

Bibliology

The Doctrine of the Written Word

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Introduction

Of all the doctrines of the Bible, none is more important or foundational than bibliology, the doctrine of the Bible. The reason for this is simple. The Bible's witness to itself is that it is God's Word and thus, our authority for belief and practice. Our understanding of God, of man, and of the salvation He offers mankind in Christ is all very much dependent on how much men believe and know the Bible.

God has revealed Himself in a number of ways: in creation, in history, in miracles, visions given directly to the prophets. But primarily, God has revealed Himself in the person of Christ, the Living Word, and in the Bible, the Written Word. But what we learn about the person and work of Jesus Christ, we learn from the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. The majority of that which we can know about God comes from the Bible. If men do not hold the Bible in high esteem as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and fail to handle it properly (interpretation and application), then they will turn to other sources as their authority (human reason alone, science, tradition, the church, mysticism, experiences) for what they believe and practice. Consequently, if men do not hold to the Scripture as the *complete, sufficient, clear, authoritative, and adequate rule of faith*, they will reject the Bible's truth either completely or partly and in the process miss its message

of salvation and deliverance from sin, which it offers them in the person of Jesus Christ.

For example, neoorthodoxy's basis of authority is Christ, which sounds good until you begin to investigate how substantial their idea really is. The Barthian (another name for neoorthodoxy) says that his authority is Christ and not the Bible, for that is a fallible book. But since it is a book full of errors (and if it is our only source of information about Christ), then how do we know that Christ has any authority unless we arbitrarily assign Him authority on the basis of our faith or of our reasoning? ... ¹

Our view, approach, and attitude toward the Bible is foundational. If our view of the Bible is inadequate we will naturally handle the Bible accordingly. If I do not think it is God-breathed, I won't think it is profitable and vital. If I think it might contain errors, or that only some of it is inspired, say the thoughts, not the words, then I am left with a dilemma and I must approach it much like a cafeteria line, choosing according to my own likes or bias. What do I believe and not believe? If it is wrong in some places, then how can I be sure what it says about Jesus is true? On the other hand, if I believe it is God's infallible and inerrant Word, as the evidence supports, then I should accept it all and study it carefully. An unfortunate element very obvious today within the evangelical community is that most who call themselves evangelicals will theoretically, at least, claim allegiance to the Bible as the all-sufficient and authoritative rule of faith, but in practice, many are raising other sources on a level with or even above the Scripture as their authority for what they believe and practice.

We believe that the Word contained in these books [of Scripture] has proceeded from God, and receives its authority from Him alone, and not from men. And inasmuch as it is the rule of all truth, containing *all that is necessary for the service of God and for salvation*, it is not lawful for men, nor even for angels, to add to it, to take away from it, to change it. Whence it follows that *no authority, whether of antiquity, or custom, or numbers, or human wisdom, or judgments, or proclamations or edicts or decrees, or councils, or visions, or miracles, should be opposed to these Holy Scriptures, but on the contrary, all things should be examined, regulated, and reformed according to them.* (Italics added)²

But, as Armstrong points out in the introduction to *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, new authorities are threatening the church today.

These authorities are often grounded in what the above confession calls "custom, or numbers, or human wisdom, or judgments ... or visions, or miracles," and they must be challenged when they stand against the authority of the Word and Gospel of Christ."³

Again, we need to recognize that the doctrine of bibliology (the doctrine of the Scriptures) is a vital and fundamental doctrine. In fact, so important is this truth that one of the battle cries of the reformers was *sola Scriptura*, "Scripture only." What this meant for the reformers was that "the church should not preach, teach, command, or practice anything contrary to the written Scriptures of the biblical canon."⁴ It became the basis for

the reformation.

Terms Used for the Bible

Bible

Our English term *bible* is from the Greek word *biblion*, which means “book” or “roll.”

The name comes from *byblos*, which denoted the papyrus plant that grew in marshes or river banks, primarily along the Nile. Writing material was made from the papyrus plant by cutting the pith of the plant in one foot strips and setting it in the sun to dry. The strips were then laid in horizontal rows with rows of vertical strips glued to the horizontal rows in a criss-cross fashion similar to the way plywood is constructed today. The horizontal rows were smoother and became the writing surface. Sections of these strips were glued together to form a scroll up to thirty feet in length. Eventually, the plural form *biblia* was used by Latin-speaking Christians to denote all the books of the Old and New Testaments.⁵

Scripture

Another term used for the Bible is the word, “Scripture,” from the Greek *graphē*, meaning “a writing, that which is written.” The plural is used collectively of the sacred writings as a whole, *the Scriptures* (i.e., the Old Testament, Matt. 21:42; 26:54; John 5:39; Rom. 15:4). The singular is sometimes used of the sacred writings as a whole (Rom. 4:3; John 7:42) and sometimes of a specific passage (Mark 12:10; 15:28; Luke 4:21). In the New Testament this term is used exclusively of the Scripture.

In the Old Testament this writing was recognized as carrying great authority (e.g. 2 Kings 14:6; 2 Chron. 23:18; Ezra 3:2; Neh. 10:34). The “writings” of the Old Testament were eventually collected into three groups called the law, prophets, and writings (or psalms). This was originally organized in a twenty-four book division beginning with Genesis and ending with 2 Chronicles. It contained the same books or content as the present thirty-nine book arrangement of the Old Testament, but with a different arrangement and division. These writings were formally combined into Old Testament canon. The statement, “the Scripture says,” is equivalent to “God says” (cf. Rom. 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; Gal. 4:30; 1 Tim. 5:18). To stress the character of these writings as sacred and unique, they are also described as “holy” or “sacred” (Rom. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:15), and stated to be “inspired of God,” literally, “God-breathed.” Consequently, with God as the author behind the human authors, the Bible is both profitable and authoritative. The noun form, *scripture*, occurs fifty times in the New Testament (used mostly of the Bible) and the verb form, often found in a form meaning “it is written” or “it stands written,” is used about ninety times.

The Word of God

“The word of God” is another title used of the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. This expression highlights the nature of the Bible as the revelation of God in

written form as well as its source; it is the revelation from God. The Greek term used is *logos*, which means “a word as embodying a conception or idea, speech or discourse.” But it is also used of the “revelation of God, of God’s word, God’s command.” In Mark 7:13, “the word of God” is used of Moses’ command regarding honoring father and mother and is seen as equivalent to the phrase, “the commandment of God” (vs. 8). In Matthew 15:6, this expression is used specifically of the Law of Moses. In John 10:35, it is used of the Old Testament and further defined as Scripture. In Hebrews 4:12, the “word of God” is used of all Scripture, referring to both the Old and New Testaments.

The Oracles of God

Another term used of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament Scripture, is *logion*, a diminutive form of *logos* meaning, “an oracle, divine response or utterance.” It is used of Scripture in Romans 3:2 and Acts 7:38 where it is translated *oracles*. In Acts 7:38 the Old Testament law received on Mount Sinai is referred to as the *living oracles*.

Testament

A less common term for Scripture is the word *testament*. The Greek word is *διαθηκη*, “covenant, testament, will.” This term is used to distinguish between the Old and New Covenants, the Old Testament and the New Testament. In particular, the word is used in dealing with the specific, unique covenants of Scripture, but since these covenants are contained in God’s revelation, it is a synonym of the Scripture. Paul wrote about the “reading of the old covenant” (2 Cor. 3:14).

The Law

Another term often used in the New Testament for the Old Testament Scripture is *the law*. On the principle that the most authoritative part gives its name to the whole, sometimes the expression *the law* refers to the entire Old Testament. Under this principle and because the whole of the Old Testament is authoritative as God’s Word of instruction to men, Jesus quoted from Psalm 82 in John 10:34 and referred to it as *the law*. In John 12:34, the multitudes answered Jesus and said, “We have heard out of the law that the Christ is to remain forever.” Here again *the law* is used of the entire Old Testament for the passages in mind included other portions like Psalm 110:4, Isaiah 9:7, and Ezekiel 37:25, and the first five books of Moses.

The Law and the Prophets

Another expression used for the entire Old Testament is *the law and the prophets*. This particular expression looks at the Old Testament from the standpoint of its divisions—the law, the prophets, and the writings. Compare Matthew 5:17; 7:12; Luke 16:16; Romans 3:21. See also Luke 24:27 and 44.

Other Terms Used of the Old Testament

Psalm 19:7-9 presents us with a number of synonyms in a six-fold description of God’s special revelation, the Word of God. It is called *law*, God’s revealed direction, or will; *testimony*, a witness of God’s person and purpose; *precepts*, a general term for the

responsibilities of God's people; *commandments*, God's authoritative words of instruction; *fear*, reverential trust that the Word produces in God's people; *judgments*, specific directions relating to different human circumstances.

Psalms 119, where devotion to the Word of God is the dominant theme, has even more terms used for the Word of God. The multiple terms used by the Psalmist convey the truth that the Word of God contains all we need for the life God wants to give us. At least nine different terms may be seen in Psalm 119—*law*, *testimonies*, *ways*, *precepts*, *statutes*, *commandments*, *judgments*, *word*, and *path*. Focusing on eight of these terms, the NIV Bible Commentary comments:

The psalmist uses eight words for God's law:

1. "Law" (*torah*) occurs twenty-five times. In the broad sense it refers to any "instruction" flowing from the revelation of God as the basis for life and action. In the narrow sense it denotes the Law of Moses, whether the Pentateuch, the priestly law, or the Deuteronomic law.
2. "Word" (*dabar*) is any word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. It is a general designation for divine revelation.
3. "Laws" (*mishpatim*) pertain to particular legal issues ("case laws") that form the basis for Israel's legal system. God himself is the Great Judge.
4. "Statute(s)" (*eduth/edoth*) derives from the word that means "witness," "testify"; "testimony" is often synonymous with "covenant" (cf. 25:10; 132:12). The observance of the "statutes" of the Lord signifies loyalty to the terms of the covenant between God and Israel.
5. "Command(s)" (*mitswah/mitswoth*) is a frequent designation for anything that the Lord, the covenant God, has ordered.
6. "Decrees" (*huqqim*) is derived from the root for "engrave," "inscribe." God reveals his royal sovereignty by establishing his divine will in nature and in the covenant community.
7. "Precepts" (*piqqudim*) occurs only in the book of Psalms and appears to be synonymous with "covenant" (103:18) and with the revelation of God (111:7). Its root connotes the authority to determine the relationship between the speaker and the object.
8. "Word" or "promise" (*imrah*) may denote anything God has spoken, commanded, or promised.⁶

Attitudes or Viewpoints Toward the Bible

In the study of bibliology it is important to be aware of the various attitudes people either

have or with which they approach the Scriptures. We will divide these attitudes toward the Bible into seven different categories.

(1) Rationalism. The philosophy behind rationalism is “The theory that the exercise of reason, rather than the acceptance of empiricism, authority, or spiritual revelation, provides the only valid basis for action or belief and that reason is the prime source of knowledge and of spiritual truth.”⁷ The rationalistic approach toward the Bible may be extreme or moderate.

In its extreme form it denies divine revelation and represents the belief of atheists and agnostics. Moderate rationalism may admit divine revelation but tends to accept only those parts of divine revelation that personal reason approves. Under this approach the Bible is not viewed as authoritative, but the moderated rationalist seeks to eliminate or honor various Scriptures as he may choose. This is often the attitude of modern liberals.⁸

The issue in rationalism is that the *mind* is supreme and becomes the final authority.

(2) Mysticism. Mysticism also falls into a two-fold classification, a false mysticism and a true mysticism. The fundamental premise in false mysticism is that divine revelation is not limited to the Bible, but that God continues to give new truth beyond the Bible. In the final analysis, false mysticism makes human *experience* supreme; one’s personal experiences become the final authority rather than the Bible. If it fits with one’s experience, then it is accepted as valid; but if it does not fit one’s experience, it is rejected as invalid. For this kind of mystic, the Bible is not complete or final. God is still in the business of giving truth if one is only receptive to its revelation. Those holding to some form of false mysticism believe spiritual truth is being added beyond the Scriptures. This type of false mysticism is seen in the ideas of pantheism, theosophy, modern-day spiritism, Seventh-day Adventism, new thought, Christian Science, Swedenborgianism, Mormonism, Quakerism, and Millennial Dawnism (Jehovah’s Witnesses).

In addition, it can be seen in the beliefs of some forms of the modern-day charismatic movement. Some non-cessationists believe all the gifts mentioned in the New Testament are operative today. Some believe that God is still speaking through present day prophets, and some even go a step further and claim that the revelation coming to and from these prophets is equal in authority with the Bible. This is a growing movement within some circles of the evangelical church. In the conclusion of the chapter, “Does God Speak Today Apart from the Bible,” E. Fowler White, one of the contributors in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, writes:

Some present-day evangelicals, Jack Deer and Wayne Grudem among them, believe and teach that God speaks today apart from the Bible. According to these teachers, God gives words of personal or ministry direction to His people using all the same means that He used in the past. Yet, when we consider the evidence for these views, we find that their resemblance to what the Bible actually depicts is more apparent than real. Whatever else Deer is teaching, he is not teaching the model of hearing God’s voice as practiced in the Bible itself.⁹

In my judgment, what these teachers and their disciples fail to appreciate is that, in the Bible, God's activity of speaking apart from the Scriptures occurred at a time when those documents were still being written. Interestingly, during that long history of Scripture writing, God's people did live by a "Scripture plus" principle of authority, and, in keeping with that principle, God employed various means to speak His extrascriptural words to them. But today the church is faced with a new situation; now, with centuries of Christian orthodoxy, we confess that the writing of Scripture is finished, and that the canon is actually closed.¹⁰

There is, however, a form of true mysticism which stems from the indwelling and teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit illuminates the minds of believers to enable them to grasp and apply the truth of the Scripture. As Hebrews 12:25 affirms, God is speaking today, but He does so through the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit to the truths of the completed canon of Scripture. This is the work of illumination, leading, and conviction, but this must be distinguished from the Spirit's work of revelation. Speaking of this ministry of the Spirit, Chafer/Walvoord writes:

By contrast, true mysticism is the proper approach of systematic theologians who believe the Bible. It involves the fact that all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and therefore are able to be enlightened directly by the Spirit in their understanding of divine revelation. Such revelation does not exceed what the Scriptures reveal; it consists in making known divine truth recorded in Scripture. True mysticism extends to what may be called normative revelation, but it does not exclude God's application of scriptural truth to an individual seeking guidance. Guidance is always in keeping with the Scriptures themselves (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:9-10).¹¹

A true mystic in the biblical sense believes that the Bible is our final authority and seeks to always judge personal experience by the Bible. He does not allow experience to either take precedence over the Bible nor does he judge the Bible or what is biblical by his experience.¹²

(3) Romanism. In Romanism, the Roman Catholic Church is both the channel of divine revelation and the final authority for how the Bible is to be interpreted in faith and practice. Since the Bible is the product of the church, and since the Scriptures are obscure (another teaching of Romanism), only the church can properly interpret the Scriptures. In Romanism, the Bible is viewed as incomplete; there is more truth available, but it can only come through the church. "Furthermore, the traditions of the church are, along with the Bible, a source of divine revelation. Ecumenical councils and popes have from time to time made pronouncements that are considered infallible and therefore binding on church members."¹³

Particularly objectionable is the concept that the church can supersede Scripture itself. As a part of this approach to divine revelation, tradition must also be examined and should be studied in the light of important Scriptures (Gal. 1:14; 2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6). In His earthly ministry, Christ repeatedly had

to contradict the traditions of men in affirming the truth of the Word of God.¹⁴

(4) Neoorthodoxy. Karl Barth (1886-1968), often viewed as the father of neoorthodoxy, believed that the basis of authority is the Word, but for Barth, the Word is mainly Christ. The Bible only witnesses to the Word and only becomes authoritative when it speaks to the individual. This means that the Bible's witness to Christ is fallible. The individual must determine what is the word of God within the Bible and what is not. To clearly grasp what is and what is not, there is the need for some type of divine encounter. In short, neoorthodoxy does not believe that the Bible *is* the word of God, only that it *contains* the word of God. This means the individual becomes the final judge as to what in the Bible is the word of God and what is not. Since in neoorthodoxy the encounter is primary, the encounter actually becomes the authority and anyone can have his or her own encounter and come up with totally different conclusions.

(5) Cultism. Many of the cults teach that the Bible *along with some other writing* is supreme and authoritative. A key characteristic of the cults, however, is that though they make a claim to believe the Bible is God's word, they either affirm another writing as having equal authority or raise the other writing as more important or authoritative than the Bible itself. The perfect illustration of this is Mormonism and the *Book of Mormon* which Mormonism views as inspired. Christian Science views Mary Baker Eddy's book, *The Key to the Scriptures*, as equally inspired. In the final analysis, the Bible is not the only authority; in matter of fact it is relegated to a lower position of importance.

(6) Conservative Protestantism (the Orthodox Position). The conservative or orthodox position is that the *Bible alone is our final authority for faith and practice*. For the conservative believer, the Bible is the infallible word of God. It is inspired in the original autographs and is without error. This means that, while it will record the lies of Satan who deceived Eve in Genesis 3, it records it as a lie. The Bible is true in everything it affirms to be true.

Concerning the mind or reason, it must be subservient to the word of God. If the mind is thinking in terms which are contrary to the Scriptures, it is not the mind that judges the Scriptures, but the Scriptures judge the thoughts of the mind. Concerning the experience of Mysticism, the Bible is the final judge of experience, and experience cannot determine the truth of Scripture. Concerning Romanism, it is not the church that determines the meaning of the Bible but, rather, the Bible determines the proper place of the Church. Concerning the encounter, a man does not need a unique encounter before he can comprehend what is the word of God in the Scriptures.... Concerning the issue of the cults, the answer of Orthodoxy is that the Bible, and the *Bible alone, is* supreme, and the 66 books of the Scriptures are all that has been inspired by God in written form. Any other writing is the writing of a false prophet or false prophetess. We who hold to the supremacy of the Bible believe that knowledge is subject to the Bible, and there is no inner light that adds revelation beyond the Bible.¹⁵

Concerning the conservative Protestant position, Ryrie writes:

“Conservative” eliminates liberalism’s humanistic and subjective bases of authority, and “protestantism” removes the church as a base of authority. So one would agree that “orthodoxy is that branch of Christendom which limits the ground of religious authority to the Bible” (Edward John Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969], p. 13). The Scriptures contain the objective revelation of God and are therefore the basis of authority for the conservative Protestant.

To be sure, understanding God’s revelation in the Bible involves using the rational processes of a redeemed mind, a commitment of faith in matters not revealed or not understood, a dependence on the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, a conscience clear before God, and some insight into the lessons of history.

Sometimes in practice, though not in theory, conservatives can and do deny that the Bible is their sole basis of authority.

(1) In practice, some traditions or denominations give their creeds coordinate authority with the Bible. Creeds can provide helpful statements of truth; but creeds can never be the authoritative judge of truth. Credal statements must always be considered fallible, in need of possible revision, and subservient to biblical authority.

(2) In practice, some groups give tradition and accepted practice coordinate authority with the Bible. A church has a divine mandate to set authoritative guidelines for its members (Heb. 13:7, 17), but these too are fallible, in need of periodic revision, and always subservient to biblical authority.

(3) In practice, some conservatives make religious experience authoritative. Healthy experience is the fruit of allegiance to biblical authority, but all experiences must be guided, governed, and guarded by the Bible. To make experience normative and authoritative is to commit the same error as liberalism by replacing an objective criterion with subjective existentialism.¹⁶

The Bible: The Written Word of God

The Claim of the Bible

Even a casual reader of the Bible will soon discover he is reading a very unusual book. Even though he may not accept its claims, a careful and reflective reading will demonstrate, for most at least, that this book is not only unique, but makes some very unique claims. The following are a number of evidences that support this uniqueness.

Internal Evidence

In hundreds of passages, the Bible declares or takes the position explicitly or implicitly

that it is nothing less than the very Word of God.

Some thirty-eight hundred times the Bible declares, “God said,” or “Thus says the Lord” (e.g. Ex. 14:1; 20:1; Lev. 4:1; Num. 4:1; Deut. 4:2; 32:48; Isa. 1:10, 24; Jer. 1:11; Ezek. 1:3; etc.). Paul also recognized that the things he was writing were the Lord’s commandments (1 Cor. 14:37), and they were acknowledged as such by the believers (1 Thess. 2:13). Peter proclaimed the certainty of the Scriptures and the necessity of heeding the unalterable and certain Word of God (2 Pet. 1:16-21). John too recognized that his teaching was from God; to reject his teaching was to reject God (1 John 4:6).¹⁷

For other passages which either declare or assume the Bible as God’s Word see Deuteronomy 6:6-9, 17-18; Joshua 1:8-9; 8:32-35; 2 Samuel 22:31; Ps. 1:2; 12:6; 19:7-11; 93:5; 119:9, 11, 18, 89-93, 130; Prov. 30:5-6; Matthew 5:17-19; 22:29; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; John 2:22; 5:24; 10:35; Acts 17:11; Romans 10:17; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Peter 3:15-16; Revelation 1:2; 22:18.

But isn’t this a circular kind of argument, and is that a valid argument? In a court of law, the accused has the right to testify on his own behalf. That testimony should be considered in the light of the evidence. In this case, the evidence, both external and internal, strongly supports the claims of the Bible.

In response to those who would reject the above-mentioned argument, it should be noted that the writers who made those claims for the Scripture were trustworthy men who defended the integrity of the Scripture at great personal sacrifice. Jeremiah received his message directly from the Lord (Jer. 11:1-3), yet because of his defense of the Scripture some attempted to kill him (Jer. 11:21); even his family rejected him (Jer. 12:6). Counterfeit prophets were readily recognized (Jer. 23:21, 32; 28:1-17). However, the Bible’s claims should not be understood as arguing in a circle or by circular reasoning. The testimony of reliable witnesses—particularly of Jesus, but also of others such as Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, and Nehemiah in the Old Testament, and John and Paul in the New Testament—affirmed the authority and verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.¹⁸

The ever present assumption of the writers of the Bible is that the Bible is the God-breathed Word of God. A good illustration is seen in Psalm 19:7-11 which not only declares the Bible to be the Word of God, but identifies six perfections with corresponding transformations of human character that the Bible will produce in those who study and apply it in faith.

External Evidence

(1) The continuity of the Bible. One of the amazing facts about the Bible is that though it was written by a wide diversity of authors (as many as 40) over a period of 1600 years, from many different locations and under a wide variety of conditions, the Bible is uniquely one book, not merely a collection of sixty-six books. Its authors came from all walks of

life. Some were kings, some peasants, still others were philosophers, fishermen, physicians, statesmen, scholars, poets, and farmers. They lived in a variety of cultures, in different experiences and often were quite different in their make up. Regardless of this diversity, as one book, it is:

... bound together by historical sequence, type and antitype, prophecy and fulfillment, and by the anticipation, presentation, realization, and exaltation of the most perfect Person who ever walked on earth and whose glories are manifest in heaven.¹⁹

Enns has an interesting comparison as it pertains to the Bible's continuity. He writes:

The divine origin of the Bible is further seen in considering the continuity of its teaching despite the unusual nature of its composition. It stands distinct from other religious writings. For example, the Islamic Koran was compiled by an individual, Zaid ibn Thabit, under the guidance of Mohammed's father-in-law, Abu-Bekr. Additionally, in A.D. 650, a group of Arab scholars produced a unified version and destroyed all variant copies to preserve the unity of the Koran. By contrast, the Bible came from some forty different authors from diverse vocations in life. For instance, among the writers of Scripture were Moses, a political leader; Joshua, a military leader; David, a shepherd; Solomon, a king; Amos, a herdsman and fruit pincher; Daniel, a prime minister; Matthew, a tax collector; Luke, a medical doctor; Paul, a rabbi; and Peter, a fisherman.²⁰

Summing up the significance of the Bible's continuity, Enns writes,

It is apparent that many of the writers did not know of the other writers of Scripture and were unfamiliar with the other writings, inasmuch as the writers wrote over a period of more than fifteen hundred years, yet the Bible is a marvelous, unified whole. There are no contradictions or inconsistencies within its pages. The Holy Spirit is the unifier of the sixty-six books, determining its harmonious consistency. In unity these books teach the triunity of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the fall and depravity of man, as well as salvation by grace. It quickly becomes apparent that no human being(s) could have orchestrated the harmony of the teachings of the Scripture. The divine authorship of the Bible is the only answer.²¹

Speaking of the Bible as "a phenomenon which is explainable in but one way—it is the word of God," the late Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote, "It is not such a book as man would write if he *could*, or could write if he *would*."²² It is beyond the scope of man's capacity to write a book like the Bible under the conditions describes above apart from its divine origin.

(2) The Bible's revelation of God. The Bible's revelation of God is unique among all the religious writings of either antiquity or of more modern times. While the Bible is a very ethical book, it never divorces its code of morality from a personal relationship with the

God of the Bible, teaching that God's laws are not meant to hinder joy and pleasure, but to enhance man's capacity to know and love God and people. Morality is to be a product of knowing and loving the God of the Bible (Deut. 4:4-6; Matt. 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31).

In addition, no other religious writing presents both the absolute holiness of God combined with God's love, mercy, and grace that reaches out to sinful man who has been separated from God not only because of man's sin, but because of God's absolute holiness. One of the great revelations and themes of the Bible is that which is expressed by Isaiah, "holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:3; Hab. 1:13a).

While other contemporary writers were primarily polytheistic, the Bible is monotheistic. It presents a monotheistic concept of God rather than the polytheism which was so flagrant in the days when the Scriptures were written. Furthermore, when later holy books like the Koran and others presented a monotheistic concept of God, the Bible remained unique because it is the only book about God that presents God as one (monotheism) yet one in three persons, the Triunity or Trinity. Indeed, the Bible's revelation of God is one that is starkly different from the ones depicted in all other holy books whether of antiquity or of modern times.

(3) The nature, condition, and cure for man's sin. Only the Bible describes man's condition in sin as it really is and demonstrates the impossibility for man to deal with his sin and sinfulness apart from God's grace solution in the person and death of His Son. Every other religion in the world, past and present, has man seeking to obtain his own salvation or gain God's favor by some form of human works or religious activity. Only the Bible presents a solution for man's sin that is truly life changing, when properly embraced and believed.

(4) The ethics and morals of the Bible. The ethics and morals of the Bible cover all areas of human conduct from the home, the husband/wife relationships, parent/child relationships, to human conduct in society as with employers and employees, neighbors and enemies, and the state and its citizens. It covers morals on all levels as well as business, economic, and social spheres. But as mentioned previously, the ethics and morals of the Bible are unique in that they are always related to one's belief in the existence of God and one's relationship with Him; in this way, the motives themselves are judged. Ethics and morals are never simply a matter of outward conformity to the moral standards of Scripture as other religions or religious books do. The emphasis of the Bible is "search me O God, and know my heart."

(5) Fulfilled prophecy. Another amazing illustration of the divine origin and uniqueness of the Bible is its many fulfilled prophecies.

Throughout Scripture, hundreds of prophecies were made by Old Testament writers concerning the Messiah, the future kingdom on earth, the restoration of Israel as a nation, and their return to their Promised Land. In the New Testament also many predictions are made of events to come. As Scripture unfolds, about half of these prophecies have already been fulfilled, but others, following the same pattern of literal fulfillment, are subject to fulfillment in the future. The perfect precision of prophecy extending to such details as the

place of Christ's birth, the character of His execution, the very words He would speak on the cross testify to the absolute accuracy of the Word of God. In Scripture, prophecy is just as accurate as history.²³

(6) The Bible as Revelation Beyond Human Comprehension.

The extent of Bible revelation is beyond human comprehension. Like a telescope, the Bible reaches beyond the stars and penetrates the heights of heaven and the depths of hell. Like a microscope, it discovers the minutest details of God's plans and purposes as well as the hidden secrets of the human heart. The Bible deals as freely with things unknown as it does with the known. It can speak with complete freedom and assurance about situations and events outside the realm of human experience. The Bible knows no limits to the infinite knowledge of God who guided its writers. It permits its readers to gaze on events in eternity past as well as in eternity future. The comprehension of divine revelation is utterly beyond the capacity of even the most brilliant men unaided by the Spirit of God.²⁴

Other unique features of the Bible that give evidence of its divine origin are its *types and antitypes*, its nature as unique *literature*, its *scientific accuracy* when compared to true science, its *enduring freshness*, and its *power to change lives*.²⁵

The Bible: God's Special Revelation

Definition of Revelation

The term revelation comes from the Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means "a disclosure" or "an unveiling." It is used in the New Testament of the disclosure of truth in general (Luke 2:32; Rom. 16:25; Eph. 1:17), of the disclosure of a specific area of truth (2 Cor. 12:1; Gal. 1:12; 2:2; Eph. 3:3), of the second coming of Christ (1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13), and of the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:1). Theologically, Bible students use this word to signify God's work of revealing Himself to mankind through the various sources of revelation as in creation (Rom. 1:18-21; Ps. 19), in providential acts (Acts 14:17; Rom. 8:28), in miracles (John 20:30-31), through direct acts of communication (Ex. 3:1-9; Acts 22:17-21), through the person of Christ (John 1:14, 18), and through the Bible.

What then is revelation? Thiessen defines it as:

... that act of God whereby he discloses himself or communicates truth to the mind; whereby he makes manifest to his creatures that which could not be known in any other way. The revelation may occur in a single, instantaneous act, or it may extend over a long period of time; and this communication of himself and his truth may be perceived by the human mind in varying degrees of fullness.²⁶

Erickson defines "revelation" as: "By special revelation we mean God's manifestation of

himself to particular persons at definite times and places, enabling those persons to enter into a redemptive relationship with him.”²⁷

The concept of revelation falls into two principal divisions or areas: (1) general, natural, or original, and (2) special, supernatural, or soteriological. The first pertains to revelation revealed through nature and history, the second to what God has revealed as He intervenes in human history to reveal Himself in supernatural ways.

General or Natural Revelation

By general revelation, we mean revelation that is simply general in its extent. Ryrie explains:

General revelation is exactly that—general. It is general in its scope; that is, it reaches to all people (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17). It is general in geography; that is, it encompasses the entire globe (Ps. 19:2). It is general in its methodology; that is, it employs universal means like the heat of the sun (vv. 4-6) and human conscience (Rom. 2:14-15). Simply because it is a revelation that thus affects all people wherever they are and whenever they have lived it can bring light and truth to all, or, if rejected, brings condemnation.²⁸

General revelation comes to mankind in a number of ways (creation, order and design, the nature of man as an intelligent being), but the most obvious and powerful means of general revelation is nature or creation. As powerful and universal as this is, however, it is inadequate or has certain limitations. It cannot tell us about the love and grace of God nor of His perfect holiness. Furthermore, creation does not tell us of God’s plan of salvation nor how man may procure that salvation. Still, general revelation “is nonetheless an important antecedent to salvation. General revelation is God revealing certain truths and aspects about His nature to all humanity, which revelation is essential and preliminary to God’s special revelation.”²⁹

Creation

Creation as a part of God’s general revelation affirms certain facts about God. Two key passages emphasize God’s general revelation in creation:

(1) Psalm 19:1-6 affirms (a) the heavens declare the fact of God’s glory to the human race throughout the earth (vs. 1), (b) that this revelation is constant, occurring “day to day” and “night to night” (vs. 2), that (c) it is a nonverbal revelation, “there is no speech, nor are there words, their voice is not heard,” (v. 3), and (d) its scope is worldwide, “Their line [sound] has gone out through all the earth, And their utterance to the end of the world” (v. 4). “Being unrestricted by the division of languages, natural revelation transcends human communication without the use of speech, words, and sounds. To those who are inclined to hear, revelation comes with no regard for linguistic or geographical barriers.”³⁰

No one is excluded from this revelation of God. Wherever man peers at the universe, there is orderliness. At a distance of ninety-three million miles from

the earth, the sun provides exactly the right temperature environment for man to function on earth. Were the sun closer, it would be too hot to survive, and were it further away it would be too cold for man to function. If the moon were closer than two hundred forty thousand miles the gravitational pull of the tides would engulf the earth's surface with water from the oceans. Wherever man looks in the universe, there is harmony and order. Similarly, God has revealed Himself on earth (v. 1). The magnificence of the human body is perhaps the best evidence of general revelation on earth. The entire human body—its cardiovascular system, the bone structure, the respiratory system, the muscles, the nervous system including its center in the brain—reveals an infinite God.³¹

(2) Romans 1:18-21 develops the truth of general revelation through creation even further. It draws our attention to four vital characteristics of what the revelation of God in creation does. (a) It is a clear testimony, being clearly seen by the things which are made (vss. 19 and 20). (b) The word “understood” (νοεω, “of rational reflection, inner contemplation, *perceive, apprehend, understand ...*”)³² indicates this general revelation goes beyond mere perception; creation's revelation is such that it is expected to result in reflection so there is a conclusion drawn about the Creator. (c) As Psalm 19 affirms, this testimony is constant being witnessed “since the creation of the world” (vs. 20). And (d) it is limited in what it reveals; only certain aspects about God's invisible qualities or nature are revealed, specifically, “his eternal power and divine nature.”

As mentioned previously, to learn of God's love, grace, and plan of salvation, one must turn to God's special revelation, the Bible, and the revelation of His Son (John 1:14, 18). Natural revelation, however, is more than sufficient to make mankind responsible and to show he is “without excuse” for his indifference and failure to seek to know God and to be thankful.

Providence and Human Conscience

In addition to creation, God has also revealed Himself to the human race through His providential goodness in the world and through the human conscience.

It is through His providential goodness in supplying people with sunshine and rain that enables them to live and function (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:15-17). Paul reminds the people at Lystra that God's providential goodness was a witness to them (Acts 14:17). God's providential control is also evident in His dealing with the nations. He disciplined His disobedient people Israel (Deut. 28:15-68) but will also restore them (Deut. 30:1-10); He judged Egypt for sinning against Israel (Ex. 7-11); He raised the nations to power and also caused their demise (Dan. 2:21a, 31-43).

Further, God has revealed Himself through conscience. Romans 2:14-15 indicates God has placed intuitional knowledge concerning Himself within the heart of man. “Man intuitively knows not only that God values goodness and abhors evil but also that he is ultimately accountable to such a righteous Power.” (Bruce A. Demarest, *General Revelation: Historical Views and Contemporary Issues*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982, p. 231.) While the

Jews will be judged according to the written law, Gentiles, who do not have the written Law, will be judged according to an unwritten law, the law of conscience written on their hearts. Moreover, Paul says the conscience acts as a legal prosecutor (v. 15). “Conscience may be regarded as an inner monitor, or the voice of God in the soul, that passes judgment on man’s response to the moral law within” (Ibid., pp. 232-33).³³

While God has revealed Himself in His creation, which gives us general revelation about God, and in the person of Jesus Christ, which gives us revelation of God incarnate, our focus in bibliology is on the revelation of God in the Bible, the written Word of God. As God’s Word the Bible reveals much more about God than can be known from nature or creation or even through the person Christ.

Accordingly, the Bible may be regarded as completing the intended divine revelation of God partially revealed in nature, more fully revealed in Christ, and completely revealed in the written Word.

Special Revelation

The Nature of Special Revelation

This section will examine how God has revealed Himself in special revelation. The nature of this mode of revelation is that it consists primarily of *words*. The author of Hebrews reminds us that God has made Himself known by speaking long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, and in these last days has spoken to us in *His Son* (Heb. 1:1-2a). There are three elements to special revelation: specific times, specific modes, and specific persons. Later, still dealing with this special revelation that reveals our “so great salvation,” the author of Hebrews says:

After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will (Heb. 1:1-2).

Again we see the same elements: a *specific mode* (special revelation embodied in words), at a *specific time* (during the life of Christ and the apostles), and in *specific persons* (those who heard the Lord, His apostles whose teaching or words were confirmed by signs and wonders). This was precisely in keeping with Christ’s own words in John 16:12-15.

Special revelation involves a narrower focus than general revelation and is restricted to Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. Of course, all that is known of Christ is through the Scriptures; therefore, it can be said that special revelation is restricted to the Scriptures.³⁴

The Necessity of Special Revelation

Why does man need special revelation? Special revelation is needed because of man’s blind and sinful condition caused by his fall as recorded in Genesis 3, a blindness that is

made even stronger by the blinding activity of Satan (cf. Eph. 4:17-19 with 2 Cor. 4:4). This necessitated the need for special revelation so God could reveal Himself and His plan of salvation that man in turn might be reconciled from his condition of alienation and restored to fellowship with God.

God's special revelation of Himself centers in the Person of Jesus Christ as the only One who fully reveals both God and His plan of salvation; Jesus is the heart and testimony of Scripture in its promises and fulfillment and the means of salvation (John 1:14, 18; 3:16-18; 6:63; 14:6; Heb. 1:3; 2:3; Rev. 19:10).

In addition to the above, man needs special revelation for two more important reasons. First, so he correctly interpret the truths revealed in general revelation, and second, because these general truths are very limited. As is obvious from the many religions of the world, man consistently misinterprets what he can learn from creation or providence. Therefore, man desperately needs God's special or supernatural revelation.

The Avenues of Special Revelation

Drawing on his knowledge of the Old Testament and the testimony of those who had personally heard the Lord Jesus, the author of Hebrews speaks of the various ways God has spoken to reveal Himself in history through the prophets and then through His Son who is the very outshining of God (Heb. 1:1-2). Ryrie gives us an excellent summary of the various avenues God has used to reveal Himself.

A. The Lot: While today we would not highly regard the use of the lot, it did serve sometimes to communicate the mind of God to man (Prov. 16:33; Acts 1:21-26).

B. The Urim and Thummim: The breastplate which the high priest wore in the Old Testament was a square piece of beautiful material which was folded in half and open at the top like a pouch. It was adorned with twelve precious stones on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Urim and Thummim possibly were two precious stones placed inside the pouch which were used, like the lot, to determine God's will (Ex. 28:30, Num. 27:21, Deut. 33:8; 1 Sam. 28:6, Ezra 2:63).

C. Dreams: God apparently used dreams to communicate many times during the Old Testament period, and He will do so again at the time of the second coming of Christ (Gen. 20:3, 6; 31:11-13, 24; 40-41; Joel 2:28). Nonbelievers as well as believers experienced God-given dreams (Gen. 20:3; 31:24). Though a common experience, dreams were used by God in this special way to reveal truth.

D. Visions: In a vision the emphasis seems to be on what is heard, while in a dream, on what is seen. Also the human being involved seems to be more active in receiving a vision (Isa. 1:1; 6:1; Ezek. 1:3).

E. Theophanies: Before the Incarnation, theophanies were associated with the appearance of the Angel of the Lord who communicated the divine

message to people (Gen. 16:7-14; Ex. 3:2; 2 Sam. 24:16; Zech. 1:12).

F. Angels: God also uses created angels to carry His message to people (Dan. 9:20-21, Luke 2:10-11, Rev. 1:1). (Notice Rev. 19:17 where God will use an angel to communicate to birds!)

G. The Prophets: Old Testament prophets brought God's message to mankind (2 Sam. 23:2; Zech. 1:1) as did New Testament prophets (Eph. 3:5). They spoke with authority because they were communicating the Word of the Lord. A preacher or teacher today does not qualify as a prophet since he proclaims or explains God's Word, previously given and encoded.

H. Events: God's activity in history also constitutes a channel of revelation. Delivering the people of Israel from Egypt revealed the righteous acts of the Lord, according to Micah 6:5. Acts of judgment reveal who God is (Ezek. 25:7). And, of course, the incarnation of Christ exegeted God (John 1:14). It does not go without saying today that these events have to be historical and factual in order also to be communicative; for today some are putting existential faith before the historical. In other words, they are attempting to create revelation apart from historical facts. Such existential historiography was never a part of the framework of the biblical writers.

Not only must the events be historical, but they also need to be interpreted through divine inspiration if we are to understand accurately their meaning. For example, many people were crucified; how do we know that the crucifixion of one Jesus of Nazareth paid for the sins of the world? The Word of special revelation clarifies and correctly interprets the obscurity of the meaning of events.

I. Jesus Christ: Undebatably the incarnation of Jesus Christ was a major avenue of special revelation. He exegeted the Father (John 1:14), revealing the nature of God (14:9), the power of God (3:2), the wisdom of God (7:46), the glory of God (1:14), the life of God (1 John 1:1-3), and the love of God (Romans 5:8). Our Lord did all this by both His acts (John 2:11) and His words (Matt. 16:17).

J. The Bible: Actually the Bible serves as the most inclusive of all the avenues of special revelation, for it encompasses the record of many aspects of the other avenues. Though God undoubtedly gave other visions, dreams, and prophetic messages that were not recorded in the Bible, we know no details of them. Too, all that we know about the life of Christ appears in the Bible, though, of course, not all that He did or said was recorded in the Scriptures (John 21:25). But the Bible is not simply the record of these other revelations from God; it also contains additional truth not revealed, for example, through the prophets or even during the earthly life of Christ. So the Bible, then, is both the record of aspects of special revelation and revelation itself.

The revelation in the Bible is not only inclusive yet partial, it is also accurate (John 17:17), progressive (Heb. 1:1), and purposeful (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Two approaches exist as to the credibility of the scriptural revelation. Fideists insist that the Scripture and the revelation it contains is self-authenticating, that is, autopistic. The infallibility of the Bible must be presupposed and can be because the Scripture says it is inspired and the Spirit accredits it. Empiricists, on the other hand, stress the intrinsic credibility of the revelation of the Bible as being worthy of belief, that is, axiopic. The Bible's claim to authority is not in itself proof of its authority; rather there exist factual, historical evidences which constitute the Bible's credentials and validate the truth of its message. My feeling is that there is truth in both approaches so that both can and should be used.³⁵

The Bible: The Inspired Revelation of God

The Necessity of Inspiration

As special revelation is God's communication to man of the truth he must know in order to be properly related to God, so inspiration deals with the preservation of that revelation so that what was received from God was accurately transmitted to others beyond the original recipient. In revelation we have the *vertical reception* of God's truth while in inspiration we have the *horizontal communication* of that revelation accurately to others. The question is how can we be sure the Bible is God's revelation to man and not merely the product of human ingenuity or merely human opinion? If what God revealed has not been accurately recorded, then that record is subject to question. The doctrine of inspiration answers that question and guarantees the accuracy of the Bible as God's special revelation.

The Meaning of Inspiration

The English word *inspiration* has a number of connotations, the most fundamental being the act of drawing in, especially of the inhalation of air into the lungs. The word is also used of the stimulation of the mind or emotions to a high level of feeling or activity. Sometimes it is used of a work of art, as a painting full of inspiration. None of these really fit with the biblical concept.

In its theological usage inspiration is derived from the Latin Vulgate Bible where the verb *inspire* is used in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21. The word *inspiration* is used in 2 Timothy 3:16 to translate $\epsilon\theta\epsilon\omicron\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$, a word that occurs only here. $\epsilon\theta\epsilon\omicron\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ is derived from $\epsilon\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$, "God," and $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon$, "to breath." Literally, it means "God-breathed" and expresses the concept of exhalation by God. More accurately, it emphasizes that Scripture is the product of the breath of God. The Scriptures are not something breathed into by God, rather, the Scriptures have been breathed out by God.

A Biblical Definition of Inspiration

Inspiration must be carefully defined because of the varied uses of this term and the wrong ideas about inspiration being promoted today, ideas that are inconsistent with what

the Bible itself teaches regarding inspiration. Inspiration may be defined as “God’s superintendence of the human authors of Scripture so that using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs.”

If we break this definition down into its various parts, we note several elements, each of which is vital to understanding what the Bible teaches about inspiration.

(1) The word “superintendence” refers to the guiding relationships God had with the human authors of Scripture in the various material of the Bible. His superintendence varied in degree, but it was always included so that the Spirit of God guaranteed the accuracy of what was written.

(2) The word “composed” shows that the writers were not simply stenographers who wrote what God dictated to them. They were actively involved using their own personalities, backgrounds, and God’s working in their lives, but again, what was composed had the superintendence of God over the material written.

(3) “Without error” expresses what the Bible itself claims to be true regarding its record; it is God’s word and that word is truth (John 17:17; Ps. 119:160).

(4) Though our translations of the Bible are tremendously accurate, being based on thousands of manuscript witnesses, inspiration can only be ascribed to the *original autographs*, not to manuscript copies or the translations based on those copies.

The following represent a few of the definitions of prominent evangelical theologians:

Benjamin B. Warfield: “Inspiration is, therefore, usually defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.”³⁶

Edward J. Young: “Inspiration is a superintendence of God the Holy Spirit over the writers of the Scriptures, as a result of which these Scriptures possess Divine authority and trustworthiness and, possessing such Divine authority and trustworthiness, are free from error.”³⁷

Charles C. Ryrie: “God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings.”³⁸

Millard J. Erickson: “By inspiration of the Scripture we mean that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God.”³⁹

To these definitions, Enns adds this important word:

There are several important elements that belong in a proper definition of

inspiration: (1) the divine element—God the Holy Spirit superintended the writers, ensuring the accuracy of the writing; (2) the human element—human authors wrote according to their individual styles and personalities; (3) the result of the divine-human authorship is the recording of God’s truth without error; (4) inspiration extends to the selection of words by the writers; (5) inspiration relates to the original manuscripts.⁴⁰

Biblical Data Supporting Inspiration

The concept that the Bible is inspired, breathed out of God, is not something man has forced on the Bible, but a concept fully in keeping with the claims of the Bible itself. Inspiration is the testimony of the Bible to itself. As in any just court of law, we need to allow the Bible to give testimony to itself.

Key Facts About Inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16)

The NASB reads, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” The KJV has, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” The NIV has, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

A number of important things are stated in this passage regarding the inspiration of Scripture.

(1) The fact of Inspiration. This verse unequivocally states that Scripture is God-breathed. The Apostle Paul, a man authenticated by signs and wonders (2 Cor. 12:12) and recognized as a writer of Scripture (2 Pet. 3:16), declares Scripture to be the product of the out-breathing of God. The question is, what of Scripture is inspired? “Our English word “inspire” carries the idea of breathing into something. But this word tells us that God breathed out something, namely, the Scripture. To be sure, human authors wrote the texts, but the Bible originated as an action of God who breathed it out.”⁴¹

(2) The extent of Inspiration. This is stated in the words, “All Scripture is inspired.” The term “Scripture,” the Greek *graphē*, is used exclusively in the New Testament of the sacred writings, of some portion of the Bible—sometimes of the whole Old Testament (Matt. 22:29; Mark 14:49; Luke 24:45; John 10:35), and sometimes of a specific passage (Matt. 12:10; Luke 4:21; John 13:8).

In addition, “Scripture” is even used of a specific New Testament passage and sometimes to a larger portion of the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 5:18, in support of paying elders for their work, Paul quoted Deuteronomy 25:4, but the words of Christ recorded in Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7 are also connected with Paul’s statement, “For the Scripture says.” This is probably the earliest instance of our Lord’s words being quoted as Scripture. While this support for a workman is also found in other Old Testament passages like Leviticus 19:13, the wording clearly is that of Christ recorded in Luke 10:7. Then in 2 Peter 3:16, Peter specifically refers to Paul’s writings as Scripture.

Some versions as the ASV and the NEB translate 3:16 as, “Every Scripture inspired of

God *is* also profitable ...” implying some books are not inspired and do not belong in the canon of Scripture. Regarding this issue, Ryrie writes:

Most do not deny that 2 Timothy 3:16 includes all of the canonical books. Those who wish to try to reduce the amount of Scripture included in the verse do so by translating it this way: “All Scripture inspired by God is also profitable” (instead of “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable”). In other words, whatever parts of Scripture that are inspired are profitable, but other uninspired parts are not profitable. That translation indicates that only part of the Bible is inspired.

Such a translation is possible, but not required. Actually either translation can claim to be accurate. Both translations have to supply the word *is* since it does not appear in the original. The matter becomes a question of whether to supply “is” only one time or two times (“Every Scripture inspired by God is also profitable” or “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable”). The preference goes to the latter translation for three reasons. First, by supplying “is” two times, both adjectives (“inspired” and “profitable”) are understood the same way, as predicate adjectives, which is more natural. Second, the connective word, though it may be translated “also,” much more frequently means “and.” Third, a similar construction occurs in 1 Timothy 4:4 where both adjectives are clearly predicate adjectives. Thus the preferred translation makes it quite clear that all the Bible is inspired.⁴²

(3) The value or purposes of Inspiration: This is seen in the second statement of 3:16, “and is profitable for teaching, ...” along with verse 17, “that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” Obviously, since all Scripture is God breathed, being the product of an all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful and loving God, the Apostle Paul goes on to state that the entire Bible is profitable for four things:

(a) Teaching— “Teaching” is the Greek *didaskalia* and means “doctrine” or “teaching.” It is used in both the active sense (i.e., the act of teaching), and in the passive sense (what is taught, doctrine). In the pastoral epistles, Paul uses it of the act of teaching (1 Tim. 4:13, 17; 2 Tim. 3:10), and of what is taught as in sound doctrine (cf. 1 Tim. 1:10; 4:6, 16; 6:1, 3; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1; 2:7, 10). As many of these passages show, especially Titus 2:1, theological teaching, if it is to be truly profitable, must be in accord with sound doctrine, truth from the inspired word. Ultimately, teaching or doctrine, which looks at the content, refers to God’s fundamental principles for man’s life both eternal and abundant. It gives us the basics, the fundamental truths upon which life is to be built.

(b) Reproof—“Reproof” is the Greek *elegmos* which means “proof, conviction, reproof.” The *mos* ending shows this is a passive noun which looks at the **result** of the process of the convicting ministry of the Spirit through the Word—personal conviction through exposure to truth. One might compare *elegmos* to another Greek word, *elenxis*, an active noun which looks at the **process** of reproof or exposing. Both need to go on in the life of a believer. The goal, however, is not simply the process. It’s the result—personal conviction. Like the light it is, the Bible reproofs and exposes us to the various ways we violate the plan and principles of God in all the relationships of life, with God and with people as in one’s family, in the church, and in society. Once we have been

reproved and experience conviction (reproof) to the violations, we each face a very important decision. We can move toward God and **respond** to His correction and training, or we can **rebel** and **resist**. If we resist, then, as a Father, He disciplines us to draw us back to Him.

(c) Correction—This is the Greek *epanorthōsis* which means “setting up straight, setting right.” It stresses the restorative nature and capacity of Scripture and points to the more immediate work of the Word to set our feet back on course. The Psalmist wrote, “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul” (Psa. 19:7a).

(d) Training in righteousness—“Training” is *paidia* which basically means “training, instruction, discipline,” not in the sense of punishment, but in the sense of the disciplines that train and develop character, strength, skill, etc. This is undoubtedly more long range and refers to those truths that develop godly character and spiritual strength—growth truths and procedures like Bible study, meditation, and prayer.

But these four objectives have a greater goal or purpose. The purpose is that “the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17). The Bible offers us God’s comfort and His peace as it reveals His love, care, and mercy, but this is always in the context of conforming us into the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28-29) and equipping us for a life of good works (Eph. 2:10). Equipping us is designed to produce righteousness and ministry rather than self-indulgence.

The word “adequate” is the Greek *artios* which means “fit, complete, capable, sufficient: i.e., able to meet whatever is needed.” Being “fit” looks at the result or the intended result of a process, the aim in view. I think the process itself is seen in the word “equipped.” Note these three points about this word:

First, “Equipped” is the Greek *ezartizō* which means “to outfit, fully furnish, fully supply” as in fitting out a wagon or a ship for a long journey. It was actually used of outfitting a rescue boat.⁴³ We might compare our Coast Guard vessels and their crews that are so well equipped to go out and rescue ships in trouble.

Second, “Equipped” is an adverbial participle which points us to the mode or the means of becoming “adequate” “capable,” or “competent.” We might translate the verse as, “that the man of God may be capable, by having been thoroughly equipped.” In the context, the equipping comes from knowing this God-breathed book.

Third, the verb “equipped” is in the perfect tense which, in Greek, often looks at the results of preceding action or a process. In the context, the process is that of studying, knowing, and applying God’s inspired Word while the result is ability for ministry through spiritual growth.

God’s goal in giving us His Word and our goal in studying and knowing God’s Word is to thoroughly fit us out that we might become fully competent servants of God for every kind of good work in the midst of a dark and needy world, like thoroughly equipped rescue vessels on missions of mercy.

The How of Inspiration (2 Pet. 1:20-21)

20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21 NIV).

The NIV translation above of verse 20 is much closer to the original Greek, more in accord with the preceding and following context, and clearly expresses the truth we need to grasp here. The statement, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation," simply declares that whatever the prophets wrote or whatever we find in the Word, it was not the product of the author's own ideas or human opinion. In verses 16-19, the issue being discussed is the source of the apostolic message. Was it human fable or was it from God? Verse 20 answers the first part of this question. It was not from man.

The second part of this question or issue is found in verse 21. Note the connecting and explanatory "For" of verse 21. This teaches us that both God and man were involved in the production of the Bible, but in such a way that God was the ultimate source (though man's will was involved, Scripture was never the product of human will). God both directed the writing and guaranteed the accuracy of the product. The human authors actively spoke God's Word and they were more than dictation machines, but to ensure the accuracy of what was spoken, the human authors were moved and carried along by the Holy Spirit. "Moved" is *feromenoi*, a Greek passive participle meaning, "to be carried, be borne along." This word was used of a ship being carried along by the wind in its sail in Acts 27:15, 17.

Catching the import of this, Ryrie writes:

Though experienced men, the sailors could not guide it so they finally had to let the wind take the ship wherever it blew. In the same manner as that ship was driven, directed, or carried about by the wind, God directed and moved the human writers He used to produce the books of the Bible. Though the wind was the strong force that moved the ship along, the sailors were not asleep and inactive. Similarly, the Holy Spirit was the guiding force that directed the writers who, nevertheless, played their own active roles in writing the Scriptures.⁴⁴

This verse, then, teaches us two things regarding the "How" of inspiration: (a) The will of the human authors never directed the writings of the Bible, and (b) the Holy Spirit as the ultimate source ensured the accuracy of what they wrote in every way.

The Breadth of Inspiration

(1) 1 Corinthians 2:12-13

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.

The subject in this passage is God's revelation by which we know of the things of God, things which man cannot know by human wisdom. But the point we must not miss is that this revelation comes to us, not just in thoughts or concepts, but in specific words. This shows the fallacy of *concept inspiration*, that inspiration extends to the concepts, but not to the words. In its scope or breadth, by the Bible's own explanation, inspiration extends to the very words of the Bible.

(2) 2 Peter 1:3-4

3 Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

It is clear from verse 4 and the reference to "His precious and magnificent promises" that Peter has the Word of God in view in these two verses. First, there is the declaration that God "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness." Second, life and godliness come through the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus, but such knowledge comes through the Word, the precious promises. In essence then, this points us to the breadth of what God's Word covers, "everything pertaining to life and godliness."

While God does not reveal everything that He could reveal, many things He has chosen to keep to Himself (Deut. 29:29), the Bible, in progressive fashion, does cover all that man needs for life and godliness through its revelation of God and of Jesus our Lord. We have everything we need, nothing is missing.

False Views of Inspiration

Natural Inspiration

This view denies the supernatural element in biblical inspiration; the writers of Scripture were simply men of special genius who possessed unusual religious insight into moral and spiritual truth. Through their special abilities, they wrote the books of the Bible in much the same way as any individual might write any book. Through their religious insight, they wrote on religious subjects in the same way Shakespeare wrote literature. Writing by their own will, the writers conceived what they wrote.

Spiritual or Mystical Illumination

Regarding this view, Ryrie writes:

This viewpoint goes a step farther than natural inspiration, for it conceives of the writers as more than natural geniuses in that they were also Spirit-filled and guided. "The inspiration of the books of the Bible does not imply for us the view that they were produced or written in any manner generically different from that of the writing of other great Christian books.... There is a wide range of Christian literature from the fifth to the twentieth century

which can with propriety be described as inspired by the Holy Spirit in precisely the same formal sense as were the books of the Bible” (Alan Richardson, *Christian Apologetics* [New York: Harper, 1948], p.207). Thus, (a) other Christian writings are as inspired as the Bible; (b) the Bible books are not infallible even though (c) they represent great religious literature that may even contain messages from God.⁴⁵

In this view any Christian, if illuminated by the Holy Spirit, could be the author of inspired Scripture. Those who hold to this view teach that it is the writers who are inspired, not the writings themselves. Schleiermacher taught this view on the Continent while Coleridge propounded it in England.⁴⁶

Degree Inspiration

This view holds to the inspiration of Scripture, but it holds that some parts are more inspired than others. It is true that some parts of Scripture are more relevant than others, but all of Scripture is equally inspired and accurate, and it all has an important place in the overall revelation of God.

Partial Inspiration

The partial inspiration theory teaches that some parts of the Bible are inspired and some parts are not. Those parts related to matters of salvation and faith are inspired, but those parts that deal with history, science, chronology, or other non-faith matters may be in error. This view maintains that though some material may be in error, God still preserves the message of salvation. We can trust the Bible in spiritual matters, but in some areas, there may be error.

The partial theory rejects both verbal inspiration (that inspiration extends to the words of Scripture) and plenary inspiration (that inspiration extends to the entirety of Scripture). Despite the presence of errors in Scripture, partial theorists teach that an imperfect medium is a sufficient guide to salvation.⁴⁷

But this creates real problems regarding the trustworthiness of Scripture. Ryrie writes:

But is not the biblical teaching about salvation based on historical facts? Suppose those facts are inaccurate? Then our understanding about salvation might also be erroneous. You cannot separate history and doctrine and allow for errors (however few) in the historical records and at the same time be certain that the doctrinal parts are true.⁴⁸

The basic question then is what parts of the Bible can we trust and what parts are in error? Furthermore, who decides these questions?

Conceptual Inspiration

This view says that the concepts or ideas of the writers are inspired but not the words. God communicated the concepts to the human author, but not the words. It is true that a

correct doctrine of inspiration does not include dictation, but God did superintend the authors so that the words they used from their own vocabularies were guided by the Holy Spirit. In response, how are concepts expressed, if they are to be expressed accurately? Through carefully chosen words. Further, both Jesus and Paul affirmed the concept of verbal inspiration (See Matt. 5:18 and Gal. 3:16).

Divine Dictation

The mechanical or dictation view teaches that the whole Bible was dictated word for word by God; the writers were passive, much like secretaries or stenographers who sat and wrote down what was given to them. Concerning this view, Enns remarks:

This claim would render the Bible similar to the Koran which supposedly was dictated in Arabic from heaven. Although some parts of the Bible were given by dictation (cf. Ex. 20:1, "Then God spoke all these words"), the books of the Bible reveal a distinct contrast in style and vocabulary, suggesting the authors were not mere automatons. The beginning student in Greek will quickly discover the difference in style between the gospel of John and the gospel of Luke. John wrote in a simple style with a limited vocabulary, whereas Luke wrote with an expanded vocabulary and a more sophisticated style. If the dictation theory were true, the style of the books of the Bible should be uniform.⁴⁹

Neo-orthodox or Barthian View

This final view is a very dangerous view because those who hold it often sound evangelical, but they are actually often very liberal in their theology. This view teaches the Bible is not the Word of God, but only becomes the Word of God through a special encounter when God speaks to a person in some kind of subjective experience. In other words, the Bible only witnesses to the Word of God, but it is not the Word of God.

Moreover, the Bible is enshrouded in myth necessitating a demythologizing of the Bible to discover what actually took place. The historicity of the events is unimportant. For example, whether or not Christ actually rose from the dead in time and space is unimportant to the neo-orthodox adherent. The important thing is the experiential encounter that is possible even though the Bible is tainted with factual errors. In this view the authority is the subjective experience of the individual rather than the Scriptures themselves.⁵⁰

Ryrie concludes his comments on Barthianism with these words:

Can such a Bible have any kind of authority? Yes, declares the Barthian. Its authority is in the encounter of faith with the Christ of Scripture. The Bible, because it points to Christ, has instrumental authority, not inherent authority. And those parts which do point to Christ have more authority than those which do not. Yet all the parts contain errors.

To sum up: Barthianism teaches that the Bible (B) points to Christ the Word (C). But in reality we do not know anything about C apart from B. It is not

that we already have a clear concept of C by which we can test the accuracy of B, the pointer. Actually the Bible is the *painter* of C; that is, what we know about Christ comes from the Bible. So if the Bible has errors in it, the portrait of Christ is erroneous. And make no mistake about it, the Barthian Bible does have errors in it.⁵¹

Regardless of whether a person responds or has an encounter with God through the Bible, it is the objective and authoritative Word of God. The Thessalonian Christians accepted it as the Word of God, but Paul's comment regarding their response was not that they had an encounter so that their message became the word of God, but rather "when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe" (1 Thess. 2:13). They did come to know God through the Word, but Paul emphatically affirms it was the Word of God regardless.

In conclusion, the strongest defense for the verbal plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is the testimony of Jesus Christ. He testified to the inspiration of the entire Scriptures, the various books of the Old Testament and the actual words of Scripture as they were originally recorded. The fact that He based His arguments on the precise wording of Scripture testifies to His exalted view of Scripture. We will demonstrate Christ's view of Scripture under the concept of inerrancy. In addition, Paul declared all Scripture to be God-breathed; man was God's instrument, being guided by God in the writing of Scripture. Peter confirmed the truth by emphasizing that the authors were carried along by the Holy Spirit in the writing of Scripture. The testimony of each of these witnesses draws attention to the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture.

The Bible: The Inerrant Word of God

A Definition of Inerrancy

The word inerrancy means "freedom from error or untruths." Synonyms include "certainty, assuredness, objective certainty, infallibility." But doesn't the concept of inspiration automatically imply inerrancy? So we might ask the question, "Why this section on the inerrancy of the Bible?" Ryrie has an excellent explanation in answer to this question.

Formerly all that was necessary to affirm one's belief in full inspiration was the statement, "I believe in the inspiration of the Bible." But when some did not extend inspiration to the words of the text it became necessary to say, "I believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible." To counter the teaching that not all parts of the Bible were inspired, one had to say, "I believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible." Then because some did not want to ascribe total accuracy to the Bible, it was necessary to say, "I believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant inspiration of the Bible." But then "infallible" and "inerrant" began to be limited to matters of faith only rather than also embracing all that the Bible records (including historical facts, genealogies, accounts of Creation, etc.), so it became necessary to add the

concept of “unlimited inerrancy.” Each addition to the basic statement arose because of an erroneous teaching.⁵²

Clarifying the definition of inerrancy has become necessary because many have, in very subtle ways, retained words like inspiration, infallible, and even inerrant in speaking about the Bible while denying its freedom from error.

E. J. Young, in his classic work on the inspiration of the Bible, gives us good definition of inerrancy: “By this word we mean that the Scriptures possess the quality of freedom from error. They are exempt from the liability to mistake, incapable of error. In all their teachings they are in perfect accord with the truth.”⁵³

Concerning the definition of inerrancy, Ryrie explains:

Definitions of inerrancy are not plentiful! Errantists equate inerrancy with infallibility and then limit its scope to matters of faith and practice or to revelational matters or to the message of salvation. An example of this: “The Bible is infallible, as I define that term, but not inerrant. That is, there are historical and scientific errors in the Bible, but I have found none on matters of faith and practice” (Stephen T. Davis, *The Debate about the Bible* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977], p. 115). At least this is an honest distinction between infallibility and inerrancy.⁵⁴

In view of this, when defining inerrancy, it is always important to state clearly what it means and what it does not mean.

It does not demand rigidity of style and verbatim quotations from the Old Testament. ‘The inerrancy of the Bible means simply that the Bible tells the truth. Truth can and does include approximations, free quotations, language of appearances, and different accounts of the same event as long as those do not contradict.’ (Charles C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know About Inerrancy*, p. 16). At the Chicago meeting in October 1978, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy issued the following statement on inerrancy: ‘Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God’s acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God’s saving grace in individual lives’ (James Montgomery Boice, *Does Inerrancy Matter?*, Oakland: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1979, p. 13.)⁵⁵

Ryrie makes an important comment regarding the statement at Chicago.

The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in its Chicago statement affirmed inerrancy in a brief statement that the “Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching...” Then followed nineteen articles to further describe and explain inerrancy.

This brief statement would be unsatisfactory to errantists. If there were any

doubt about that, certainly the nineteen-article elaboration would exclude errantists' agreeing with it.⁵⁶

It is important to bear in mind that belief in inerrancy is in keeping with the character of God. If God is true and He is (Rom. 3:4), and if God breathed out the Scripture, then the Scripture, being the product of God, must also be true. This is why the Psalmist affirms, "All your words are true" (Ps. 119:160a).

Clarifications Regarding Inerrancy

A number of different issues invariably come up when considering the doctrine of inerrancy. What about the variety of styles, or the varying ways certain events are described, or the different reports of events? How does this mesh with the concept of inerrancy? Paul Enns has done an excellent job in summarizing these fundamental issues.

Inerrancy allows for variety in style. The gospel of John was written in the simple style one might expect of an unlearned fisherman; Luke was written with a more sophisticated vocabulary of an educated person; Paul's epistles reflect the logic of a philosopher. All of these variations are entirely compatible with inerrancy.

Inerrancy allows for variety in details in explaining the same event. This phenomenon is particularly observed in the synoptic gospels. It is important to remember that Jesus spoke in Aramaic and the writers of Scripture wrote their accounts in Greek, meaning they had to translate the original words into Greek. One writer would use slightly different words to describe the same incident, yet both would give the same meaning, albeit with different words. There is an additional reason for variety in details. One writer might have viewed the event from one standpoint while the other gospel writer viewed it from another standpoint. This would make the details appear different, yet both would be accurate.

Inerrancy does not demand verbatim reporting of events. "In times of antiquity it was not the practice to give a verbatim repetition every time something was written out" (E. J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth*, p. 119). A verbatim quote could not be demanded for several reasons. First, as already mentioned, the writer had to translate from Aramaic to Greek in recording Jesus' words. Second, in making reference to Old Testament texts it would have been impossible to unroll the lengthy scrolls each time to produce a verbatim quote; furthermore, the scrolls were not readily available, hence, the freedom in Old Testament quotes (William R. Eichhorst, *The Issue of Biblical Inerrancy: In Definition and Defence*, Winnipeg, Man.: Winnipeg Bible College, n.d., p. 9).

Inerrancy allows for departure from standard forms of grammar. Obviously it is wrong to force English rules of grammar upon the Scriptures. For example, in John 10:9 Jesus declares, "I am the door," whereas in verse 11 He states, "I am the Good Shepherd." In English this is considered mixing metaphors, but this is not a problem to Greek grammar or Hebrew language.

In John 14:26 Jesus refers to the Spirit (*pneuma* = neuter) and then refers to the Spirit as “He” (*ekeinos* = masculine). This may raise an English grammarian’s eyebrows, but it is not a problem of Greek grammar.

Inerrancy allows for problem passages. Even with so vast a work as the Holy Scriptures it is impossible to provide solutions to all the problems. In some cases the solution awaits the findings of the archaeologist’s spade; in another case it awaits the linguist’s research; in other cases the solution may never be discovered for other reasons. The solution to some problems must be held in abeyance. The answer, however, is never to suggest there are contradictions or errors in Scripture. If the Scriptures are God-breathed they are entirely without error.

Inerrancy demands the account does not teach error or contradiction. In the statements of Scripture, whatever is written is in accord with things as they are. Details may vary but it may still reflect things as they are. For example, in Matthew 8:5-13 it is noted that the centurion came to Jesus and said, “I am not qualified.” In the parallel passage in Luke 7:1-10 it is noted that the elders came and said concerning the centurion, “He is worthy.” It appears the elders first came and spoke to Jesus, and later the centurion himself came.

Both accounts are in accord with things as they are.⁵⁷

What Happens If Inerrancy Is Denied?

How important is inerrancy? What happens when this doctrine is denied? There are those (and some are even evangelicals) who believe that inerrancy is not important. We do not need to defend the Bible, particularly as it relates to the details of chronology, geography, history, or cosmology or the so-called alleged discrepancies. But how sound is this kind of thinking and how does it stack up with the teaching of the Bible and particularly with what Christ taught?

If the Bible teaches inerrancy, then to deny it is to deny that which the Scripture claims is true. Further, if the Bible contains some errors, how can we be sure that its claims concerning Christ, salvation, man, etc., are true? Also, the chronology, geography, and history of the Bible are often woven together like strands of a basket with vital spiritual truths. As you cannot start pulling strands out of a woven basket without doing damage to the whole, so it is with the Bible.

For instance, is the history of Adam and Eve important? Absolutely, for Paul developed a theological analogy between Adam and Christ which essentially breaks down if it is historically not true. The Old Testament has dozens of prophecies of the coming Messiah that detail his lineage. If the genealogy of Matthew 1 and Luke 3 are historically inaccurate, then this raises questions about whether Jesus is the one anticipated as well as about the rest of His life.

As Ryrie points out, “Even if the errors are supposedly in ‘minor’ matters, any error opens the Bible to suspicion on other points which may not be so ‘minor.’ If inerrancy falls, other doctrines will fall too.”⁵⁸ If we can’t trust Scripture in things like geography, chronology, and history, then how can we be sure we can trust it in its message of

salvation and sanctification?

I recently received an email question regarding the story recorded in the gospels where Jesus delivered two demon possessed men and sent the demons into a herd of swine. Assuming that the owners of the pigs were Jews (which they were not), the person sending the email doubted the historicity of the account because they could not imagine Jews raising pigs since it was contrary to the law for them to eat pork. A person believing in the inerrancy of the Bible, would know that the account was historical and accurate. Therefore, the apparent problem was not in the accuracy of the Scripture, but in their understanding of the event, which was precisely the case.

A denial of inerrancy is a serious matter and will lead to the following kinds of problems doctrinally and practically:

When inerrancy is denied one may expect some serious fallout in both doctrinal and practical areas.

Some doctrinal matters which may be affected by denying inerrancy include the following.

- (1) A denial of the historical fall of Adam.
- (2) A denial of the facts of the experiences of the Prophet Jonah.
- (3) An explaining away of some of the miracles of both the Old and New Testaments.
- (4) A denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.
- (5) A belief in two or more authors of the Book of Isaiah.
- (6) A flirting with or embracing of liberation theology with its redefining of sin (as societal rather than individual) and salvation (as political and temporal rather than spiritual and eternal).

Some lifestyle errors that may follow a denial of inerrancy include the following.

- (1) A loose view of the seriousness of adultery.
- (2) A loose view of the seriousness of homosexuality.
- (3) A loose view of divorce and remarriage.
- (4) "Cultural" reinterpretation of some of the teachings of the Bible (e.g., teaching on women, teaching on civil obedience).
- (5) A tendency to view the Bible through a modern psychological grid.

Inerrancy is an important doctrine, the denial or even diluting of which may result in serious doctrinal and life errors.⁵⁹

Support for Inerrancy from the Teachings of Christ

A study of what Jesus said about the Bible reveals not only His belief in its verbal, plenary inspiration, but that He also believed it was inerrant. In fact, the greatest testimony to the authenticity of the Bible as God's inspired and inerrant Word is the Lord Jesus. Why is His testimony so important? Because God authenticated and proved Him to be His own divine Son by the resurrection (cf. Acts 2:22-36; 4:8-12; 17:30-31; Rom. 1:4). Christ not only clearly confirmed the authority of the Old Testament, but He specifically promised the New Testament.

Note what Christ taught about the inspiration of the Old Testament:

(1) Its entirety; the whole of the Bible is inspired (Matt. 4:4; 5:17-18). In Matthew 4:4, Jesus responded to Satan's temptation by affirming verbal plenary inspiration when He said, man is to live by *every word* (plenary) that proceeds out of the *mouth of God* (inspiration). In Matthew 5:17-18, Christ promised that the entire Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets, would be fulfilled, not abolished. In fact, He declared that not even the smallest Hebrew letter, the *yodh*, which looks like an apostrophe ('), or stroke of a letter, a small distinguishing extension or protrusion of several Hebrews letters (cf. the extension on the letter R with its absence on the letter P), would pass away until all is fulfilled. Christ's point is that it is all inspired and true and will be fulfilled.

(2) Its historicity; He spoke of the Old Testament in terms of actual history. Adam and Eve were two human beings, created by God in the beginning, who lived and acted in certain ways (Matt. 19:3-5; Mark 10:6-8). He spoke of Jonah and his experience in the belly of the great fish as an historical event (Matt. 12:40). He also verified the events of the flood in Noah's day along with the ark (Matt. 24:38-39; Luke 17:26-27). He verified God's destruction of Sodom and the historicity of Lot and his wife (Matt. 10:15; Luke 17:28-29). These are only a few illustrations; many others exist.

(3) Its reliability; because it is God's word, the Scripture must be fulfilled (Matt. 26:54).

(4) Its sufficiency; it is sufficient to witness to the truth of God and His salvation (Luke 16:31).

(5) Its indestructibility; heaven and earth will not pass away until it is all fulfilled. Nothing can stop its fulfillment (Matt. 5:17-18).

(6) Its unity; the whole of the Bible speaks and witnesses to the person and work of Christ (Luke 24:27, 44).

(7) Its inerrancy; men are often in error, but the Bible is not; it is truth (Matt. 22:29; John 17:17).

(8) **Its infallibility**; the Bible cannot be broken, it always stands the test (John 10:35).

The Bible: The Holy Canon of Scripture

Introduction

The fact of the inspiration of the Bible as God's special revelation to man naturally leads to the question (since many other religious books were written during both the Old and New Testament periods) what particular books are canonical, that is, what books are inspired and should be recognized as a part of God's authoritative revelation? Are any inspired books missing? Are any books included that should not be in our Bible? Is our Old Testament Bible the same as the Lord's and is our New Testament the same as the Bible of the church fathers? These are obviously vital questions for the people of God to determine.

Meaning of "Canon" or "Canonicity"

The word *canon* is used to describe those books recognized as inspired of God. The word comes from the Greek *kanwn* and most likely from the Hebrew *qaneh* and Akkadian, *qanu*. Literally, it means (a) a straight rod or bar; (b) a measuring rule as a ruler used by masons and carpenters; then (c) a rule or standard for testing straightness.

Historically, the word was first used by the church of those doctrines that were accepted as the rule of faith and practice. The term came to be applied to the decisions of the Councils as rules by which to live. All these employ the word in the metaphorical sense of a rule, norm, or standard.

In the course of time, the terms *canon* and *canonical* came to be applied to the catalogue or list of sacred books distinguished and honored as belonging to God's inspired Word. "Greek Christians by the fourth century A.D. had given the word a quasi-technical religious meaning, applying it to the Bible, especially to the Jewish books."⁶⁰

... It is important to note that religious councils at no time had any power to cause books to be inspired, rather they simply recognized that which God had inspired at the exact moment the books were written.

Jews and conservative Christians alike have recognized the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament as inspired. Evangelical Protestants have recognized the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as inspired. Roman Catholics have a total of eighty books because they recognize the Apocrypha as semicanonical.⁶¹

The Logical Necessity for a Canon of Scripture and Its Preservation

That God would provide and preserve a Canon of Scripture without addition or deletion

is not only necessary, but it is logically credible. If we believe that God exists as an almighty God, then revelation and inspiration are clearly possible. If we believe in such a God, it is also probable that He would, out of love and for His own purposes and designs, reveal Himself to men. Because of man's obvious condition in sin and his obvious inability to meet his spiritual needs (regardless of all his learning and technological advances), special revelation revealed in a God-breathed book is not only possible, logical, and probable, but a necessity.

The evidence shows that the Bible is unique and that God is its author. The evidence declares that "all Scripture is God breathed and profitable ..." (2 Tim. 3:16) and that "no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). In view of this, the logical question is: "Would it not be unreasonable for God to fail to providentially care for these inspired documents to preserve them from destruction and so guide in their collection and arrangement that they would all be present with none missing and none added that were not inspired?"⁶²

Important Considerations

There are a number of important considerations that must be kept in mind when considering the issue of canonicity or how the books of the Bible came to be recognized and held to be a part of the Bible. Ryrie summarizes these issues as follows:

1. *Self-authentication.* It is essential to remember that the Bible is self-authenticating since its books were breathed out by God (2 Tim. 3:16). In other words, the books were canonical the moment they were written. It was not necessary to wait until various councils could examine the books to determine if they were acceptable or not. Their canonicity was inherent within them, since they came from God. People and councils only recognized and acknowledged what is true because of the intrinsic inspiration of the books as they were written. No Bible book became canonical by action of some church council.
2. *Decisions of men.* Nevertheless, men and councils did have to consider which books should be recognized as part of the canon, for there were some candidates that were not inspired. Some decisions and choices had to be made, and God guided groups of people to make correct choices (not without guidelines) and to collect the various writings into the canons of the Old and New Testaments.
3. *Debates over canonicity.* In the process of deciding and collecting, it would not be unexpected that some disputes would arise about some of the books. And such was the case. However, these debates in no way weaken the authenticity of the truly canonical books, nor do they give status to those which were not inspired by God.
4. *Completion of canon.* Since A.D. 397 the Christian church has considered the canon of the Bible to be complete; if it is complete, then it must be closed. Therefore, we cannot expect any more books to be discovered or

written that would open the canon again and add to its sixty-six books. Even if a letter of Paul were discovered, it would not be canonical. After all, Paul must have written many letters during his lifetime in addition to the ones that are in the New Testament; yet the church did not include them in the canon. Not everything an apostle wrote was inspired, for it was not the writer who was inspired but his writings, and not necessarily all of them.

The more recent books of the cults which are placed alongside the Bible are not inspired and have no claim to be part of the canon of Scripture. Certainly so-called prophetic utterances or visions that some claim to be from God today cannot be inspired and considered as part of God's revelation or as having any kind of authority like that of the canonical books.⁶³

Canonicity of the Old Testament

The Hebrew Bible of today is substantially the same as the original writings, with only physical changes like the addition of vowel pointings, reading aids in the margins, and a change to a more open form of the letters, etc. In Romans 3:2 we are told that the "oracles of God," the Old Testament Scripture, had been entrusted to the Jews; they were to be the custodians of the Old Testament. This precisely fits what we know about the Jews and the Old Testament. They have always been a people of one book who have guarded it with extreme care and precision. From the time of Ezra and even before, there were priests (Deut. 31:24-26) and later scribes called *sopherim* who were given the responsibility to copy and meticulously care for the sacred text so they could hand down the correct reading.

To ensure this accuracy, later scribes known as the Masoretes developed a number of strict measures to ensure that every fresh copy was an exact reproduction of the original. They established tedious procedures to protect the text against being changed. For instance, (a) when obvious errors were noted in the text, perhaps because a tired scribe nodded, the text was still not changed. Instead, a correction was placed in the margin called *qere*, "to be read," and that which was written in the text was called, *kethibh*, "to be written." (b) When a word was considered textually, grammatically, or exegetically questionable, dots were placed above that word. (c) Minute statistics were also kept as a further means of guarding against errors: in the Hebrew Bible at Leviticus 8:8, the margin has a reference that this verse is the middle verse of the Torah. According to the note at Lev. 10:16 the word *darash* is the middle word in the Torah, and at 11:42 we are assured that the *waw* in a Hebrew word there is the middle letter. At the end of each book are statistics as: the total number of verses in Deuteronomy is 955, the total in the entire Torah is 5,845; the total number of words is 97, 856, and the total number of letters is 400,945.⁶⁴

In this we see something of the painstaking procedures the Jews went through to assure the accurate transmission of the text. Our English Bible is a translation of this Hebrew text which has been handed down to us. God made the Jews the custodians of the Old Testament record. Though their eyes may be blind to its truth (Isa. 6:10; John 12:40; Rom. 10:1-3; 11:7), they have guarded its transmission with great accuracy.

The original copies of the Old Testament were written on leather or papyrus

from the time of Moses (c. 1450 B.C.) to the time of Malachi (400 B.C.). Until the sensational discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 we did not possess copies of the Old Testament earlier than A.D. 895. The reason for this is simply that the Jews had an almost superstitious veneration for the text which impelled them to bury copies that had become too old for use. Indeed, the Masoretes (traditionalists) who between A.D. 600 and 950 added accents and vowel points and in general standardized the Hebrew text, devised complicated safeguards for the making of copies (*as described above*) ... When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, they gave us a Hebrew text from the second to first century B.C. of all but one of the books (Esther) of the Old Testament. This was of the greatest importance, for it provided a much earlier check on the accuracy of the Masoretic text, which has now proved to be extremely accurate.

Other early checks on the Hebrew text include the Septuagint translation (middle of third century B.C.), the Aramaic Targums (paraphrases and quotes of the Old Testament), quotations in early Christian writers, and the Latin translation of Jerome (A.D. 400) which was made directly from the Hebrew text of his day. All of these give us the data for being assured of having an accurate text of the Old Testament.⁶⁵

The Three-fold Division

The Masoretic text of the Hebrew Old Testament contains twenty-four books, beginning with Genesis and ending with 2 Chronicles. Though this arrangement of the Old Testament is in only twenty-four books, the subject matter is identical with the thirty-nine book division of our Protestant English Bible. The difference is in the *order* and *division* of the arrangement of the books. The reason for this is that the Protestant canon of the Old Testament has been influenced by the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX) made about 250-160 B.C.

The Septuagint divided the books of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah each into two, which makes eight instead of four. The Twelve Minor Prophets were divided into twelve, instead of being counted as one book as in the twenty-four book division. This adds fifteen making a total of the thirty-nine books as in the Protestant English Bible.

Since the year 1517, modern Hebrew Bibles divided the books into thirty-nine, but kept the three-fold division including the arrangement of the books (Genesis through 2 Chronicles) as in the ancient Hebrew Bible. In Matthew 23:35, Jesus said, "that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar." The murder Jesus spoke of is recorded in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22. Abel's death is recorded in Genesis and in the Hebrew Bible 2 Chronicles is the last book. In essence then, Christ was saying "from the first to the last murder in the Bible." This was equivalent to saying from Genesis to Malachi and demonstrated what He considered as the canon of the Old Testament.

This twenty-four book division in its three-fold division which became the thirty-nine book division is as follows:

(1) *The Law* or The Pentateuch (5 books)—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

(2) *The Prophets* (originally 8 books, then 21)

- The Former Prophets (originally 4 books, then 6)—Joshua, Judges, Samuel (1 & 2), Kings (1 & 2)
- The Latter Prophets (originally 4 books, then 15)
Major: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel (3 books)
Minor: The 12 (originally 1 book, then 12)

(3) *The Writings* (originally 11 books, then 13)

- Poetical (3 books) —Psalms, Proverbs, Job
- The Rolls (5 books) —Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther
- Historical (originally 3 books, then 5) —Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (2), Chronicles (1 & 2)

... By the time of the New Testament this three-fold division was recognized (Luke 24:44). Other designations such as “The Scripture” (John 10:35) and “The Sacred Writings” (2 Tim. 3:15) suggest a generally accepted Old Testament canon. This three-fold division was also attested to by Josephus (A.D. 37-95), Bishop Melito of Sardis (ca. A.D. 170), Tertullian (A.D. 160-250), and others (Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Moody, Chicago, 1964, pp. 62-65). The Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90 is generally considered the occasion whereby the Old Testament canon was publicly recognized (while debating the canonicity of several books).

There is evidence of the manner in which the Old Testament books were recognized as canonical. Laird Harris (R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1969, pp. 62-65), traces the continuity of recognition: Moses was recognized as writing under the authority of God (Ex. 17:14; 34:27; cf. Josh. 8:31; 23:6). The criterion for acknowledging the Pentateuch was whether it was from God’s servant, Moses. Following Moses, God raised up the institution of prophecy to continue revealing Himself to His people (cf. Deut. 18:15-19; Jer. 26:8-15). The prophets to whom God spoke also recorded their revelation (cf. Josh. 24:26; 1 Sam. 10:25; Isa. 8:1; Ezek. 43:11). Harris concludes, “The law was accorded the respect of the author, and he was known as God’s messenger. Similarly, succeeding prophets were received upon due authentication, and their written works were received with the same respect, being received therefore as the Word of God. As far as the witness contained in the books themselves is concerned, this reception was immediate.” (Ibid., p. 167). ⁶⁶

The Tests of Canonicity

Specific tests to consider canonicity may be recognized.

(1) Did the book indicate God was speaking through the writer and that it was considered authoritative? Compare the following references: (a) God was speaking through the human author—Ex. 20:1; Josh. 1:1; Isa. 2:1; (b) that the books were authoritative—Joshua 1:7-8; 23:6; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; 23:25; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:11; Malachi 4:4. Note also Joshua 6:26 compared with 1 Kings 16:34; Joshua 24:29-33 compared with Judges 2:8-9; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 compared with Ezra 1:1-4; Daniel 9:2 compared with Jeremiah 25:11-12.

(2) Was the human author recognized as a spokesman of God, that is, was he a prophet or did he have the prophetic gift? Compare Deuteronomy 18:18; 31:24-26; 1 Samuel 10:25; Nehemiah 8:3.

(3) Was the book historically accurate? Did it reflect a record of actual facts?

Historical Evidence Supporting the Canonicity of the Old Testament

There are a number of important historical evidences drawn from the ancient writings that give support to the Old Testament canon as we have it in our Protestant Bible.

1. *Prologue to Ecclesiasticus*. This noncanonical book refers to a threefold division of books (namely, the Law, the Prophets, and hymns and precepts for human conduct) which was known by the writer's grandfather (which would be around 200 B.C.).

2. *Philo*. Philo (around A.D. 40) referred to the same threefold division.

3. *Josephus*. Josephus (A.D. 37-100) said that the Jews held as sacred only twenty-two books (which include exactly the same as our present thirty-nine books of the Old Testament).

4. *Jamnia*. Jamnia (A.D. 90), was a teaching house of rabbis who discussed canonicity. Some questioned whether it was right to accept (as was being done) Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. These discussions concerned an existing canon.

5. *The church fathers*. The church fathers accepted the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. The only exception was Augustine (A.D. 400) who included the books of the Apocrypha (those "extra" books that some Bibles include between the books of the Old and New Testaments). However, he did acknowledge that they were not fully authoritative. The books of the Apocrypha were not officially recognized as part of the canon until the Council of Trent (A.D. 1546) and then only by the Roman Catholic church.⁶⁷

New Testament Evidence for the Canonicity of the Old Testament

(1) Old Testament quotations in the New. There are some 250 quotes from Old

Testament books in the New Testament. None are from the Apocrypha. All Old Testament books are quoted except Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

(2) Old Testament quotations by Jesus Christ. In Matthew 5:17-18, the Lord declared that the Law and the Prophets, a reference that includes all of the Old Testament, then summarized as “the Law” in verse 18, would be fulfilled. This declared it was therefore God’s authoritative Word. Christ’s statement in Matthew 23:35 about the blood (murder) of Abel to the blood of Zechariah clearly defined what Jesus viewed as the Old Testament canon. It consisted of the entire Old Testament as we know it in our Protestant English Bible. This is particularly significant in view of the fact there other murders of God’s messengers recorded in the Apocrypha, but the Lord excludes them suggesting He did not consider the books of the Apocrypha to belong in the Canon as with the books from Genesis to 2 Chronicles.

The above evidence shows the books of the Old Testament, as we have them in our Protestant Bible, were God breathed and therefore authoritative and profitable the very moment they were written. “There was human recognition of the writings; normally this was immediate as the people recognized the writers as spokesmen from God. Finally, there was a collection of the books into a canon.”⁶⁸

Canonicity of the New Testament

Factors Leading to the Recognition of the New Testament Canon

What were the factors that led to the recognition of a New Testament canon as we have it today? For almost twenty years after the ascension of Christ none of the books of the New Testament were even written and about sixty-five years elapsed before the last New Testament book was written. James was undoubtedly the first, being written between 45-50 A.D., and Revelation was most surely the last, being written about 90 A.D. But several things began to happen that promoted the formation of the New Testament canon. Enns summarizes these:

- (1) Spurious writings as well as attacks on genuine writings were a factor. Marcion, for example, rejected the Old Testament and New Testament writings apart from the Pauline letters (he altered Luke’s gospel to suit his doctrine).
- (2) The content of the New Testament writings testified to their authenticity and they naturally were collected, being recognized as canonical.
- (3) Apostolic writings were used in public worship, hence, it was necessary to determine which of those writings were canonical.
- (4) Ultimately, the edict by Emperor Diocletian in A.D. 303, demanding that all sacred books be burned, resulted in the New Testament collection.⁶⁹

The Process of Recognition of the New Testament Canon

(1) In the Apostolic Era. Since the books were inspired when they were written, they were already canonical and possessed authority as being a part of God’s Word. The responsibility of the church was simply to attest to the fact of their inspiration. This process began immediately with the writers recognizing that their own writings were the Word of God (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 4:15). But they also recognized that other writings of

the New Testament were Scripture and on a par with the Old Testament. In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul quoted Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7 and referred to both passages as Scripture. Peter likewise attested to Paul's writings as Scripture in 2 Peter 3:15-16. Furthermore, the New Testament epistles were being read and circulated among the churches as authoritative revelation from God (cf. Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27).

(2) In the Post-Apostolic Era.

Clement of Rome (c. A.D. 95) mentioned at least eight New Testament books in a letter; Ignatius of Antioch (c. A.D. 115) also acknowledged about seven books; Polycarp, a disciple of John, (c. A.D. 108), acknowledged fifteen letters. That is not to say these men did not recognize more letters as canonical, but these are ones they mentioned in their correspondence. Later Irenaeus wrote (c. A.D. 185), acknowledging twenty-one books. Hippolytus (A.D. 170-235) recognized twenty-two books. The problematic books at this time were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John.

Even more important was the witness of the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170), which was a compilation of books recognized as canonical at that early date by the church. The Muratorian Canon included all the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, and one epistle of John.

In the fourth century there was also prominent recognition of a New Testament canon. When Athanasius wrote in A.D. 367 he cited the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as being the only true books. In A.D. 363 the Council of Laodicea stated that only the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were to be read in the churches. The Council of Hippo (A.D. 393) recognized the twenty-seven books, and the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) affirmed that only those canonical books were to be read in the churches.⁷⁰

Ryrie has an important note in connection with Martin Luther's opinion of the epistle of James.

Sometimes it is claimed that Martin Luther rejected the Book of James as being canonical. This is not so. Here's what he wrote in his preface to the New Testament in which he ascribes to the several books of the New Testament different degrees of doctrinal value. "St. John's Gospel and his first Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and St. Peter's Epistle—these are the books which show to thee Christ, and teach everything that is necessary and blessed for thee to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book of doctrine. Therefore, St. James' Epistle is a perfect straw-epistle compared with them, for it has in it nothing of an evangelic kind." Thus Luther was comparing (in his opinion) doctrinal value, not canonical validity.⁷¹

The Tests For Canonicity

The question naturally arises, what process and by what means did the early church

recognize which books were canonical and which books were not? The following summarizes the tests used to discern which books were canonical.

(1) Authentication on the Divine side—Inspiration. Did the book give internal evidence of inspiration, of being God breathed? Was it of proper spiritual character? Did it edify the church? Was it doctrinally accurate? “The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were rejected as a result of not meeting this test. The book should bear evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit.”⁷²

(2) Authentication on the human side. Three issues were important here: (a) Was the author an apostle or did he have the endorsement of an apostle? Mark wrote the gospel of Mark, but he did so under Peter’s endorsement. Luke, as a close associate of the Apostle Paul, wrote under the endorsement of his authority. (b) Universal acceptance was another key factor. On the whole, was the book accepted by the church at large? The recognition given a particular book by the church was important. By this standard, a number of books were rejected. There were some books that enjoyed an acceptance by a few, but were later dropped for a lack of universal acceptance. Then there were a few books that some questioned because of doubts about the author, not the content, but were later accepted because the majority accepted them.⁷³

The Reliability of the New Testament

Just how reliable are the New Testament documents?

There are now more than 5,300 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Add over 10,000 Latin Vulgate and at least 9,300 other early versions (MSS) and we have more than 24,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament. This means that no other document of antiquity even begins to approach such numbers and attestation. In comparison, the *Iliad* by Homer is second with only 643 manuscripts that still survive. The first complete preserved text of Homer dates from the 13th century.⁷⁴

This contrast is startling and tremendously significant.

Perhaps we can appreciate how wealthy the New Testament is in manuscript attestation if we compare the textual material for other ancient historical works. For Caesar’s *Gallic War* (composed between 58 and 50 B.C) there are several extant MSS, but only nine or ten are good, and the oldest is some 900 years later than Caesar’s day. Of the 142 books of the Roman history of Livy (59 B.C-A.D 17), only 35 survive; these are known to us from not more than twenty MSS of any consequence, only one of which, and that containing fragments of Books III-VI, is as old as the fourth century. Of the fourteen books of *Histories* of Tacitus (c. A.D. 100) only four and a half survive; of the sixteen books of his *Annals*, ten survive in full and two in part. The text of these extant portions of his two great historical works depends entirely on two MSS, one of the ninth century and one of the eleventh.... The History of Thucydides (c. 460-400 B.C.) is known to us from eight MSS, the earliest belonging to about the beginning of the Christian era. The same is true of the History of Herodotus (c. 480-425 B.C.). Yet no classical scholar would

listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest MSS of their works which are of any use are over 1,300 years later than the originals.⁷⁵

The fact of the many documents plus the fact that many of the New Testament documents are very early (hundreds of parchment copies from the 4th and 5th centuries with some seventy-five papyri fragments dating from A.D. 135 to the 8th century) assures us we have a very accurate and reliable text in the New Testament.

The Bible: Understanding Its Message

The Psalmist, affirming the Old Testament as God's Word, wrote, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). Later in this same Psalm he wrote, "The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple" (vs. 130). Solomon wrote, "For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life" (Prov. 6:23). So David wrote, "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Obviously God has revealed Himself to us in His inspired Word that it might give light to our innate blindness. However, for the Scripture to give us light, it must be understood properly, then believed and applied in faith. But for man to understand the Bible properly, he must have two things: (a) he needs the illuminating work of the Spirit of God, and (b) he needs the proper method of interpretation for without the right method of interpretation, one is left on a sea of uncertainty.

Its Illumination

The Need for Illumination

Though the Bible is a pure light that can direct our paths and bring us into an understanding of God and His salvation in Christ, man needs special enablement from God due to the Bible's spiritual dimension that raises it above man's natural abilities. "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11). Furthermore, Adam's fall into sin and his consequent spiritual death rendered man incapable of comprehending the truth of Scripture. Simply put, the "natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Cor. 2:14). This means a special work of God is needed to make the Scripture understandable to both the natural man (unsaved) and to the saved. As seen in the way Jesus opened the eyes of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the work of *illumination* is necessary to enable us to comprehend the Word of God (cf. Luke 24:44-45).

Definition of Illumination

Illumination can be defined as "the special ministry of the Holy Spirit whereby He enlightens men so they can comprehend the written Word of God." *Illumination* begins with the pre-salvation work of the Spirit to bring demonstrable proof of the claims of the

gospel that people might trust in Christ (cf. John 1:9; 16:8-11; 2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 6:4). Generally, *illumination* is used in reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to understand the Scripture (Eph. 1:18; 3:9).

Explanation of Illumination⁷⁶

The doctrine of *illumination* must not be confused with *revelation* and *inspiration*. The following differences need to be understood:

- (1) *Revelation* refers to the content of God's truth as it was revealed to the Old Testament and New Testament authors of Scripture.
- (2) *Inspiration* refers to the accurate transmission of that content to men, first verbally (as with the prophets) and then in written form.
- (3) *Canonization* refers to the recognition and collection of those inspired books into a canon, the Bible.
- (4) *Illumination* refers to understanding of the Bible's message to believers. Unbelievers can only experience this work as it pertains to His convicting ministry in relation to the gospel message (John 16:8-11).

As the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit is the believer's means of spiritual illumination. Four New Testament passages focus on this ministry of the Spirit; these are John 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:9-3:3; Ephesians 3:16-19; and 1 John 2:20 and 27. The essence of these passages is as follows:

- (1) As the Spirit of truth and God's special anointing, He is our Teacher. This is not a privilege for a select few, but is available to all believers since He indwells all believers. The teaching ministry of the Spirit is thus guaranteed to all believers.
- (2) Since indwelling is limited to believers, unbelievers can only experience the illuminating ministry of the Spirit in the matter of convicting and convincing them of the truth of the gospel message (John 16:8-11). This does not mean they cannot achieve a high level of understanding of the Bible, but its truth remains foolishness and they do not welcome it.
- (3) As the extent of the Spirit's illumination, it encompasses the whole council of the Bible, Genesis to Revelation and salvation to things to come.
- (4) Several things can hamper the Spirit's ministry of illumination. Carnality (1 Cor. 2:1-3), indifference (cf. Heb. 5:1f with 1 Pet. 2:2), tradition and preconceived ideas (Mark 7:7-13), ignorance (Mark 12:24; Luke 24:25-32; "foolish" in vs. 25 is the Greek, *anohtos*, "not understanding"), and poor methods of Bible study or interpretation (cf. Paul's exhortation in 2 Tim. 3:15).
- (5) The purpose of the Spirit's ministry is not to focus on Himself, but to disclose to us the glories and sufficiency of Christ and, as a result, to glorify Him (Eph. 3:16f; John 16:12-15).

(6) The Spirit uses those whom He has gifted with the gift of teaching in His ministry of illuminating others (Rom. 12:7; 1 John 2:27). 1 John 2:27 does not mean we do not need teachers. Otherwise, why would the Spirit give this gift? In the context, John was speaking of discerning truth from error.

Ryrie adds an important note about illumination and revelation.

The experience of illumination is not by “direct revelation.” The canon is closed. The Spirit illumines the meaning of that closed canon, and He does so through study and meditation. Study employs all the proper tools for ascertaining the meaning of the text. Meditation thinks about the true facts of the text, putting them together into a harmonious whole and applying them to one’s own life. The end result of the illumination ministry of the Spirit is to glorify Christ in the life, or to promote healthy doctrine—teaching that brings spiritual health and wholeness to the believer’s life. Illumination is not concerned merely with understanding facts but with using those facts to promote Christlikeness.⁷⁷

Historically, Protestant evangelicalism has affirmed that the Bible is the canon of Scripture, that it is our supreme authority in matters of faith and practice, and that the canon is now closed, but that God is still speaking today and that He does so by means of the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit through this completed canon. But a new proposition is being promoted today which states that God also speaks to His people today *apart* from the Bible. Most within the evangelical community would also add that, though He speaks *apart* from the Bible, He never *contradicts* what is in the Scriptures. But doesn’t this new position threaten the sufficiency and finality of the Scripture? Many conservative scholars believe that it does.⁷⁸

Its Interpretation

If you will note, in the outline used here, *interpretation* has been placed on a level with *illumination* under the heading “Understanding the Bible.” This is because the illuminating work of the Spirit goes hand-in-hand with the interpretation of Scripture. Although illumination is assured for believers, it does not always guarantee accurate interpretation. And if the interpretation is wrong, so will be the understanding of the passage in question. Many people approach the Bible with a false mysticism. Their attitude is, “The Holy Spirit will show what this means.” But then they proceed to butcher the text and come up with some off-the-wall idea that completely misses what the Spirit is saying based on solid principles of Bible study or exegesis. The word that comes to mind here is *abuse*. In a chapter entitled, “Handling the Scriptures Accurately,” Swindoll writes:

Ours is a day of abuse; sexual abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse. But what about *biblical* abuse? By that I mean being deceived by the improper use of Scripture. Who of us has not witnessed someone twisting Scripture, forcing it to mean something it does not mean?⁷⁹ Those who don’t know better start believing it with all their heart, only to discover later on that both

the interpretation and the application were fallacious ... perhaps dangerous to their spiritual health and growth.⁸⁰

It is because of this very problem that the Apostle Paul, in a section where he was warning Timothy against false teaching that can lead to the ruin of the hearers, said, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, *handling accurately the word of truth*” (emphasis mine). Paul had in mind the important principle that we must correctly handle the Word of God in both its analysis (exegesis) and in its presentation (exposition) since Timothy was faced with the foolish interpretations of false teachers (as we often are). But the main emphasis is on the study and interpretation of the Word of God. What’s involved here? Is this a matter of sincerity or of theology?

Now this has nothing to do with *sincerity*. Many, perhaps most, people who mishandle the Word are very sincere. And it really has little to do with *theology*. Some who have their theology fairly well in place can still mishandle Scripture. It also has nothing to do with *personality*. There are gifted teachers dripping with charisma who can sway an audience and hold them in the palm of their hand, yet be guilty of mishandling Scripture. It certainly has nothing to do with *popularity*. Famous, highly visible personalities in Christian circles who can draw large listening audiences can (and often *do*) mishandle Scripture. So let’s put to bed, once for all, the idea that if a person just “loves the Lord,” he or she will be preserved from mishandling Scripture. No, even those of us who believe in the inerrancy of Scripture and affirm the importance of sound doctrine can be guilty of biblical abuse.⁸¹

Christians need to learn the basics of sound Bible study. Sound Bible study is that which is based on the fundamental principles of interpretation that will protect the student from Scripture abuse and that will provide a check on his or her own wild imagination. The following lists several important principles that are basic to the interpretation of Scripture.

The Plain or Normal Method of Interpretation

The word *literal* is avoided here since it often leads to wrong ideas that must be later corrected. Rather, I am using the terms *plain* or *normal* to express the proper method of interpretation. By plain or normal we mean the words of Scripture are to be understood in their normal meaning just as we normally understand words in our normal, everyday communication. When we read the newspaper or a recipe in a cookbook, how do we read those words? We understand them according to their literal or normal meaning. If the recipe says two cups of flower, you don’t symbolize that to mean, a great quantity to be chosen at your discretion. If, however, it calls for a pinch of salt, you understand it to be somewhat symbolical of a very small amount.

Justification for the Plain, Normal Method of Interpretation

(1) The very purpose and nature of language supports this method. This is how we

communicate in everyday life. God gave us language for the purpose of communicating with each other and with Him. Ryrie writes:

Two ramifications flow from this idea. First, if God originated language for the purpose of communication, and if God is all-wise, then we may believe that He saw to it that the means (language) was sufficient to sustain the purpose (communication). Second, it follows that God would Himself use and expect man to use language in its normal sense. The Scriptures do not call for some special use of language, implying that they communicate on some “deeper” or special level unknown to other avenues of communication.⁸²

(2) The need of control and objectivity. Only the plain method of interpretation provides a check on the minds of men. The allegorical or spiritualizing method of interpretation leads to all kinds of abuse with one person seeing one kind of hidden meaning and another person seeing something entirely different. When interpreters disregard the normal meaning of words and look for supposedly hidden meanings, the true meaning of the Bible is lost; the Bible is abused; imagination and speculation go wild as the interpreter arbitrarily assigns this meaning and then that meaning to the text without any solid historical, grammatical, or lexical foundation for his interpretation.

(3) The example of the Bible itself. A precedence for interpreting the Bible in this manner can be seen in the way Old Testament prophecies like Psalm 22, Isaiah 7:14; 53:1-12; Micah 5:2 have all been fulfilled literally or according to their plain meaning. To this someone might argue, “Aren’t some prophecies of the Old Testament fulfilled in a spiritual or typical sense in the New Testament?” To this question Ryrie says:

To be sure some prophecies of the Old Testament are given a typical fulfillment, only seven are cited as examples of a nonliteral hermeneutic. However, of the approximately twenty-four prophecies to which the New Testament gives a typical fulfillment, only seven are cited as examples of a nonliteral hermeneutic (and, of course, not all agree that these seven prove this). The seven are Matthew 2:15, 18, 23; 11:10; Acts 2:17-21; Romans 9:24-26; and Galatians 4:21-31. Remember, however, that we are not just comparing seven out of a total of twenty-four, but seven out of a total of hundreds, for almost all Old Testament prophecies are clearly fulfilled literally in the New Testament. To be sure, the New Testament may use the Old Testament in ways other than fulfillment, but I am here speaking of prophecies and their fulfillments. This is a strong support for the literal hermeneutics.⁸³

Principles of the Plain, Normal Method of Interpretation

(1) We must interpret the Bible grammatically. This is in keeping with the fact of *verbal* (words) *plenary* (full) inspiration. Every word of the Bible is important and though some words will hold more importance than others, all the words and sentences are a part of God’s communication to us. “Only grammatical interpretation fully honors the verbal

inspiration of Scripture.”⁸⁴ Grammatical relationships are vital to sound interpretation because thoughts are expressed in words which stand in relationship to each other to express complete thoughts.

If we neglect the meanings of words and how they are used, we have no way of knowing whose interpretations are correct. The assertion, “You can make the Bible mean anything you want it to mean,” is true only if grammatical interpretation is ignored.⁸⁵

The hallmark of the Reformation was a return to the historical, grammatical interpretation of Scripture. This was in direct opposition to the approach to the Bible that had been in vogue for hundreds of years—the view that ignored the normal meaning of words in their grammatical sense and let words and sentences mean whatever the readers wanted them to mean.⁸⁶

So, what is grammatical interpretation? Grammatical interpretation is the process that studies the text of Scripture (*exegesis*, the critical analysis of the text) to determine four important things: (a) the meaning of words (lexicology), (b) the form of words (morphology), (c) the function of words (parts of speech), and (d) the relationship of words (syntax). This means it is necessary to study the tenses of verbs, nouns and pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and the ways these words are structured.

(2) We must study the Bible historically. As Enns points out, “The historical context is important as a framework from which to interpret the Scriptures. Every book of Scripture was written in a historical context that should be understood in order to help interpret the book accurately.”⁸⁷

(3) We must study the Bible contextually. Every passage and all the words and sentences in that passage have a context. Take the passage out of the context, and you will miss its meaning and you may abuse the passage. “Words and sentences do not stand in isolation; therefore, the context must be studied in order to see the relation that each verse sustains to that which precedes and to that which follows. Involved are the immediate context and the theme and scope of the whole book.”⁸⁸

(4) We must interpret according to the analogy of Scripture. This simply means, while always keeping in mind the context, etc., we also need to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. If an interpretation of a passage contradicts other plain passages of the Bible, then something is wrong with the interpretation. Included here is a recognition of the dual authorship of the Bible.

The dual authorship of the Bible makes it necessary not only to know the human author’s meaning but also God’s. God’s meaning may not be fully revealed in the original human author’s writing but is revealed when Scripture is compared with Scripture. We must allow for a *sensus plenior* which allows for a fuller (though directly related) meaning in the mind of the divine Author of Scripture. We cannot say that the human authors of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words. When we compare Scripture with Scripture, we can discover the fuller intention of

the divine Author.⁸⁹

(5) We need to recognize the progressive nature of God's revelation. God did not reveal Himself or His plan all at once. The promise of salvation is revealed in seed form in Genesis 3:15, but it is expanded and developed throughout the Old Testament until we come to its fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ and its full explanation in the New Testament. Once more let me quote Dr. Ryrie:

To be able to interpret plainly and consistently, it is imperative to recognize that revelation was given progressively. This means that in the process of revealing His message to man, God may add or even change in one era what He had given in another. Obviously the New Testament adds much that was not revealed in the Old. What God revealed as obligatory at one time may be rescinded at another (as the prohibition of eating pork, once binding on God's people, now rescinded, 1 Tim. 4:3).

To fail to recognize this progressiveness in revelation will raise unresolvable contradictions between passages if taken literally. Notice the following pairs of passages which will contradict if understood plainly unless one recognizes changes due to the progress of revelation: Matthew 10:5-7 and 28:18-20, Luke 9:3 and 22:36, Genesis 17:10 and Galatians 5:2; Exodus 20:8 and Acts 20:7. Notice too the crucial changes indicated in John 1:17; 16:24; 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. Those who will not consistently apply this principle of progressive revelation in interpretation are forced to resort to figurative interpretation or sometimes simply to ignore the evidence.⁹⁰

Since the whole area of biblical interpretation is such an important subject and so determinative on properly understanding the Word of God, a short bibliography is attached to encourage further study in this area.⁹¹

The Bible: Alive and Powerful (Animation)

Many theologies in discussing bibliology include a section called *Animation*. By animation we mean that quality of the Bible as it is expressed in passages like Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Another passage that speaks of the animating, life-giving, life-changing power of the Scripture is Psalm 19:7-9:

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

In addition, there is probably no passage that stresses the animating power and value of the Scripture like Psalm 119 which describes numerous attributes of God's Word as

“faithful” (vs. 86), “exceedingly broad” (vs. 96), “right” (vs. 128), “wonderful” (vs. 129), “pure” (vs. 140), “truth,” “everlasting” (vs. 160), and “righteousness” (vs. 172) .

The doctrine of animation stresses the powerful and life-changing activity of the Scripture. Unlike any other book known to man, the Bible possesses a living quality that stems from its divine origin as the unique God-breathed book. This power is manifested in two primary ways.

First, the power of the Bible is seen in the way it reveals God and His glorious plan of salvation in the person and work of Jesus Christ; it is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). The stress here is on the power of the Bible on the unsaved. This truth is brought out for us in many ways, but the classic passage is 1 Peter 1:23, “for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.” The Word of God combined with the ministry of the Holy Spirit work together to bring people to faith in Christ and into the new birth so they become the children of God (John 3:5; 2 Tim. 3:15; Tit. 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:1-4).

Second, the power of the Word is seen in the lives of the saved as God uses it along with the illuminating and empowering ministry of the Spirit to conform us into the image of the Lord Jesus. Our Lord had this in mind in His prayer in John 17:17 when He prayed, “Sanctify them through Your truth, Your Word is truth.” God’s Word is truly alive and powerful.

I recently read an interesting illustration that is pertinent here. A Bible translator working with the Agta people shared this interesting insight. “Depending upon the context, the Agta word *madagat* can mean “stinging, venomous, or potent.” A poisonous snake is *madagat*, but so are some medicines that can heal. The translation assistant explained his understanding of how the Word of God is potent: “It depends upon how we approach it. If we disregard it, it’s like the poisonous snake. But if we live by it, its potency is like medicine.”

Another illustration of the animating power of the Word may be seen in the many pictures God gives us in the Bible of what His Word can do. It is pictured as a sword (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17), as a critic or judge (Heb. 4:12), as a lamp or a light (Ps. 19:8b; 119:105, 130; Prov. 6:23), as a mirror (1 Cor. 3:18; Jam. 22-25), as rain, snow, or water (Isa. 55:10-11; Jer. 17:5-8; Eph. 5:26), as food or bread from heaven (Deut. 8:3; Job. 23:12; Ps. 19:10b), and as gold (Ps. 19:10; 119:72, 127; Pr. 8:10, 11; Isa. 55:1-3; 1 Pet. 2:18). And these are not all of the pictures. For more detail on these pictures, their significance, and the animating actions of the Word, see Lesson 6, “The Word Filled Life” in Book 2, of the *ABCs for Christian Growth* series on our web site.

Concluding Thoughts

As I sought to emphasize at the beginning of this study, nothing is more important to us than the Bible for all we believe basically hinges on its truth. The late Francis A. Schaeffer voiced concern over the growing tendency to elevate feelings—experience—to the throne of authority. In his book, *The New Superspirituality*, Schaeffer cautioned: “Beware! Neither experience nor emotion is the basis of faith. The basis for our faith is that certain things are true. The whole man, including the intellect, is to act upon the fact that certain

things are true. That of course will lead to an experiential relationship with God, but the basis is content not experience.”

In the dumbing down we have witnessed in America with its happy-clappy kind of Christianity so prevalent today, we are witnessing a growing anti-intellectualism in the church. For many of the present generation, experience has become more important than truth, but experience without truth is the menace and misery of a mindless Christianity, and one of the issues we face is that God’s truth is found for us in the Bible. So not only have we been faced with a battle for the inerrancy of the Bible, but for the need to return to the Bible as God’s holy Word as the foundation of our faith and experience. Let me conclude with these words from the Savior:

John 8: 31-32. Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you abide in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

In praying for the disciples and for those who would believe after them (the church) He was praying that they might be protected from the evil influences of the world, the Savior said these vital words:

John 17:16-17. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

1 Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1972, p. 7.

2 *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, John H. Armstrong, general editor, Moody Press, Chicago, 1996, p. 20 quoting the *French Confession of Faith*, Article V (1559).

3 Armstrong, p. 20.

4 Armstrong, p. 19.

5 Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1989, p. 153.

6 *NIV Bible Commentary*, Zondervan New Media, Grand Rapids, 1997, electronic media.

7 *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Electronic version licensed from INSO Corporation. All rights reserved.

8 *Lewis Sperry Chafer Systematic Theology*, Abridged Edition, Vol. 1, John F. Walvoord, editor, Donald K. Campbell, Roy B. Zuck, consulting editors, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1988, p. 41.

9 For the discontinuity between the gifts practiced in the early church and those being

claimed today, as with the gifts of miracles and prophecy, see the article by Dr. Dan B. Wallace on this web site, "Two Views on the 'Sign Gifts:' Continuity VS Discontinuity" (www.bible.org).

10 Armstrong, p. 86. The issue of canonicity will be addressed in the material below.

11 Chafer, p. 42.

12 The issue of illumination will be covered later in this study, but see also Wallace's article, "The Holy Spirit and Hermeneutics" in the Prof's Soapbox section on this web site (www.bible.org).

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14 Chafer, p. 42.

15 Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Ariel's Radio Ministry, The Messianic Bible Study.

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35 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987, electronic media.

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43 Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, edited by Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., Regency, Grand Rapids, 1976, p. 647.

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61 Enns, p. 170.

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THEOLOGY I: BIBLIOLOGY - THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURE

I. THE BIBLE AS A BOOK

A. The designation of the Book

1. The Bible

Our English word "Bible" comes from the Greek words "Biblos" (Matt. 1:1) and "Biblion" (Luke 4:17) which mean book.

2. The Proposition set forth by the Bible itself.

a. The Bible claims to be the product of the work of God. The two great texts for inspiration are: 2 Pet 1:21 and 2 Tim 3:16. The Biblical claim may be seen in many other passages in both Testaments.

b. In the Old Testament, we have Ex 20:1; Deut. 10:4; 2 Sam 23:1-2.

c. In the New Testament, we have Ga 1:11-12; Heb 1:1-2.

3. The Bible is called the Scripture (Mark 12:10; Luke 4:21).

4. The name applied in the New Testament to the books of the Old Testament collectively is The Writings, or in Latin, The Scriptures, Once we find the phrase, Holy Scriptures, and once with a different form of the Greek word, Sacred Writings.

5. Of all the names given to the Bible, "The Word of God" is doubtless the most significant, impressive and complete (Mark 7:13).

B. The embodiment of a Divine Revelation

The scriptures are the supreme source of Christian theology. What are the proofs for this belief?

1. The A Priori Argument

This argument is based on evidence obtained prior to and based on sense experience.

Presumption as an argument - positive presumption.

2. The Argument from Analogy

This is an argument from the correspondence between ratios or relations between things.

a. We need to communicate amongst ourselves. This is a universal need found in all forms of animal life.

b. There is the healing of limbs, the cure of diseases and the delay of judgment. These furnish some ground for thinking that the God of nature is a God of

forbearance and mercy (Acts 14:15-17).

3. The Argument From the Indestructibility of the Bible

a. The survival of the Bible through the ages is very difficult to explain if it is not in truth the Word of God. Books are like men - dying creatures. A very small percentage of books survive through the centuries. But, the Holy Scriptures stand out like the last survivor of an otherwise extinct race and the very fact of the Bible's continued existence is an indication that, like it's Author, it is indestructible.

b. When we bear in mind, the fact that the Bible has been subjected to never ending persecution, it is a miracle that it still exists. Not only has the Bible been the most intensely loved Book in the whole world, but it has also been the most bitterly hated.

4. The Argument From the Character of the Bible

a. The Bible recognizes the personality, unity and trinity of God. b. It magnifies the holiness and love of God.

c. It accounts for man as a direct creation of God, made in the likeness of God.

d. It represents man's fall as a free revolt against the revealed will of God.

e. It pictures sin as inexcusable and under the judgment of eternal punishment.

f. It teaches that God is sovereign.

g. It sets forth in great detail God's provision of salvation and the conditions on which it may be experienced.

h. It describes the purposes of God concerning Israel and the church.

i. It predicted the developments of the world, socially, economically, politically and religiously.

j. It portrays the culmination of all things in the second coming of Christ, the resurrections, the judgments, the millennium, and the eternal state.

5. The Argument from the Influence of the Bible

The Bible influences the fundamental laws of the nations and great social reforms have been effected. There is not another book in the entire world that has such beneficial influence upon mankind. Furthermore, it has brought the impact of the regenerating effect on millions of individual lives.

6. The Argument from the Fulfilled Prophecy

a. Definition of Prophecy

Prophecy is the foretelling of future events by virtue of direct communication from God through man. This foretelling, though not contravening any laws of the human mind would not be possible without this agency of God.

So prophecy is God's communication to man knowledge concerning events still future, which he otherwise could not have discovered.

b. Example of Fulfilled Prophecy

(1) The prophecies concerning Israel's dispersion have been minutely fulfilled (Deut. 28:15-68, Jer. 15:4, 16:13, Hos. 3:4).

(2) The overthrow of Samaria and preservation of Judah occurred as prophesied. (I Kings 14:15, Is 7:6-8, Hos. 1:6-7);

(3) That Judah and Jerusalem, having been rescued from the Assyrians, were to fall into the hands of the Babylonians (Is 39:6, Jer. 25:9-12);

(4) that the destruction of Samaria was to be final (Mic. 1:6-9) but that of Jerusalem was to be followed by a restoration (Jer. 29:10-14);

(5) the very restorer of Judah was foretold by name (Is 44:28, 45:1); (6) the Medes and the Persians were to overthrow Babylon (Is 21:2, Dan 5:28);

(7) and the city of Jerusalem and the temple were to be rebuilt (Is 44:28).

There are many other predictions in the Bible that could be cited as proof of the fulfillment of prophecy. Some examples are, the increase of knowledge and of travel in the latter days (Dan 12:

4), the continuation of wars and rumors of wars (Matt 24:6-7), the increase of wickedness (2 Tim 3:1-13), the preservation of a remnant of Israel (Rom. 11:1-5, 25-32. What man could foresee and predict any of these things? This again, proves we have in the Bible the embodiment of a divine revelation.

II. THE GENUINENESS, CREDIBILITY & CANONICITY OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

A. The Genuineness of The Books of The Bible

"Proof that the books of the Old and New Testaments were written at the age to which they are assigned and by the . . . men to whom they are ascribed." - A.H. Strong

1. The Genuineness of the Books of the Old Testament

There is a threefold division in the Old Testament Scripture namely, the Law, the Prophets and the Kethubhim (Writings).

a. The Genuineness of the Books of the Law

(1) There were genealogical tablets and lists known in Babylonia centuries before Abraham; it is possible that Abraham carried cuneiform tablets containing such records with him from Haran to Canaan.

(2) In the Pentateuch, Moses is repeatedly represented as the author of that which is written. He was to write it (Ex 17:14) and it said that he did write it (Ex 24:4). What he wrote is described as "the words of this law" (Deut. 28:58). In addition, thirteen times outside the Pentateuch in the Old Testament Moses is represented as the author of a written work.

(3) In the New Testament, our Lord frequently speaks of "Moses" as a written work (Lk 16:29).

(4) Certain other internal evidence may also be mentioned which attests to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The author is obviously an eyewitness to the account of the exodus; he is very familiar with the land of Egypt. He uses several Egyptian words. He makes reference to customs which go back to the second millennium B.C.

b. The Genuineness of the Books of the Prophets

It is commonly assumed by conservative scholars that the names which appear in the opening verses of a prophetic book are intended to give us faithfully the name of the author of that book.

Even Malachi is probably intended as the name of the author as well as of the book and not as a reference to 3:1.

c. The Genuineness of the Kethubhim

This constitutes the remaining books. We will look at two of these books.

(1) Daniel was undoubtedly written by the statesmen who bore that name. The author identifies himself as Daniel and writes in the first person (Dan 7:2 - "Daniel spake and said I . . .").

Further, Daniel was commanded to preserve the book (Dan 12:4 - "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book . . ."). There is a noticeable unity in the book, with the name Daniel appearing throughout. Jesus attributed the book of Daniel (Matt 24:15 - ". . . spoken of by Daniel the prophet").

(2) Nehemiah was no doubt written by Nehemiah, the Persian king's cupbearer. This is made clear by the opening words, "The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah" (Neh., 1:1) and the fact that the author speaks in the first person many times. It was written in the time of Malachi, somewhere between 424-395 B.C.

2. The Genuineness of the Books of the New Testament

It is commonly assumed that the author can be known by the opening verses of some of the books of the New Testament.

The book of Acts is today quite generally ascribed to Luke, the same man who wrote the third Gospel. Ten of the so-called Pauline Epistles are today for the most part attributed to Paul, doubt being cast only upon the Pastoral Epistles, on the basis of style. But style changes can be due to change in subject matter and the age of the author.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is anonymous and no one knows who wrote it. It was undoubtedly written by a learned Christian somewhere between AD 67 and 69.

B. Credibility of The Books of The Bible

A book is credible if it relates truthfully the matters which it treats. Credibility then embraces both the ideas of truthfulness of the records and purity of the texts.

1. The Credibility of the Books of the Old Testament

This is established by two great facts.

a. The proof from Christ's recognition of the Old Testament. Christ received the Old Testament as relating truthfully the events and doctrines which it treats (Matt 5:17).

b. The proof derived from history and archaeology. History furnishes many proofs of the correctness of the biblical representations of life in Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia and so forth. A number of the rulers of these countries are mentioned by name in Scripture and none of them are represented in a manner contradictory to what is known of them in history.

2. The Credibility of the Books of the New Testament.

This can be established by four great facts: -

a. The writers of the New Testament were competent. They were qualified to bear testimony to divine truths.

b. The writers of the New Testament were honest. The moral tone of their writings, their evident regard for the truth, and the circumstantiality of their accounts indicates that they were not deliberate deceivers, but honest men.

c. Their writings harmonize with each other. The Synoptics do not contradict but supplement each other, The details in the Gospel of John can be fitted together with the first three Gospels into a harmonious whole.

d. Their accounts agree with history and experience. There are many references to contemporary history in the New Testament.

C. The Canonicity of The Books of The Bible

The word "canon" comes from the Greek "kenon." It means:

1. a reed or measuring rod, hence a rule or standard

2. an authoritative decision of a church council

3. as applied to the Bible, it means those books which have been tested according to certain and fixed standards, found satisfactory and approved as inspired of God.

There were three basic requirements for each book before it was received into the canon of Scripture.

1. apostolic sanction

2. used in early church

3. found to be inspired

III. THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

A. The Definition of Inspiration

1. Inspiration may be defined as that operation of the divine Spirit which renders speaker or writer infallible in the communication of truth whether or not that information was previously known.

2. "Inspiration may be defined as God so supernaturally directing the writers of Scripture that without waiving their human intelligence, their individuality, their literary style, their personal feelings, or any other human factor, His own complete coherent message to man was recorded in perfect accuracy, the very words of Scripture bearing the authority of divine authorship."- L.S. Chafer

3. Another definition: inspiration may often include revelation, or the direct communication from God, of truth which man could not attain by his unaided powers. It may include illumination, or the quickening of man's cognitive powers to understand truth already revealed.

Inspiration, however, does not necessarily always include either revelation or illumination. It is simply the divine influence which secures a transmission of needed truth. It may be only an inspiration of superintendence. It may be an inspiration of illumination or revelation. It can also be a combination of both of these factor.

B. The Process Involved in The Divine Work of Inspiration

This is a complex and varied process. We will consider these five aspects: Work of Preparation, Work of Revelation, Work of Inspiration, Work of Preservation and Work of Interpretation

1. The Work of Preparation -Each writer was prepared by God (Jer. 1:5-6; Gal 1:15-16)

2. The Work of Revelation - God revealed the material to the writers. The Bible shows at least eight types of revelation:

- a. The direct voice of God
- b. The immediate writing of God
- c. Dreams
- d. Visions
- e. Spiritual life and experience
- f. The direct influence of the Holy Spirit
- g. The natural world and miraculous events
- h. Types (both men and things)

3. The Work of Inspiration -Inspiration has to do with the writing, or recording of the words of God in written form which is permanent and lasting (2 Tim. 3:16).

4. The Work of Preservation - The Bible teaches such a work of God clearly (Deut. 10:5; Jer. 36:27-28)

5. The Work of Interpretation -First four stages are not enough to bring the revelation to man. One more is needed: God Himself must interpret His own revelation to man. Only He can do this (Lk 24:27, 45).

Note: Revelation concerns the discovery of truth; Illumination concerns the understanding of truth; Inspiration concerns the communication of truth in written form.

These may act cooperatively or separately. Instances of this are as follows:

- a. Inspiration without revelation (Lk 1:1-3);
- b. Inspiration including revelation (Rev 1:1,11);
- c. Inspiration without illumination, as in the prophets (1 Pet 1:11);
- d. Inspiration including illumination, as in the case of Paul (1 Cor. 2:12);
- e. Revelation without inspiration, as in God's words from Sinai (Ex 20:1, 22); and...
- f. Illumination without inspiration, as in modern preachers (Eph. 2:20).

C. The Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration

The Holy Spirit so guided and superintended the writers of the sacred text, making use of their own unique personalities, that they wrote all that he wanted them to write, without excess or error. Several things must be noted: -

1. Inspiration is Inexplicable. It is the operation of the Holy Spirit, but we do not know exactly how that power of the Spirit operates.
2. Inspiration, in this restricted sense, is limited to the Scripture. Other books are not inspired in the same sense.
3. Inspiration is Essentially Guidance. That is, the Holy Spirit supervised the selection of the materials to be used and the words to be employed in writing.
4. The Holy Spirit preserved the authors from all error and from all omission.
5. Inspiration extends to the words, not merely to the thoughts and concepts.
6. The Verbal, Plenary Theory, or Full Inspiration.
 - a. By verbal inspiration, we mean that the very words of Scripture were given by, the Holy Spirit, that the writers were not left absolutely to themselves in the choice of words they should use, but were divinely directed in their selection. This interpretation opposes the concept or thought theory which claims that only the concepts, or thoughts, of men were given by inspiration.
 - b. By plenary inspiration we mean that the Scriptures are fully and equally inspired in all their parts. This opposes the teaching of partial inspiration, expressed in the statement: "The Bible contains the Word of God."

7. Inadequate Theories of Inspiration

a. Natural inspiration or the Intuition Theory

This theory holds that inspiration is merely a superior insight on the part of

natural man.

b. The dynamic or partial-inspiration theory

This theory holds that God supplied the ability needed for the trustworthy transmission of the truth which the writers of Scripture were commissioned to deliver. This made them infallible in matters of faith and practice, but not in things which are not of an immediate religious character.

c. The theory that the thoughts, not the words, are inspired.

According to this theory, God suggested the thoughts of the revelation, but left it up to man to put the revelation into words. But Scripture indicates that the words themselves are inspired.

d. The theory that the Bible contains the Word of God.

On this theory, the Bible is a human book that God can make His Word at the moment of

personal encounter.

e. The dictation theory or mechanical inspiration

This theory holds that inspiration consisted in such a possession of the minds and bodies of the

Scripture writers by the Holy Spirit that they became passive instruments or pens, not penmen of

God.

8. The Proofs of Inspiration

There are two fundamental things on which we may base the theory of verbal, plenary inspiration: the character of God and the character and claims of the Bible itself.

a. The Character of God

(1) The existence of God is evident from the fact that he has revealed Himself, and it has been established by means of various proofs for His existence.

(2) If God is all this, we would expect Him to have a loving concern for His creatures and come to their aid. That He has such a concern and does come to man's aid is evident from His provision for man's material and temporal needs.

b. Character and Claims of the Bible

(1) The strongest witness to the inspiration of the Bible is the claim of the Bible itself. The Bible plainly teaches that the words are inspired and that it is the Word of God.

(2) This teaching may be considered less than three kinds of evidence:

(a) Direct testimony - God Himself spoke (Ex 4:10-12; 34:27; Numbers 12:6; Deut. 4:2; 18:20, Mk 12:36; Jer. 1:6-9; Num. 22:38; 23:26). For the testimony of the New Testament Scriptures (Jn 12:49, 50; 17:8; 5:19; Mk. 13:11; Acts 2:1-4; 2:7, 11; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13). The Bible uniformly teaches the doctrine of verbal inspiration.

(b) Inferential testimony - By this it is meant that which is assumed by the Bible and the natural implication of many of its statements.

(c) The resultant testimony - there are certain results which follow believing the Word and submission to its requirements which cannot be accounted for on any other basis than it is inspired of God.

i) It will impart spiritual life and save the soul (Jas 1:21; 1 Pet 1:23) ii) It has cleansing power (Ps. 119:9; Jn. 15:3) iii) By the word, we are kept from evil and the power of the evil one (Ps. 17:4; 119:11; Jn 17:14)

9. The Objections to the Biblical View of Inspiration

a. Quotations of Ignorance or Error

(1) Paul said before Ananias, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest" (Acts 23:5). Here Paul merely admits his ignorance and does not deal with the question of inspiration.

(2) Dealing with 1 Cor. 7:12, "But to the rest I say, not the Lord." The Lord has given commands concerning divorce (Matt 5:31; 19:3-9). Now Paul speaks with the authority given him. He is not drawing a line between the authoritative commands of Christ and his own. Rather, he himself is claiming inspiration and the authority to set forth doctrine and practice (1 Cor. 7:12, 25; 7:40).

b. In Science and History

(1) The Bible is not a textbook on either science or history; but if it is verbally inspired, then we expect it to speak truthfully whenever it touches on either of these subjects.

(2) But, just as scientists still speak of the rising and setting of the sun, the four corners of the earth, etc., so the Bible often uses the language of appearance. The seeming imperfections, errors and contradictions usually disappear when we take into account the nontechnical style of the writers.

c. In Miracle and Prophecy

If one believes in the physical resurrection of Christ, then there remains no hindrance to the acceptance of all the other miracles of Scripture as well.

d. In Quoting and Interpreting the Old Testament

Most of our difficulties here will vanish if we observe several items:

(1) Sometimes the New Testament writers merely express their ideas in words

borrowed from an Old Testament passage, without pretending to interpret the passage (Rom. 10:6-8).

(2) Sometimes they point out a typical element in a passage that has not been generally recognized as typical (Matt 2:15).

(3) Sometimes they give credit to an earlier prophecy when they really quote from a later form of it (Matt 27:9; Zech. 11:13).

(4) Sometimes they combine two quotations into one and assign the whole to the more prominent author (Mk 1:2; Is 40:3; Mal. 3:1).

e. In Morals and Religion

Practically all of the so-called errors in morals and religion are in the Old Testament. But all difficulties along these lines will disappear if we bear in mind the following facts:

(1) The sinful acts of man may be recorded, but they are never sanctioned. For example, Noah's drunkenness (Gen. 9:20-27) and Lot's incest (Gen. 19:30-39).

(2) Some evil acts appear to be sanctioned, but it is really the good intention or accompanying virtue that is recognized and not the evil act itself. For example, Rahab's faith, not her duplicity (Josh 2:1-21).

(3) Some things were permitted as relatively, not absolutely, right. For examples, divorce (Deut. 24:1, Matt 5:31).

D. Authority of The Scriptures

The Bible carries with it the divine authority of God. It is binding upon man - on his mind, conscience, will and heart. Man, creed, and church are all subject to the authority of Scripture. God has spoken; we must submit. The eternal "thus saith the Lord" is our standard.

E. Inerrancy of The Scriptures

Not only is Scripture inspired and authoritative, it is also inerrant and infallible. By this we mean that it is without error in the original manuscripts. It is inerrant in all that it affirms, whether in historical, scientific, moral or doctrinal matters. Inerrancy extends to all of Scripture and is not limited to certain teachings of Scripture.

F. Illumination of The Scriptures

The one who inspired men in the writing of Scripture, illumines the minds of those who read it. Because of sin and the darkened understanding brought about because of sin, no one can understand Scripture properly (Rom. 1:21; Eph. 4:18). However, the Spirit can enlighten the mind of the believer to understand the Scriptures (1Cor 2:6-16; 1 Jn.:20, 27).

CENTRAL PASSAGES FOR BIBLIOLOGY

The following are passages which clearly demonstrate the truth of each doctrine listed below. Each passage is useful in explaining what the true doctrine of bibliology affirms and denies. For instance, the following claim is a common one:

The claim for the Bible as an objective authority is idolatry. It is the displacement of God by the Book. It is the denial of the right of religious experience for any but the founders of a movement who give the Book a certain interpretation. It is blasphemy against God who has created man in His image. It is denial of freedom as set forth in the New Testament.- Robert S. Alley, Revolt Against the Faithful, p. 68.

If one claims the Bible to be an objective authority to which one submits oneself, this, it is claimed, is bibliolatry. However, consider the following central passage which speaks to this objection:

"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy *truth*; for thou has magnified *thy word above all thy name*. - Ps. 138:2.

Note the extent to which God exalts His word! There is no competition between God and His word that He values so highly as the revelation of His truth. The charge of bibliolatry against believers for their deep reverence of God's word is unfounded. If we submit to God's word as our authority we do not blaspheme God; we honor Him. The above writer is seen then as attempting to turn a virtue (reverence for God's word) into a vice (bibliolatry) in order to be able to justify a freedom that the Bible does not recognize.

The student is encouraged as he proceeds through his reading assignments to reflect on the following passages and commit the addresses, if not the content, to memory.

Agent of inspiration (Holy Spirit)	II Pet. 1:20,21
Anticipation of New Testament Scriptures	Jn 16:13,14
Bibliolatry?	Ps. 138:2
Christ's endorsement of the O.T. canon	LK 24:44 Matt. 23:35
Demythologizing not scriptural	II Pet. 1:16
Historicity of Adam (not mythical)	Lk. 3:23-30

Illumination	I Cor. 2:9-3:2
Limitation on "freedom of interpretation"	Isa. 8:20
General revelation	Rom. 1:19, 20 Ps. 19:1-6
Inerrancy of Scripture	John 10:35
Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch	Jn. 5:45-47
N.T. endorses N.T. as Scripture	II Peter 3:15,16 I Tim 5:18 (cf. Lk. 10:7)
No new revelation expected	Heb 1:1,2
Warning against adding to Scripture	Prov. 30:5-6
Practical value of inspired Scripture	II Tim. 3:15, 17
Preservation of Scripture	Isa 40:8
Propositional revelation	Rev. 1:1-3
Importance of Scripture for living	Matt. 4:4
Trinity's involvement in revelation	I Cor. 2:10 Jn. 1:18 Matt.3:17
Unity of Isaiah	Jn. 12:38-40
Validity of messianic prophecy	Lk. 24:25-27 Jer. 1:9
Verbal plenary inspiration	II Tim 3:16
Vivification (Animation)	Heb. 4:12

See Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, pp. 525-526

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THE TRINITY

A definition of The Trinity runs as follows: there is only one God; the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God and yet there are not three Gods but only one. The persons are co-eternal and co-equal; one substance makes up the three members of the Godhead, yet it exists or is distributed among three persons. All alike are uncreated and omnipotent. God is a triune being, three persons in one.

The technical definition of The Trinity may perhaps be confusing to some people. As a result, various devices have been developed to try to make the concept understandable. Here are a few.

One can picture a cake, made up of its separate ingredients: eggs, flour, sugar -- yet combined and cooked, they make a single cake. A single bottle of soft drink may be poured out into three glasses -- one substance, yet three containers. St. Patrick liked to make use of the Shamrock as an illustration of the Trinity: three leaves, yet one Shamrock. Water exists in three forms: liquid, solid (ice), and gas (water vapor), yet it remains one substance.

Perhaps the best way of expressing the nature of the Trinity is to take the approach used in the Bible: that of a family. Three members belong to this family: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet they remain a single family, identified by the term God. No analogy, no example to help explain the nature of the trinity is going to be without its flaws. Every analogy breaks down, every example remains less than completely satisfying. It must be understood that the doctrine of The Trinity is designed to remove the paradox that, though the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, yet there is but *one* God.

I. There is Only One God

Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one.

Deuteronomy 4:35

You were shown these things so that you might know that Yahweh is God; besides him there is no other.

Isaiah 43:10

"You are my witnesses,"
 declares Yahweh
 "and my servant whom I have chosen,
 so that you may know and believe me
 and understand that I am he.
 Before me no god was formed,
 nor will there be one after me."

Isaiah 44:6-8

"This is what Yahweh says --

Israel's King and Redeemer,

Yahweh of Hosts:

I am the first and I am the last;

apart from me there is no God.

Who then is like me?

Let him proclaim it.

Let him declare and lay out before me

what has happened since I established

my ancient people,

and what is yet to come -- yes, let him foretell what will come.

Do not tremble, do not be afraid.

Did I not proclaim this and foretell it

long ago?

You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me?

No, there is no other Rock;

I know not one."

Isaiah 45:5-6

I am the Lord, and there is no other;

apart from me there is no God.

I will strengthen you, though

you have not acknowledged me,

so that from the rising of the sun

to the place of its setting

men may know there is none besides me.

I am the Lord, and there is no other.

II. The Son is God

John 1:1-2

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

The Greek grammatical construction leaves no doubt whatsoever that this is the only possible rendering of the text. The subject of the sentence is Word (*logos*), the verb was. There can be no direct object following was, since according to grammatical usage, intransitive verbs take no objects but take instead predicate nominative which refer back to the subject, in this case, word (*logos*) it is therefore easy to see that no article is needed for *theos* (God), and to translate it "a god" is both incorrect grammar and poor Greek, since *theos* is the predicative nominative of was in the third sentence-clause of the verse and must refer back to the subject word (*logos*) Christ then, if he is the word "made flesh" (Jn 1:14) can be no one else except God, unless the Greek text and consequently God's word be denied." "The Word was with God" means that the Word was with the person commonly known as "God", that is, the Father -- while "the Word was God" means that the Word was himself God by nature as much God as the Father, without being the same person as the Father. This is about as explicit as it gets. Besides the problems in Greek with those who would suggest that the verse should be translated "the word was a god", such a translation seriously contradicts the Scriptures which say there is no other God but the one true God.

If Jesus is "a god" then what else can he be but God? There is only one divine being in the universe. All others are either false gods, who are not gods at all, or humans who falsely claim such divinity (as for instance certain kings). That Satan is referred to as "the God of this age" can hardly be construed as an argument against Jesus' divinity. The statement in reference to Satan is sarcastic, not serious; he is worshiped by the wicked, and they follow him instead of the true God. Satan is portrayed as a false god. This is hardly equivalent to the way Jesus is portrayed. Notice what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6:

So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

According to 1 Corinthians, if the Word in John 1:1 is anything other than the one true God -- simply "a god" -- then he is false and evil. The Watchtower publication, *Reasoning from Scripture* points out that "Isaiah 9:6 (RS) also prophetically describes Jesus as 'Mighty God,' but not as the Almighty God. All this is in harmony with Jesus' being described as 'a god,' or 'divine,' at John 1:1 (NW,AT)." Yet the point being made by the Watchtower publication seems ill-founded at best, because just one chapter over in Isaiah 10:20-21 is the following:

"In that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob,
will no longer rely on him who struck them down
but will truly rely on Yahweh,
the Holy One of Israel.
A remnant will return,
a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God."

If Yahweh is referred to as "Mighty God" wouldn't it be somewhat blasphemous to apply the same designation to anyone of lesser significance? In some Jehovah's Witness literature it is intimated that there are three classes of divine beings: The one true God, false gods, and something in between, "creatures which, by virtue of their might and authority over other creatures are legitimately designated 'gods'." How a creature could be neither the True God, when the Bible is unmistakable in declaring there is only one, nor a false god who is not

legitimate at all -- and yet still be "a god", is puzzling to say the least. Scriptures raised to suggest that someone else might legitimately be referred to as "a god" are Psalm 82:1, 6 (compared to John 10:34); Psalm 8:5 (compare to Hebrews 2:7); and sometimes Exodus 22:8-9, 28. In Psalm 82:1, 6 the psalmist calls certain rulers "gods" (Hebrew *elohim*), yet verse five states that they will die, making clear the writer's sarcastic use of the term "god" for these kings (see the similar approach taken by the writer of Ezekiel 28:1-10, where, regarding the ruler of Tyre, he records:

Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre,

"This is what the lord Yahweh says:

"In the pride of your heart you say 'I am a god;

I sit on the throne of a god in the heart of the seas.'

But you are a man and not a god,

though you think you are as wise as a god....

They will bring you down to the pit,

and you will die a violent death

in the heart of the seas.

Will you then say, 'I am a god,'

in the presence of those who kill you?

You will be but a man, not a god,

in the hands of those who slay you.

You will die the death of the uncircumcised

at the hands of foreigners.'

In Hebrew, Psalm 8:5 states that man was created "a little lower than God." The writer of Hebrews 2:7 was not quoting from this Hebrew text when he wrote his passage; instead he made use of the Greek translation of the Old Testament which has here "angels" in place of God. The Jewish people during the time the Septuagint was written were very fearful of doing anything to lessen the power and glory of God; therefore, they substituted "bless" in place of "curse" when the object of cursing was God, and adjusted other passages which might be taken to lessen God's honor -- hence their translation of Psalm 8:5. The use of this Greek translation by the writer of Hebrews should not be taken as an endorsement of the idea that "God" sometimes refers to someone other than the one true God. So far as Exodus 22:8-9 and 28 are concerned, in Hebrew it is clearly the word "God" (*Elohim*) and though certain translations may want to make this word mean "judges," there is no evidence to suggest that this is reasonable; there are no other places in the Bible where such a translation of the term could at all be justified, and to take it as meaning "God" in Exodus makes perfect sense. Finally, it may be useful to quote at least a portion of a letter written by Julius R. Mantey, whose *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* has been quoted by various Watchtower publications in their discussions of John 1:1-2:

I have a copy of your letter addressed to Caris in Santa Ana, California and I am writing to express my disagreement with statements made in that letter, as well as in quotations you have made from The Dana-Mantey Greek Grammar.

1) Your statement: "their work allows for the rendering found in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* at John 1:1." There is no statement in our grammar that was ever meant to imply that "a god" was a permissible translation in John 1:1. A. We had no "rule" to argue in support of the trinity. B. Neither did we state that we did have such intention. We were simply delineating the facts inherent in Biblical language. C. Your quotation from P. 148(3) was in a paragraph under the heading: "With the Subject in a Copulative Sentence." Two examples occur here to illustrate that "the article points out the subject in these examples." But we made no statement in this paragraph about the predicate except that, "as it stands the other persons of the trinity may be implied in *theos*." And isn't that the opposite of what your translation "a god" infers? You quoted me out of context. On pages 139 and 140 (VI) in our grammar we stated: "without the article *theos* signifies divine essence...*theos en ho logos* emphasizes Christ's participation in the essence of the divine nature." Our interpretation is in agreement with that in NEB and the TED: "What God was, the Word was"; and with that of Barclay: "The nature of the Word was the same as the nature of God," which you quoted in your letter to Caris.

2) Since Colwell's and Harner's article in JBL, especially that of Harner, it is neither scholarly nor reasonable to translate John 1:1 "The Word was a god." Word-order has made obsolete and incorrect such a rendering.

3) Your quotation of Colwell's rule is inadequate because it quotes only a part of his findings. You did not quote this strong assertion: "A predicate nominative which precedes the verb cannot be translated as an indefinite or a 'qualitative' noun solely because of the absence of the article."

4) Prof. Harner, Vol. 92:1 (1973) in JBL, has gone beyond Colwell's research and has discovered that anarthrous predicate nouns preceding the verb function primarily to express the nature or character of the subject. He found this true in 53 passages in the Gospel of John and 8 in the Gospel of Mark. Both scholars wrote that when indefiniteness was intended that gospel writers regularly placed the predicate noun after the verb, and both Colwell and Harner have stated that *theos* in John 1:1 is not indefinite and should not be translated "a god". Watchtower writers appear to be the only ones advocating such a translation now. The evidence appears to be 99% against them.

5) Your statement in your letter that the sacred text itself should guide one and "not just someone's rule book." We agree with you. But our study proves that Jehovah's Witnesses do the opposite of that whenever the "sacred text" differs with their heretical beliefs. For example the translation of *kolasis* as cutting off when punishment is the only meaning cited in the lexicons for it. The mistranslation of *ego eimi* as "I have been" in John 8:58. The addition of "for all time" in Hebrews 9:27 when nothing in the Greek New Testament supports it.

The attempt to belittle Christ by mistranslating *arche tes ktiseos* "beginning of the creation" when he is magnified as "the creator of all things" (John 1:2) and as "equal with God" (Phil. 2:6) before he humble himself and lived in a human body here on earth. Your quotation of "The father is greater than I am" (John 14:28) to prove that Jesus was not equal to God overlooks the fact stated in Phil. 2:6-8. When Jesus said that, he was still in his voluntary state of humiliation. That state ended when he ascended to heaven. Why the attempt to deliberately deceive people by mispunctuation by placing a comma after "today" in Luke 23:43 when in the Greek, Latin, German and all English translations except yours, even in the Greek in your *KIT*, the comma occurs after *lego* (I say) -- "Today you will be with me in Paradise." 2 Cor. 5:8, "to be out of the body and at home with the Lord." These passages teach that the redeemed go immediately to heaven after death, which does not agree with your teachings that death ends all life until the resurrection. Cf. Ps. 23:6 and Heb. 1:10.

The aforementioned are only a few examples of Watchtower mistranslations and perversions of God's Word. In view of the preceding facts, especially because you have been quoting me out of context, I herewith request you not to quote from the *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* again, which you have been doing for 24 years. Also that you not quote it or me in

any of your publications from this time on.

Also that you publicly and immediately apologize in the Watchtower magazine, since my words had no relevance in the absence of the article before *theos* in John 1:1. And please write to Caris and state that you misused and misquoted my "rule". On the page before the Preface in the grammar are these words: "All rights reserved -- no part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher." If you have such permission, please send me a photo-copy of it.

If you do not heed these requests you will suffer the consequences.

Respectfully yours,

Julius R. Mantey

This is what certain scholars, regularly quoted in Watchtower publications actually have to say regarding John 1:1:

E. C. Colwell:

...predicate nouns proceeding the verb cannot be regarded as indefinite or qualitative simply because they lack the article; it could be regarded as indefinite or qualitative only if this is demanded by the context, and in the case of John 1:1c this is not so.

And later:

A definite predicate nominative has the article when it precedes the verb...this statement cannot be regarded as strange in the prologue of the gospel which reaches its climax in the confession of Thomas, 'My Lord and my God.' (John 20:28)" ("A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 52 (1933), p. 20)

Philip B. Harner:

"Perhaps the clause could be translated 'the Word had the same nature as God.' This would be one way of representing John's thought, which is, as I understand it, that *ho logos*, no less than *ho theos*, had the nature of *theos*." ("Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 92,1 (March 1973), p. 87)

James Moffat:

"'The Word was God...And the Word became flesh,' simply means 'The Word was divine....And the word became human.' The Nicene faith, in the Chalcedon definition, was intended to conserve both of these truths against theories that failed to present Jesus as truly God and truly man..." (*Jesus the Same*. Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1945, p. 61)

A.T. Robertson:

"So in Jo. 1:1 *theos en ho logos* the meaning has to be the Logos was God, not God was the Logos." (*A New Short Grammar of the Greek Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977, p. 279)

Henry Alford:

"*Theos* must then be taken as implying God, in substance and essence -- not *ho theos*, 'the Father,' in person. It does not = *theos*, nor is it to be rendered a God -- but, as in *sarx egeneto*,

sarx expresses that state into which the Divine Word entered by a definite act, so in *theos en*, *theos* expresses that essence which was His *en arche*: -- that He was very God. So that this first verse might be connected thus: the Logos was from eternity, -- was with God (the Father), -- and was Himself God." (*Alford's Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*, Vol. I, Part II. Guardian Press, 1976; originally published 1871, p. 681)

B.F. Westcott:

"The predicate (God) stands emphatically first, as in iv. 24. It is necessarily without the article (*theos* not *ho theos*) inasmuch as it describes the nature of the Word and does not identify His Person.... No idea of inferiority of nature is suggested by the form of expression, which simply affirms the true deity of the Word." (*The Gospel According to St. John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958 reprint, p. 3)

Philippians 2:6

Who, being in the form of God,
 did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
 but made himself nothing,
 taking the form of a servant,
 being made in human likeness.

The Greek word translated "form" in both verses is *morphe*; in the same way Christ had the "form" of God, so he had the "form" of a man. The use of the term *morphe* in scripture is quite interesting. Gifford writes that,

...*morphe* is therefore properly the nature or essence, not in the abstract, but as actually subsisting in the individual, and retained as long as the individual itself exists....Thus in the passage before us *morphe Theou* is the Divine nature actually and inseparably subsisting in the Person of Christ....For the interpretation of 'the form of God' it is sufficient to say that (1) it includes the whole nature and essence of Deity, and is inseparable from them, since they could have no actual existence without it; and (2) that it does not include in itself anything 'accidental' or separable, such as particular modes of manifestation, or conditions of glory and majesty, which may at one time be attached to the 'form,' at another separated from it...

The true meaning of *morphe* in the expression 'form of God' is confirmed by its recurrence in the corresponding phrase, 'form of a servant.' It is universally admitted that the two phrases are directly antithetical, and that 'form' must therefore have the same sense in both". It is perhaps interesting to note that the Septuagint makes use of the term *morphe* in such passages as Judges 8:18, where it describes Gideon's brothers as having the "form" of princes. Or in Isaiah 44:13 where the craftsman is described as making idols in the "form" of a man. As this passage in Philippians makes clear, as much as Jesus was human, so was he God.

Romans 9:5

Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Everett F. Harrison writing about this passage in his commentary on Romans states:

But is "God over all" the correct translation? On the ground that elsewhere Paul avoids such a stark identification, despite his high Christology, some scholars reject the traditional rendering, preferring something on the order of NEB: "May God, supreme above all, be blessed for ever."

This involves taking the closing portion of the verse as a doxology and referring it to God (the Father). Several considerations favor the traditional wording, which refers "God" to Christ: (1) Christ's relationship to Israel on the human side has been stated in such a way as to call for a complementary statement on the divine side. This is provided by the usual translation but not by the other rendering. (2) "Who" can properly be coupled only with the foregoing subject (Christ). If another subject (God) is being introduced, there is no reason at all for the "who." (3) A doxology to God can hardly be intended, since in doxologies the word "blessed" is regularly placed before the one who is praised. Here it comes after. (4) A doxology to God would be singularly out of place in a passage marked by sorrow over Israel's failure to recognize in Christ her crowning spiritual blessing. (5) The definite article "the," is not linked in the text with "God," but with the foregoing words (literally, "the one being over all"), so Paul is not trying to displace God with Christ, but is doing what John does in Saying that the Word was God (John 1:1), that is, has the rank of God. In any case, this is really implied in recognizing him as "over all" (it is very awkward, with NEB, to refer this to God in distinction from Christ). (Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. *The Expositors Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976, p. 103)

John 20:28

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Commenting on this passage, even the Watchtower publication, *Reasoning From Scripture*, states (on page 213) that "There is no objection to referring to Jesus as 'God', if this is what Thomas had in mind." Admittedly the book then goes on and tries to limit the impact of this statement by arguing that since mighty men were referred to as "gods", then there is nothing wrong in describing Jesus as "divine" or "a god". This argument has already been discussed in some detail above. But this brings up another issue that needs to be faced. The Watchtower publications will make use of terms such as "deity", "divine", "divinity" and leave the impression that it is okay to apply such terms to Jesus since they are somehow less strong than saying "Jesus is God". However, the word "deity" means "God", as do the words "divine" and "divinity". Those translations that use such terms in reference to the Son are not thereby trying to downplay the fact that Jesus is God. Instead they are affirming it!

1 John 5:20

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true -- even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Titus 2:13

While we wait for the blessed hope -- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,...

There is really not a whole lot that can be argued against this rendering; even the rendering in NW approximates this. Reasoning from Scripture tries to say that the above translation is inconsistent: "they [translators] do not follow the same rule in their translation of 2 Thessalonians 1:12". Unfortunately for this statement, the structure in the two passages is not the same:

Titus 2:13:

tou megalou theo kai soterou hemon Iesou Christou

the great God and Savior ours Jesus Christ

2 Thessalonians 1:12

tou theou hemon kai kuriou Iesou Christou

the God ours and Lord Jesus Christ

Considering the difference in structure between these two passages, it is not surprising that 2 Thes. 1:12 tends to be translated differently than Titus 2:13. Therefore, it is inescapable that Titus 2:13 states plainly that Jesus Christ is "our Great God and Savior". And notice in Greek that it is "THE Great God" -- with a definite article.

Colossians 2:9

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

The criticism raised against Trinitarians who use this verse to show that Jesus is God is that "Being truly 'divinity,' or of 'divine nature' does not make Jesus as the Son of God coequal and coeternal with the Father, any more than the fact that all humans share 'humanity' or 'human nature' makes them coequal or all the same age."

What are they saying then? That as there are many human beings, so there are many Gods? This is an argument for polytheism, not an argument countering the Trinity, which preserves the Biblical truth of "Hear O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one". If a man is "human" and shares in "humanity", then how much less is the Son of God "divine" and sharing in "divinity"? There is only one God; if Jesus is "divine" then he has to be God. There is not room for more than one God!

Colossians 1:16-17

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

It is difficult to escape the feeling of omnipotence given off by this passage. Not only is the Son of God responsible for creating the universe, it is also by his power that everything remains in its orderly pattern. Related to this concept, one might also take a look at the next passage and the comments that follow.

Ephesians 4:10

He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.

This second passage reflects the omnipresence of the Son of God, telling us that he "fills the whole universe." No more explicit statement of omnipresence is found, though it well reflects what is described in Psalm 139:

O Yahweh, you have searched me

and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise;

you perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down;

you are familiar with all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue

you know it completely, O Yahweh.

You hem me in -- behind and before;

you have laid your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,

too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me,

your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me

and the light become night around me,"

even the darkness will not be dark to you;

the night will shine like the day,

for darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am

fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful,

I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you

when I was made in the secret place.

When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

your eyes saw my unformed body.

All the days ordained for me
were written in your book before one of them came to be.
How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand.
When I awake,
I am still with you.

Only God is portrayed in the Bible as being everywhere present, of being all powerful, and having all knowledge. Yet, the Son is given these same attributes. Is it so surprising then that Colossians 2:9 states that "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form..."

Some might object: "But look, the next verse goes on to add "and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority." So does this mean that we are Christ, if his fullness dwells in us? Not quite; take a look at Galatians 2:20ff. to get a sense of what Paul means:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

Christ living in us, the Holy Spirit living in us, is the evidence of salvation; what it is to be a Christian. It has nothing to do with making us "gods" or "christs".

One last passage on the subject, Romans 8:1-2:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Hebrews 1:8-10

But about the Son he says,
"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,
and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.
He also says,
"In the beginning, O Lord,

you laid the foundations of the earth

and the heavens are the work of your hands.

Sometimes Jesus refers to the Father as God and this is taken as an indication that Jesus is somehow less than God. For instance, in John 20:17:

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to my Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

There is nothing odd in Jesus referring to the Father as God, since indeed that is what the Father is. What else would Jesus call Him? In his incarnation as a human being, this would not be unexpected -- but even in his glorified state (as in Revelation 3:12) there is nothing odd in it. Moreover it should be noted that in John 20 for Jesus the words "Father" and "God" are equivalent terms, defining each other.

Some will take Jesus' words in John 17:1-3 and say that Jesus has excluded himself from being God:

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Perhaps it would be useful to read verses four and five as well:

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Listing Jesus separate from the Father does not diminish his Godhood; it merely distinguishes the members of the Trinity as the separate persons that they are.

It should be noticed that the words of Hebrews 1:10-12 are addressed to the Son, paralleling John 17:4-5:

He [God] also says: (about the son, see verse eight)

"In the beginning, O Lord,

you laid the foundations of the earth,

and the heavens are the work of your hands...

But you remain the same,

and your years will never end."

This is a quotation of Psalm 102:25-27. If we look at verse 24 we see whom the psalmist had in mind:

So I said:

"Do not take me away,

O my God, in the midst of my days;

your years go on through all generations.

In the beginning you laid..."

Now some might say this passage is applied to the Son simply because he is God's representative and does the will of the Father. However, the angels are God's representatives and do God's will, yet the whole argument in the passage in Hebrews is that the Son is something far more than the angels. As Hebrews 1:3-4 states:

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ, an ambassador of God; the same could be said of Peter and the other apostles or of the Kings of Israel and Judah, and yet no passages apply divinity to any of these other "representatives" of God. Jesus is far more than a mere "representative" -- which is the whole point of Hebrews chapter one!

John 1:18:

No one has ever seen God, but God the one and only who is at the Father's side has made him known.

John 6:46

No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.

These are key verses, since they tell us no one has seen God. Yet, we know from the Old Testament that people *did* see God. For instance, Exodus 24:9-11:

"Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel.

Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank."

The Hebrew word *hazah* translated as "see" in 24:11 means "to see or behold with the eyes", according to Brown, Driver, and Briggs in their *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, where they make specific mention of this very verse.

Notice also Genesis 18, where Abraham has three visitors, one of whom turns out to be the Lord: Yahweh. See also Isaiah 6:1-3 where Isaiah saw God "high and lifted up" in the same way he saw the Seraphim; Numbers 12:6-8 tells us that Moses spoke to God face to face, rather than through visions or dreams, and that he sees "the form of God"; Judges 13:20-23 explains that the father of Samson is afraid he might die because he has seen God. He is reassured by his wife when she points out that God would not have accepted their offering if he intended to kill them. Job 42:5 says that Job saw God.

To explain the apparent contradiction between John 1:18 and 6:46, which very clearly state that no one has seen God -- and Exodus 24 which very clearly says that Moses and seventy-three other folks did (not to mention the problems raised by the other passages), there is only one possible explanation: since no one has seen the Father, the only conclusion, then, is that the God of the Old Testament, Yahweh, is none other than the Son of God! This isn't so surprising considering that Romans 10:9-13 records:

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified,

and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Everyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile -- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Paul has here quoted from Joel 2:32: "Everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh will be saved." Yet Paul applies the statement to Christ. Consider also Acts 2:21 where the same passage is quoted from Joel and Peter again applies it to Jesus. Or Acts 4:10-12, where Peter says:

Then know this, you and everyone else in Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you completely healed. He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone." Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Salvation is through the Son, whether in the Old Testament or the New. Notice also what Isaiah 43:11 says:

I, even I, am Yahweh,

and apart from me there is no savior.

III. The Holy Spirit is God

Acts 5:3-4

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

First Peter says they lied to the Holy Spirit, then he says they were lying to God.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Hebrews 10:15-16

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

"This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

This passage in Hebrews is a quote from Jeremiah 31:34 which identifies the speaker as Yahweh -- yet the author of Hebrews feels perfectly comfortable attributing it to the Holy Spirit.

The following passage is sometimes raised to cast doubt on both the deity of the Son of God, as well as the Spirit of God:

Matthew 24:36

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Not all the Greek manuscripts have the phrase "nor the Son" (in fact, it is quite a large number, including an uncial text dating back to the fourth century). But even if the phrase does stand in the text, it is easily explained by the fact that Jesus was speaking in his human incarnation (cf. Philippians 2:7 "but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant"; also Luke 2:52, "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Clearly, Jesus was not omniscient as a human being.) Sometimes the passage in Matthew is also used to claim that the Holy Spirit is not omniscient, since it does not know when Jesus will come back. First, it should be noted that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in the passage in Matthew at all; secondly, the thought that the Holy Spirit is less than knowledgeable about the things of God is contradicted by the following passage in 1 Corinthians 2:10-11:

"But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."

The Holy Spirit is therefore presented as knowing all that God knows.

Some people may attempt to argue that the Holy Spirit is simply an impersonal force or power, pointing out that the Hebrew word for Spirit, *ruah*, like the Greek word, *pneumos*, can also mean "wind". However, it must be pointed out that "wind" is an option only in very limited circumstances, i.e., in those cases where *ruah* is not in a genitival relationship with a person. If the word is linked as in Genesis 1:2 "The *ruah* of God..." then the only possibility linguistically is "Spirit", "breath", or "emotion". "Active force" in an impersonal sense is never an option with either the Greek or Hebrew words. Notice 1 John 4:13- 15:

We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.

Notice that John says that God lives in the believer. But before that, he says that believers have been given "of his Spirit". Notice too, what some other passages say about who lives inside believers:

Romans 8:9

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:16

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you.

The believer is called the temple of God, yet what the believer has inside him is the "Spirit of God", which in Romans is also called "the Spirit of Christ", once again making Christ and God equivalent.

IV. The Father is God

There is little disagreement about this. Some relevant verses: John 6:27, 1 Peter 1:2, Luke 10:21.

V. The Baptismal formula of Matthew 28

Matthew 28:19:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Notice that the word "name" is singular, not plural. There is one name ascribed to all members of the Godhead: Yahweh. To suppose that the Son and the Spirit are somehow less than the Father makes a

mockery of this instruction. How can the Father be Almighty God and yet be linked to beings -- creatures -- who are anything less? Such an idea is blasphemous. The Son and the Holy Spirit are as much God as the Father is.

The Ante-Nicene Fathers

It is said by some that "the testimony of the Bible and of history makes clear that the Trinity was unknown throughout Biblical times and for several centuries thereafter." Specifically, it is argued that such church fathers as Justin Martyr (d. c. 165 AD), Irenaeus (d. c. 200 AD), Clement of Alexandria (d. c. 215 AD), Tertullian (d. c. 230 AD), Hippolytus (d. c. 235 AD) and Origen (d. c. 250 AD) did not believe in the Trinity or accept Jesus as God. The following quotes from these church fathers would tend to weaken such a contention:

Justine Martyr:

Moreover, in the book of Exodus we have also perceived that the name of God Himself, which, He says, was not revealed to Abraham or to Jacob, was Jesus, and was declared mysteriously through Moses.

And now we, who believe on our Lord Jesus, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, when we exorcise all demons and evil spirits, have them subjected to us. For if the prophets declared obscurely that Christ would suffer, and thereafter be Lord of all, yet that [declaration] could not be understood by any man until He Himself persuaded the apostles that such statements were expressly related in the Scriptures. For He exclaimed before His crucifixion: 'The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the Scribes and Pharisees, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' And David predicted that He would be born from the womb before sun and moon, according to the Father's will, and made Him known, being Christ, as God strong and to be worshipped. (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers, volume 1, Dialogue With Trypho*, LXXV, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956, p. 236-237)

Irenaeus:

The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His [future] manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father 'to gather all things in one,' and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus our Lord, and God, and Savior, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, 'every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess' to Him, and that He should execute judgment towards all;... (*Against Heresies*, I,x,1)

Therefore the Father is Lord, and the Son is Lord, and the Father is God and the Son is God; for He who is born of God is God. And thus God is shown to be one according to the essence of His being and power; but at the same time, as the administrator of the economy of our redemption, He is both Father and Son: since the Father of all is invisible and inaccessible to creatures, it is through the Son that those who are to approach God must have access to the Father. Moreover David speaks clearly and most manifestly of the Father and Son, as follows: Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; Thou hast loved justice, and hated iniquity, therefore God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. For this means that the Son, being God, receives from the Father, that is, from God, the throne of the everlasting kingdom, and the oil of anointing above His fellows. And 'oil of anointing' is the Spirit, through whom He is the Anointed, and 'His fellows' are the prophets and the just and the apostles, and all who receive fellowship of His kingdom, that is, His disciples. (Joseph P. Smith. *Ancient Christian Writers, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*. New York: Newman Press, 1952, p. 78)

Clement of Alexandria:

And the Son is neither simply one thing as one thing, nor many things as parts, but one thing as all things; whence also He is all things. For He is the circle of all powers rolled and united into one unity. Wherefore the Word is called the Alpha and the Omega, of whom alone the end becomes beginning, and ends again at the original beginning without any break.

Now God, who is without beginning, is the perfect beginning of the universe, and the producer of the beginning. As, then, He is being, He is the first principle of the department of action, as He is good, of morals; as He is mind, on the other hand, He is the first principle of reasoning and of judgment. Whence also He alone is Teacher, who is the only Son of the Most High Father, the Instructor of men. (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 11. The Stromata, or Miscellanies, Book IV, chapter XXV.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962, pp. 438-439)

Tertullian:

"We have been taught that He proceeds forth from God, and in that procession He is generated; so that He is the Son of God, and is called God from unity of substance with God. For God, too, is a Spirit. Even when the ray is shot from the sun, it is still part of the parent mass; the sun will still be in the ray, because it is a ray of the sun -- there is no division of substance, but merely an extension. Thus Christ is Spirit of Spirit, and God of God, as light of light is kindled. The material matrix remains entire and unimpaired, though you derive from it any number of shoots possessed of its qualities; so, too, that which has come forth out of God is at once God and the Son of God, and the two are one. In this way also, as He is Spirit of Spirit and God of God, He is made a second in manner of existence -- in position, not in nature; and He did not withdraw from the original source, but went forth. This ray of God, then, as it was always foretold in ancient times, descending into a certain virgin, and made flesh in her womb, is in His birth God and man united. (*Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. III, Tertullian, Parts I-III, Chap. XXI.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962, pp. 34-35)

For God alone is without sin; and the only man without sin is Christ, since Christ is also God. (*Tertullian, p. 221*)

Hyppolytus:

The first and only (one God), both Creator and Lord of all, had nothing coeval with Himself, not infinite chaos, nor measureless water, nor solid earth, nor dense air, nor warm fire, nor refined spirit, nor the azure canopy of the stupendous firmament. But He was One, alone in Himself. By an exercise of His will He created things that are, which antecedently had no existence, except that he willed to make them....Therefore this solitary and supreme Deity, by an exercise of reflection, brought forth the Logos first; not by the word in the sense of being articulated by voice, but as a ratiocination of the universe, conceived and residing in the divine mind. Him alone He produced from existing things; for the Father Himself constituted existence, and the being born from Him was the cause of all things that are produced. The Logos was in the Father Himself, bearing the will of his progenitor, and not being unacquainted with the mind of the Father. For simultaneously with His procession from His Progenitor, inasmuch as He is this Progenitor's first-born, He has, as a voice in Himself, the ideas conceived in the Father. And so it was, that when the Father ordered the world to come into existence the Logos one by one completed each object of creation, thus pleasing God.... The Logos alone of this God is from God himself; wherefore also the Logos is God, being the substance of God.

For Christ is the God above all, and He has arranged to wash away sin from human beings, rendering regenerate the old man. (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V. The Refutation of All Heresies, Chaps. XXVIII-XXIX.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956, pp. 150-151, 153)

Origen:

The particular points clearly delivered in the teachings of the apostles are as follows:-- First, That there is one God, who created and arranged all things, and who, when nothing existed, called all things into being -- God from the first creation and foundation of the world -- ...Secondly, That Jesus Christ Himself, who came (into the world), was born of the Father before all creatures; that, after He had been the servant of the Father in the creation of all things -- "For by Him were all things made" -- He in the last times, divesting Himself (of his glory), became a man, and was incarnate although God, and while made a man remained the God which He was;...Then, Thirdly, the apostles related that the Holy Spirit was associated in honour and dignity with the Father and the Son.... (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. IV, Origen de Principiis*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956, p. 240)

John, however, with more sublimity and propriety, says in the beginning of his Gospel, when defining God by a special definition to be the Word, "And God was the Word, and this was in the beginning with God." Let him, then, who assigns a beginning to the Word or Wisdom of God, take care that he be not guilty of impiety against the unbegotten Father Himself, seeing he denies that He had always been a Father, and had generated the Word, and had possessed wisdom in all preceding periods...(Origen de Principiis, p. 246)

We worship one God, the Father and the Son, therefore, as we have explained; and our argument against the worship of other gods still continues valid. And we do not "reverence beyond measure one who has but lately appeared," as though He did not exist before; for we believe Himself when He says, "Before Abraham was, I am." Again He says, "I am the truth;" and surely none of us is so simple as to suppose that truth did not exist before the time when Christ appeared. We worship, therefore, the Father of truth, and the Son, who is the truth; and these, while they are two, considered as persons or subsistences, are one in unity of thought, in harmony and in identity of will. So entirely are they one, that he who has seen the Son, "who is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person," has seen in Him who is the image of God, God Himself. (*Origen de Principiis*, pp. 643-644)

ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC OBJECTIONS

Col. 1:15

"First born of all creation"

Notice what is written about this phrase in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*:

The description of Christ as *prototokos pases ktiseos* in Col. 1:15 obviously finds in the *hoti* clause of v. 16 its more precise basis and explanation: Christ is the mediator at creation to whom all creatures without exception owe their creation, see V. 894, 28ff. Hence *prototokos pases ktiseos* does not simply denote the priority in time of the pre-existent Lord. If the expression refers to the mediation of creation through Christ, it cannot be saying at the same time that He was created as the first creature. The decisive objection to this view, which sees in the *pase ktiseos* a partitive genitive, is that it would demand emphasis on the *tokos*, whereas with the exception of Lk. 2:7 (see 876,6 ff.), which refers to literal birth, the *tokos* is never emphasized in the NT passages which speak of Christ, especially Col. 1:18 (see 877, 15ff.). A further point is that this view would bring *-tokos* into tension with *ktiseos* (and *ktisesthai* in 1:16), for creation and birth are different concepts and *prototokos* cannot be regarded as a simple synonym of *protoktistos*. The only remaining possibility is to take *prototokos* hierarchically (see line 7f.). What is meant is the unique supremacy of Christ over all creatures as the mediator of their creation. The succeeding statement in 1:17a; *autos estin propanton*, emphasizes the same supremacy, while 1:17b draws the conclusion from 1:16. If *prototokos* is selected in Col. 1:15 and then again in 1:18 to express this supremacy, this is because of the great importance which the term "firstborn" took on as a word for rank in the OT and then retained in later Judaism. (*TDNT*, Kittel, vol. VI, pp. 878-879)

John 1:18

"only begotten" or "one and only"

Monogenes:

That he is not merely making a comparison with earthly relationships is indicated by *para* "from". The glory was that of a unique relationship and the word "begotten" does not imply a beginning of his sonship. It suggests relationship, indeed, but must be distinguished from generation as applied to man. We can only rightly understand the term "only begotten" when used of the Son, in the sense of unoriginated relationship.

The begetting is not an event of time, however remote but a fact irrespective of time. The Christ did not become, but necessarily and eternally is the Son. He, a person, possesses every attribute of pure Godhood. This necessitates eternity, absolute being; in this respect He is not 'after' the Father (Moule). (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 140)

Notice, too, the use of the word *monogenes* in Hebrews 11:17, where the writer tells us that Isaac was Abraham's *monogenes* son. Certainly this word does not then have the sense of "only begotten", despite the tradition of translating it this way, since Genesis 16 tells us that Ishmael is also Abraham's son, not to mention Genesis 25:1-2 which tells us that his second wife, Keturah bore him "Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah". Genesis 25:5-6 explains:

Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east.

Therefore, he also had an indeterminate number of other sons by his "concubines".

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament made about 200 BC makes use of the word *monogenes*; for instance in Psalm 22:20 the Septuagint translates a Hebrew word meaning "precious", as in the phrase "my precious life", with the word *monogenes*; likewise in Psalm 35:17 it does the same thing; and in Psalm 25:16 it translates "lonely" with *monogenes*.

CERTAIN SCHOLARS (AND OTHERS) TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT IN REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES

The reader might want to compare the way these sources are quoted in the Watchtower publication *Reasoning From the Scriptures* with the complete quote as given below:

***The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol X, p. 126:**

Trinity, the doctrine of God taught by Christianity that asserts that God is one in essence but three in "person," Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Neither the word Trinity, nor the explicit doctrine as such, appears in the New Testament, nor did Jesus and his followers intend to contradict the *Shema* in the Old Testament: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). The earliest Christians, however, had to cope with the implications of the coming of Jesus Christ and of the presence and power of God among them -- i.e., the Holy Spirit, whose coming was connected with the celebration of the Pentecost. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were associated in such New Testament passages as the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19); and in the apostolic benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (II Cor. 13:14). Thus, the New Testament established the basis for the doctrine of the Trinity.

The doctrine developed gradually over several centuries and through many controversies. Initially, both the requirements of monotheism inherited from the Old Testament and the implications of the need to interpret the biblical teaching to Greco-Roman paganism seemed to demand that the divine in Christ as the Word, or Logos, be interpreted as subordinate to the Supreme Being. An alternative solution was to interpret Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three modes of the self-disclosure of the one God but not as distinct within the being of God itself. The first tendency recognized the distinctness among the three, but at the cost of their equality and hence of their unity (sub-ordinationism); the second came to terms with their unity, but at the cost of their distinctness as "persons" (modalism). It was not until the 4th century that the distinctness of the three and their unity were brought together in a single orthodox doctrine of one essence and three persons. The Council of Nicea in 325 stated the crucial formula for that doctrine in its confession that the Son is "of the same essence [homo-ousios] as the Father," even though it said very little about the Holy Spirit. Over the next half century, Athanasius defended and refined the Nicene formula, and, by the end of the 4th century, under the leadership of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus (the Cappadocian Fathers), the doctrine of the Trinity took substantially the form it has maintained ever since. (See *Reasoning*, p. 405)

***New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. XIV, 1981, p. 299:**

From what has been seen thus far, the impression could arise that the Trinitarian dogma is in the last analysis a late 4th-century invention. In a sense, this is true; but it implies an extremely strict interpretation of the key words Trinitarian and dogma. Triadic Consciousness in the Primitive Revelation. The formulation "one God in three Persons" was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title the Trinitarian dogma. Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective; among the 2nd-century Apologists, little more than a focusing of the problem as that of plurality within the unique Godhead. Not before Tertullian and Origen, early in the century following, had an attempt been made to solve the problem once raised by replying to the double question: in what sense is God one, in what sense three? And even then, results had been far from decisive....

Another way of saying the same thing, however, is not the only oversimplified interpretation possible in this matter. If it is clear on one side that the dogma of the Trinity in the stricter sense of the word was a late arrival, product of 3 centuries' reflection and debate, it is just as clear on the opposite side that confession of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- and hence an elemental Trinitarianism -- went back to the period of Christian origins. Contemporary studies on the ancient Christian creeds have done much to bring this out. (See *Reasoning*, p. 405)

John L. McKenzie. *Dictionary of the Bible*. New York: Macmillan, pp. 899-900:

The trinity of God is defined by the Church as the belief that in God are three persons who subsist in one nature. The belief as so defined was reached only in the 4th and 5th centuries AD and hence is not explicitly and formally a biblical belief. The trinity of persons within the unity of nature is defined in terms of "person" and "nature" which are Gk philosophical terms; actually the terms do not appear in the Bible. The trinitarian definitions arose as the result of long controversies in which these terms and others such as "essence" and "substance" were erroneously applied to God by some theologians. The ultimate affirmation of trinity of persons and unity of nature was declared by the Church to be the only correct way in which these terms could be used.

The elements of the trinity of persons within the unity of nature in the Bible appear in the use of the terms Father, Son, and Spirit. The personal reality of the Spirit emerged more slowly than the personal reality of Father and Son which are personal terms. On the application of the name of Spirit to the Son in Pauline writings of SPIRIT. The unity of nature does not appear as a problem in the Bible, and indeed could only arise when a philosophical investigation of the term

nature as applied to God was begun. In the NT the Father is "the God" (Gk *ho theos*), and Jesus is "the Son of the God" (*ho hyios tou theou*). The Spirit is "the Spirit of the God" or "the Holy Spirit," in this context a synonymous term. Deity is conceived not in the Gk term of nature but rather as a level of being, "the holy"; between this level and the level of "flesh" there is an impassable gulf. Impassable, that is, by man; it is bridged by Jesus, the Son, who renders it possible for men to be adopted sons. Without an explicit formula the NT leaves no room to think that Jesus is Himself an object of the adoption which He communicates to others. He knows the Father and reveals Him. He therefore belongs to the divine level of being; and there is no question at all about the Spirit belonging to the divine level of being. (see *Reasoning*, p. 406)

Consider what McKenzie had to say on page 317 under the entry on "God":

The word *theos* is used to designate the gods of paganism. Normally the word with or without the article designates the God of the Old Testament and of Judaism, the God of Israel: Yahweh. But the character of God is revealed in an original way in the NT; the originality is perhaps best summed up by saying that God reveals Himself in and through Jesus Christ. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ does not consist merely in the prophetic word as in the OT, but in an identity between God and Jesus Christ. Jn 1:1-18 expresses this by contrasting the word spoken by the prophets with the word incarnate in Jesus. In Jesus the personal reality of God is manifested in visible and tangible form.

In the words of Jesus and in much of the rest of the NT the God of Israel (Gk *ho theos*) is the Father of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that the title *ho theos*, which now designated the Father as a personal reality, is not applied in the NT to Jesus Himself; Jesus is the Son of God (of *ho theos*). This is a matter of usage and not of rule, and the noun is applied to Jesus a few times. Jn 1:1 should rigorously be translated "the word was with the God [= the Father], and the word was a divine being." Thomas invokes Jesus with the titles which belong to the Father, "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20:28). "The glory of our great God and Savior" which is to appear can be the glory of no other than Jesus (Tt 2:13).

OTHER MISQUOTES

The Watchtower for May 15, 1977 quotes William Barclay as follows:

Now normally, except for special reasons, Greek nouns always have the definite article in front of them,...When a Greek noun has not got the article in front of it, it becomes rather a description than an identification, and has the character of an adjective rather than of a noun. We can see exactly the same in English. If I say: 'James is the man', then I identify James with some definite man whom I have in mind; but, if I say: 'James is man', then I am simply describing James as human, and the word man has become a description and not an identification. If John had said *ho theos en ho logos*, using a definite article in front of both nouns, then he would definitely have identified the *logos* [the Word] with God, but because he has no definite article in front of *theos* it becomes a description, and more of an adjective than a noun. The translation then becomes, to put it rather clumsily, 'The Word was in the same class as God, belonged to the same order of being as God'....John is not here identifying the Word with God. To put it very simply, he does not say that Jesus was God.

Thus ends the quotation in *The Watchtower*. However, this is not quite what Barclay was actually saying. *The Watchtower* has left out the rather significant set of sentences that comes where only four dots appear in the quotation by *The Watchtower*:

The only modern translator who fairly and squarely faced this problem is Kenneth Wuest, who has: 'The Word was as to his essence essential deity.' But it is here that the NEB has brilliantly solved the problem with the absolutely accurate rendering: 'What God was the Word was.'

On the 26th of August, 1977 William Barclay wrote the following letter to Dr. Donald P. Shoemaker of the department of Bible Studies at Biola College (now University) in La Mirada, California:

Dear Professor Shoemaker,

Thank you for your letter of August 11th. The Watchtower article has, by judicious cutting, made me say the opposite of what I meant to say. What I was meaning to say, as you well know, is that Jesus is not the same as God, to put it more crudely, that he is of the same stuff as God, that is of the same being as God, but the way the Watchtower has printed my stuff has simply left the conclusion that Jesus is not God in a way that suits themselves.

If they missed from their answer the translation of Kenneth Wuest and the N.E.B., they missed the whole point. It was good of you to write and I don't think I need say anything more to make my position clear.

But he had spoken to the issue years before, in the *Expository Times*, November, 1953:

The deliberate distortion of the truth by this sect [Watchtower Society] is seen in their New Testament translation which is grammatically impossible. It is abundantly clear that a sect which can translate the New Testament like that is intellectually dishonest.

LOGICAL FALLACIES

1. *Strawman arguments*

There is a tendency, when disparaging the beliefs of another person or group, to inaccurately portray what they believe. For instance, the Watchtower Society will give an inaccurate rendering of the Trinitarian dogma, and then tear apart their portrayal of that dogma. Unfortunately, in so doing, they have failed to argue against the actual Trinitarian belief. Related to the strawman argument is that called "poisoning the well"; for instance, an individual or organization will be linked to others with whom they have no direct relationship.

Poisoning the well also relates to the practice of finding fault with a group or individual and then making the statement "see, you can't believe anything they say"; such a conclusion does not reasonably follow. Human beings make mistakes; even if you know someone is habitually a liar, you cannot be certain that he is always lying. For instance, if Adolph Hitler says the sun rises in the east, one would have to accept the statement as valid, despite how bad Hitler is, because the statement is true. One does not get rid of truth by attacking the source of the statement.

The fact that the Catholic Church precipitated the Crusades, slaughtering thousands of innocent people, often times just for financial benefit, is no reason to reject the statement "Jesus is the Son of God", although the Catholic Church makes this pronouncement. A fact remains a fact no matter who is throwing it. Just because there are some errors in any group, it does not mean that everything they say is wrong.

2. *Argument from Authority*

To quote multiple scholars, to make statements along the lines that "eleven German translations render the verse this way" is not a valid method of argument.

...if experts rather than laymen are disputing over a question in the field in which they themselves are experts, their appeal would be only to the facts and to reason, and any appeal to the authority of another expert would be completely without value as evidence. (Irving M. Copi. *Introduction to Logic*. New York: Macmillan, 1982, p. 105)

Listing all the scholars who have translated John 1:1 in a manner consistent with the Watchtower perspective is not a reasoned defense of that translation. It merely indicates that there are other people of like opinion. The question that needs to be answered is not how many names can be listed in agreement, but, what are the reasons for the translation, and are those reasons valid? Furthermore, if they wish to argue against the majority view, they should give the arguments of that view, and then systematically answer that argument,

giving counter arguments -- without recourse to statements like "and so and so agrees with us." It doesn't matter who agrees with you; what matters are your arguments.

EDUCATION

An interesting question may be asked: why does the Watchtower Society not encourage its members to learn Greek? Then they would have thousands of scholars supporting their position after an investment of only a couple years. Of course the argument is made that the Watchtower Society already has a good translation and so it is unnecessary. Yet, in the Christian churches, almost all the pastors have at least two years of Greek training, even though they have access to many translations. All translations are imperfect, since they are created by fallible human beings. No translation can fully represent what exists in the original language: for instance, plays on words, alliteration, rhymes, and just the sound and feel of the words do not translate. To fully comprehend the text in all its richness and depth, one must see it in its original form. Take Shakespeare for instance: do you seriously think it feels the same in German? How much more the Bible, then! Someone once said that reading a text in translation is like making love with your clothes on.

One wonders if perhaps the reason the Watchtower Society does not encourage its members to learn Greek is because they might arrive at conclusions at variance with those of the Society. Of course, it is interesting to note that Charles T. Russell (1852-1916), the first President of the Watchtower Society sued a man named J.J. Ross for "defamatory libel" in March 1913. Ross, in his booklet, *Some Facts About the Self-styled Pastor C.T. Russell* wrote, "Russell does not know the dead languages." In the court room, Russell proved that Ross was right:

Attorney Staunton: Do you know the Greek Alphabet?

Russell: Oh, yes.

Attorney Staunton: Can you tell me the correct letters if you see them?

Russell: Some of them, I might make a mistake on some of them.

Attorney Staunton: Would you tell me the names of those on top of the page, page 447 I have got here? (Wescott & Hort Greek NT)

Russell: My way... (he was interrupted at this point and not allowed to explain)

Attorney Staunton: Are you familiar with the Greek language?

Russell: NO.

Fredrick W. Franz, current President of the Watchtower Society, in a Scottish Court case (Walsh vs. Latham, 1954) said the following:

Attorney: Have you also made yourself familiar with Hebrew?

Franz: Yes....

Attorney: So that you have a substantial linguistic apparatus at your command?

Franz: Yes, for use in my biblical work.

Attorney: I think you are able to read and follow the Bible in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Spanish, Portuguese, German and French?

Franz: Yes....

Attorney: You, yourself, read and speak Hebrew, do you?

Franz: I do not speak Hebrew.

Attorney: You do not?

Franz: No.

Attorney: Can you, yourself, translate that into Hebrew?

Franz: Which?

Attorney: That fourth verse of the second chapter of Genesis?

Franz: You mean here?

Attorney: Yes.

Franz: No. I wouldn't attempt to do that... (*Pursuer's Proof*, p. 7)

Fred Franz also claims to have been nominated a Rhodes Scholar. *Faith on the March* [a Watchtower Publication] on page 181 states:

A scholar from his youth, Franz is a keen student of the Bible. Born in Covington, Kentucky, in 1893, he carried away the honors of the University of Cincinnati and was offered the privilege of going to Oxford or Cambridge in England under the Rhodes Plan. Instead, in 1914, he entered the full-time ministry.

Yet, according to a letter from The Rhodes Scholarship Trust of January 14, 1981:

I have checked our records and do not find that Frederick William Franz was elected to a Rhodes Scholarship. Our records, I should note, refer only to Scholars from the United States. Unless Mr. Franz has competed successfully as a candidate for the Scholarship in another country, you may conclude that his claim to have been a Rhodes Scholar is incorrect. (*Pursuer's Proof*, p. 102)

Lie (li). n., v. 1. a false statement made with deliberate intent to deceive. Syn. 1. falsehood, fib, untruth.

In the Watchtower Publication *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* it needs to be noted that at least ninety percent of the sources quoted are taken out of context in order to try to make them say the opposite of their intent. It should therefore be understood that the Watchtower Society is virtually alone in its belief that the Bible does not teach the Trinity.

Conclusion

The doctrine of the Trinity has been firmly entrenched in Christian teaching since the New Testament. It is the plain teaching of the Bible and it is impossible to deny that the Son and Holy Spirit are as much God as the Father.

More importantly, it needs to be noted that the deity of Jesus is necessary in order for his sacrifice on the cross to be sufficient payment for our sins.

The result of sin is everlasting torment in Hell -- an infinite penalty. Only an infinite being -- God -- could take such a penalty. Therefore, Jesus must be God.

Since Jehovah's Witnesses deny the Trinity, at least they are consistent in arguing that the death of Christ is not sufficient for final salvation. Therefore Jehovah's Witnesses must teach that works are necessary for salvation -- that an individual must "contribute" to his or her own salvation.

However, such a concept flies in the face of plain biblical teaching:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Therefore, even the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith teaches the necessity of the Trinity.

Chapter Three

Bibliology: Doctrine of Scripture

General Information About the Text

Old Testament

The Old Testament is written mostly in Hebrew, except for the following sections which are written in Aramaic (constituting about one percent of the Old Testament): Genesis 31:47 (two words), Jeremiah 10:11, Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26, and Daniel 2:4b-7:28.

The Languages of the Old Testament

The Semitic family of languages do not include the oldest known languages - that honor goes to Sumerian, a unique language which is part of no known language family and bears no resemblance to any other known language; it was written with cuneiform characters. The earliest evidence for Semitic tongues are Akkadian texts dating back to the third millennium B.C. Semitic is distantly related to the Hamitic family of languages, which includes Egyptian, and so in its earliest roots, the two are combined into what is called Hamito-semitic. At a point in prehistory, they split into what is called proto-Semitic and proto-Hamitic. From these, arise Egyptian in the Hamitic branch, and on the Semitic side, the northwest Semitic languages of Ugaritic, Moabite, Aramaic and Hebrew and the Southeast Semitic languages such as Akkadian (divisible into two dialects, Babylonian and Assyrian). The earlier Semitic languages, such as Akkadian and Ugaritic have a case system which identifies what role a noun is playing in a sentence. That is, a *u* tacked on to the end of the word, as in *shar*, the Babylonian word for prince, gives the form *sharu*, telling the reader that the word is the subject of the sentence, as in "The Prince hears the Princess". An *a* tacked on to the end - *shara* - makes the word the object, as in "the Princess hears the Prince." And an *i* tacked on at the end as in *shari* makes the word possessive, as in "the Prince of the Princess".

In later Semitic languages such as Hebrew, the case system has disappeared, so that word order now indicates the job assignments that were previously provided by the case endings. Hebrew is one of the latest of the known Semitic languages. Even Arabic, another Semitic language, appears more ancient in its forms, since it preserves the old Semitic case structure. The different Semitic languages bear a general similarity with each other, as for instance with the word for "sun". In Akkadian it is *shamash*, in Arabic it is *shamps* and in Hebrew it is *shemesh*.

Hebrew

Hebrew was the language of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah respectively. It was used by the Jews until the time of the Babylonian captivity, when the language of the court, Aramaic, came more and more to replace it. When the Jewish people returned from the Babylonian captivity around 536 B.C. the Hebrew language had undergone some significant changes. Aramaic words had been added to the vocabulary, and the alphabet was changed from the Old Hebrew characters to the newer square Aramaic script - which is the form still in use today. After the fall of Jerusalem AD 70 and the subsequent dispersion, Hebrew, already barely more than a liturgical language (used in the Synagogue for reading scripture), ceased to be spoken altogether. Hebrew remained a dead language, known only to scholars until the end of the nineteenth century. With the rise of the Zionist movement in Europe, some Jews started to revive Hebrew as a spoken tongue, so those Jews who moved back into Palestine began speaking to one another in the old Biblical language.

Today, the official language of the modern nation of Israel is Hebrew and except for the addition of a few new words to account for technological change like airplane and automobile the Modern Hebrew language is virtually identical to that of the Bible.

Aramaic

Aramaic, not to be confused with the language spoken by the Arabs today - which is called Arabic - is a Semitic language used by the neo-Babylonians of the time of Nebuchadnezzar II (cf. Book of Daniel). It became the major language of the ancient Near East and was spoken and written by most nations of the area until the rise of Islam subjugated it and replaced it with Arabic.

The language most commonly spoken in Israel in Jesus' day was Aramaic and in fact it is the language that Jesus himself spoke. A few snatches are recorded in the New Testament, but most of what remains are translations of his words into Greek, the language used by the New Testament writers. They used Greek because it was the language of the Roman Empire and the writers of the New Testament were concerned that the message of the gospel should get as wide a readership as possible. The translational nature of Christ's words can be seen, for example, in the wording of the beatitudes; Luke writes simply "blessed are the poor", while Matthew writes "blessed are the poor in spirit". The reason for the slight difference in the wording results from the underlying Aramaic word for "poor", which has both ideas contained within it; Matthew, therefore, was a bit more precise in his translation, since the Greek word for poor generally - like the English term - refers only to those who lack material benefits.

New Testament

The New Testament is written entirely in Greek, except, as has already been indicated, for a few Aramaic words or phrases: Matthew 27:33, Matthew 27:46, Mark 5:41, Mark 15:22, Mark 15:34, and John 19:17.

Greek

Though the native language of the Romans was Latin, the language of the Empire, and especially the eastern half of the empire where the Jews lived, was Greek; the Greeks, though militarily weak, had been culturally powerful, leaving their mark on Roman thinking in everything from their language and theology, to their laws and philosophy. If a person knew Greek, he could get along well in the Roman Empire, just as today, if a person knows English, he'll do better than a person who doesn't.

Origin of the Bible

Divine

The Bible had its origin with God, not with man.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Inspiration

God inspired people to write the scriptures.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)

Theories of Inspiration

1. The mechanical or dictation theory

Some teach that God dictated the words of scripture to the various authors, making them in essence secretaries or tape recorders. A few passages (such as Exodus 20:1 and 31:18) do indicate that God was dictating and expected his words to be copied verbatim. Such a concept insures a very high regard for scripture, insuring accuracy and completeness. However the variety of vocabulary and style by the various

authors seems to mitigate against this view, because if God were dictating, then there should be a uniformity of style, vocabulary and point of view - which simply is not the case.

2. Partial inspiration

The essence of this view may be summarized by stating that the Bible "contains the word of God." Especially, it is believed that those sections of the Bible that are doctrinal in nature are inspired, while merely history or whatever would not be. The decision as to what is inspired or not is largely left up to the individual to decide.

3. Degrees of Inspiration

Closely related to the concept of partial inspiration is the concept of degrees of inspiration. The bottom line is that some passages in the Bible are more important than others

Inspiration was based on the following criteria:

- a. What every man knew - very little, if any inspiration needed.
- b. What involved special investigation - still little, if any inspiration necessary.
- c. What could not otherwise be known. Those things that required direct intervention by God are the only sections that can claim to be inspired or God-breathed.

This allows, then, for errors and is dependent upon human judgment as to what is true.

4. The concept, not the words inspired

This hypothesis attempts to conceive of thoughts apart from words; that is, the concept being expressed by the words is what is without error and inspired by God, not the actual words themselves.

5. Natural inspiration

Just as the Egyptians excelled in geometry, so the Jews excelled in religion; the inspiration of the Bible is the same as that of any gifted author, and what we see in the Bible is merely human genius at work. And of course, even genius is capable of error.

6. Mystical inspiration

The truthfulness of the Bible depends on the subjective response of the individual. It isn't what the Bible says, but what the Bible says to an individual that is inspired. In this sense, then, the Bible BECOMES the word of God to each person who reads it. Therefore, our conscience, or the indwelling Holy Spirit, tests every external revelation and evaluates it, and determines if it is meaningful and true for the individual involved. Subjective experience takes precedence over objective scripture.

7. Verbal plenary inspiration

Evangelicals generally believe that inspiration is plenary, that is, that it extends to the entire scripture, and verbal, that it applies to the very words of the text, and not merely to the ideas contained in them.

The extent of scripture:

2 Timothy 3:16 - "All scripture..."

2 Peter 3:16 - Peter states that Paul's writings are scripture.

1 Timothy 5:18 - Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 25:4 - "Do not muzzle the ox" and Luke 10:7 "for the laborer is worthy of his hire", thereby equating the Gospel of Luke with the Old Testament scriptures.

Biblical Evidence for Inspiration and Inerrancy

1) 2 Timothy 3:16-17

2) Matthew 5:17-18

3) 2 Peter 1:20-21

4) John 10:34-35

God's Words are True

The law of Yahweh is perfect, reviving the soul.

The statutes of Yahweh are trustworthy, making wise the simple. (Psalm 19:7)

Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true. (Psalm 119:142)

I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (Matthew 5:18)

...an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth - (Romans 2:20)

For the word of Yahweh is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. (Psalm 33:4)

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17)

Obviously, this involves circular reasoning; we are proving that the Bible is inerrant by using the Biblical claims about itself. However, if the Bible is assumed to be flawed, then obviously it is lying about itself, not simply making unfortunate mistakes. That would make the Bible even less trustworthy.

These verses are useful, however, if we already have the assumption that the Bible is inerrant; also they can silence those critics who might try to claim that the Bible nowhere claims to be without error. Clearly, the sense of the above verses is quite clearly that it is claiming to be without error.

The Nature of God Suggests Inerrancy

We make the assumption that God is perfect; we further assume that he wants to have a relationship with us and is concerned to communicate with us accurately. Therefore, we make the assumption that he has communicated with us, and that this communication is contained in the Bible. Since it has its origin in a perfect God, we thus assume it, too, is perfect. There are several biblical passages which seem to suggest that this is the case.

Guide me in your truth and teach me,

for you are God my Savior,

and my hope is in you all day long. (Psalm 22:5)

Into your hands I commit my spirit;

redeem me, O Yahweh,

the God of truth. (Psalm 31:5)

But I trust in you, O Yahweh;

I say, "You are my God." (Psalm 31:14)

Trust in him at all times, O people;

pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. *Selah* (Psalm 62:8)

Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. (Psalm 78:7)

But Yahweh is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath. (Jeremiah 10:10)

But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. (John 3:21)

The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. (John 3:33)

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (John 17:3)

Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge." (Romans 3:4)

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood. (1 John 4:6)

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true-even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (1 John 5:20)

...and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. (Rev. 15:3)

Reliability Necessitates It

If we are going to put our trust in the word of God, we have to accept it as reliable; once we open up the possibility of errors in the Bible, where do we stop? The story of the camel is perhaps applicable: once you let it get its nose in the tent, the next thing you know, you'll have the whole creature in there with you. Or better, it is like censorship. Once you allow it, how do you determine objective guidelines - and worse, who is going to have the responsibility for drawing them up, and why? Can one be a little bit pregnant? Or how do you decide when human life begins? First trimester, second? Viability? What are the criteria? Is it arbitrary?

A whole slew of possible analogies present themselves, none of which is entirely perfect, but perhaps one can see the point. The Bible is either true or it isn't; if it has errors, it is hard to put much trust in it.

Of course the answer from those who do posit errors is that errors are a matter of degree. That is, do we reject what the encyclopedia says because we find a single mistake or two of minor quality? Isn't the larger, overall picture still valid?

But take a book like *The Coming Economic Earthquake* by Larry Burkett. Certainly its major point, that debt can be bad, both for a country as well as for individuals is valid; nevertheless, many of its assumptions and conclusions are overly simplistic and wrong. More seriously, Burkett did a very poor job of research, making many serious factual errors that cast questions about the reliability in general of much of what he has to say. He has not been faithful in small matters...

Five examples can serve to illustrate the problem.

1. p. 27:

"Their spokesman for this New Deal was an articulate aristocrat with a household family name: Roosevelt. Franklin Roosevelt was born to wealth, raised to wealth, and educated in wealth at Harvard, where he was exposed to the philosophies of Dr. John Maynard Keynes of England. Keynes, an avowed socialist, had long advocated the use of government control over banking and business to ensure prosperity for all. This philosophy was not new. Karl Marx had advocated essentially the same doctrine, only to a more radical group - the poor."

a. John Maynard Keynes was not a socialist. According to *the Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

In Cambridge, to which Keynes now returned, his reputation was rather different. He was quite simply esteemed as the most brilliant student of Alfred Marshall and A.C. Pigou, the two Cambridge economists who between them had produced the authoritative explanation of how competitive markets functioned, business firms operated, and consumers spent their incomes.

Although the tone of Keynes major writings in the 1920's was occasionally skeptical, he did not directly challenge that conventional wisdom of the period that held laissez-faire, only slightly tempered by public policy, the best of all possible social arrangements.

b. It is impossible that Roosevelt was influenced by Keynes in Harvard because Keynes was born on June 5, 1883. Roosevelt was born January 30, 1882. Roosevelt was *older* than Keynes, and they were both in college about the same time. It seems unlikely that Roosevelt would be studying the philosophy of someone who was himself taking classes at the same time in Cambridge, from firmly laissez-faire capitalist economic teachers - especially when you consider that Keynes had yet to develop the economic philosophy about which Burkett is so critical.

c. Keynes' book, in which he propounded his economic theory of unemployment (Larry Burkett terribly misrepresents and apparently doesn't understand Keynesian economics in the first place) was called *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, which appeared in England at the very end of 1935. Roosevelt had been elected president in 1932.

This is how the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* summarizes Keynes argument in his book:

The central message is readily translated into two powerful propositions. The first declared the existing theory of unemployment nonsense. In a depression, according to Keynes, there was no wage so low that it could eliminate unemployment. Accordingly, it was wicked to blame the unemployed for their plight. The second proposition proposed an alternative explanation about the origins of unemployment and depression. This centered upon aggregate demand - i.e., the total spending of consumers, business investors, and public agencies. When aggregate demand was low, sales and jobs suffered. When it was high, all was well.

From these generalities there flowed a powerful and comprehensive view of economic behaviour. Because consumers were limited in their spending by the size of their incomes, they were not the source of business cycle fluctuations. The dynamic actors were business investors and governments. In depressions the thing to do was either to enlarge private investment or to create public substitutes for private investment deficiencies. In mild economic contractions, monetary policy in the shape of easier credit and lower interest rates just might stimulate business investment and restore the aggregate demand caused by full employment. Severe contractions required as therapy the sterner remedy of deliberate public deficits either in the shape of public works or subsidies to afflicted groups.

Whether Keynes is right or not is a separate issue. But Burkett's presentation of him is far from accurate, therefore rendering Burkett's conclusions very suspect.

2. p. 72:

"It was assumed that by injecting a modest amount of new currency into the economy, only a modest amount of inflation would follow. Advocates of this plan assured the Kaiser that a modest amount of inflation would be manageable and would actually allow producers to reap more profits, thus helping to repay the Weimar Republic's debts with cheaper currency."

a. Germany did not have a Kaiser after World War I. How could there be advisors to this non-existent person? Following World War I, the Kaiser abdicated and moved to Holland, together with his family. Before the rise of Hitler, Germany had a popularly elected, democratic government.

3. p. 165:

"This is what George Orwell described as 'government speak' in his novel *1984*."

Orwell called it "Newspeak".

4. p. 166:

"Then in the sixties President Nixon substituted the use of base metal coins for silver coins effectively removing all fixed asset value from U.S. currency."

The coins were changed from silver to nickel/copper sandwiches in 1965. Nixon did not take office as president until January, 1969.

5. p. 198:

"Once the word was made public, investors outside the U.S. rushed to convert their U.S. dollars into the E.C. Eurodollar, adopted as the official world currency by virtually all members of the World Economic Council, excluding the United States of course."

Although Burkett is describing a fictionalized account of a possible future crisis in 1999, what he is describing would be a remarkable trick indeed, considering what Eurodollars are, according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

Eurodollars, deposits of United States dollars in foreign banks obligated to pay in U.S. dollars when the deposits are withdrawn.

In essence, Eurodollars are simply U.S. dollars that happen to be in European banks. If Burkett's scenario took place, I suspect the Europeans would find the Eurodollars just as worthless as the U.S. dollars - since they are the same thing.

The sorts of errors that we find in Mr. Burkett's book are the same sort of flaws that are postulated for the Bible. If we wouldn't care to trust or read Larry Burkett's book, then why should we accept the possibility of such errors in the Bible? The Bible would then be just as worthless.

By its nature, a presupposition Geisler has pointed out the following regarding the Bible and error:

In summation, the denial of the inerrancy of Scripture is not primarily a factual problem, though it has factual dimensions, to be sure. The root problem of modern errancy is philosophical. And the apostle Paul has urged us to "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor. 10:4, 5). In view of this it seems to me that the best *refutation* of biblical errancy is a clear *exposition* of the premises on which it is built, whether these presuppositions be grounded in inductivism, materialism, rationalism, or naturalism.

Hence, the rise of an errant view of Scripture did not result from a discovery of factual evidence that made belief in an inerrant Scripture untenable. Rather, it resulted from the unnecessary acceptance of philosophical premises that undermined the historic belief in an infallible and inerrant Bible.

The presupposition is either: the Bible is principally the work of God, and therefore, because of the nature of God, without error. Or, the Bible is primarily the work of human beings, and because of the nature of human beings, inevitably with error.

C. Textual Criticism

All this talk about the inerrancy of the Bible is good in abstract; the reality is, however, that the current text of the Bible, as we have it, *does* contain errors. However, there is a big difference between assuming a perfect autograph into which subsequently the sort of errors that copiers will make have crept in, and assuming an autograph that was not perfect. Assuming perfection at the beginning, the work of textual criticism is to restore that original, pristine text.

1. Reason for it

The necessity for textual criticism is obvious, because the modern reader is in the predicament of the man with two watches. If a man has one watch, he knows what time it is. If he has two, he is never sure. We have far more than two manuscripts - there are literally hundreds - more specifically, there are about five thousand manuscripts or portions of manuscripts of the NT or books of the NT. However, things are not quite so hopeless as they are for the man with two watches. There are methods - things that can be done, to arrive at an accurate text.

2. Text families

As the various (5000) manuscripts have been studied, it has become apparent that they may be categorized into what are called text types or text families.

a. Alexandrian

General characteristics: conciseness, no polished or embellished inclusions; generally it has the shorter readings

General value: generally considered the oldest and best texts

b. Western

General characteristics: no tendency to paraphrase

General value: tends to support the other family types

c. Caesarean (Unclassified)

General characteristics: tends to follow the Western pattern

General value: tends to support the other family types

d. Byzantine

General characteristics: tends to smooth out difficulties

General value: probably inferior; some believe that their abundance should be taken into consideration. However this seems an odd conclusion to draw, since majority cannot be said to imply right.

3. Methods

The history of the biblical texts shows clearly that all of them stand far removed from the originals both by time and by the process of transmission. They contain not only scribal errors, but even some actual transformations of the text, both deliberate and accidental. By means of textual criticism we attempt to find all

the alterations that have occurred and then recover the earliest possible form of the text.

Textual criticism proceeds in steps:

- a. All the variant readings of the text are collected and arranged. Of course, this is the very reason textual criticism is necessary at all. If we had only a single copy, there would be no questions, but since we have several, which all say different things, we have a problem. Which text accurately records the original statements?
- b. The variants must then be examined.
- c. The most likely reading is then determined.

For the Old Testament, in order to carry out these steps, it is necessary to use the Masoretic Text, which ordinarily serves as the basis from which the textual critic will work. Combined with the Masoretic Text the critic will consult all the ancient Hebrew manuscripts and versions that might be available.

4. Ideally, the work of textual criticism should proceed with all of these ancient versions and copies readily available. There are then some basic rules that help place the textual criticism of the Bible, whether Old or New Testament, on a firm basis that generally avoids arbitrariness and subjectivity.

1. Internal Evidence

a. For the Old Testament, where the Hebrew manuscripts and the ancient versions agree, we may assume that the original reading has been preserved. Likewise, with the New Testament, where the various manuscripts agree, we may assume the original text has been preserved. To our great relief, this covers 95 per cent of the Bible.

b. Where the manuscripts differ among themselves, one should choose either the more difficult reading from the point of view of language and subject matter or the reading that most readily makes the development of the other readings intelligible.

In order to make this choice, it is necessary that the critic have a thorough knowledge of the history and character of the various manuscripts. It needs also to be realized that these criteria work together and complement one another. A "more difficult reading" does not mean a "meaningless reading."

c. The shorter reading is preferred

The common tendency among scribes is toward additions and insertions rather than omissions. Hence arose, in the first place, the marginal glosses and insertions between lines which later transcribers incorporated into the text. Although this rule has been widely accepted, it must be applied with discrimination, a longer reading being in some cases clearly more in harmony with the style of the original, or the shorter having arisen from a case of homoeoteleuton. d. the reading different from the parallel reading is preferred.

e. The reading that best explains the origin of other variants is preferred. f. The reading that is most consistent with the writer's style and vocabulary is preferred.

g. The reading that is in agreement with its immediate context is preferred.

h. However, the critic must not assume that just because a reading appears meaningless that it necessarily is. Scribes are not likely to turn a meaningful passage into gibberish. Therefore, if a passage is not understandable, that is often as far as we can go. We must, as scholars, acknowledge our own ignorance.

i. With the Old Testament, where the Hebrew manuscripts and the translations differ, and a superior reading cannot be demonstrated on the basis of the above rules, then one should, as a matter of first principle, allow the Hebrew text to stand. With the New Testament, one will generally choose the shorter reading because of

the tendency of scribes to try to "explain" passages.

j. Where the different manuscripts differ and none of them seem to make any sense, one may attempt a conjecture concerning the true reading - a conjecture that must be validated by demonstrating the process of the textual corruption that would have lead to the existing text forms. Such a conjecture, however, must not be used to validate the interpretation of a whole passage in that it might have been made on the basis of an expectation derived from the whole.

k. A reading is preferable which reflects no doctrinal bias, whether orthodox on the one side or heretical on the other. This principle is so obvious that it is accepted on all sides, but in practice wide divergence arises, owing to the doctrinal bias of the critic himself.

2. External evidence

1) Date - which ms. is earliest? The more ancient reading is usually one that is supported by the most ancient manuscripts.

2) Text family - which family? Is it the more reliable text type?

3) Geographical distribution - is there a wide diffusion of the variant? Great significance must be granted to the testimony of witnesses from localities or times widely apart, and it can only be satisfactorily met by balancing agreement of witness also from different times and localities.

4) The reading that has the undoubted support of the earliest manuscripts, versions, and patristic writers is unquestionably original.

5) Mere numerical preponderance of witnesses to a reading of any one class, locality, or time, is of comparative insignificance.

6) The disagreement of early authorities usually indicates the existence of corruption prior to them all.

4. Important Manuscripts

a. Papyrus Fragments The Papyrus fragments are some of the earliest NT texts available. They are written in uncial script, that is, in all capital letters, without divisions between words or any punctuation whatsoever. Most of the fragments date between the second and fourth centuries AD.

b. Greek Manuscripts

1) Codex Sinaiticus

It was discovered by Tischendorf at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai and now resides in the Imperial Library in St. Petersburg, Russia. It dates from the 4th century. This is the only uncial which contains the entire NT. It also has the Epistle of Barnabas and part of the Shepherd of Hermas. The marks of many corrections are found in the text. It is written on 147 and a half leaves of very thin vellum in four narrow columns of 48 lines each. The pages measure 15x13 and a half inches and the leaves are arranged in quaternions of four sheets. The open sheet exposing eight columns resembles greatly an open papyrus roll. There is but rudimentary punctuation and no use of accent or initial letters.

2) Codex Alexandrinus

It received its name since it was supposed to have come from Alexandria, Egypt, being the gift of Cyril Lucar, at one time Patriarch of that Province, though later of Constantinople, to Charles I, through the English ambassador at the Turkish court in 1627, and in 1757 presented to the Royal Library and now in the British Museum. It doubtless belongs to the 5th century, and contained the entire NT, lacking now only portions of Matthew, John, and 1 Corinthians, as well as containing the two epistles of Clement of Rome and the Psalms

of Solomon. It is written on thin vellum in two columns of 41 lines to the page, which is 12 and five eighths by ten and three eighths inches. It employs frequent initial capitals, and is divided into paragraphs, but has no marginal signs except in the Gospels. Several different hands are discovered in the present state of the manuscript.

3) Codex Vaticanus

Since 1481 it has been in the Vatican Library and it is universally esteemed the oldest and best manuscript of the Greek NT. It dates from the fourth century. Written on very fine vellum, the leaves are nearly square, measuring 10 by 10 and a half inches, with three narrow columns of 40-44 lines per column and five sheets making the quire. A part of the Epistles to the Hebrews and the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation are missing. It is written without accents, breathings or punctuation. In the Gospels the divisions are of an earlier date than in Codex Sinaiticus. The theory of Tischendorf that Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus were in part prepared by the same hand and that they were both among the fifty manuscripts made under the direction of Eusebius at Caesarea in 331 for use in the emperor Constantine's new capital, is not now generally accepted.

4) Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus

This is the great palimpsest (twice written) manuscript of the uncial group, and originally contained the whole NT. Now, however, a part - approximately half - of every book is missing and 2 Thess and 2 John are entirely gone. It belongs to the 5th century and is written on good vellum 9 by 12 and a half inches to the page of 41 lines, and of one column in the original text, though the superimposed writings of St. Ephraem are in two. Enlarged initials and the Eusebian marginal sections are used and several hands have corrected the Manuscript. Brought to Italy from the East in the 16th century, it came to France with Catherine de'Medici and is not in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.

5) Codex Bezae

This is the early known manuscript which Theodore Beza obtained in 1562 from the monastery of St. Irenaeus at Lyons and which he gave in 1581 to the University of Cambridge, where it now is. It is a Greek-Latin text, the Greek holding the chief place on the left-hand page, measuring 8 by 10 inches and dating probably from the end of the 5th century. Both Greek and Latin are written in large uncials and are divided into short clauses, corresponding line for line. The hands of no less than nine correctors have been traced, and the critical questions arising from the character of the readings are among the most interesting in the whole range of biblical criticism and are still unsettled. It contains only the Gospels and Acts, with a fragment of 3 John.

6) Codex Washingtoniensis

The U.S. has now in the National Library (Smithsonian) at the capital one of the foremost uncial manuscripts of the Greek NT. It is a complete codex of the Gospels, in a slightly sloping but very ancient hand, written upon good vellum, in one column of 30 lines to the page, and 6x9 inches in size. It dates between the 4th and 5th centuries.

c. Vernacular Versions

1) Latin

Vulgate. The Latin translation of the Old and New Testaments that was made by Jerome about 400 A.D.

2) Greek

The Septuagint - a translation of the Old Testament into Greek, made in Alexandria, Egypt about 250 B.C. There are several versions, with minor variations among them. They are: the Codex Sinaiticus, which dates to the fourth century A.D., the Codex Alexandrinus, which dates to the fifth century A.D., and the Codex Vaticanus, also of the fourth century A.D. 3) Syriac

Peshitta. The Syriac translation of the Old and New Testaments. Syriac is an Aramaic dialect. The translation was done sometime between 75 and 200 A.D.

4) Samaritan

The Samaritan Pentateuch. A copy of the first five books of Moses kept by the Samaritans in Samaritan characters. It is notorious for some deliberate alterations designed to legitimize the Samaritan place of worship on Mt. Gerizim (cf. John 4:20).

5) Aramaic Targums

Less serviceable than the LXX for textual studies are the Aramaic Targums (Targum is derived from the Aramaic word meaning translation) both because they were standardized only later in their history and because they contain aggadic (nonlegal or narrative) and paraphrastic material, obviate anthropomorphisms, explain figurative language, and modernize geographical names.

Origin:

During the Persian period the majority of the Jews began to use Aramaic in addition to Hebrew; as a result, it became the custom to interpret in the synagogue the reading of the Bible with Targums after every verse. There are indications both in the rabbinic literature and in the Targums themselves that they were committed to writing at least by the first century AD.

1. Of the Pentateuch

a. Targum Onkelos

Because the Babylonian Talmud (Meg. 3a) attributes the official Targum of the Pentateuch to Onkelos in a text obviously parallel to a related account in the Jerusalem Talmud attributing the Greek translation to Aquila (note the phonetic similarity of the two names) A.E. Silverstone, along with many others, arrived at the conclusion that Onkelos and Aquila are one and the same, but the Babylonian applied to the official Aramaic version the tradition in Palestine regarding Aquila's Greek translation. On the other hand, we should note that on the basis of the mixture of Western and Eastern Aramaic in Onkelos, some of the most competent Aramaists believe it originated in Palestine, while its final redaction took place in Babylonia. Then to, its halakhic (legal) and aggadic (non-legal, narrative) content betrays the Palestinian school of Aquila of the second century AD. Possibly, then, Aquila had a hand in its Palestinian base after which it was imported to Babylonia where it was revised in the third century AD.

Like Aquila's Greek recension, the Hebrew text lying behind the Aramaic is the one that ousted all rival recensions. While it aims to conform the Targum as closely as possible to this base, it misses the mark through the paraphrastic influences on all Targums.

After the destruction of the cultural centers of Judea in the first and second revolts against Rome, the centers of Jewish life shifted to Galilee. Here Targums in the Galilean dialect evolved, but it is widely agreed that they contain much earlier material. The recently discovered Codex Neofiti I is the oldest complete manuscript of this tradition and according to its editor, Diez Macho, it belongs to the first or second century AD.

b. Targum Yerushalmi I

It has been mistakenly ascribed to Jonathan and therefore it is sometimes known as Targum Jonathan (ben Uzziel) or Pseudo- Jonathan, but more correctly called Targum Erez Israel by earlier Jews; it lacks only fifteen verses of the pentateuch. It aggravates the distinctive traits of the paraphrastic translation. Its early base was revised not later than the seventh century.

c. Targum Yershalmi II

This targum is also called the Fragmentary Targum; it contains about 850 verses, preserving fragmentary portions of the Pentateuch. It is not clear how these fragments came together.

d. The Genizah Fragments

Edited by Kahle, they date from between the seventh and ninth centuries AD and represent various recensions and contain both older and younger materials.

2. Of the Prophets

a. Targum Jonathan

The history of this Targum is like Targum Onkelos: it originated early in Palestine and was later revised in Babylonia at which point it was recognized as being of ancient authority. According to the Babylonian Talmud, it was written by Jonathan ben Uzziel who is named as Hillel's most prominent pupil in the first century BC. A conspicuous affinity between Targum Jonathan and Targum Onkelos has led some to conclude that Targum Jonathan influenced Onkelos. The usual rules of Targumic interpretation are observed, but the renderings of the latter prophets are more paraphrastic on the whole than in the former prophets.

b. Targum Yerushalmi to the Prophets

This work is known mainly from citations in Rashi and David Kimchi. Codex Reuchlinianus, written in 1105 AD in the form of eighty extracts, belongs to a later period, when the Babylonian Talmud began to exert an influence on Palestinian literature.

3. Of the Hagiographa

In general, these contain older materials, but in the current forms they did not originate until a later period. Written at different times by different authors, they never enjoyed official recognition.

6) Others

Other relatively early versions of the text are the Coptic, Gothic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Georgian, Arabic, Nubian, Old High German, Persian, Provencal, and Slavonic.

d. Patristic Quotations

The church fathers (early Christian writers antedating the time of the apostles), not surprisingly quoted extensively from the NT and OT; it would almost be possible to reconstruct the entire NT from just the writings of the church fathers, alone. However, the witness of the church fathers to the text is somewhat uneven, since they were often times quoting from memory rather than verbatim, with the text of the NT in front of them.

e. Hebrew Scriptures

For the Old Testament, the traditional text is what is known as the Masoretic. The Masoretes were Jewish scholars who worked diligently between the 6th and 10th centuries A.D. in Babylonia and Palestine to reproduce, as far as possible, the original text of the Old Testament. Their intention was not to interpret the Bible, but to transmit to future generations what they regarded as the authentic text. Therefore, to this end, they gathered manuscripts and whatever oral traditions were available to them.

They were careful to draw attention to any peculiarities they found in the spellings of words or the grammar of sentences in the Old Testament, and since Hebrew in their day was a dying language, they introduced a series of vowel signs to insure the correct pronunciation of the text, since traditionally, the text was written with consonants only. Among the various systems developed to represent the vowel sounds, the system developed in the city of Tiberias, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, gained the ascendancy. The earliest complete copy of the Masoretic text of the Old Testament is located in the St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) Public Library; it was written about 1008 A.D. The Masoretic text is not a single, unbroken thread,

but rather a river of manuscripts, with both a western and eastern branch; within the texts labeled "Masoretic" there is a certain amount of variation and the Masoretes carefully noted the differences in the texts that they used as their sources.

Therefore, it must be stressed that the so-called "Textus Receptus" that one may hear of occasionally (especially from those who believe that the King James Version is the only acceptable translation) is mostly a pious fiction; it is a concept that has little basis in reality beyond wishful thinking.

Remember, too, that English is not the only language that the Bible has been translated into. It has been translated into over two thousand languages by scholars using the original Greek and Hebrew texts.

1) St. Petersburg Codex

The St. Petersburg (or Leningrad) Codex, 1008 A.D. It is the largest and only complete manuscript of the entire Old Testament.

2) Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls)

The earliest copies of Old Testament books are called the Dead Sea Scrolls, a body of biblical manuscripts discovered since 1947 inside caves near a place called Qumran, right next to the Dead Sea in Israel. The texts all date prior to 70 A.D., the period when the community at Qumran was destroyed by the Romans following the Jewish revolt. Some texts date as far back as 150- 200 B.C., based on epigraphic dating and Carbon 14 dating.

b. The Aleppo Codex, 930 A.D. It used to be a complete copy of the Old Testament, but was partially destroyed in a synagogue fire in 1948.

c. The British Museum Codex, 950 A.D. It is an incomplete copy of the Pentateuch.

d. The Cairo Codex, 895 A.D. A copy of the Former and Latter Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets).

e. The St. Petersburg Codex of the Prophets, 916 A.D. containing only the Latter Prophets.

f. The Reuchlin Codex of the Prophets, 1105 A.D.

g. Cairo Geniza fragments, 6th to 9th century, A.D.

5. The Causes of Textual Corruption The goal of textual criticism is to remove the textual errors and restore the original readings. To aid in this goal, it is helpful if the textual critic has an idea of what sorts of errors he or she is likely to find.

When copying out a text, errors occur in every conceivable way, as we no doubt know from our own experiences. Sometimes it is difficult to explain, even to ourselves, how we might have come to make a particular error. Therefore it is unlikely that we will be able to correct or explain everything that has eluded the scribes over the centuries. A reading that appears doubtful or corrupt to us today may have been caused by a hole or some other damage to the copyist's manuscript. Or maybe the letters or words in a given section of his text were faded and nearly illegible, forcing the copyist to make his best guess. Moreover, a single error can give rise to many others, leaving us with no clue as to how it might have happened.

And of course, as always, the assumption of a textual error may really be only a cover for our failure to understand the language or the idiom. Beyond these unrecoverable sorts of errors, there are two categories of errors that may be distinguished and often corrected: errors due to an unintentional, mechanical lapse on the part of the copyist (often called Errors of Reading and Writing), and two, errors that are the result of deliberate alteration (called Intentional Alterations).

a. Errors of Reading and Writing

1. Confusion of similar letters

In Hebrew, there are several letters which look very similar to one another: the B and K, R and D, H and T, W and Y.

2. Transposition of Letters

3. Haplography - a fancy word that means when there were two or more identical or similar letters, groups of letters, or words all in sequence, one of them gets omitted by error. Of course, there is some evidence that some of these supposed "errors" are actually equivalent to English contractions like "don't" instead of "do not" and therefore are not errors at all.

4. Dittography - another fancy word that refers to an error caused by repeating a letter, group of letters, a word or a group of words. The opposite, really, of Haplography.

5. Homoioteleuton - an even fancier word which refers to the error that occurs when two words are identical, or similar in form, or have similar endings and are close to each other. It is easy in this sort of situation for the eye of the copyist to skip from one word to the other, leaving out everything in between. A good example of this occurs in 1 Samuel 14:41:

Therefore Saul said unto the Lord God of **Israel**, give a perfect lot. (KJV)

Therefore Saul said, "O Lord God of **Israel**, why hast thou not answered thy servant this day? If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O Lord, God of Israel, give Urim: but if this guilt is in thy people **Israel**, give Thummim. (RSV)

The copyist's eye jumped from the first instance of the word "Israel" to the last instance, leaving out everything in between for the reading that the KJV translators had at their disposal. The word translated "perfect" is spelled with the same consonants in Hebrew (TH-M-M) as the word Thummim.

6. Errors of Joining and Dividing Words.

This is more a problem in the New Testament than it is in the Old Testament, for while the Greek manuscripts were written well into the Medieval period without spacing or dividing signs between words, there is no evidence that this was EVER the case with the Old Testament Hebrew texts. In fact, the evidence is very strong to the contrary; inscriptions on walls from the time of Hezekiah actually had dots between each word to separate them from each other.

b. Deliberate Alterations

The Samaritan Pentateuch, as an example, is notorious for its purposeful changes designed to help legitimize some of their sectarian biases. They were sort of like the Jehovah's witnesses of their day.

A more substantive change in the Hebrew text came after the Babylonian captivity in the time of Ezra (fifth century BC) when the alphabet changed from the Old Hebrew Script to the Aramaic Square Script - in which all copies of the Old Testament except for the Samaritan Pentateuch are written.

It should not surprise us that there have been a certain amount of alteration in the text over time, since the Bible was not intended to be the object of scholarly study but rather was to be read by the whole believing community as God's word to them. Thus, the text would undergo adaptations to fit the linguistic needs of the community. For instance in Isaiah 39:1 the Masoretic Text preserves a rare word, *hazaq*, which has the sense of "to get well, recuperate." The community that produced the Dead Sea scrolls altered this word to the more common Hebrew word for get well, *zayah*. Other examples of adaptation to colloquial usage are likely. The

lack of early material for the Old Testament makes it impossible to demonstrate these sorts of alterations on a larger scale. But a few small alterations are easily demonstrable.

The treatment of the divine name Baal is an example of deliberate change for theological reasons. In personal names which included the word "Baal", which simply means "master" or "lord", the scribes deliberately replaced "Baal" with "Bosheth," which means "shame". Hence, Jonathan's son was actually named "Meribbaal" rather than "Mephibosheth" (cf. 1 Chron. 8:34, 9:30 and 2 Sam 9:6, 19:24, 21:7) Another example of deliberate alteration is found in Job 1:5, 11 and 2:5, 9 where we now read the word *berek*, to bless (with God as the object) even though we should expect to find the word *qalal*, to curse. The scribes replaced the offensive expression "to curse God" with a euphemism - motivated no doubt by their fear of taking God's name in vain.

C. The Nature of Translation

1. How translation occurs

It is important to realize - and most people who have not learned a second language wouldn't know - that there is no such thing as a one-to-one correspondence between languages. You cannot have a word for word translation that is at all readable, because the word order is different, the nature of the grammar is different and even the sense of a word may cover a wider or smaller range than the corresponding English word.

For instance, the word "house" in Hebrew can mean "immediate family" or "a royal dynasty" besides the equivalent English idea of a building where a person dwells. Therefore to have an accurate English translation you cannot simply translate the Hebrew word with "house"; you need to translate it according to which of the possible meanings is intended.

Idioms, likewise, do not translate across directly: for instance the English phrase "I'm sick and tired of apple pie" if translated literally could give a reader in another language the false impression that the individual in question is sleepy and ready to throw up.

Consider the following "literal translation" of the first verse of the Bible, which maintains the Hebrew word order and phrasing and ask yourself if it is easily comprehensible:

In-beginning he-created God (definite direct object) the-heavens and-(definite direct object) the- earth.

But even this is not entirely accurate in a word for word sense, because Hebrew does not have past tense; however, there is no other way to indicate perfect aspect (completed action). However, when one of the prophets makes use of the perfect aspect to show the certainty of the prophesy, to translate it as a past tense can create the false impression that the prophet is speaking of things that have already happened when that is not the case at all! And in front of the single words (they are only one word in Hebrew) "the-heavens" and "the-earth" is the Hebrew word that indicates that what follows is a definite direct object, as you can see, hardly translatable into English at all.

Having said all this, one would imagine that this first verse is a complicated sentence. Not at all. It is remarkably simple. It only becomes difficult if we expect translation to be "literal". It isn't. All translation, by its very nature, is paraphrastic and interpretive.

The way translation happens is as follows. The translator learns a foreign language and learns it well. Learning Hebrew or Greek is just like learning French or Spanish in high school. There is nothing mysterious or special about the ancient languages. Then the translator reads the foreign text and understands it. Having understood it, he or she then puts it into the best English possible.

There is no mystery associated with the translation of the Bible, nor are there any significant disagreements between translations. However, by the nature of what translation is - the work of individuals with their own separate styles - the wording of say, *Today's English Version* is not going to be identical to the *King James Version* or the *New International Version*. Not because anyone is trying to twist something or make it say what

it doesn't, but only because each translator is going to word it as he thinks best. But the MEANING will be the same. And of course between the King James and the more modern translations there is also the gap caused by the change in the English language - we don't speak like the people in Shakespeare's time did, but their way of speaking is no "grander" or any more "eloquent" than ours. King James English was the way any farmer or fisherman of 1611 would have talked, just as *Today's English Version* or the *New International Version* is the way an average person speaks today. For all the snobbishness of attitude on the part of some regarding Shakespeare today, in his own day he was considered somewhat vulgar and not a little risqué. Shakespeare was like an ordinary television drama or sitcom is for us today.

D. Canon

(The material on Canon is excerpted from the book by James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983 pp. 1-32)

1. What it is

There was not always a Bible. That is a truism, of course. And all of you are quite aware that this is the case. When was the time that was "before scripture"?

James Barr wrote:

Clearly, in the misty antiquity of the human race, before Abraham, before the origins of Israel: then there was as yet no holy scripture. But it is not to this distant antiquity that I refer. When we say "before scripture", we are speaking of the time of the Bible itself. In what we call "biblical times", or in much of them, there was as yet no Bible.

Our traditional doctrine of scripture takes its departure from the situation where the Bible is already complete, defined, known and acknowledged. The Bible is understood to be already there, it is already demarcated from other writings. This is so both in Catholic and Protestant doctrines, but it is particularly evident in Protestantism because in it the role and the authority of scripture are more starkly isolated and more sharply defined as uniquely essential.

Traditional doctrines - and most emphatically in Protestant orthodoxy - are from the start predicated upon the existence of scripture as a whole, as a collection delimited and defined. The canon of scripture, that is, that list which defines which books lay within it, and by exclusion, those which lay without it, is seen as complete, exclusive, and unchanging; the attributes of scripture, its inspiration, its necessity, its sufficiency, its clarity, and so on, are applied in a level way to all parts of the Bible. In Protestant orthodoxy scripture is taken to be the central criterion for faith, and, even more, it is taken to be the central source for doctrine: thus, doctrine is represented as derived from scripture, so that in the total scheme of understanding, scripture is antecedent to doctrine. Doctrine, to be valid, must derive from scripture. Faith is required to be biblical. That's why the study of theology always (except in one college to be left nameless) begins with bibliology - the study of the Bible.

The Westminster Confession places its formulation of the doctrine of scripture right at the beginning, before any other matters at all are considered. Scripture was given by inspiration of God, and the scope of its operation was defined with extreme precision: all sixty-six books of the Protestant canon were completely inspired. No other books were inspired at all. Everything else, however good, belongs at the best to human tradition or ecclesiastical opinion. Verbal inspiration means that all the words of the text of exactly these books are inspired and therefore infallible. All doctrinal formulation is to be strictly guided and controlled by scripture and by no other comparable source of authority.

2. Problem

But there is a difficulty here which we must face: the question of the canon itself. It is impossible to provide scriptural proof for this most central of questions, namely, which precisely were the books which had been divinely inspired. No passage in either the Old or New Testament gives a list.

The list of contents prefaced to the Bible is not a part of the inspired text of the Bible itself.

For evidence about what is within the canon, what exactly the Bible is, one must go outside the canon itself. The most ancient precise evidence for the shape of the Old Testament, which supports the traditional Protestant view, is in Josephus (Ap. i.37-41). He does not name the books precisely. He says there are five books of Moses, thirteen books written by prophets to continue the history after Moses, and four books containing "hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life." If one takes together certain books, e.g. Judges and Ruth, Jeremiah and Lamentations, this enumeration can fit that of the present Jewish and Protestant canons.

Another source is 4 Ezra 14:37ff, which tells us that after the Law had been burned and lost, and needed to be restored, five men under the direction of Ezra wrote what had been dictated in order, producing 94 books. Afterwards, the Most High spoke to Ezra saying that the 24 should be made public so that all should read them, but the other 70 should be kept and delivered only to the wise. This is a text that is really interested in the numbering and delimiting of the books, and at least some people, one supposes, have thought it to be an inspired work: it is part of the Latin Bible, even if only in an appendix nowadays. But of course it is no more possible to use 4 Ezra than to use Josephus as proof of a Protestant orthodox view of Scripture: 4 Ezra is a book considered to be apocryphal, and - even worse - it expressly sanctioned the authority of no less than seventy additional works outside the Jewish canon.

These exotic sources being ruled out, there is, on the orthodox view, no scriptural evidence to decide what are the exact limits of the canon. Most books do not necessarily say whether they are divinely inspired or not, and many books that do in some fashion lay claim to divine inspiration were nevertheless not accepted as canonical.

3. Tradition

Appeal can be made to the Fathers and to tradition but the Fathers and tradition are disunited over exactly this matter. Protestantism in following the Hebrew Canon, agrees with the judgment of Jerome.

And so, when all is said and done, what is the Bible? It is what has been accepted traditionally; primarily, it is what the Jewish tradition has been.

In the final analysis, we must accept the canon on faith - just as we accept Jesus Christ on faith. The study of the Bible and theology in a work such as this can become so technical, so esoteric, so concerned with objectivity as regards facts, that we forget to remember the element of faith, and the end or goal of our studies.

Consider Hebrews 11:1-6.

Please be reminded that we do not know and cannot know everything.

E. Necessity of the Bible

1. General Revelation

General revelation refers to that revelation that comes from the universe around and from history (see Psalm 19:1-6, Romans 1:19-20, Psalm 8:13, Isaiah 40:12-14, 26, Acts 14:15-17, 17:24-28) It reveals such matters as the wisdom, power, and glory of God (Romans 1:20)

2. Special Revelation

Special revelation comes by means of miracles, direct communication, the incarnation, and finally, through scripture. Scripture is the principle way by which God currently reveals himself to human beings, and it is the final judge and arbiter, the final authority of all such communication, general or special.

3. Limitations of General Revelation

a. Ecclesiastes

The author of Ecclesiastes attempts to arrive at an understanding of God and at an understanding of the purpose of human existence, apart from God's self-disclosure in the Bible. He fails, arriving at futility and despair: bad things happen to good people, good things happen to bad people. There is nothing for us but to be terrified at a capricious God and universe.

4. Limits of Special Revelation
It is sufficient, not complete or exhaustive. It does not tell us everything there is to know about God or the universe. General revelation has its role to play, just as special revelation does.

F. Studying the Bible

When we think about studying God, the first place we usually look is the Bible. What are some things we need to understand about this book that we all own? We think we know all about the Bible, don't we? It has been a part of western civilization for nearly two thousand years, and most of us have been exposed to it all our lives. We therefore assume we understand it.

But do we?

What Thorkild Jacobsen had to say about Sumerian religion should give us pause as we consider the Bible:

Considering first the absolute distance in time from the end of ancient Mesopotamian civilization shortly before the beginning of our era to the present, it may be noted that it is not only a distance but a clean break. No living cultural tradition connects us with our subject, spans the gap between the ancients and us. We are almost entirely dependent on such archaeological and inscrip-tional data as have been recovered and upon our own contemporary attempts at interpreting them. These data are, unfortunately, incomplete and somewhat haphazard as sources for the total culture to which they testify; and the languages of the inscrip-tional materials are still far from being fully understood. The concepts denoted by their words and the interrelations of these concepts, moreover, are not infrequently incongruent with, or accented differently from, anything in our present day culture and outlook, so that misunderstanding and even failure to comprehend altogether are constant stumbling blocks.

Formidable as our difficulties are, they are no cause for dismay or for ceasing our efforts to understand. If they were, then earlier generations should have been the ones to give up, for they had far greater difficulties and far less help than we have. Actually, the very realization that difficulties exist often goes a long way toward overcoming them by forcing upon us the necessity of other ways of thinking and evaluating than those to which we are accustomed. We may become alert to the dangers of too easy generalization, may doubt accepted translations and search for more adequate meanings of a word.

While the Bible is certainly familiar, it is also alien. It was written thousands of years ago by people living thousands of miles away from us, speaking a language unknown to most of us, and still imperfectly understood by those who have devoted themselves to its study. The culture of the Bible is radically different from twentieth century America. A person diving into the Bible experiences many of the same problems facing an American who travels to another country. Alvin Toffler writes:

Culture shock is the effect that immersion in a strange culture has on the unprepared visitor. Peace Corps volunteers suffer from it in Borneo or Brazil. Marco Polo probably suffered from it in Cathay. Culture shock is what happens when a traveler suddenly finds himself in a place where yes may mean no, where a "fixed price" is negotiable, where to be kept waiting in an outer office is no cause for insult, where laughter may signify anger. It is what happens when the familiar psychological cues that help an individual to function in society are suddenly withdrawn and replaced by new ones that are strange or incomprehensible.

The culture shock phenomenon accounts for much of the bewilderment, frustration, and disorientation that plagues Americans in their dealings with other societies. It causes a breakdown in communication, a misreading of reality, an inability to cope.

So it is with the Bible. It is an alien land, and many people hop into it unprepared, expecting it to be populated with Americans. They read American cultural values, composition techniques, and democratic ideals into the ancient text. Those things that they find in the Bible which don't fit twentieth century norms are either ignored, misinterpreted, or explained away.

The people of the Bible, its authors and original readers, did not think the same way as twentieth century Americans. The Old Testament was not written by someone who lived his life in a suburb of Columbus, Ohio. To take a modern example of the difficulties we might face in understanding the Bible, think about the Australians. The Australians speak English, they live in a modern industrialized society, watch TV and do many of the same things Americans do. "Walzing Matilda" is a song known to just about every Australian, and Americans have heard the tune and may know a few of the words:

*Once a jolly swag man camped by a billy-bong,
Under the shade of a kulibar tree,
And he sang as he sat and waited for his billy-boil,
"You'll come a-walzing, Matilda, with me."*

If Americans have difficulty understanding a simple song written in their own language by people almost like themselves, is it any wonder that we moderns should have difficulty fully understanding the Bible? "Walzing Matilda" has nothing to do with dancing or girls; instead, it refers to walking with a kind of knapsack. A "swag man" is a hobo, and "billy-bong" is a brook or pond. A "kulibar" tree is a eucalyptus tree, and "billy-boil" is coffee.

Should we give way to despair then as we think about studying the Bible? Is it a book that only specialists with years of study can read? Not at all. But certain things do need to be kept in mind as we begin reading it:

1. We must not assume that idioms or idiomatic ideas in the Bible mean the same thing that they do in modern English. In other words, don't make assumptions! Study things carefully. We must be careful to notice how a word or phrase is actually being used in context, before we assume that we understand what it signifies. We must be constantly alert to unexpected meanings connected to what we thought we already understood. For instance, in English, the word "heart", when it doesn't refer to the physical organ, has the sense of the seat of the emotions. But in Hebrew and Near Eastern society in general, it instead had the idea of "mind", or the seat of the intellect. A big difference!

2. Be careful to notice how the Biblical documents are structured; notice that they don't follow the pattern we

would expect of a document written in English. For instance, in the Old Testament, and even some in the New Testament, when the Jews wrote poetry they did not rhyme the sounds; instead they rhymed the ideas. In English, adjectives might be piled up one on the other, or a carefully worded description of characteristics or appearance might be given, but in Hebrew synonymous phrases are piled one on top of another. For example, Psalm 1:1:

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked

or stand in the way of sinners

or sit in the seat of mockers...

The author of Psalm 1 is not describing three different activities or types of people. A native English speaker would have expressed the verse differently:

Blessed is the man who does not practice wickedness as a habit of life.

Of course this bare prose statement is not as vivid or pretty as the poetry of the Psalm, but this is the *meaning* of Psalm 1:1.

Therefore, be open to new and different methods of expression. Be careful not to prejudge a statement. Try to understand it in its complete cultural context, as well as its textual context. Check out how words and phrases are used in the Bible - not necessarily how we use them in modern America.

3. We must approach the Bible as an exciting adventure in a foreign country, where all is not as we may assume it to be. Most importantly, we must realize this is where God reveals himself to us; to understand Him, we must understand the place he reveals himself.

B. What are Some Basic Guiding Principles for Bible Study?

Certain presuppositions - hypotheses that are accepted at the start of an argument as self-evident (like axioms in geometry) - should be stated at the outset. They can be listed as a series of eight points. The first three are basic presuppositions which underlie modern science, and these same basic presuppositions should also underlie anyone's approach to theology.

1. There is an actually existing external universe.

The universe, and everything in it, is real. That is should be necessary to state explicitly something so obvious should not be viewed as strange.

Certain eastern philosophies and religions would deny the validity of just this point, leading inevitably to solipsism. Thus, I would assume that the Bible - God's special revelation - is real in the same way that I assume the universe - God's general revelation - is real.

2. The external universe is attainable accurately by our senses.

It is possible to gain an accurate understanding of the world and everything in it by looking, hearing, feeling, and tasting. In the same way, I would assume that we may gain an accurate account of the Bible - God's special revelation.

3. The external universe is orderly, endowed with cause and effect and it follows the laws of logic.

Likewise, the Bible - the special revelation of God - is orderly and endowed with cause and effect and follows the laws of logic. That is, we can gain a correct understanding of the Bible because the Bible will be consistent, orderly, and sensible. A consistent hermeneutic (interpretation or explanation) is possible in examining the universe, and so a consistent hermeneutic is possible in examining the Bible.

Irving M. Copi of the University of Hawaii and author of *Introduction to Logic*, argues that there are three fundamental laws of thought necessary and sufficient for thinking to be "correct". Traditionally, these are called:

- a. The Principle of Identity
- b. The Principle of Noncontradiction
- c. The Principle of the Excluded Middle

a. The Principle of Identity

Simply stated, the first of the fundamental laws is a tautology. If any statement is true, then it is true. Some have criticized this first principle on the basis that things change. For instance, in 1790 one could make the statement: "The United States of America is made up of thirteen States." But obviously such a statement is not true today. However, the fact of change in human affairs does not negate this principle of logic. Statements which change over time are said to be elliptical, or incomplete statements. Thus, the statement "The United States of America is made up of thirteen States" is a partial formulation of the statement, "The United States of America was made up of thirteen states in 1790." Such a statement is as true today as it was in 1790. Thus, as Copi said, "When we confine our attention to complete or non-elliptical formulations, the Principle of Identity is perfectly true and unobjectionable."

b. The Principle of Noncontradiction

Simply proposed, this asserts that "No statement can be both true and false." Or to take it a step further, "A given thing cannot be and not be in the same way and to the same extent at the same time." This is a vital principle, without which reasoned thinking is not possible. While it may seem obvious that a given object cannot be both an apple and a peach, this principle is often ignored or twisted out of shape by both secularists and theologians.

The word "paradox" is used sometimes to describe contradictions - contradictions that, some would say, must be accepted.

For instance, famous experiments with light indicate that under certain experimental conditions, light acts as if it is made of particles, while under other experimental conditions, light seems to be made of waves. A contradiction! In some circles it has been suggested that light is both and neither and we must live with the contradiction.

Occam would shout "Poppycock!" to that conclusion. He was a famous fourteenth century schoolman and philosopher, born at Ockham in Surrey, England. A Franciscan, his fundamental principle was that "entities must not be unnecessarily multiplied." That is, in arriving at a theory for any situation, the simplest explanation that adequately handles all the data, is more likely to be correct than a competing explanation which is more complicated. One might call this the K.I.S.S. principle: keep it simple, stupid. It more commonly is known as Occam's razor.

Therefore, in the question of the nature of light, the simpler explanation, by making use of Occam's razor, is to say that the experiments have settled nothing, and that further study is needed. We can't just throw up our hands and say, "Oh well, it's both; let's say light is made of 'wavicles'." What the heck is a 'wavicle'? The same thing arises in theology in attempts to explain the Trinity, the relationship of free will to divine sovereignty, or how a good, all powerful God could permit sin. Too often, theologians are satisfied with the paradox - "the apparent contradiction" - and leave it at that. Again, Occam's razor would simply slice through the gobbledygook and tell the theologians that they have more work to do. Frank Wilczek and Betsy Devine, writing about nature (the general revelation of God), made a very perceptive point, which has definite implications for understanding the Bible (the special revelation of God):

Nature poses many riddles but contains no contradictions. By solving one of her puzzles,

therefore, we are guaranteed to learn something - and the weirder, the more impossible the paradox seems at first, the more mind-expanding will be its ultimate resolution.

What all this means then, is that contradictions cannot be real. Such a conclusion is a very hopeful and useful tool, and has been of immense impetus to scientific research, because this principle of noncontradiction assures the researcher, in whatever field, that there is, indeed, an answer to any conundrum. And if there is an answer, then it is possible to find it.

On a personal level, this principle of noncontradiction has some serious implications. Every day, we discover people who, within their lives, are not living up to the principle. George Orwell described the problem as "doublethink". An older word for this sort of person is simply "hypocrite". The Bible calls such a person a "double-minded man":

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. (James 1:5-8)

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:8)

Notice the sheer idiocy and irrationality of the hypocrisy: a person goes to God to request something that He has promised to give, but then doesn't believe God will give it. Such an attitude irrationally contradicts the truthfulness and goodness of God, not to mention explicit biblical statements that God does not lie.

The second passage in James 4:8 goes even further, equating hypocrisy with sin, or better yet, portrays the sinner as being a hypocrite by definition. After all, a Christian claims to be filled with the Holy Spirit, cleansed by the sacrifice of Christ, a new creature, and yet he sins. Contradiction. Of all things a nonbeliever delights in most, it is to point out the inconsistency of believers. I give two examples:

Catholic theology teaches that the Pope and Church are infallible. The doctrines and traditions handed down from the fathers are as much the words of God as the Bible. Yet, thousands who claim to be Catholic, feel perfectly justified ignoring the Catholic Church's teaching on birth control, abortion, or women in the Church. How can this be?

Doublethink; hypocrisy; inconsistency. To be a consistent Catholic, to obey the concept of noncontradiction, the follower of Rome must accept what the Catholic Church says in all things.

Otherwise, that one becomes by definition, no longer Catholic - but Protestant.

By contrast, Baptists claim (in the Protestant tradition) that the Bible alone is authoritative, that the individual Christian is free to interpret the Bible for himself, and that all believers are priests, equal before God. Yet in practice, the standard, traditional interpretation of the Bible is the true authority, and to dissent from that interpretation (particularly if you act upon it) will often result in church discipline, censure, and possible expulsion, as the pastor alone is really in charge of things. Where then is biblical authority? Where then is soul liberty? Where then is the priesthood of all believers? They are swallowed in doublethink.

What is in our heads rarely matches our practice, and often contradicts other ideas in our heads. Humans are strange that way. Listen to George Orwell:

The Party said that Oceania had never been in alliance with Eurasia. He, Winston Smith, knew that Oceania had been in alliance with Eurasia as short a time as four years ago. But where did that knowledge exist? Only in his own consciousness, which in any case must soon be annihilated. And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed - if all records told the same tale - then the lie passed into history and became truth. "Who controls the past," ran the Party slogan, "controls the future: who controls the present controls the past." And yet the past,

though of its nature alterable, never had been altered. Whatever was true now was true from everlasting to everlasting. It was quite simple. All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your own memory. "Reality control," they called it; in Newspeak, "doublethink."

"Stand easy!" barked the instructress, a little more genially. Winston sank his arms to his sides and slowly refilled his lungs with air. His mind slid away into the labyrinthine world of doublethink. To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which canceled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy, to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again, and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself - that was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word "doublethink" involved the use of doublethink.

c. The Principle of the Excluded Middle

The principle of the excluded middle asserts that "any statement is either true or false". Some have objected that if this principle is accepted one is forced into a "two-valued orientation" which implies that everything is "either-or", with no middle ground possible. Such an objection results from a misunderstanding of the principle. If you have something that is gray, for instance, the statements "this is black" or "this is white" are both false. When faced with a situation where one is given such statements, "this is white" or "this is black", while both statements cannot be true, they very easily might both be false.

When one restricts oneself to statements that are unambiguous and precise, then the principle of excluded middle is perfectly valid. In other words, what this principle asserts is that *real* contradiction is not possible, only *apparent* contradiction, the result of limited language or data. By the principle of excluded middle, when faced with the question of whether light is made of waves or particles, since the experiments contradict each other, it is best to assume that light is neither wave nor particle, but something else: GRAY.

4. The Bible is unique.

The Bible should not be viewed as equivalent to a work of Shakespeare. Shakespeare was brilliant, but his writings are a purely human creation. The Bible, on the other hand, is not a purely human creation: it is the very Word of God - God's special revelation of himself to the human race.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

5. Stand in humility before the text of scripture.

When something in the Bible seems contradictory, or when something does not appear to make sense, the reader should assume that he or she is failing to understand something. One should question his or her own reasoning abilities and knowledge, since our reason and knowledge are in a finite, corrupted, and fallen state. Do not question the reliability of the Bible.

Trust in Yahweh with all your heart

and lean not on your own understanding;

in all your ways acknowledge him,

and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Yahweh said to Job:

"Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?

Let him who accuses God answer him!"

Then Job answered Yahweh:

"I am unworthy - how can I reply to you?

I put my hand over my mouth.

I spoke once, but have no answer-

twice, but I will say no more."

Then Yahweh spoke to Job out of the storm:

"Brace yourself like a man;

I will question you,

and you will answer me.

Would you discredit my justice?

Would you condemn me to justify yourself?

Do you have an arm like God's,

and can your voice thunder like His?

Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor,

and clothe yourself in honor and majesty.

Unleash the fury of your wrath,

look at every proud man and bring him low,

look at every proud man and humble him,

crush the wicked where they stand.

Bury them all in the dust together;

shroud their faces in the grave.

Then I myself will admit to you

that your own right hand can save you." (Job 40:1-14)

6. The reader must always ask "Where is it written?"

Just because a good Christian says it or writes it, just because the pastor says it, or just because "that's what I've always believed", does not necessarily make it true. What does the Bible really say?

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. (Acts 17:11)

7. Do not be afraid of the Bible.

The ultimate source of authority for Christians is the Bible, not our theological preconceptions, not our cultural preferences or fears. If what the Bible says does not square with one of our theological ideas, then we must change our theological idea! We must not go through strange contortions to get the text to support our preferred viewpoint.

Your word is a lamp to my feet

and a light for my path....

(Psalm 119:105)

8. Conform to the Bible.

The reader must be careful to make his or her life conform to Scripture, not Scripture to his or her life. Be aware of one's own cultural biases. Do not read into the text what is not there.

So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"

He replied "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

'These people honor me with their lips,

but their hearts are far from me.

They worship me in vain;

their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is "Corban" (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." (Mark 7:5-13)

C. What is the Value of Tradition?

What is tradition, and what value does it have? These are two questions that need to be asked now, as we think about how to approach the text of scripture. We all come to the Bible with preconceived notions about

the proper interpretation of given passages. How much weight should be allowed for that which "has always been taught"?

1. Definition of Tradition:

The dictionary defines "tradition" as "the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction." It can also be defined as "an inherited pattern of thought or action (as religious practice or social custom)" or it involves "cultural continuity in social attitudes and institutions." Tradition has been described as opinion which has the force of habit behind it. That is, the difference between opinion and tradition is that an opinion belongs to an individual, while tradition belongs to a group.

2. The Value of Tradition:

James Barr has some interesting thoughts on tradition in his book, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism*:

In spite of what has been said about the positive importance of tradition, and the way in which scripture emerged from tradition, we do not suggest that Protestantism was wrong in claiming scripture as its authority and in denying that tradition (after scripture) could be placed on the same level as scripture or that tradition should be allowed to decide what was the right exegesis of scripture. In all this Protestantism was in many ways right. But Protestantism is not proof against the vices which it itself set out to reform. It is perfectly possible today to reiterate the positions of the older Protestant orthodoxy, to regard its judgments as virtually final and to resist the possibility that they might be substantially modified as a result of more modern research into scripture. What then happens is that the traditional "Catholic" and "Protestant" roles come to be reversed: the facts of scripture are once again obscured through the imposition of a tradition, but this time it is not a medieval Catholic tradition, it is a Protestant tradition, built upon the insights of the seventeenth century and anxious to maintain these insights against the evidence of the text of scripture or at least against the fact that quite different interpretations of the text are possible. When one looks at the various "conservative", "orthodox", or "evan-gelical" schemes of doctrine which are so influential today, and all of which energetically proclaim the authority of scripture as their first principle, it requires no great insight to see that in many cases it is "conservatism" or "Calvinism", or "evangelicalism" that is the actual authority, which is the real dominant power. The Bible is fully authoritative, but it does not have authority to question the accepted doctrinal tradition. This is analogous to the late medieval position against which the Reformers protested.

Biblical authority on Protestant terms (on Catholic or Orthodox terms it may be otherwise) exists only where one is free, on the ground of scripture, to question, to adjust, and if necessary to abandon the prevailing doctrinal traditions. Where this freedom does not exist, however much the Bible is celebrated, its authority is in fact submitted to the power of doctrine and interpretation....If the Bible says a certain thing, but says it only when understood through an existentialist interpretation, or through a Calvinist interpretation, then it becomes very doubtful whether the Protestant appeal to scripture can be maintained at all....

What does the Bible have to say about the value of tradition? Without exception it is viewed as a corrupting influence.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. (Colossians 2:8)

For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. (Galatians 1:13-14)

Notice also Mark 7:1-13, and the parallel passage, Matthew 15:1-9. It is a great challenge to find anything positive about tradition in the Bible: there simply isn't anything. It must be noticed that Christ's condemnation of traditions involved the interpretations of the Bible which had become traditional. When asked to explain the

why of an interpretation, the worst imaginable answers are "That is what I was told", or "That is what the Church has always believed."

In a Sunday School lesson regarding a passage in Isaiah several students disagreed with the teacher's interpretation of the text. Unfortunately, the arguments brought against the teacher's interpretation were based not on the Bible, but on tradition.

One student expressed the fear that if we were to question all the traditions, we would then have nothing to believe in. Another wondered whether a small Sunday School class shouldn't be hesitant to postulate something different from the generally accepted view. "Who are we to go against tradition?"

I was reminded of the criticisms voiced against Martin Luther and his radical insistence on "Only Scripture" and "salvation by faith", that such beliefs were contrary to the established traditions of the church. Several students reacted by saying, "Well, that's different. Luther was right and those traditions of the Catholic Church were obviously wrong." Ah, how easy to see the speck in the eye of another!

Attacking tradition results in the same criticism faced by Copernicus as he demonstrated that the Sun was the center of the Solar System, and not the Earth. It is the same criticism faced by Martin Luther King, Jr. as he tried to get a nation to accept Blacks as human beings, deserving of equal respect and treatment.

Tradition dies hard, and it complains a lot.

D.A. Carson, in his book *Exegetical Fallacies*, writes:

Careful handling of the Bible will enable us to "hear" it a little better. It is all too easy to read the traditional interpretations and invest them with a false, even idolatrous, degree of certainty. Because traditions are reshaped as they are passed on, after a while we may drift far from God's Word while still insisting all our theological opinions are "biblical" and therefore true. If when we are in such a state we study the Bible uncritically, more than likely it will simply reinforce our errors. If the Bible is to accomplish its work of continual reformation - reformation in our lives and our doctrine - we must do all we can to listen to it afresh, and utilize the best resources at our disposal.

To appeal to tradition, to argue that because such and such an idea has always been accepted, is to fall prey to the logical fallacy of simplistic appeals to authority. Again D.A. Carson:

Such appeals can be to distinguished scholars, revered pastors, cherished authors, the majority, or various others. The fallacy lies in thinking that appeals to authority constitute reasons for interpreting texts a certain way; but in fact, unless that authority's reasons are given, the only thing that such appeals establish is that the writer is under the influence of the relevant authority! The most such an appeal can contribute to an argument is to lend the authority's general reputation to its support; but that is not so much a reasoned defense or explanation as a kind of academic character reference.

The reader might also want to look at Psalm 118:8-9 and Jeremiah 17:5-8 at this point:

It is better to take refuge in Yahweh

than to trust in man.

It is better to take refuge in Yahweh

than to trust in princes.

(Ps. 118:8-9)

This is what Yahweh says:

"Cursed is the one who trusts in man,
who depends on flesh for his strength
and whose heart turns away from Yahweh.

He will be like a bush in the wastelands;
he will not see prosperity when it comes.

He will dwell in the parched places of the desert,
in a salt land where no one lives.

"But blessed is the man who trusts in Yahweh,
whose confidence is in him.

He will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit."

(Jer. 17:5-8)

D. Theological Method

At the outset of Bible study, three questions need to be asked, and they need to be kept firmly distinguished from each other. Confusing these three questions has resulted in many errors:

1. What does the Bible really say?

First off, we must determine what the text is actually reporting. What, precisely, is written on the page? The second question is related, but it is the second step, and must be kept separate from this first question.

2. What does the Bible mean?

Too often people skip the first question and dive headfirst into the second, not realizing the difference. It's no wonder they get into trouble. Only after we have clearly articulated what the Bible says, can we go on and ask about the meaning - the interpretation - of a given passage.

3. How does the Bible apply to me?

Finally, and only after the first two steps have been taken, can the final, third step be made to personal

application, where the text takes on relevance to an individual in a particular place and time. A common fallacy in modern Christianity, and a source of considerable confusion, derives from the tendency to skip the first two steps, leap on the third, and then trumpet the application as the eternal and universal truth, ignoring fully the actual context and meaning of the text - and sometimes even denying that it matters.

Of course, the contrary mistake can be made, of ignoring this third step altogether, resulting in Bible reading that is as dead and useless as perusing the yellow pages for entertainment.

Let's look at how these steps can be put to use with a silly example. We are presented with the following text: "This dog is white." That is all it says, no more, no less. Any step beyond this bare statement, any questions we ask about it, begin the process of interpretation. Does the text mean that all dogs are white? Does the text tell us that this dog is all white, without a spot of other color on him? How white is white? What kind of dog is it? Are there any types of dogs we can exclude because of this statement? Does this statement about a white dog mean the dog is an albino? Where is the dog from? Is it a live dog or a dead dog? Such questions are endless, and at this point, random. To help organize our search for meaning, we may categorize the sorts of questions that must be asked:

1. What is the definition/connotation of the words?
2. Are these words universal or specific in their application?
3. What is the context?
4. The newspaper questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How?

Practically speaking, in thinking about the Bible, we can say without hesitation that the Bible is the absolute, inerrant word of God, and that anything it says is absolutely correct. The Bible describes reality for us: not simply *A* reality, but *the* reality.

But, and this is vital: **WE MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO CONFUSE OUR INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE WITH THE ACTUAL STATEMENTS OF THE BIBLE.** The distinction must be kept clearly in mind. Our interpretation may accurately reflect the true meaning of the Bible. Our interpretation may indeed be what the Bible "says". But again, our interpretation may *not* be what the Bible "says."

We must work at knowing what the Bible says. We must explicitly label - at least in our own minds - that which is stated, and that which is left unsaid.

So how does this three step approach work with an actual passage of scripture? Let's look at Genesis 3:21:

Yahweh God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

What does Genesis 3:21 say? It says that God made clothes for Adam and Eve. No more and no less is indicated by the words of this sentence.

But what is the popular interpretation of these words in Genesis? That here is a sacrifice by God for the sin of Adam and Eve. To make skins, an animal had to be killed; therefore its blood was shed, and thereby atonement was made for their sins. This was the example God made, so that Adam and Eve would know how to sacrifice.

Question: is this what the text actually says?

Of course not.

The popular interpretation *may* be valid; however, there is no textual support for it. No other passage in the Bible refers to this incident or gives it the popular interpretation of "sacrifice". It would be best to take Genesis 3:21 at face value and leave it at that; it is more consistent with the grammatico-historical method of

interpretation. The popular interpretation is subjective, and appears to represent a more allegorical approach to biblical interpretation.

Uh-oh, I just used a big hyphenated word in the last paragraph: "grammatico-historical" interpretation. What in the world does that mean? Walter E. Kaiser, Jr. wrote:

The grand object of grammatical and historical interpretation is to ascertain...the specific usage of words as employed by an individual writer and/or as prevalent in a particular age. And the most fundamental principle in grammatico-historical exposition is that words and sentences can have only one signification in one and the same connection.

In studying the Bible, the attempt is made to figure out the explicit meaning of a given text, to understand it fully in its historical and cultural context, and to fully understand the idiom of the author. This is sometimes called the "literal" approach; this does not mean a failure to recognize idioms, though. For instance, if a given passage says "the king was sitting on his right hand", unless the text gives us a particular reason to think so, the clear meaning of the text is that the king was sitting to the right of the other individual; it is very unlikely to mean that the king had his butt on the other guy's palm - or his own palm. That would be an abnormal understanding of the language. Still, all possibilities, however bizarre, should be explored as hypotheses in attempting to arrive at the true meaning of a given passage.

One other thing should be noted: what we derive from the text of scripture alone may not be enough to properly understand what is going on. In the *Baptist Bulletin*, the official organ of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, an article was published in April 1986, in which Gerardus D. Bouw argued that Copernicus was wrong. Instead, Bouw insisted that the sun, and everything else, goes around the Earth, which is stationary at the center of the universe. He bases his contention on such statements as Joshua 10:12-14 which states:

The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day.

Bouw argues that there are hundreds - even thousands - of verses which support his contention that the sun goes around the Earth and not the other way around. We have all been hoodwinked. The Bible speaks about the "sun setting" and the "sun rising", and he insists that such statements must be accepted literally. To speak of phenomenological language is to miss the point, he argues.

From a strictly literal perspective, Bouw is right about what the Bible states. But what does the Bible *mean*?

This author has forgotten that there are two revelations from God: the special revelation we call the Bible, and the general revelation of the universe around us. The Bible is absolutely correct in everything it states, but the problem remains that we don't always correctly *understand* it. Until the time of Copernicus, many people had misinterpreted both the words of the Bible, and the phenomena of nature. Recognizing that the sun is indeed the center of the solar system does not mean that we are forcing the Bible to say something it doesn't; it simply means that we gain the proper understanding of what it intended. To say that the sun goes around the Earth is as silly as insisting that two and two are five. It is not a matter open to question. There are no doubts at all about a heliocentric system. It is not a theory or a hypothesis. It is reality.

E. What Are Some Standards for Responsible Interpretation?

1. The meaning of a biblical statement is going to be the ordinary, normal meaning of the words: a meaning in keeping with the context, idiom, and purpose of the given author. Therefore, it is important for us to remember that listing a reference "does not necessarily mean that one's interpretation of it is faithful to the biblical meaning." Cults are commonly guilty of messing up at this point. Let's be careful not to be like them.
2. The meaning of the biblical statements should fit the historical and cultural setting of the writer and readers. That's why archaeology and the study of history are valuable. The frame of reference can't be ignored. We must be very careful not to interpret the Bible through our own culture.
3. The meaning of a sentence is the one that best fits the writer's context. The usage an author makes of a

word is what is important. The definition of a word is contextually determined. The etymology is of hardly any importance in truly gaining an understanding of a word. The sentence is the basic unit of a writer's thought. "Then the sentence should be understood in relation to the other books in its Testament. And the two Testaments need to be related to each other."

4. The Bible doesn't contradict itself.

5. The intended meaning of the text is going to be the literal historical-grammatical one. There is not a "deeper" or "secret" meaning. Avoid allegorization and spiritualization of the Bible. Such techniques come from the Middle Ages, and are the province of such modern groups as Theosophy, Christian Science, and the New Age Movement. There is no place for such things in a truly rational approach to Scripture.

6. Scriptural passages are comprehensible as they are related to, and informed by others. For instance in 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul writes:

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them - yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

A passage like this informs our understanding of passages that refer to the "works" that Christians do. Rather than imagining that "works" passages contradict the gospel, a passage like this clarifies the intent. Salvation by grace has inevitable outward manifestations. Any work we do, the effort we make, is actually God working through us. God does the work, not us.

Thus, Paul's intention in Ephesians 5:1-15 is clear:

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live in love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person - such a man is an idolater - has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said:

"Wake up, O sleeper,

rise from the dead,

and Christ will shine on you."

Be very careful, then, how you live

- not as unwise but as wise.

It is impossible for a person to take a passage like Ephesians 5:1-15 and try to make that inform our understanding or comprehension of Ephesians 2:8-10, because to do so creates a contradiction. Likewise, our understanding of the book of James is informed by our comprehension of Ephesians 2:8-10, Galatians 3:1-6, and the rest. Ephesians and Galatians inform our understanding of Peter's comment on Lot in 2 Peter 2:7-8,

or how Jephthah as described in Judges 11:24-40, who sacrificed his daughter as a burnt offering, can still wind up listed with David and Samuel in Hebrews 11:32.

Which of a given possible interpretations is correct can be demonstrated by determining which passages inform other passages. How? Through recognizing the proper cause and effect. For instance, wringing a nose produces blood (Proverbs 30:33). However, blood does not produce the wringing of a nose.

Thus, grace produces good works, but good works do not produce grace. Besides the logical problem of imagining otherwise, Paul is explicit:

And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.
(Romans 11:6)

I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing! (Galatians 2:21)

You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen from grace. (Galatians 5:4)

Certainly there are occasions when informing will work both ways; however, in the case of grace versus works, the concept expressed by "salvation by grace through faith" informs the concept "good works;" the reverse, in this case, simply is not possible, both by logic and by the text of Scripture.

Therefore, questions such as "is baptism necessary" are like the question Paul dealt with in his letter to the Galatians: "is circumcision necessary?" Since salvation is not a matter of outward action, the answer must be no. Outward action is a *consequence* of grace.

F. What is the Value of Knowledge?

What is the value of knowing things? How does knowledge affect theology? Is it important that we know anything? Should knowledge be understood as being limited to only knowledge of God and the Bible?

1. *Wisdom in the Bible*

Wisdom is a theme which runs deep and wide throughout God's word. Perhaps the first thing which must be made clear is that in Old Testament thought, little, if any, distinction is made between the words "knowledge" and "wisdom". In modern thinking, at least for the educated, "wisdom" has the meaning of "applied knowledge". The dictionary defines it as the "ability to discern inner qualities and relationships" or "a wise attitude or course of action." Knowledge, on the other hand, is simply "accumulated information", without the implication of truly understanding and making use of it. Perhaps the distinction can best be illustrated with a story:

A little girl from the backwoods of West Virginia entered the first grade with no understanding of how to speak standard English. Her teacher, a woman educated at New York University, took upon herself the task of correcting this little girl's language. Weeks passed, but no improvement was apparent in her speech patterns. Exasperated, the teacher asked to speak with her briefly after school. "How is it," demanded the teacher, "that after all these weeks in school you still don't know how to speak decent English?"

"Oh, but I does know how," she said.

"Then why do you insist on talking like that?"

"You asked if I *knows* how. You didn't say nothin' 'bout *speakin'* how."

Now if the teacher and the little girl had been Hebrew speakers, there would have been no such misunderstanding. According to Hebrew thought, the little girl would not *know* how to speak standard English, since she doesn't do it. For the Hebrew mind-set of the Bible, all knowledge that is known is expressed, else it isn't known. Thus wisdom is the sum of a person's knowledge. In the Old Testament (as in the New), the value of knowing - of being wise - is of greatest value. Job 28 is a classic expression of this attitude:

There is a mine for silver

and a place where gold is refined.

Iron is taken from the earth,

and copper is smelted with ore.

Man puts an end to the darkness;

he searches the farthest recesses

for ore in the blackest darkness.

Far from where people dwell he cuts a shaft,

in places forgotten by the foot of man;

far from men he dangles and sways.

The earth, from which food comes,
is transformed below as by fire;
sapphires come from its rocks,
and its dust contains nuggets of gold.
No bird of prey knows that hidden path,
no falcon's eye has seen it.
Proud beasts do not set foot on it,
and no lion prowls there.
Man's hand assaults the flinty rock
and lays bare the roots of the mountains.
He tunnels through the rock;
his eyes see all its treasures.
He searches the sources of the rivers
and brings hidden things to light.
But where can wisdom be found?
Where does understanding dwell?
Man does not comprehend its worth;
it cannot be found in the land of the living.
The deep says, "It is not in me";
the sea says, "It is not with me."
It cannot be bought with the finest gold,
nor can its price be weighed in silver.
It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir,
with precious onyx or sapphires.
Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it,
nor can it be had for jewels of gold.

Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention;

the price of wisdom is beyond rubies.

The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it;

it cannot be bought with pure gold.

Where then does wisdom come from?

Where does understanding dwell?

It is hidden from the eye of every living thing,

concealed even from the birds of the air. Destruction and Death say,

"Only a rumor of it has reached our ears."

God understands the way to it

and he alone knows where it dwells,

for he views the ends of the earth

and sees everything under the heavens. When he established the force of the wind

and measured out the waters,

when he made a decree for the rain

and a path for the thunderstorm,

then he looked at wisdom and appraised it;

he confirmed it and tested it.

And he said to man,

"The fear of the Lord -

that is wisdom,

and to shun evil is understanding."

Wisdom is described as an extremely valuable and desirable commodity, beyond compare or price. It is not an object which can be picked up at the corner dime store, nor something that can be mined out of the ocean depths (vs. 14). It is not something which can be located without help. Rather, wisdom is a gift of God. James writes:

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)

At the end of Job 28, in the last verse, it is recorded that "The fear of the Lord - that is wisdom; and to shun

evil is understanding." Does this verse teach the Christian that the *sum* of knowledge and wisdom is the fear of God, or that *all* a person needs to know about is "Yahweh"? Probably not. Notice Proverbs 1:7:

The fear of Yahweh is the *beginning* of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (emphasis added)

At least five passages in Proverbs associate wisdom with the fear of Yahweh (1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:12-14; and 15:33). Wisdom cannot exist apart from the source of wisdom. The first principle of wisdom is the fear of God. It is here that wisdom begins, and it is around this hub that all else revolves. But this fear of God in no way excludes the desire to know and gain knowledge of the universe around us. It is recorded in 1 Kings 3:7-13 that Solomon asked for wisdom. And God gave it to him. In 1 Kings 4:29-34 his wisdom is described:

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man, including Ethan the Ezrahite - wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

G. Can We Know Too Much?

In the world at large, and among many Christians in particular, a very peculiar dogma has arisen: "There are some things in the universe that people just shouldn't know, or shouldn't mess with." This dogma has been a theme in much popular literature, from Frankenstein to the latest horror movie. Item: An episode of *Twilight Zone* shown on CBS shortly after the Challenger disaster showed a scientist awakening in a distant future, in a time when machines are virtually outlawed. Instead, the mind is used to manipulate the world. But a danger has arisen that can be solved only by making use of the long forbidden nuclear weapons. The people of this time convince the scientist that an asteroid is approaching the Earth and will crash into it, and only a nuclear explosion can stop it. But at the last minute, when it is too late to stop, he discovers it is not an asteroid, but rather a spaceship filled with people from his own time. They are destroyed so that they cannot contaminate the world with the knowledge of nuclear weapons and other evil machines. He ultimately recognizes the "wisdom" of this, and approves.

Item:

A class in a small Christian college is dismayed at the thought of artificial insemination and genetic engineering. "We're playing God. It shouldn't be allowed."

Item:

A well-known tele-evangelist and his colleagues expressed dismay at the thought that students in some Christian colleges were taught to probe, question, and inquire about the Bible, and were exposed to more than one possible interpretation for a given passage. Shockingly, the students were actually taught to debate theological positions!

Why this fear of knowledge and free inquiry? Biblically, there is only one thing that the human race should never have known: sin. Outside of that, everything is permissible. God has never forbidden knowledge. Instead, the Bible - particularly the Old Testament - stresses the desirability of it. God doesn't want ignorance.

Yet, many think that if you know too much, you will then turn your back on God. After all, it is the scientists, and the theologians, and the colleges that are turning people away from God. "You know too much, and you'll deny God." Such thoughts are challenged by what Charles Dickens wrote in *Christmas Carol*:

They were a boy and a girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility...

Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.

"Spirit! are they yours?" Scrooge could say no more.

"They are Man's," said the Spirit, looking down upon them. "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!" cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. "Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse. And bide the end!"

How can a person know too much? Where does the Bible condemn wisdom and knowledge? How does a fear of *knowing* reconcile itself with Proverbs 1:22?

How long will you simple ones love your simple ways?

How long will mockers delight in mockery

and fools hate knowledge?

Or how do those who argue that we can know too much reconcile their anti-intellectualism with Proverbs 8:1-11?

Does not wisdom call out?

Does not understanding raise her voice?

On the heights along the way,

where the paths meet, she takes her stand;

beside the gates leading into the city,

at the entrances, she cries aloud:

"To you, O men, I call out;

I raise my voice to all mankind.

You who are simple, gain prudence;

you who are foolish, gain understanding.

Listen, for I have worthy things to say;

I open my lips to speak what is right.

My mouth speaks what is true,

for my lips detest wickedness.

All the words of my mouth are just;

none of them is crooked or perverse.

To the discerning all of them are right;

they are faultless to those who have knowledge.

Choose my instruction instead of silver,

knowledge rather than choice gold,

for wisdom is more precious than rubies,

and nothing you desire can compare with her...."

All the words of wisdom's mouth are just; to the discerning everything she says is right. To those who have knowledge, the ways of wisdom are faultless. Verses 34-36 go on to say:

Blessed is the man who listens to me,

watching daily at my doors,

waiting at my doorway.

For whoever finds me finds life

and receives favor from Yahweh.

But whoever fails to find me harms himself;

all who hate me love death.

The Bible is unequivocal in stating that those who despise knowledge, who wish to remain ignorant, are fools on their way to death. Those anti-intellectuals teaching "Be-ware, lest you know too much", are fools. Don't think that it is only Bible knowledge that is in view in these passages. Solomon's wisdom is described not just in his fear for God, but in the practical matters of life, and in the esoteric matters of natural history: biology and botany. He was a man of letters and art. To think that for some reason God wants Christians to be ignorant, or that we are to be "uncultured barbarians" is certainly unscriptural and dangerous.

Daniel 1:17 records that "To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning...." No limits were placed on what they could learn. They were good students, even in a pagan culture; they knew the literature of a polytheistic society. God never said "You don't want to learn about that; you can't know that." Instead, it says that God himself gave the knowledge and understanding for it. God is the source of learning and of knowledge, as the other verses have shown.

H. Wisdom and the Two Revelations of God

What anti-intellectuals sometimes forget is that God's revelation of himself is not limited to the Bible. Rather, his word makes clear that the natural world around us is also a revelation of himself:

The heavens declare the glory of God;

the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they display knowledge.

There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.

Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.

(Psalm 19:1-4)

Other passages dealing with natural revelation are Psalm 92:1-6 and Psalm 104. God's revelation is the universe around us just as much as the Bible. Everything should be open to study and learning, for in studying about the world around us we can also learn about God. Both the study of nature and the study of the Bible are legitimate and Christ-honoring goals for the Christian. An insatiable curiosity is a gift from God. No branch of knowledge is out-of-bounds. All can be used to the glory of God:

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;...

(Psalm 24:1)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)

If we can maintain the attitude of submission to God, and at all times wish to bring honor and glory to him, then we needn't be afraid of knowledge - only its abuse. Atomic energy can power a city or destroy it. Genetic engineering can cure disease, produce Nutrasweet™, or it could be used to produce a deadly disease. In vitro fertilization makes it possible for childless couples to have children, or it can be used to build a Brave New World - a parentless society. But to oppose research from the fear of the possible evil to which it might be put is irresponsible. Genesis 1:26-28 records:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the Earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the Earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 2:15 records:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Notice Psalm 8:

O Yahweh, our Master,
how majestic is your name in all the Earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
From the lips of children and infants you have
ordained praise because of your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.
When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the Moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you are mindful of him?
You made him a little lower than God
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet:
all flocks and herds,
and the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air,
and the fish of the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.
O Yahweh, our Master,
how majestic is your name in all the Earth!

That human beings "play God" should not be surprising, nor is it necessarily evil, since we are, after all, created in God's image. The world, according to the record of Genesis and Psalms, is *ours*. We are to subdue it, and rule it, and we are to rule the other living creatures of the planet. To do this right, it is necessary to fully understand all that God has made.

I. Secular vs. Religious

Perhaps one of the problems facing the anti-intellectuals of Christendom is the desire to separate life into the religious and the non-religious (don't confuse this with the question of separation of Church and State, which very clearly is a New Testament principle). We can thank the Middle Ages for much of this sort of thinking. From the Biblical perspective, all aspects of existence are essentially religious. One cannot escape from the presence or influence of God (cf. Jonah and Psalm 139). Whether awake or asleep, working or playing, everything is to be done for God (cf. Deut. 6 and Titus 1:15). Worship is not something done only on Sunday in a building called a church. Worship is something that can be done at all times, in any situation. Worshiping God involves doing what is right, doing the will of God (cf. Isaiah 1:15-17). In Deuteronomy 6:20 God commands human beings to work. Look at what the reformer John Calvin had to say about human labor:

It is to be remarked that the Lord commands every one of us, in all the actions of life, to regard his vocation. For he knows with what great disquietude the human mind is inflamed, with what desultory levity it is hurried hither and thither, and how insatiable is its ambition to grasp different things at once. Therefore, to prevent universal confusion from being produced by our folly and temerity, he has appointed to all their particular duties in different spheres of life. And that no one might rashly transgress the limits prescribed, he has styled such spheres of life vocations, or callings. Every individual's line of life, therefore, is, as it were, a post assigned to him by the Lord, that he may not wander about in uncertainty all his days...It is sufficient if we know that the principle and foundation of right conduct in every case is the vocation of the Lord, and that he who disregards it will never keep the right way in the duties of his station. He may sometimes, perhaps, achieve something apparently laudable; but however it may appear in the eyes of men, it will be rejected at the throne of God; besides which there will be no consistency between the various parts of life.

In Genesis 2:15 God told people to cultivate and care for the Garden of Eden. God also told Adam to name all the animals. It is reasonable to state that labor and the knowledge necessary to subdue the creation of God, is a holy calling from God. The whole created order was made by God for the use and pleasure of the human race, so as to bring glory to God. Therefore the universe is ours to study.

Your Word, O Yahweh, is eternal;

it stands firm in the heavens.

Your faithfulness continues through all generations;

you established the Earth,

and it endures.

Your laws endure to this day,

for all things serve you.

If your law had not been my delight,

I would have perished in my affliction.

I will never forget your precepts,

for by them you have renewed my life.

Save me, for I am yours;

I have sought out your precepts.

The wicked are waiting to destroy me,
but I will ponder your statutes.

To all perfection I see a limit;
but your commands are boundless.

(Ps. 119:89-96)

God's word stands firm in the heavens; it is his revelation to the human race, as much as the words of scripture.

J. What About Accommodation?

For many years, people looked at their world, and believed it to be flat, with edges over which they might fall. It is now known that the Earth is not flat, and that it is not possible to fall off the edge. The world is a sphere (roughly), and gravity pulls everything on the surface toward the center of that sphere. That we have come to this conclusion, altering the interpretation of the reality around us, does not speak ill of us. We have advanced and we know more. Scientists are not "reading into" the universe something odd that wasn't really there. They rather simply recognize what was there all along.

Likewise, when the Bible is reinterpreted, it is not an admission by the reinterpreters that there was something wrong with the text, nor does it mean that something is being "read into" it that is odd or wasn't there to begin with. It simply means that we recognize now what was there all along.

In the study of both revelations, advance is inevitable. We are ignorant; changes in the interpretation of the Bible are as inevitable, and no more dangerous, than changes in the interpretation of the universe around us.

Copernicus suspected that one source of potential opposition to his book, *On The Revolutions of the Heavenly Orbs*, might come from Christians who perceived it as a challenge to the authority of Holy Writ. They would, he feared, confuse their *interpretation* of Scripture with what the Bible actually taught. We must be careful not to do this. Humility with the text is very important. Our interpretations are not God's word, and therefore they may or may not be an accurate reflection of scripture.

A practical example of a failure to understand what the Bible is and is not, and the difference between interpretation and reality, can be shown from a freshman college student's paper:

Evolutionists would seemingly view theistic evolution as 1) an admittance on the part of Christianity that the Bible is lacking in its explanation of man's existence and "needs help;" 2) since the Bible "needs help" in this area, it may, therefore, not be the inerrant stronghold that these same Christians claim it to be.

First, theistic evolution is based too much on supposition. The Bible does not allude to the long periods of time that evolution requires. For Christians to add to the facts presented - an act forbidden by God - gives all the more support to the evolutionists' bad habit of unsubstantiated linkages.

Secondly, as Lightner points out, theistic evolution is a concession to the evolutionists. This meeting in the middle might as well be printed on a banner with the phrase, "We really aren't sure that the Bible is as sound as it should be." Psalm 33:9, however, should be quite satisfying to any Christian who takes the Bible as God's absolute truth: He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast.

It would take too much time to go into all the logical fallacies and misstatements contrary to fact in these

three paragraphs. The main point to notice is the student's misperception of the Bible. She believes the Bible is *complete* revelation, rather than what it actually is: *sufficient* revelation. The Bible does not give us an exhaustive account of reality. It tells us simply what we need to know about God and his dealings with people - not all that we might want to know.

In this freshman's words, we can see an underlying fear of knowledge; she expresses the thought that if something is not in the Bible, then it is forbidden to us. There is also, quite evidently, a failure on her part to understand that what the Bible actually says and what our interpretation of it is, may not be identical. The theistic evolutionary viewpoint is not a "concession" to science (as if science were an enemy!), nor is it an admission of weakness: rather, it is simply an attempt to make sense of the biblical data as it relates to the data from natural revelation.

Certainly, we are free to disagree with theistic evolution, and we may argue (if that is how we feel) that it does not make good sense of the biblical or natural data; but it is not legitimate to condemn it as somehow traitorous to Christianity or to argue that it necessarily weakens or undermines the truth of the Bible.

K. Natural vs. Supernatural

About four hundred years before the time of Christ a philosopher named Plato (427 - 347 BC) developed a dualistic philosophy of the ideal and the real. He argued that mind had an independent reality, and that a distinction exists between the ideal object in the mind of God, and the reality we experience. In fact, Plato argues that the ideal in the mind of God is the only reality, with the objects of the material plane mere shadows by comparison.

As a result, Greek philosophy developed a deep distrust of matter and a corresponding love for the immaterial or spiritual. Then, since this Greek philosophy bore a superficial resemblance to their concepts of the spiritual, some Christians later accepted Platonism and incorporated it into their theological system. Thus, Gnosticism was ultimately born; it vilified the material as corrupt and sinful, in contrast to the spiritual which it saw as good and wonderful.

Though regarded as a heresy in many of its details, during the Middle Ages the Church came to accept the basic gnostic concept of a good spirit and bad matter as if it were divine truth. Not surprisingly, Christians increasingly came to emphasize the importance of the hereafter - to the denigration of the here and now. The practical out workings of this Gnosticism were the growing distinction made between work for the church and secular employment, the consequent separation between clergy and laity, and the development of monasticism. A wall had grown up between the realm of God and the realm of man. And only the realm of God really mattered. Then the Renaissance arrived.

With the Renaissance - the rebirth of humanity - the masses, but especially the elite, reacted at last against this otherworldliness in Christianity; but the impact of the rebirth of humanity on the Church was simply to increase the dichotomy between this world and the next - so much so that the subsequent abdication of the natural realm to the secularists became permanent in the Church. Christianity would content itself with the spiritual and mysterious workings of God. To the secularists could go the mundane things of the world.

The Reformation - which arrived at about the same time - was a reaction to *theological* faults in the medieval church and a rejection of the hierarchical church structure; the reformers recognized that all Christians were equal and that any employment could be God honoring; suddenly there ceased to be a value distinction - at least theoretically - between a pastor and, for instance, a farmer.

Unfortunately, this rejection of dualism during the Reformation went no further than the job market, and in the end even that small victory did not stick. The natural realm, though recognized as beautiful - and the here and now, though recognized as important, remained - fundamentally - separated from the "spiritual" realm.

As the split between the Church - whether Catholic or Protestant - and the secular world increased, the spiritual world lost ground and shrank. What had, in times past, been recognized as the mysterious workings of God, became relegated to the "mundane". Since science could explain what had previously been the hand of God in the world, it became acceptable to recognize that God, in reality, had nothing to do with the day-to-day functioning of the universe. Removal of "mystery" became the removal of deity. Increasingly it seemed

that God was nowhere to be found.

Christians clung desperately to those few questions still without answers, but as those questions were answered, their footholds were lost. With the so called God-of-the-gaps theology in full bloom, the unknown was God only until it became known; after that, God wasn't there after all. The realm of God shrank, and with it, so did God.

What has happened? Today, religion and religious thought are relegated to a no man's land of mysticism and subjectivism, a place where God is somehow less than real, with an existence only as men define Him. Even conservative Christians, who hold to an inerrant scripture and believe in a born again experience, relegate miracles to the past, when "God was doing things differently than he does now" - a theological reaction to the shrinking of God's domain brought about by secularization and modernism, not biblical exegesis. Whether expressed or not, God's reality and power shrank to become nothing more than "God helps those who help themselves." Not surprisingly, some Christians - perhaps most - have become terrified of science and learning, fearing that the last few wisps of their faith are about to be forever yanked from under them when the last mysteries are explained and understood. Modern science looks out at the universe and finds little if any room for God, so small has He shrunk in the minds of Christians.

The fundamental flaw - or heresy, if you will - has been the separation (and the acceptance of this separation) of the natural and supernatural according to Platonic and related thoughts. This heresy has resulted in the belief, current among most, that miracles are "violations" of natural law, when God "rarely" intervenes directly in the life of his universe. Modern Christianity has become almost deistic, thinking that those things we understand, those things we can do, those things that we can predict and those things that therefore are natural and ordinary, have nothing to do with God, except that he started it all up, sometime long ago. God is simply the clock winder and builder, but everything works by itself now. "We must work out our own salvation and live our own lives. It's all up to us!"

When the Bible speaks of God actively orchestrating the birth process, the weather, the feeding of animals, and all the rest, the tendency is to understand it as simply poetic rather than real.

Instead, we should recognize that the concept of "natural" in the Platonic sense of "separate from divine intervention" is fallacious. That we understand how God does many of the wonders of this universe doesn't mean that God isn't involved. He most assuredly is.

Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." (John 5:17)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. (Col. 1:15-18)

'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' (Acts 17:28)

For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful,

I know that full well.

(Psalm 139:13-14)

Have you ever given orders to the morning,
or shown the dawn its place...

(Job 38:12)

Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain,
and a path for the thunderstorm,
to water a land where no man lives,
a desert with no one in it,
to satisfy a desolate wasteland
and make it sprout with grass?

(Job 38:25-27)

Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades?
Can you loose the cords of Orion?
Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons
or lead out the Bear with its cubs?

(Job 38:31-32)

Do you give the horse his strength
or clothe his neck with a flowing mane?
Do you make him leap like a locust,
striking terror with his proud snorting?

(Job 39:19-20)

Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom
and spread his wings toward the south?

Does the eagle soar at your command
and build his nest on high?

(Job 39:26-27)

It is not true that God is "wholly Other" and incomprehensible to man. Much of what God does we do understand and can explain. Should this be a wonder to us? Why, when we are created in his image? Isn't it to be expected that we *can* understand? Mysteries are not "forbidden" territory or permanently incomprehensible.

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

However, as it is written:

"No eye has seen,

no ear has heard,

no mind has conceived

what God has prepared for those who love him" -

but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit...

(1 Cor. 2:6-10a)

The distinction between "supernatural" and "natural" in the universe is an artificial distinction that really isn't there. Instead, *everything* is supernatural. It is the "natural" - in the sense of a universe operating without God's direct, immediate intervention - that doesn't exist.

Secularists have said "there is no supernatural". Christians must respond, not by saying, "yes, the supernatural also exists," but by insisting, "there is no natural!" Nothing happens apart from God.

K. Problems That Have Developed from the Acceptance of a "Natural" World

1. Degradation of the "miraculous", not because of the proper "testing of the spirits", but because miracles are viewed as inherently "irrational" and therefore disreputable. This derives from a false idea that miracle means "violation of natural law", rather than "God's intervention". All of life is a miracle.

2. The concept that God will handle the "big things" - that is, those items I don't understand or those that seem to be beyond my capabilities or control. This is the "God helps those who help themselves" approach.

3. Consequently, there is a tendency to rely on self rather than the omnipresent and indwelling Holy Spirit, a lessening reliance on grace, increasing legalism, and a tendency to take credit for the good in our lives - i.e. "self-righteousness". We fail to recognize that all the good we do is from the hand of God. As a Christian, I am simply a chosen vessel molded and put to work by God. Apart from him, I am miserable, wretched, blind and doomed to destruction. Yet, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Phil. 4:13)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

4. Anti-intellectual tendencies are prevalent because of an unnecessary tension between "special" and "general" revelation. The thought exists that if it isn't in the Bible, it doesn't matter or isn't important - with a subsequent denigration of literature, art, philosophy, and science, despite the fact that these are all part of "general" revelation.

5. God is viewed as completely incomprehensible - "Wholly Other".

The strange idea develops that "if we can understand it, then it isn't God."

6. Technophobia blossoms, and Christians become fearful of using modern technology or even modern medicine because they think "human" methods betray a lack of faith, as if God had nothing to do with the development of modern technology, and he is incapable of using it - or more than that, that he has nothing to do with the fact it works at all!

When the Lord has finished all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, "I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes. For he says:

"By the strength of my hand I have done this,

and by my wisdom, because I have understanding.

I removed the boundaries of nations, I plundered their treasures;

like a mighty one I subdued their kings.

As one reaches into a nest,

so my hand reached for the wealth of the nations;

as men gather abandoned eggs,

so I gathered all the countries;

not one flapped a wing,

or opened its mouth to chirp."

Does the ax raise itself above him who swings it,

or the saw boast against him who uses it?

As if a rod were to wield him who lifts it up,

or a club brandish him who is not wood! (Isaiah 10:12-15)

The king's heart is in the hand of Yahweh;

he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases. (Proverbs 21:1)

The earth is Yahweh's, and everything in it,

the world, and all who live in it;...

(Psalm 24:1)

Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever;

wisdom and power are his.

He changes times and seasons;

he sets up kings and deposes them.

He gives wisdom to the wise

and knowledge to the discerning.

He reveals deep and hidden things;

he knows what lies in darkness,

and light dwells with him. (Daniel 2:21-22)

His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" (Daniel 4:34b-35)

L. Conclusion

The Christian is responsible for knowing and understanding the Bible. Each individual stands before God as a priest, not needing any human intermediary. This is both a great privilege as well as a great responsibility.

Therefore it is important that the Christian be able to handle the Bible correctly; it will save him or her a world of problems.

Study Bibles From Hell

The title of this section sounds like something that belongs on a horror flick, but no movie could ever be so insidious. Nothing has ever worked so well at quenching the Spirit of God and closing the mind than the omnipresent Study Bible. Notice the words of Charles Caldwell Ryrie, ThD, PhD in his "To The Reader" at the front of the Bible that bears his name:

Every time you read this Bible, whether carefully or casually, be sure to look at the notes at the bottom of the page. These are designed to illuminate and help you understand the verses you are reading. The notes provide a variety of helps ... some define ... doctrines

When you wish to study a book of the Bible more systematically, you will want to read the Introduction to that book, which will give you information about the author, background, and contents. A unique feature of this Bible is the outline of each book printed at the end of each Introduction and also interspersed throughout the text. In this way you can readily see as you are reading through a book exactly where you are in the development of the ideas of that book by simply referring to the complete outline in the Introduction. The Introductions will help lead you into the messages of the books; the outlines will help you see the development of the messages; and the notes will help shed light on the messages

"Come, let me take the place of the Holy Spirit: I will tell you what to think, how to believe; I have the Truth and I will reveal it to you." Though I don't seriously believe Dr. Ryrie set about to quench the Holy Spirit or to narrow the minds of his readers, his words would have been no different if he had.

It is the Holy Spirit's job to illuminate the words of Scripture and help you understand it. Yet Dr. Scofield

wrote:

And yet most [readers of the Bible], even of sincere believers, soon retire from any serious effort to master the content of the sacred writings. The reason is not far to seek. It is found in the fact that no particular portion of Scripture is to be intelligently comprehended apart from some conception of its place in the whole.

How much more wrong he could have been, I don't know. The reason people don't understand the Bible is because of two things: one, they simply fail to read it and two, they fail to let the Holy Spirit fill them - and of course, without the filling of the Spirit, the reading of the Bible is probably the last thing a person would want to do. If you do not have a hunger and thirst for the Word of God, then all the study Bibles in the world won't help you. Only God can fix that. And if you have a hunger and thirst for the Word, the study Bibles will probably get in your way.

Christianity is by grace, not by the numbers. And reading the Bible isn't by the numbers either. A study Bible can very easily lock you into another man's opinion and quench the working of the Spirit as you read and study.

Like commentaries of any sort, they should be resorted to only after the individual has done study of the text on his or her own. And the best study Bibles, like the best commentaries, do not lock you into any one set doctrinal position, but rather give you some sense of the variety that exists within Christianity in those places where multiple interpretations are possible. Allow the Holy Spirit to illuminate you while you read the Bible. The Spirit is much more than just a doctrine.

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares Yahweh. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying 'Know Yahweh,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares Yahweh. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:33-34; cf. Hebrews 8)

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)

As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit - just as it has taught you, remain in him. (1 John 2:27)