude than disappointment.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr., author, lecturer, pastor, Eternal Ministries

Greek Verbs in the New Testament and Their Principal Parts, by Laurence M. Vance. Pensacola, Florida: Vance Publications, 2006. 236 pp., paperback, \$14.95.

Here is a book for the serious student wishing to read the Greek New Testament. If one means to achieve that goal, he will not be able to casually learn Greek on his own. Certainly, one can learn the vocabulary by putting words on cards, perhaps beginning with Summers or Metzger, and then working through them faithfully. The verbs are another matter. One can learn vocabulary later by translating and sight-reading (but not the verb forms). If Koine were still a spoken language, and if one began young enough, he might learn many forms. However, if one does not memorize the λύω chart and many principal parts, it will be look and say, or look and guess, throughout life. One must memorize the paradigms, and learn nearly all the principal parts of the verbs (i.e. those that appear in the Greek New Testament ten or more times), because the more one learns, the more patterns will be evident in approaching verbs not yet known. This book claims to give every verb and every principal part that appears in the Greek New Testament, which means that in making vocabulary cards, a check

with Vance will provide all six, or all five, or all three of the forms needed. This book will not give word meanings; one will need a lexicon for those. It will not identify or parse given forms that are found, for instance, in 2 Peter (those are for an analytical lexicon). It is of use almost solely in making vocabulary cards and then in learning the forms. For that purpose it is truly useful. The standard lexicons are not always helpful in providing principal parts. As already suggested, it may not be necessary to learn all the principal parts. If one learns λύω and a few more regular verbs, it is possible to reconstruct other regular verb forms (the same is true for μι and contract verbs). It is the common verbs that tend to be irregular, and each needs its own work (e.g. carry, come, say, and see)—the present active gives only the barest idea of other forms. A further value of the book is the introduction, which explains the patterns of the different verbs (e.g. how the liquids form their futures and aorists). The average exegete may find that those explanations go beyond what is needed. He could be better learning the accents and breathings, which some, sadly omit. If the translations were more careful with their verb renderings, Vance's work might not be so necessary. The serious student, however, must memorize not just the lists but also the principal parts, and this book will help him do that.

Robert G. Delnay, adjunct Bible professor, Clearwater Christian College

A High View of Scripture?: The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon, by Craig D. Allert. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007, 203 pp., paperback, \$18.99.

The author of this work is associate professor and chair of religious studies at Trinity Western University at Langley, British Columbia. He specializes in patristics, bibliology, and New Testament canon, and has written numerous articles in the area of New Testament canon studies. In this book, Allert concerned himself with “investigating the implications of the formation of the New Testament canon on evangelical doctrines of Scripture” (p. 10). He contended that a “high view of Scripture should take account of the historical process that bequeathed to us the Bible, and that examination of this issue should actually precede an investigation into what the Bible says” (p. 10). Allert acknowledged the two dimensions of biblical revelation—the divine dimension and the human dimension—but argued that the divine aspect has virtually eclipsed the human in contemporary studies of the canon. Essentially, according to the author, scholars have concerned themselves little with the human *process* of canonicity. As a result, Allert believes, the early church fathers had a better doctrine of Scripture than contemporary evangelicalism possesses.

“In the early church,” Allert noted, “a high view of Scripture was not one that necessitated a text that functioned authoritatively outside of the church.

This would be unthinkable to the fathers” (pp. 175-76). However, he did claim that such texts outside the church have informed the formation of the New Testament canon in a way that borders on authoritative. Although Allert did not consider a high view of Scripture itself to be a problem for evangelicals, he did contend that “a high view of Scripture has been usurped by verbal plenary theorists – the determination of what is high and what is low comes from them” (p. 11). Throughout the remainder of his book, this contention concerning verbal plenary theorists seems to affect everything presented. For example, the author argued that verbal plenary theorists disregard the process of the Bible’s formation in their efforts to protect the verbal plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.

In the first chapter, Allert discussed evangelicals in connection with traditionalism. He noted that evangelicalism is a movement, and argued that it defies precise definition. Indeed, since evangelicalism is a movement with “incredibly diverse strands,” it has grown in modern times to be defensive and at the same time reactionary. Allert also contended that evangelicalism, at least of the American and Canadian varieties, “militate against elaborate theological sophistication and precision” (p. 32). In America, this lack of theological sophistication resulted from the fundamentalist/liberal controversy. Consequently, evangelicalism developed a narrow theological foundation that has left evangelicals with “withered roots as to the sources of the early church that should assist in maintaining it, but also with a mentality that protection of the essentials is more important than understanding how they actually came to be essential” (p. 35). This evaluation of evangelicalism appears to inform the remainder of the book.

In the second chapter, Allert argued that evangelicals have a naïve understanding of the process of canon formation. He discussed theories of how the canon was formed over the several centuries until the church closed the canon of the New Testament. He identified three theories of canon formation, noting as one of them, the contention that Scripture does not equal canon or vice versa. Indeed, Allert contended that it is important to distinguish between Scripture and canon because the closing of the canon did not occur until the fifth century. One positive aspect of this chapter is Allert’s discussion of the criteria of canonicity. He identified that there was no actual list of criteria, but there were certain factors that the church and its leaders considered as guidelines with varying degrees of importance. Among these criteria, were apostolicity, orthodoxy, catholicity and widespread reception, and inspiration. Each of these criteria Allert described and explained. He concluded the chapter with a discussion of the use of non-canonical texts and their function in the formation of the New Testament canon.

In the next several chapters, Allert discussed the historical development of views of the canon, which he began by addressing the question, “Does history

support the evangelical view?” (p. 68). His answer to this question is essentially, “no” since he claimed that evangelicals tend to read modern conceptions into the ancient texts and thereby distort their portrayal of the “central Christian tradition.” Allert argued that the church fathers cited a broad spectrum of literature during the process of canon formation, suggesting that the central tradition was not so central at all. At the same time, Allert contended the Bible is central in and for the Christian life.

Allert further discussed philosophical issues of the church and Scripture that impacted the process as the canon began its formation. Among these issues, he evaluated Marcionism, Gnosticism, and Montanism. Allert noted that the fathers countered these heresies “not with a written canon, but with the canon of truth” (pp. 129-30). At the same time, Allert desires the reader to know that the fathers considered the Scriptures both important and authoritative. They provided the foundation for all reflection on at least the Gospel. Allert merely wanted the reader to see that the growth and spread of the Scriptures did not occur all at once but gradually. One thing significantly missing in his overview of the church’s teaching on the canon is a discussion of the Protestant Reformation. All he said that even intimates the Reformation was that evangelicals have failed to uphold the Protestant tradition of bearing witness to the Gospel, to the Scriptures, to the canon, etc.

Finally, Allert argued that the Christian faith resulted from “a response to God’s interaction with the community of faith” (p. 145) rather than a response to a book. The only way, according to Allert, to understand a relationship between, for instance, inspiration and canonicity is to see it in the context of the community that produced the texts. He supported this contention by reference to Paul’s affirmation of the importance of community in the framework of the Holy Spirit’s work within the community expounded in 1 Corinthians 12. To be fair, more than once, Allert brought the reader to the idea that within the entire process and behind it lies the work of the Holy Spirit, guiding and developing the process. He mainly wanted the readers to give adequate attention to the human side of the process.

The final chapter discussed inspiration and inerrancy and their relationship to each other, a relationship that Allert claimed has been either widely misrepresented or misunderstood by evangelicals. He offered a detailed discussion of both issues as held by evangelicals, concluding that both inspiration and inerrancy are not well-defined and discussions of each have resulted in more confusion than clarify. Consequently, Allert saw in the early church centuries a large canon referenced by the early church fathers and possibly inspired (but not necessarily inerrant) that he considered as including texts beyond the present collection in the Bible.

In the final analysis, Allert contended that focus on traditionalism has left evangelicals rigid and defensive at best. Tradition has made evangelicals

unaware of how their doctrinal essentials actually became essential. They have essentially ignored the formation of the canon within the tradition of the church. Whereas Allert accused evangelicals of not placing enough emphasis on the early church fathers and the texts they used in forming the canon, he seemed to place too much emphasis on these writings. They certainly play an important role in the historical development of the canon and the church, and Allert is correct in stating such. However, in his zeal to argue this case, he appeared to have introduced more confusion or blurring of some of the important issues rather than clarifying them. For example, instead of clarifying issues of inspiration and inerrancy, Allert has obfuscated them, or reduced their definitions to vague meanings resulting in minimizing their significance for the doctrine of Scripture. He offered a good general picture of the issues, but unfortunately, offered not a very good establishment of solutions. Instead of a solid hermeneutic based on Scripture itself, for example, Allert suggested, “the proper lens of interpretation has been the ecclesial canons of the church in which the bible grew” (p. 175). It is true that students can learn much from the fathers and their successors about interpreting the Scriptures, but a proper lens of interpretation should come from the Scriptures themselves and be based on a natural reading of the text itself, rather than from any ecclesial canons. This is an issue where evangelicals have historically differed from Catholics for centuries. As Lee Martin MacDonald noted, “a growing number of scholars agree that [the non-canonical texts of the early church] are arguably an important resource for historical-Jesus research,” but they are only that—an important resource (Lee Martin MacDonald, *The Biblical Canon* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007]: 284). Other documents may help bring understanding of the Scriptures but because the early church accepted them as canon neither means they are canon nor that modern students should necessarily consider them as canon.

The primary drawback to Allert’s book is its conclusions. Although Allert claimed to be evangelical and he presented his information in a well-organized format, his interpretation and discussion did not result in clear conclusions. Indeed, they so negate his own claims to be an evangelical that he must occasionally pause to defend his belief in Scripture as authoritative and that Scripture is inspired. However, he then suggested that some non-canonical texts may also be inspired, and since his definition of inspiration is vague and general, he could say this with minimal impunity. Some who can tolerate these suggestions will otherwise find a treasure of helpful information in this small volume, and helpful information especially in his description of the process of canonization. However, Allert’s work does raise a few questions. For instance, while the historical process is important, why should one ignore the solid conclusions of tradition? Moreover, since the scriptures are authoritative as the

Word of God, how can one not evaluate the ancient documents by the Scriptures rather than the other way around?

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New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics, by W. C. Campbell-Jack and Gavin J. McGrath. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006. xx + 779 pp., cloth, \$45.00.

This reference work is divided into two main sections. The first section has a variety of chapters dealing with specific issues related to apologetics. The chapter titles are self-explanatory: “Christian apologetics for a new century,” “Approaches to apologetics,” “Legitimacy of apologetics,” “Viability of apologetics,” “Theology and apologetics,” and “Apologetics and the non-Western world.” The second chapter discussed Richard Swinburne’s evidentialist apologetic and Alvin Plantinga’s Reformed epistemology. However, the dictionary attempted to utilize non-evidentialist and evidentialist methods (pp. 20, 21). The following distinction was made: “How does Reformed epistemology differ from what Cowan terms ‘presuppositionalism’? The point of similarity is that Reformed epistemology, like presuppositionalism, emphasizes that coming to know the truths of Christian faith is ultimately the work of God, and thus gives an account of that process that in some ways presupposes the truth of Christianity. The difference is that the presuppositionalist typically goes on to claim that a person’s belief structure forms a tightly linked system, and that the non-Christian who does not begin with the right presuppositions will inevitably fall into contradictions” (pp. 20, 21).

This dictionary spoke of both concepts and people. Most of the biographies feature evangelicals, but not all (e.g. B. F. Skinner). Each article ended with a bibliography. Although God was mentioned in many of the articles, there is no article on “God” specifically. The work reflected a conservative stance on such issues as abortion and homosexuality. More than 160 scholars contributed to this resource. Unlike most dictionaries, this one has three helpful indexes (names, subjects, articles). The chapters in the first section alone make this book worth examining.

Charles Ray, *online studies dean, Tyndale Seminary*

BOOK NOTICES

These books are not recent publications, but are worthy of contemporary notice for those who are not aware of these valuable reference works.

Dictionary of Early Christian Literature, eds. Siegmar Dopp and Wilhelm Geerlings. New York: Herder and Herder, 2000. 640 pp., cloth, \$75.00.

This reference work contains the life and work of early Christian writers to the eighth century, and analyzes their legacy upon church history. The entries range from single paragraphs to several pages. The value of this collection is for understanding the influence of early Christian literature upon contemporary theological development.

Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, 4th edition, by Richard Krautheimer. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986. 553 pp., paperback, \$40.00.

As indicated by the title, this classic volume provides a reasoned and comprehensive history of the evolving character of early Christian and Byzantine architecture. There are more than 700 footnotes and more than 400 illustrations. This work is highly recommended for understanding the cultural and religious transformation that was initiated by Constantine, and why Byzantine architecture became the dominant architectural style for Christian churches in the early medieval period.

Patrology, 4 volumes, by Johannes Quasten. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1986. 2162 pp., paperback, \$149.95, cloth, \$199.95.

The first volume of this monumental work first appeared in Italian in 1950, and was translated into English by Placid Solari in 1986. Volume 1 contains the beginnings of patristic literature (from the Apostles Creed to Irenaeus). Volume 2 contains the ante-Nicene literature after Irenaeus. Volume 3 contains the golden age of Greek patristic literature. Volume 4 contains the golden age of patristic literature. This 4-volume set is a standard reference work providing an exhaustive introduction to early Christian literature. This publication is highly commended for students of early church history, and for understanding the development of Patristic doctrine.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.