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A Magazine for the church of Christ

The Quarterly

Vol. 7, No. 3



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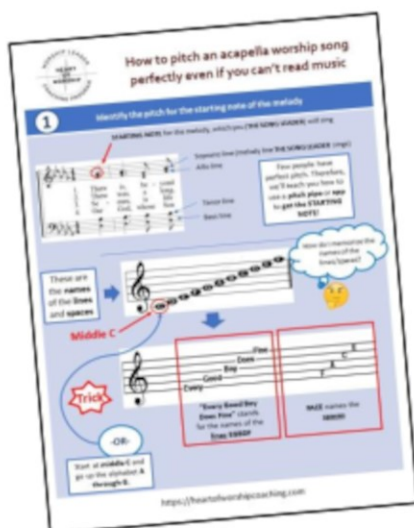
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The Quarterly

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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OLD THINGS AND NEW

As seemingly happens at least once a year, I didn't get this issue out as early as I would like (in other words, this one is a couple weeks late). It's been a very productive summer, but in ways not related to getting you the latest issue of the *Quarterly* on time. And for that, I offer my apology.

I usually don't beg, but please read the editorial in this issue, for the conclusion if nothing else. Thanks.

Some articles in this issue are different than what you're used to from us. And hopefully you'll agree they were worth including. One is taken from the pages of the *Christian Baptist*, Alexander Campbell's periodical, from 1823. Another is a paper on the interpretation of Daniel's "Little Horn" prophecy, done by Blake Hudson for a college class. And yet another is the story of one writer's journey from Mormonism to the truth.

Next year, each issue will have a guest editor who will pick a specific theme and writers for the 6-8 articles included in that theme. Your regular writers will still be here, fear not! This is just a way of getting more people involved in teaching the word of God through writing. Lest you get worried, each of the guest editors have written multiple articles for the *Quarterly* already. So we're not turning it over to strangers. I hope you look forward to seeing what they come up with as much as I do.

Some notable articles from this issue? How about *The Pre-Incarnate Christ*? Or something *Better than Baptism*? Or *Daniel's Seventy Sevens*? You know how this goes—just turn the page, look at the table of contents, and enjoy the largest issue of the *Quarterly* yet!

Oh, and check out the big announcement on page 64...

-Bradley S. Cobb

The articles contained in each issue represent the research and conclusions of the authors, and may not reflect the views of the other authors (or even the editor). But they are presented for contemplation by Christians who are dedicated to living for the one true God of heaven.

WHAT TO FIND AND WHERE TO FIND IT

(AKA: The Contents of the Quarterly)

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A.I. ARGUES FOR JEHU

An Editorial by Bradley S. Cobb

Sometimes I have strange ideas. I admit it. It's not really a secret to anyone who knows me. So it should probably come as no surprise when I tell you I asked ChatGPT a biblical question.

Now before I get into the results, I have to tell you about my fascination with Jehu.

I've always been taught there were no good kings of the northern tribes of Israel. From Jeroboam to Ahab to Hoshea—all of them were wicked. But when I read through First and Second Kings, there's one king that stands out from the rest of them—and it isn't even close. The safe way to say it is he was the “least bad king of Israel.” But can an argument be made for him being an actual *good* king? I have my thoughts on the matter (which should become clearer throughout this article), but I figured why not put A.I. to the test.

I asked the question, “Who was the most faithful King of Northern Israel after the Kingdom was divided?” Here's the answer from ChatGPT:

Among the kings of the northern tribes of Israel, the most faithful king after the division of the kingdom during the reign of Rehoboam was King Jehu. Jehu's faithfulness can be attributed to his zeal in carrying out God's judgment against the house of Ahab and his efforts to eradicate idolatry from the kingdom of Israel.

Here are the reasons why Jehu can be considered the most faithful king among the northern tribes of Israel:

1. **Destruction of the House of Ahab:** Jehu was anointed as king of Israel by divine command to execute judgment upon the house of Ahab for their wickedness and idolatry. He fulfilled this command by killing both King Joram of Israel and King Ahaziah of Judah, who were descendants of Ahab (2 Kings 9:1-29, 2 Kings 10:1-14). This act demonstrated Jehu's loyalty to God's righteous judgment.

2. **Elimination of Baal Worship:** Jehu took decisive actions to eradicate the worship of Baal from Israel. He devised a plan to gather all the worshippers of Baal in one place and killed them all, destroying the temple and altars of Baal (2 Kings 10:18-28). This demonstrated his commitment to removing false gods and restoring the worship of the true God.

3. **God's Recognition and Blessing:** Although Jehu did not follow God with a perfect heart, the Lord commended him for carrying out His judgment against the house of Ahab and promised that his descendants would sit on the throne of Israel for four generations (2 Kings 10:30). This recognition from God signifies Jehu's faithfulness in fulfilling God's purpose.

4. **Preservation of the Davidic Line:** Despite Jehu's zeal in executing God's judgment, he maintained the Davidic line in Judah. He spared Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, who had shown loyalty to God (2 Kings 10:15-16). By preserving the Davidic line, Jehu showed a level of reverence for the covenant God made with David.

While the history of the northern tribes of Israel is marked by idolatry and unfaithful kings, Jehu's actions demonstrated a strong commitment to carrying out God's judgment and eliminating idolatry. His

decisive measures against the house of Ahab and the worship of Baal signify his faithfulness to God's commands. Therefore, Jehu can be regarded as the most faithful king among the northern tribes of Israel during that period.

So there you have it. A.I. makes the case for Jehu being the most faithful king of Northern Israel. But having a computer program (especially one that is notoriously inaccurate when it comes to people and events) spit out an answer doesn't mean it's accurate. Don't get me wrong, I agree with the conclusion that if we ranked all the kings of Israel, Jehu would clearly stand at the top. But are the reasons given enough to call Jehu "faithful," and maybe even move him into the "good" category of Israel's kings? Let's look at each of them:

Destruction of the House of Ahab

A prophet went to Jehu, who was in a military meeting, spoke to him privately and anointing him king of Israel. He told Jehu the LORD had chosen him to be king, and that Jehu would destroy "the house of Ahab your master, so that I might avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. The whole house of Ahab shall perish..." (2 Kings 9:6-8). Then the prophet ran.

Jehu took this instruction seriously. He wiped out the house of Ahab—at least the ones who were in the northern kingdom (including Ahaziah, king of Judah, who was visiting). But does this mean he was counted as good and faithful? After all, God used Babylon to carry out vengeance on His rebellious people, and they couldn't be counted as good or faithful.

One might think Jehu was only so eager to do it because of power. But he continually appeals to God's commands, God's prophecies (including some which were known then, but aren't recorded for us elsewhere), and his zeal for Jehovah. I am convinced Jehu carried out this instruction from a desire to follow God's commands—but solidifying his power as king probably didn't hurt his motivation any.

Unlike Babylon (or later, Rome) Jehu was an *active, willing, and knowing* participant in carrying out God's plans. He knew it was from God, and acted on it because of his zeal for God. I think this argument is a point in favor of moving him to the "good" list.

Elimination of Baal Worship

Last Sunday, I referenced Jehu and called him a "Baal-killing machine." Going from the information God provided, Jehu took on the responsibility of destroying Baal worship in Israel of his own accord. The prophet of God didn't mention it. Jehu, in his zeal for the LORD, rid the nation of all vestiges of Baal. In the southern kingdom of Judah, this action elevated a king to the "good" list (see Hezekiah, Josiah, Asa). So why not in the north?

This is yet another piece of evidence (and the one I find most compelling) in favor of rehabbing Jehu's "one of the many bad kings of Israel" reputation.

God's Recognition and Blessing

God indeed recognized Jehu's faithfulness in carrying out the "end Ahab's line" mission. God even granted Jehu four generations of his family ruling Israel. But is that conclusive proof Jehu was faithful to God? If we assume (as I do) Jehu followed the commands of God zealously because of his dedication to God, this could be read as God's endorsement. The problem is, God elsewhere blessed bad people, when they gave partial obedience or dedication, while otherwise living horrible lives.

Ahab was blessed by God that he wouldn't see the end of his family line—God would wait until after

Ahab's death to have Jehu carry that out. Ahab heard the prophecy, and mourned in humility before the Lord. So God blessed that one act of righteousness. The recognition of Ahab's humility and blessing him by withholding judgment for a time didn't mean Ahab was a good king—not by any stretch! So *just because* God recognized and blessed Jehu for his obedience in this area didn't necessarily mean Jehu was counted as a good, faithful king.

Sparing the Davidic Line

Here is where ChatGPT got it all wrong. Jehonadab wasn't a member of the Davidic line. He was a Rechabite. A.I. might be useful in some instances, but you have to be careful with the information it gives you, because (like this one) it can just start making stuff up. Jehu slaughtered the king of Judah (who while of the Davidic line, was also Ahab's grandson on his mother's side), but didn't do anything to any heirs.

My Conclusion and IMPORTANT Application

Jehu was easily the least wicked king of Israel. He was active in carrying out the will of the Lord in destroying Ahab. He (apparently) took it upon himself to rid the nation of all Baal idols, temples, and worshippers—because of his zeal for Jehovah. And once again, if a king of Judah had done these things, we would instantly place him in the “good king” category.

But...

The last words on Jehu are these:

But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.

(2 Kings 10:31)

Jehu was zealous for Jehovah, but he made the same mistake so many others do. He went with what he was familiar with, what he grew up with, and thought that was good enough. He didn't question it, didn't seek fuller knowledge and understanding, didn't bother asking, “Is this right?”

You see, Jehu worshipped Jehovah, but in the wrong way, in the wrong place, with the wrong priesthood, with the wrong understanding. He grew up only knowing the golden calves in Dan and Bethel as “Jehovah.” He was zealous for *that* manner of worshipping Jehovah, which wasn't authorized or approved by God at all.

I try to give Jehu the greatest possible motives when I read the story (and maybe I'm wrong there). But he didn't have the heart to examine the Law of God to see what God actually wanted.

So here's the application. You and I know people, zealous for God, who are worshipping Him in ways unauthorized and unapproved by Him. Some worship with an unauthorized priesthood. They have a wrong understanding of salvation and of worship. But since that is what they've always known, what they grew up with, that is what they stick with. They are zealous, but they don't love the Law of God, because they haven't sincerely compared their worship with what God authorizes and approves.

In case I didn't make it clear, I hold up Jehu as a perfect analogy of our denominational friends who are very zealous for Jesus, but who try to follow Him in ways contrary to the Scriptures. And while I so wish the activities done because of their zeal for God would be enough to save them, in the end, it won't be.

Not every one that says to me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? and in Your name cast out devils? and in Your name done many wonderful works?” And then will I profess unto them, “I never knew you: depart from me, you who work iniquity.”

(Matthew 7:21-23)



From Mediocre *to* Magnificent

Nurturing a Heart of Worship in Worship Leaders

Ben Mitchell

How often have we heard, “I don’t want to go to church today. Church is always dry. The singing was lousy. Worship was boring”? Perhaps we’ve said these things ourselves! If we put words like “dry,” “boring,” or “mediocre” together with “worship” of our magnificent God, we have entirely missed the meaning of worship! Sometimes worship is perceived as dry or boring in our congregations because of us, the worship leaders. Of course, every individual worshiper has a personal responsibility to worship regardless of what anyone else is doing around them. However, if we’re really honest, sometimes the blame is on us, the worship leaders!

I have long had a passion for leading a cappella singing in worship, a passion that began to grow when I was just three years old. There's something I've come to realize along the way—sometimes, we lose sight of what worship truly means. As worship leaders, it's essential for us to grasp the genuine essence of worship. How can we effectively lead others in worship if we ourselves are disconnected from its true meaning? It's a challenge we must confront with sincerity and humility. How many times do we make a good worship service all about get-

ting our 4-point beat pattern perfect, or using the mic flawlessly, or sounding like a pro with a key change, or looking great in our Sunday suit, or making some witty comment about the sermon before we lead the closing song?

Worship is not about *us* looking good! Worship is not about superficial outward expressions or good-looking facades. Worship is about being wrapped up in God’s magnificent goodness! It's about humbly bowing before our great and awesome God, sometimes physically but particularly in the posture of our hearts. It's about exalting His splendor and acknowledging our own insufficiency in the face of His perfect sufficiency. Worship is the expression of our eternal gratitude for His undeserved and boundless love. It's a pursuit of His power and presence, offering our lives as living sacrifices for His work in and through us. There's nothing dry or boring about worshipping our glorious God!

As worship leaders, it's crucial for us to grasp the true meaning of worship. It transforms not only our public worship but also our personal lives. When we understand how to worship well in our private lives, it enables us to lead others in meaning-

ful worship. I think this is a critical point! We cannot offer something publicly that we haven't mastered privately in our own hearts.

So, how do we cultivate a heart of deep worship in our daily personal lives? It's similar to how we grow in love for a spouse or respect for a role model—we dwell on God's amazing characteristics. When we immerse ourselves in His incredible creativity, His overwhelming goodness, and His awe-inspiring greatness, our hearts are stirred with worship. His creation is a testament to His glory, from the majestic peaks of Denali to the vastness of the Grand Canyon to the intricate beauty of a microscopic paramecium. Let's open our eyes and truly see the wonder of our Creator!

But it doesn't end there. God has also revealed Himself through intangible things like love. His love for us is beyond comprehension. When we meditate on the sacrificial love displayed at the Cross, it moves us to worship wherever we are. The Cross is not a symbol of fairness; praise God! If it were fair, we'd be without hope! The cross is a symbol of love so deep that we'll never fully grasp its magnitude. Let that really sink in! It doesn't matter where we are, what day it is, or what we are going through—letting the reality and vastness of God's love permeate us will overwhelm us with genuine worship privately, which will allow us to lead genuine worship publicly.

In order to dwell on the glorious attributes of God, we need spend time in God's presence. Think about Isaiah, who saw an overwhelming glimpse of God (Isaiah 6). Or John, who also had a glorious glimpse into the throne room of God (Revelation 4). Unlike them, I haven't personally seen a glimpse of God in his full glory. How do we spend time in God's presence in the 21st century? We forget about the power of God's word.

God's word reveals God to us! Spend time in it. Spend time absorbing passages like Psalm 89:14 that reveal God's attributes, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you." Let Psalm 19 draw your mind to the magnificent creative power

of God, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). Think about the account of Jesus' crucifixion in Matthew 27. It's both terrible and wonderful at the same time. It's wonderful for us because of what it means for us! Let it move you with intense gratitude for what God has done for you! As Hebrews 4:12 reminds us, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword." God's word is a place we go to be touched and transformed by God's power and presence. When we delight in His Word, meditate on its truth day and night, we become better worshipers first and then by extension, better worship leaders.

Here's my challenge to you: Be a worshiper first. Let worship permeate every aspect of your life. What happens when we live private lives of daily worship, bathed in prayer and saturated with God's Word? God prepares us in our private lives to be effective worship leaders in the public setting. Just like Moses, whose face radiated God's glory after encountering Him, our lives will shine with His peace, love, and joy and we'll become vessels through which God can inspire others to give Him true worship. Then, master the technical aspects of music. When we combine a heart of worship with technical proficiency, our leadership becomes a powerful conduit for drawing others into heartfelt, genuine worship of our great and glorious God.

Worship to our magnificent God should never be dry, boring, or mediocre. It's a vibrant encounter where you and I lift up our incomprehensibly amazing God.

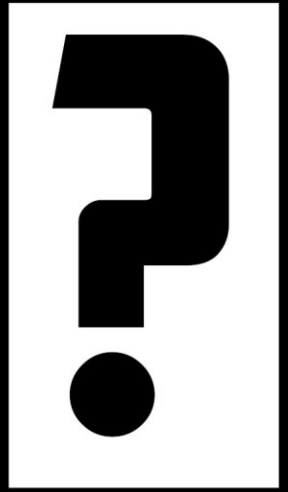
If you want to dive deeper into worship leadership, visit HeartOfWorshipCoaching.com. You'll find links to my growing YouTube channel and practical resources that will help you become an excellent worship leader, including a free downloadable that teaches you step-by-step how to pitch an a cappella worship song perfectly every time, even if you don't read music. As worship leaders, let's be vessels of worship, drawing others into the awe-inspiring presence of our magnificent Creator.



Alexander Campbell

vs.

An Unidentified "Layman"



From the Christian Baptist, 1823

The following is an example of the searing wit and sarcasm employed by Alexander Campbell in fighting the entrenched ideas of the denominational world of his day. And many of those same entrenched ideas are still present today. This letter appeared in the *Wooster Spectator* in March, 1823. Campbell replied in his paper, the *Christian Baptist*. Read and enjoy.—*Editor*.

***A Letter Addressed to Alexander Campbell,
Editor of the Christian Baptist.***

Dear Sir—You will confer a particular favor on the Christian community by proving—

First, That clergymen can subsist without either eating or drinking.

Secondly, That the clergymen who provide for their own households are worse than infidels.

Thirdly, That clergymen should not receive a liberal education.

Fourthly, That clergymen should not study divinity.

Fifthly, That if clergymen can preach without compensation, you can publish your *Christian Baptist* without compensation.

Sixthly, That you are the only pious clergyman on the face of the earth.

Seventhly and lastly, That you are the only clergyman since the days of the apostles that has taught the genuine and undefiled doctrines of the gospel of Christ. From the spirit and zeal with which you labor to establish truth and expose error, I have no

doubt but that you will cheerfully and promptly prove the above stated points. And when you shall have proved them, I will then willingly become a member of your church. I will, in conclusion of this note, assure you that I am no clergyman; that I am neither jealous nor envious of great talents, or of your unexampled piety; but that I am merely

A LAYMAN.

Reply To Some Unknown Layman.

You did me the honor of addressing me a note in a late *Spectator*, in which you salute me "*dear sir*." I suppose in a ceremonious age I should, in return, salute you *Very Dear Sir*. Be this as it may, I am certainly indebted to both the laity and clergy, as well as to the poets in and about Wooster, for their very marked attention to me. I hope soon to have so much leisure as to pay them a visit for their kindness, and salute them face to face. You propose to me no less than seven positions to prove. This is another proof that the number 7 is a symbolic number. As you say I "will confer a favor on the religious community by proving them," I will, at all events, pay them a respectful notice.

Your first position is, that "*Clergymen can subsist without eating or drinking*." This you desire me to prove. You ought to have defined this *being* you call a clergyman, for whose interest and welfare you are so solicitous. As I, the Bible being judge, view those gentlemen as an order of men unauthorized of Heaven; as the creatures which laymen have made,

and not the workmanship of Heaven, I have no concern about their eating and drinking. Let them that created them feed them. But as I prefer experiment to theory, I will tell you how you can prove the position most satisfactorily. Do you, then, and all your lay brethren, give them nothing to eat or drink for seven years, and I predict many of them will be no longer clergymen, but will transmigrate into other more innocent and more useful beings.

Your second position now offers itself, that “*the clergymen who provide for their own houses are worse than infidels.*” This proposition will become intuitively evident and infallibly correct by the insertion of a word of two, thus, “The clergy who provide for their own houses by making the people called laymen support them, and who pursue no honest calling for means of subsistence, have denied the faith and are worse than infidels.”

Your third position is, that “*clergymen should not receive a liberal education.*” For what? To qualify them to reign as kings and priests over the laity? Certainly, for these important purposes, they should receive a very liberal education; and the more liberal their education the more liberal their support. But, if it requires a liberal education to cause them to understand the Christian religion, then the laity require a liberal education too; except you think that it is the clergyman’s duty to expound the revelation of God, and the layman’s duty to receive, believe, and practice whatever his clergyman tells him. In this case it matters not how ignorant the laity are. But, sir, knavery and finesse have always been eloquent in advocating the cause of a learned priesthood; and this “*liberal*” order have, when fully saddled upon the shoulders of the people, gravely told them they should not read the Bible at all—it belonged to the priesthood to understand it. This is the legitimate issue of the common talk about a liberally educated priesthood. I argue, if it be necessary to have a liberally educated clergy, we should have a liberally educated laity to understand them; for it is more difficult to understand the clergy than the Bible.

Your fourth position, that “*clergymen should not study divinity,*” is akin to the third. The Episcopalian

clergy should study Episcopalian divinity; the Presbyterian clergy should study Presbyterian divinity, &c. &c. for in whatever sort of divinity a man deals, he ought to be well-versed in it; besides, an Episcopalian layman would not thank you for Presbyterian divinity, nor a Presbyterian layman receive Episcopalian divinity.

Certainly, then, it behooves every divine to be master of that divinity which he is to retail to his customers for a livelihood, But, sir, believe me or not, the greatest students of divinity are amongst the most ignorant of the Bible. And I will pledge myself to find as many women of plain education as you have divines in your county, who can teach them for months the meaning of the scriptures. I do not mean any disrespect to your divines: I suppose them to be quite as intelligent as their neighbors.

Your fifth position now comes, that “*if clergymen can preach without compensation, you can publish your Christian Baptist without compensation.*” Any young damsel knows better. All that the clergy sell is breath, and that is one of the most common things amongst the living. It is as little expense to a man who can talk, to talk, as it is for the laity to hear. He sells you divinity, which is supposed to be a heavenly commodity, and costs no money; but our Christian Baptist is a terrestrial thing and requires many earthly things to furnish one page, which are not like the grace of divines, without money and price. I wish, my friend, your education had been a little more liberal, and then I could easily have convinced you that types and press, paper and ink, are not divinity.

Your sixth proposition approaches, that “*you are the only pious clergyman upon the face of all the earth.*” So said the Papists, both clergy and laity, of Luther. I wish you could find out the meaning of the term clergyman. Don’t look into the Bible for it—it is only found in theological dictionaries. I am no clergyman at all, sir, pious or impious. I once was, but I have renounced it as one of the hidden things of darkness. As I am no clergyman, you will excuse me for not determining who is the most pious one—whether the Pope or the Vicar of Wakefield.

Your seventh is now arrived—that “*you are the only clergyman since the days of the apostles that has taught the genuine and undefiled gospel.*” While I was a clergyman I did not teach the genuine gospel; therefore I am not contained in your last proposition. But I do know, and you might know, that there are myriads, and that there were myriads on earth, who have protested against the clergy as Anti-christ, who have witnessed a good confession against all the popular schemes of the times. When I see you and know you, I will tell you more of this.

Now, sir, I will, in return for your kindness, propose you seven questions for your consideration and exposition, which I hope your Christian candor and sense of justice will prompt you to explain—for I have a high opinion of your ability.

1. What is your name? Should you honor me with another epistle and suppress your name, I cannot answer it; because I could not then consider you an honest and well-meaning layman who fears not the light.

2. What is the office and duty of a Christian bishop?

3. Did the author of the Christian religion declare it to be his will that one Christian in fifty or a hundred should obtain a liberal education in order to make a living, or to get rich by interpreting his will to the forty-nine or the ninety-nine?

4. Whether is the Christian bishop, who is chosen by the church for his piety, gravity; and ability to

teach the Christian books; who labors in the word and doctrine, and by his own hands ministers to his own wants and those of his house, or the college-bred gentleman who makes a gain of his godliness, more worthy of the honor, esteem, love and credit of the church or congregation to which they respectively minister?

5. Does the character of the Christian church, drawn by the apostles in their writings, correspond to that of a modern congregation with its clergyman at its head?

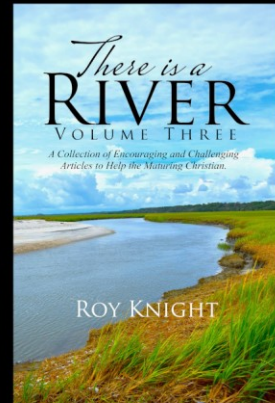
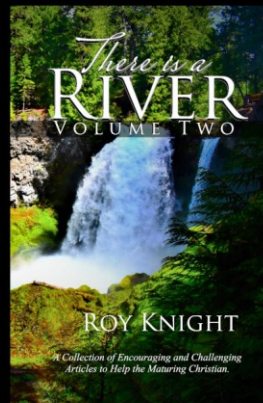
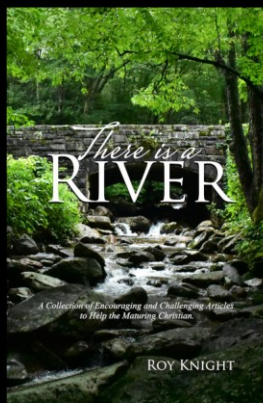
6. Is it compatible with the character of the father of our spirits in giving us but one book to make us wise unto salvation, to have it expressed in such language as none but linguists, philosophers, and rabbis can understand?

Averaging the stipend paid to the learned clergy at 500 dollars a year; in ten years, 5000 dollars—query 7th, Whether would it be more conducive to the spiritual and temporal interest of a congregation to spend this \$5000 in ten years upon giving their youth so good an education as to make them so well acquainted with their mother tongue as to understand any book written in English without the aid of an interpreter, or to give it to the priest?

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THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE "LITTLE HORN" IN DANIEL 7 AS THE PAPACY, CONSIDERED



Blake Hudson

In his first official sermon at St. Andrews Church, the Scottish reformer John Knox (1514–1572) took as his text Daniel 7 and declared the little horn of the fourth beast is the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church.¹ Knox was not idiosyncratic in this regard, but is part of a large number of interpreters throughout history who have identified the little horn of Daniel 7 as the papacy (an identification that will be referred to as the papacy-little

horn view).² This article³ will give some historical notes on this view, consider Daniel 7 from such a view, further discuss the identity of the fourth beast, and present two major objections to the papacy-little horn view.

Historical Notes, with Focus on the Restoration Movement

While popes had been identified as antichrist ear-

¹ John Knox, *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*, vol. 1 of *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: The Wodrow Society, 1846), 189-190.

² Unless specified otherwise, “little horn” refers to the little horn in Daniel 7.

³ Note: This article was originally presented as a paper for a class at Heritage Christian University earlier this year.—*Editor.*

lier,⁴ the first recorded instance of the papacy being identified with the little horn was by Eberhard II von Truchsees in the 13th century.⁵ Others after Eberhard came to the same conclusion, but it was not until the Protestant Reformation that this view took firm root and became widely accepted. Despite the broad acceptance of the papacy-little horn view, Daniel 7 was not the most popular proof-text against the papacy, being overshadowed by 2 Thessalonians and Revelation. Notable exceptions to the papacy-little horn view are Martin Luther and John Calvin, who identified the little horn as the Muslim Turks and Julius Caesar respectively.⁶ Nevertheless, the identification of the little horn as the papacy became a major interpretive view for several centuries and was held by no less figures than Isaac Newton, Alexander Campbell, and Charles Hodge.⁷

The Restoration Movement in the 19th century follows the same trend: the pope is universally acknowledged as antichrist, but Daniel 7 was not the most popular proof-text.⁸ The most notable adherent to the papacy-little horn view is Alexander Campbell, who defended it in public debate and

writing.⁹ James M. Mathes, in his journal *The Christian Record*, also affirms that the little horn is the papacy.¹⁰ Likewise, Benjamin Franklin seems to agree that the little horn is the papacy since he included a lengthy article promoting such a view in his *American Christian Quarterly Review* without any editorial comment of disagreement.¹¹ Barton Stone also identifies the little horn as the papacy in his magazine *The Christian Messenger*.¹² While Stone holds the papacy-little horn view and identifies the papacy as “the man of sin” and product of apostasy,¹³ he also saw many other Protestant groups as sharing in the apostasy of Rome.¹⁴

The identification of the little horn as the papacy continues to this day, but has declined to the point of obscurity.¹⁵ Most modern commentators identify the little horn as Antiochus Epiphanes, a past Roman emperor, or a future Antichrist.¹⁶ Within the Restoration Movement, identifying the little horn as a past Roman emperor appears to have become the preferred view.¹⁷

⁴ For the history of popes being identified as antichrist, see Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994); John Brug, “A Scriptural and Historical Survey of the Doctrine of the Antichrist,” (presented by the author at the Northern Wisconsin District, 1987; 1998), <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/774/BrugScriptural.pdf?sequence=1>.

⁵ John Fuller, “Antichrist,” *A Dictionary of the Bible* (London: John Murray, 1893), 144.

⁶ Martin Luther, “Preface to Daniel,” *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Deutsche Bibel]* (1522-1546; Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1960), 11/2:12; John Calvin, *Commentary on Daniel*, vol. 2, Lecture 33, trans. Thomas Meyers (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), <https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom25/calcom25.ii.ix.html>; Winfried Vogel, “The Eschatological Theology of Martin Luther Part II: Luther’s Exposition of Daniel and Revelation,” *AUSS* 25 (1987): 185-186.

⁷ See Appendix 2 for a select bibliography of works identifying the little horn as the papacy.

⁸ Some, such as Barton Stone and David Lipscomb, did not limit the label “antichrist” exclusively to the papacy, but the universal opinion within the 19th century Restoration Movement was that the papacy is antichrist.

⁹ Alexander Campbell and John B. Purcell, *A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion* (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1914); Alexander Campbell, “The Pope Demonstrated to be the ‘Little Horn,’” *Millennial Harbinger* 3 (1844): 394-405.

¹⁰ James M. Mathes, “Reply to Theological Discussion – No. 1,” *The Christian Record* 2 (1844; repr., Charleston, AR: Cobb Publishing, 2021): 156.

¹¹ American Protestant Society, “The Rise and Progress of Popery: A Tract,” *American Christian Quarterly Review* 1 (1862): 170-174, 185-188, 197-201.

¹² Barton Stone, “The Second Coming of Christ,” *The Christian Messenger* 12 (1842): 219.

¹³ Barton Stone, “A Protestant Opiate,” *The Christian Messenger* 13 (1843): 97-99. Stone does not share the optimistic view of many of his peers that the Roman Catholic Church was on the verge of destruction. He believes that those who take such a view have unwittingly taken an opiate from Satan to lull them into complacency.

¹⁴ Barton Stone, “The Apostasy,” *The Christian Messenger* 13 (1843): 138-140.

¹⁵ Notable exceptions are the Seventh Day Adventists and some conservative Lutheran groups which continue to promote the papacy-little horn view.

¹⁶ A helpful overview of the various interpretive schools related to Daniel is Gerhard Pfandl, “Interpretations of the Kingdom of God in Daniel 2:44,” *AUSS* 34 (1996): 249-68.

¹⁷ Appendix 3 lists Restoration Movement commentaries

Daniel 7 From a Papacy-Little Horn Perspective

In this section, I will summarize the view of those who promoted the Papacy-Little Horn view.

A Fourth Beast with Ten Horns

In Daniel 7, Daniel sees a vision of four beasts, representing four kingdoms (7:17), coming out of the sea. These four beasts parallel the kingdoms of the statue in Daniel 2 and represent Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The fourth beast, Rome, is not identified as a particular animal, but is described as having ten horns (7:7, 20) which are said to be ten kings (7:24). “King” and “kingdom” are used interchangeably in the visions of Daniel 2 and 7 (e.g., 2:38-39; 7:17, 23, 24, 27), so it is possible for the ten horns to signify either individuals or, more likely, the kingdoms that would arise after the dissolution of the western Roman empire. The number ten should not be pressed, but rather represents the general dissolution of Rome into a multiplicity of kingdoms (c.f., the general breakup of the Greek kingdom signified by the four horns of the goat in Daniel 8).¹⁸ Likewise, the specificity of the three horns that are uprooted by the little horn (7:23-24) should not be pressed.¹⁹ The uprooting of three horns signifies that a substantial, but limited, amount of the beast’s power will be assumed by the little horn.²⁰

Judgment of the Fourth Beast

From 7:9-14 and 7:23-27, it seems that once the

identifying the little horn as a Roman emperor.

¹⁸ Paul T. Butler, *Daniel*, Bible Study Textbook Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1970), 263; Andrew Steinmann, *Daniel*, ConcC. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2008), 373.

¹⁹ For a summary of attempted identifications of the ten and three horns, see Albert Barnes, *Daniel*, 2 vols. (1853; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 85-90. It is, however, an interesting correspondence that the papal crown is a triple-crown: an unfortunate fluke of history if the papacy is in fact not the little horn.

²⁰ Butler, *Daniel*, 263; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 373; James E. Smith, *The Major Prophets* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2007), 579, 586.

little horn comes into existence, it will exist until Jesus returns, which corresponds well with the continuation of the papacy.²¹ The heavenly events and judgment of the fourth beast in 7:9-14 should not be taken as a strict sequence, but should allow for events in the heavenly and earthly visions to be happening simultaneously.²² In 7:11-12, the first three beasts do not continue to exist after the destruction of the fourth beast; rather, the destruction of the fourth beast is mentioned first as a point of emphasis and to contrast the nature of the end of the fourth beast with that of the other three.²³

The Little Horn as a Religious Institution

Unlike the other three beasts, the fourth beast is not overthrown, but dissolves into a multiplicity of kingdoms, represented by the ten horns. From within this dissolved state will arise a king/kingdom that is different than the other king/kingdoms and will assume a substantial amount of strength, represented by the uprooting of three horns (7:23-24). This little horn is the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church, which did in fact grow from within the Roman empire and became a substantial temporal power.²⁴ The little horn is substantially different from any of the other horns because it began as a religious institution and only later assumed political

²¹ “Rome has never been destroyed completely. This political-religious combination [i.e., the Roman Catholic Church] has continued to smolder from underneath the ruins of the old Roman Empire.” Lehman Strauss, *The Book of the Revelation* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1964), 249.

²² John J. Collins, *Daniel, Herm.* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 303; Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Daniel*, Preacher’s Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 152; S. P. Tregelles, *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, 5th ed. (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1864), 37; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 329-330; James E. Smith, *The Major Prophets*, 580-581.

²³ Edward J. Young, *Daniel*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949; repr., Wiltshire: Cromwell Press, 1972), 153; Smith, *The Major Prophets*, 580; contra H.H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1959), 87.

²⁴ The papacy once ruled substantial amounts of land and claimed to have temporal power of all of the western Roman empire based on the forged *Donation of Constantine*. See also the papal bull *Unum Sanctum*.

power.

The religious nature of the little horn could be supported by the fact that it is described as having eyes and a mouth. In the Old Testament, prophets were early on known as seers (e.g., 2 Samuel 24:11 and Amos 7:12). It could also be that the eyes indicate the little horn is an overseer; that is, a bishop.²⁵ The religious nature of the little horn would also connect it to 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8, which anticipates a falling away from within the Church.²⁶ Further support for identifying the little horn as having a religious nature comes from Revelation, in which the imagery of the fourth beast and little horn of Daniel 7 is utilized and expanded upon.²⁷ In Revelation 13, the sea beast represents Rome and the land beast represents false religion.²⁸ The land beast is represented subsequently as the false prophet (Revelation 16), and finally as a prostitute (Revelation 17), showing that it ultimately represents an apostate Church.²⁹

Characteristics of the Little Horn

The little horn is described as speaking words against the Most High, changing times and the law, and “wear[ing] out the saints” (7:25). If this wearing out is understood as physical, the persecutions committed by the Roman Catholic Church are an open fact of history. Alternatively, the wearing out

could be done through the words spoken by the little horn (i.e., the false teachings) that over time turn people away from fidelity to God’s word.³⁰

The changing of times and the law indicate changes of a religious nature and correspond to the changes made to belief and practice within the Roman Catholic Church.³¹ Regarding the possibility of describing the papacy as speaking “great things” (7:8) and “words against the Most High” (7:25), the claims to power made by popes and the elevation of Mary, among other teachings, appear to make the papacy open to such charges.³² It is not that the papacy explicitly denies that Jesus is the Christ; rather, it is that the papacy takes upon itself the prerogatives of God by changing religious practice and doctrine and by its claims to power.³³

Time, Times, and Half a Time

Finally, the power of the little horn is said to last “a time, times, and half a time,” commonly understood as “three and one half times” (7:25). These “times” are often interpreted as years.³⁴ Historically, some have taken “times” to be years, but convert the years into days, then reconvert the days into years to produce 1260 years. Without the text making the need to do so explicit, this (re)conversion process

²⁵ Isaac Newton, *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse* (1733; repr., London: J. Nisbet, 1831), 79.

²⁶ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 385; Butler, *Daniel*, 274-277; Wilbur Fields, *Thinking Through Thessalonians*, Bible Study Textbook Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1971), 195-198.

²⁷ Joe Sprinkle, *Daniel*, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 196; E. B. Elliott, *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, vol. 3, 5th ed. (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1862), 70-108.

²⁸ Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation*, ConC (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1999), 358.

²⁹ Brighton, *Revelation*, 436; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 371-372; Lee G. Tomlinson, *The Wonder Book of the Bible: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1963), 290. Throughout the Old Testament, God’s people are often described in terms of a virgin/faithful wife or a prostitute/adulteress, depending on their spiritual fidelity to God.

³⁰ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 374.

³¹ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 374, 547; Barnes, *Daniel*, 72-73; Sprinkle, *Daniel*, 192-193.

³² The papacy seems to stand condemned by one of its own, Gregory the Great, who spoke strongly against John of Constantinople when the latter assumed the title of Universal Bishop (Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 12b, *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great*, Epistles 18 and 21 (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1895), 166-169, 171-173). See also the claims to spiritual and temporal supremacy made by the papacy in the papal bull *Unam Sanctum*. Examples of the elevation of Mary include the dogmas of the immaculate conception (not to be confused with the virgin birth of Christ), the assumption of Mary, apparitions of Mary, Marian iconography, Mary’s sinlessness, and her role as mediatrix and Queen of Heaven – see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1997), 411, 963-975; William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2019), 72-89, 187-190.

³³ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 374.

³⁴ Sprinkle, *Daniel*, 193.

seems unjustified.³⁵ Instead, it seems preferable to understand “time, times, and half a time” as symbolically representing a limited period of time: three and one half is half of seven, which in turn represents fullness, completion, and perfection.³⁶ If world history is divided into two parts, BC and AD, it may be that the three and one half times represents half of the complete world history, indicating that the little horn will exist for the complete AD period until Jesus returns.³⁷

The Fourth Beast as Rome: An Essential Starting Point

For the little horn to be identified as the papacy, the fourth kingdom in Daniel 2 and 7 must be Rome. If the fourth kingdom is not Rome, then trying to determine if the little horn is the papacy is a non-starter. Since the identification of the fourth kingdom is debated, the topic will be considered in some detail.

Historical Specificity

In order for the fourth beast to be Rome, the four beasts must have historical specificity. Most commentators believe that the four beasts do in fact represent four identifiable kingdoms, but there are some who take an idealist approach, suggesting that the vision of Daniel 7 provides general principals, not historical specificity. On this view, the kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7 are meant to encompass all kingdoms throughout history, not four specific kingdoms.³⁸ If this position is correct, then it cannot be said that the papacy *is* the little horn, but only that the papacy acts *like* a “little horn.” John Goldingay takes a modified approach, asserting that the fourth empire is Greece, but that the second and third empires are not to be specified due to the constraints of

a supposed four-empire scheme.³⁹

While there is truth in the idealist view, it seems best to also assign historical specificity to the kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7. For starters, the first kingdom is positively identified in the text as Babylon (Daniel 2:38), so the sequence of kingdoms begins with specificity. Second, without denying the use of symbolism, the language of Daniel 2 and 7 gives the impression of referring to specific kingdoms. Third, the idealist view is either not attested to, or is an extremely minority view, before the 20th century. This gives the impression that denying historical specificity is an exasperated response to the perpetual arguments over the identification of the kingdoms. Finally, the kingdom of God is to be established during the time of the fourth kingdom (Daniel 2:44). This would make the most sense if there is actually a specific earthly kingdom during which God would establish His kingdom.⁴⁰

Fourth Beast Must Be Rome, Not Greece

Despite the general agreement among commentators that the four kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7 do have historical specificity, the agreement does not extend to the identification of the four kingdoms. Daniel 2:44 identifies the first kingdom as Babylon, but the remaining three kingdoms are not explicitly identified by the text. The two major schools of thought regarding the four kingdoms are the Roman and Greek views, identifying the fourth beast as Rome and Greece respectively.⁴¹ The Roman view has been the majority view throughout history; however, the Greek view is now the almost universal view of critical scholars.⁴² For the little horn to

³⁹ John Goldingay, *Daniel*, rev ed., WBC 30 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 126; see Appendix 1.

⁴⁰ Smith, *The Major Prophets*, 581.

⁴¹ Roman view: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome; Greek view: Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece, but there is some variation among proponents. For a chart of the various identifications of the kingdoms, see Rowley, *Darius the Mede*, 184-185.

⁴² G.R. Beasley-Murray is an example of a generally conservative scholar who accepts the critical Greek view (G.R. Beasley-Murray, “A Conservative Thinks Again About

³⁵ Smith, *The Major Prophets*, 584.

³⁶ Butler, *Daniel*, 277; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 375-376.

³⁷ Butler, *Daniel*, 277; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 375-376.

³⁸ Gregory Ross Goswell, “The Visions of Daniel and Their Historical Specificity,” *ResQ* 58 (2016): 129-42; Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 190.

be the papacy, the fourth beast must be identified as Rome, which means the second must be Medo-Persia and the third Greece.

Second Beast Must Be Medo-Persia

In favor of identifying the second beast as Medo-Persia is the fact that it is historically accurate to say that the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon, but it is not accurate to say that Media did so.⁴³ Second, with one exception (the reference to Darius the Mede in 5:31), Daniel consistently speaks of Media and Persia as one entity (6:8, 12, 15; 8:20). Also, the two-horned ram in Daniel 8, explicitly identified as Medo-Persia, is described as having two horns, one larger than the other, which seems to parallel the second beast, described as a bear “raised up on one side” (5:5). This image of a lopsided-two suggests there is an identification between the second beast and the ram. Finally, Anne Gardner gives an interesting, even if not absolutely compelling, argument for identifying the second beast as Medo-Persia based on Hosea 13:7-8, Isaiah 13:5, and Job 38:32.⁴⁴

Third Beast Must Be Greece

If the second beast is identified as Medo-Persia, the almost inevitable conclusion is that the third beast is Greece. Additional support for identifying the third beast as Greece comes from Daniel 8, in which the ram with two lopsided horns (Medo-Persia) is followed and destroyed by a goat (identified as Greece in 8:21) that ends up having four horns. This seems to parallel the third beast in Daniel 7, described as a leopard with four wings and

four heads (7:6). Without trying to identify what the “fours” represent,⁴⁵ it seems too coincidental to have a lopsided-two animal followed by a four-animal in both chapter 7 and 8 to not see an identification between the two pairs. On the other hand, those who believe the fourth beast is Greece often connect the “four” of the third beast with the four Persian kings mentioned in Daniel 11:2.⁴⁶ However, while the number four is implied in 11:2 (i.e., three plus one), it is explicitly applied to Greece in 11:3-4; again, suggesting that the third beast with “fours” should be identified as Greece.⁴⁷

The Kingdom of God Established in the Fourth Empire

If the second and third beasts are Medo-Persia and Greece, then the natural conclusion is that the fourth beast is Rome. From a Christian perspective, the testimony of the New Testament would seem to make such an identification certain. Daniel 2:44 states that the kingdom of God would be established during the fourth kingdom, and the kingdom of God was established during the Roman Empire by Christ’s incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension to glory.⁴⁸

Some Objections to Identifying the Fourth Beast as Rome Considered⁴⁹

First, it is suggested that the “mixing” in the

Daniel,” *Baptist Quarterly* 12 (1948): 341-346, 366-371). Robert Gurney and John Walton hold the Greek view, but do so because they think that it best fulfills the prophecies of Daniel, not because of any perception of failed prophecies (Robert Gurney, “The Four Kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7,” *Them* 2 (1977): 39-45; John H. Walton, “The Four Kingdoms of Daniel,” *JETS* 29 (1986): 25-36).

⁴³ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 148-149.

⁴⁴ Anne E. Gardner, “Decoding Daniel: The Case of Dan 7,5,” *Bib* 88 (2007): 222-33.

⁴⁵ Edmon L. Gallagher, “Daniel and the Diadochi,” *JBL* 141 (2022): 301-16.

⁴⁶ John J. Collins, *Daniel, Herm* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 298.

⁴⁷ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 346.

⁴⁸ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 144, 153; Smith, *The Major Prophets*, 581; e.g. Matthew 28:18, Acts 2:32-36, Colossians 1:13.

⁴⁹ An older summary of objections to the Roman view is found in Rowley, *Darius the Mede*, 73-90. A more recent and briefer summary of objections to the Roman view can be found in Ernest Lucas, *Daniel*, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 190-191. Andrew Steinmann provides a point-for-point rebuttal to Lucas’s objections and in turn presents his objections to the Greek view in Steinmann, *Daniel*, 144-157. EJ Young also gives an extended defense of the Roman view in Young, *Daniel*, 275-294.

fourth kingdom (2:43) points to the intermarriages between the Seleucids and Ptolemies which are described in Daniel 11.⁵⁰ This is perhaps the strongest textual argument in favor of the Greek view; however, it seems preferable to understand this mixing as referring to the mixing of nationalities rather than to marriage alliances.⁵¹ A mixing of nationalities would very well describe the Roman empire.

Second, it is argued that the little horns in chapters 7 and 8 should both have the same referent: Antiochus Epiphanes.⁵² This objection seems to have merit, especially since the parallels between chapters 7 and 8 were referenced in support of identifying the second and third beast. However, among other differences between the horns, “it is difficult, if not impossible, to equate a horn that arises among ten horns and uproots three of them (7:8, 20) with a horn that grows from one of four horns and displaces none of them (8:9).”⁵³ Chapter 7 seems to present the little horn as a new entity, while chapter 8 seems to present its little horn as the continuation of an already existing entity.⁵⁴ The similarities between the two horns can probably be accounted for by the use of a “little horn” typology.⁵⁵

Finally, it is argued that the Greek view is to be preferred because it would create a recapitulation throughout the book of Daniel, with each cycle ending at the same terminus: the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes.⁵⁶ Such recapitulation would be convenient, but it appears to be forcing onto the text what is not there. Also, the terminus for the visions in Daniel 2 and 7 is explicitly men-

tioned in the text as the establishment of the kingdom of God, and there is no persecution mentioned in Daniel 2.⁵⁷ It seems to be more faithful to the text to consider Daniel 2, 4, and 7 as focusing on the first and fourth kingdoms and Daniel 8 and 10-12 as focusing on the second and third kingdoms.⁵⁸

Objections to Identifying the Little Horn as the Papacy⁵⁹

Two major objections to the papacy-little horn view will now be considered. Possible solutions are offered, but they still present significant obstacles to the papacy-little horn view.

Objection #1: Identifying the Little Horn as the Papacy Does Not Account for the East

First, identifying the little horn as the papacy appears to be too focused on the West, not taking into account 1) the continuation of the Roman empire in the East and 2) the existence of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Regarding the continuation of the Roman empire in the East, it could legitimately be asked how much change in location and language can be sustained before a different empire must be defined. While it is true that the Roman empire continued in the East, it can be argued that with the change of location (Rome to Constantinople) and language (Latin to Greek), the “Roman” empire in the East is, in many ways, no longer Roman. This is reflected in our speech today: we differentiate between the *Roman* and *Byzantine* empires. If the fourth beast is Rome, then it could be that it is limited to Rome itself, not Constantinople.

Also, the papacy-little horn view seems to ignore Christianity in the East, which has many of the same beliefs and practices as the Roman Catholic Church. However, only in the West, with the dissolution of

⁵⁰ Lucas, *Daniel*, 190; Rowley, *Darius the Mede*, 94-95.

⁵¹ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 155; Goswell, “The Visions of Daniel,” 134.

⁵² Lucas, *Daniel*, 190.

⁵³ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 154-155.

⁵⁴ Charles Boutflower, *In and around the Book of Daniel* (London: SPCK; New York & Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 15.

⁵⁵ James M. Hamilton Jr., *With the Clouds of Heaven: The Book of Daniel in Biblical Theology*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 32 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 52.

⁵⁶ Lucas, *Daniel*, 190-191.

⁵⁷ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 156.

⁵⁸ Hamilton, *With the Clouds of Heaven*, 94.

⁵⁹ While not addressed here specifically, Tregelles has an interesting excursus in which he argues against viewing the papacy as the little horn while at the same time speaking strongly against the papacy in Tregelles, *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions*, 182-211.

the empire, did a bishop gain the level of temporal power that the popes attained. If the East must be explicitly accounted for, perhaps it could be said that the little horn is a Political-Christian institution of which the papacy is a potent example.⁶⁰ At that point, however, the interpretive method is moving away from historicism and into idealism.

Objection #2: Is Not Islam a Greater Blasphemer and Persecutor of Christians?

The second objection is that, if we are to look for a blasphemous institution that persecutes Christians, would not Islam be the better candidate? As mentioned above, the blasphemous and persecuting nature of Islam led Martin Luther to identify the little horn as Mohammed/the Muslim Turks rather than the papacy. Nevertheless, Luther, also saw a connection between the papacy and Islam, describing them as the spirit and flesh of antichrist.⁶¹ Perhaps it is better to see the papacy and Islam as a both/and rather than an either/or. However, this understanding of the text also moves toward idealism.

Conclusion

This paper began by giving some historical notes on the identification of the little horn in Daniel 7 as the papacy and then considered Daniel 7 from such a view. This was followed by a closer look at the identification of the fourth beast and a consideration of two significant objections to the papacy-little horn view. It remains to set forth some conclusions.

First, it must be remembered that the identification of the little horn is not explicitly taught in Scripture, so there is an element of doubt and need for humility in any identification.⁶²

Second, the possibility of the little horn being the

papacy should not simply be ignored as modern commentators tend to do. Many great minds in the Church have affirmed that the little horn is the papacy, and there is an argument to be made in favor of such a view. Among those who hold the Roman view at least, the papacy-little horn view should be considered as a legitimate option and not be dismissed out of hand as Reformation-era anti-Roman propaganda.

Third, there is good reason to maintain the traditional view that the fourth beast represents Rome. There are good answers to the arguments against the Roman view and the Roman view has good support from the biblical text. However, should it be shown that the fourth beast is not Rome, then that would be a defeater of the papacy-little horn view.

Finally, identifying the little horn as the papacy is not without its challenges. Daniel 7 is a particularly difficult passage and the additional biblical support for the papacy-little horn view comes from debated passages in 2 Thessalonians and Revelation. There are also significant objections when one considers historical facts such as the Byzantine Empire and the rise of Islam. The safest view is probably that of the idealist, who seeks to draw principles from the text without defining historical specificity to the imagery. On that view, it could be said that the papacy has “little horn characteristics,” without identifying a specific referent of the little horn. Nevertheless, it is perhaps appropriate to say along with J.W. McGarvey that “we are constrained to contend that if no other form appears, the Papacy has already fulfilled the prophecy.”⁶³

APPENDIX 1: IS DANIEL USING A FOUR-EMPIRE SCHEME?

Many commentators, especially among critical scholars, assert that Daniel is making use of an established four-empire trope when he describes the four kingdoms in chapters 2 and 7. John J. Collins is

⁶⁰ Similar to David Lipscomb’s view that all Political-Christian institutions, not just the papacy, are apostate (David Lipscomb, *Civil Government* (1866-1867; repr. Bowling Green, KY: Gospel Armory Publishing), 116-120).

⁶¹ Martin Luther, *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Tischreden]* (1531-1546; Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1914), 3:158, no. 3055a; Vogel, *The Eschatological Theology of Martin Luther*, 184.

⁶² Steinmann, *Daniel*, 554.

⁶³ J.W. McGarvey, “2 Thessalonians 2:12,” *Commentary on 2 Thessalonians* (Lexington, KY: Transylvania Printing and Publishing Co., 1872).

representative when he states that the four kingdoms in Daniel are “based on the traditional sequence of Assyria, Media, and Persia, which was of Persian origin but was widely known throughout the Near East.”⁶⁴ John Goldingay also believes a four-empire scheme is being used, but uses that assumption to suggest that the second and third kingdoms in Daniel are not to be strictly identified since “utilizing the four-empire scheme involves squeezing historical and theological material into a pre-existent mold that was not designed for it.”⁶⁵ However, the idea that Daniel is relying on a four-empire scheme of Persian origin has not gone unchallenged, with some, such as Ernest Lucas, finding no compelling reason to conclude that Daniel is dependent on a Persian tradition.⁶⁶ Even Goldingay’s comment above shows that there is not an exact parallel between Daniel and a supposed four-empire scheme. It seems that since Daniel has, at the least, heavily modified any four-empire scheme for his own purposes, it is best to pay attention to the text itself and not interpret the text based on outside sources.⁶⁷

APPENDIX 2: SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS IDENTIFYING THE LITTLE HORN AS THE PAPACY

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DANIEL'S SEVENTY SEVENS

John Krivak

I thought I was all done with Daniel 9. Many times, I've satisfied myself that I have done adequate exegesis and reached adequate understanding. But then I read it fresh, and yet again sense that I still have work to do.

The bulk of the chapter still reads well.¹ Daniel is reaching out to God while the Jerusalem Temple lies in shambles and Babylon is the overlord of exiled Israel. The dynasty of David prevailed for four centuries, but now the throne has been toppled. Some wonder if God has broken covenant promises. Things are not good between God and His people, and Daniel openly confesses their sins. The mighty angel Gabriel has been sent to Daniel on a huge mission. After this visit, he will not be seen again for nearly 600 years. In that future, he will visit Zechariah (father of John the Baptist) inside the Temple (it had, by then, been rebuilt). Daniel (9:2) had been reading the “70 year” prophecy of Jeremiah (25:11-12; 29:10). The temple was destroyed in 586 BC, and Cyrus enabled this rebuilding by 516 BC—seventy years exactly! Next, Gabriel would visit the virgin Mary, who would give birth to the Son of God, the Messiah, the new “son of David.” Jesus would reclaim the throne of the Kingdom and resume the dynasty forever. Gabriel appears at both ends of a six-century lapse in the Kingdom.

But there is more to Chapter Nine, and the “seventy weeks prophecy” (9:24-27) now looks different to me. I have work to do before I can be comfortable that I understand what God is saying here. Read-

ing Tom Wright² brought me to a new vantage point. His discussion of the Sabbath is just fascinating. The Creation narratives of Genesis shows God moving ahead by punctuating time with seventh day periods of “rest.” Regular time and God’s time intersect at regular intervals. Anticipation keeps all eyes on God, and heightens with the “Sabbath year” punctuations, and even more with the jubilee (seven weeks of years, times seven, leading to the 50th). Aside from whatever unfolds in regular time, God is all about rest, debt relief, redemption, release from slavery into liberty. Ownership of land and slaves falls away at seventh intervals because God asserts His ownership.

When Jesus arrives, this Messiah fulfills and takes over the sacred time (Sabbath) and the sacred space (Temple). Now, the regular sabbath punctuations fall away, because the “rest” to which they pointed, from Creation until “the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4; Eph. 3:10), happens totally in Jesus. There is much more, and I hope every reader can read Wright’s discussion. But the short of it is this: Daniel speaks of “seventy sevens”—the ultimate fulfillment of God’s time that had accrued meaning in sabbath day, sabbath year, and jubilee. At last—true rest, true liberty. Great day—Daniel presents the grand-daddy of all sabbath expressions—70 times 7! Jesus claims “today fulfillment” as He reads Isaiah:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to

¹ Daniel 9 sounds much like Ezra 9, with which it is contemporary,

² *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (HarperCollins e-books, 2011), pp.143-201.

the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord”
(Luke 4:18–19, NASB).

In the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus was making His claim regarding Sabbath blessings. He was anointed for this.

Regarding Daniel 9:24–27, let me just say what I am hearing (without detailed exegesis). This reads like a synopsis that credits the messianic ministry of Jesus with fulfilling God’s prophetic program. In Daniel’s cryptic lines, I see atonement for sin when the Messiah is crucified and raised. Jerusalem and her Temple are in view here. A covenant emerges and the Christ is cut off. Ominously, it sounds like the end of the Jewish religious (sacrificial) system. And, war is in view. Jerusalem and her Temple again face destruction by “the [Roman?] prince who is to come.” It results in some final end [70 AD?], and the prince himself faces “complete destruction” (because he had brought destruction himself). When I read the ending of Daniel 9, since I am a Christian who has read the NT, I hear fulfillment in the broad strokes of these distinctive Christian Scriptures.

Now, I may seem very subjective, as though my own preexisting views fill my exegesis in a hermeneutic of circular reasoning. I realize that this smacks of “confirmation bias.” However, my reading of Daniel is not merely a fanciful back-reading of my own deepest beliefs. It finds corroborating support. First, this fits the immediate context: fulfillment of Daniel’s words reaches into the Christian age (where Gabriel completes his work). There is a second Biblical confirmation. Most of us are aware that both Daniel (OT) and Revelation (NT) share similar expressions and imagery. They must be interpreted together and cannot be understood in isolation from each other.³ For example, in Daniel 7

³ I recommend the commentaries on Daniel and Revelation by Jim McGuiggan. Readers will see fully the ways that the two Bible books interpret each other. And as a bonus, a careful reader will find out the meaning of “*let the reader understand*” in Matthew 24:15!

are four beasts—a lion, a bear, a leopard, and the fourth so terrible as to defy description. They represent four gentile kingdoms that will rule over Israel—Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and the fourth (which must be Rome). The same beasts appear—in reverse order—in Revelation 13:1–2! It is as though Daniel starts with Babylon, and then looks for the other three in his future. John the Revelator starts, conversely, with Rome, and then looks for the others back in his past (to Babylon). This objectively supports my “Christian” reading of Daniel.

Daniel and Revelation (with the “apocalyptic discourse” in Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) declare that God will storm judgment upon both Jerusalem and Rome.⁴ Their mutual complicity in cruel rejection and opposition—crucifying Messiah Jesus—will be punished by God (ironically, Rome turns its fury against Revelation’s “harlot,” Jerusalem). Raised to power in Resurrection, Jesus reigns over the Kingdom that Gabriel had worked to restore. As Daniel had predicted, that Kingdom rose up in the days of the fourth gentile kingdom, Rome.

Now, the great question—that begs to be answered by Daniel’s sevens—concerns chronology. The 70 years of Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2) were fulfilled in literal years. What about the “seventy heptads” of Daniel? Will these 490 years work into some prophetic chronology? Well, almost. By working backward from Jesus’ time in history, the fit can be made almost perfectly. But, is “almost” good enough?

A chronological interpretation sees 490 actual years. Daniel breaks the time up into 7 sevens and 62 sevens, leaving one more 7-year period. The marker that begins the chronology is “*the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem*” (9:25). Three candidates are discussed in McGuiggan’s commentary.⁵ From the date of this decree, there are 69 weeks (7 plus 62) until the Messiah. Then after

⁴ See my *Quarterly* articles “Gates of Hades” (vol. 3, no. 1) and “Jerusalem” (vol. 3, no. 2).

⁵ See Jim McGuiggan, *The Book of Daniel* (Lubbock, TX: Montex Publishing, 1978), pp. 144–154.

this—in the middle of the final week—the Messiah will be “cut off” (9:26). This makes 483 years, plus another 3 or 4 years into the final 7.

If we begin with the decree of Artaxerxes (458 B.C.) that sent Ezra back to Jerusalem, you arrive at 25 A.D. after 483 years—which seems astonishingly close to the time when Jesus was baptized and began three years of Messianic ministry. Add in a few more years (to reach the middle of the final seven), and you are mighty close to the Cross!

Or instead, if we begin with the 445 B.C. decree of Artaxerxes that involved Nehemiah, you arrive at 38 A.D. (and have to add the few extra). This also gets somewhat close (especially for those who date the Cross at 33 A.D.).

Although both time constructs seem to get close, we achieve this only by assuming a literal chronology.⁶ In 9:1, Daniel says he is writing in the first year of Darius, as he contemplates the 70-year prophecy of Jeremiah (which began with 586 B.C.). Darius I began to reign in 521—so Daniel is writing this chapter about 65 years into Jeremiah’s 70. Just 18 years previous (539 or 538 BC), Cyrus had delivered his famous decree that allowed Babylon’s exiles to return to their homelands. This had been prophesied by Isaiah (44:26-28; 45:1-13), and is recorded on the famous Cyrus Cylinder. At the same time as Daniel, Ezra (chapter one) celebrates the decree of Cyrus. This amazingly fortuitous decree opens the way for God to do the seemingly impossible—the restoration of Israel. The decree of Cyrus must be the right starting point for calculations.

So, good exegesis would begin with the only decree that Daniel knows: the decree of Cyrus—around 539 B.C. Unfortunately, from here a literal chronology will not bring us anywhere close to the Cross.⁷ Either this means a failure of the prophecy,

or it means that we should not be thinking in terms of literal years. Perhaps we should think of a figurative time period. We find exegetical support in the figurative usage of “seven” found often in the Bible (especially in Daniel and Revelation). Seven represents completion or perfection (in terms of a completed perfection). Seven days make a complete (or perfect) week. Read Daniel and Revelation, and “sevens” appear all over the place. McGuiggan favors a figurative interpretation, and I find his reasoning persuasive.

The figurative understanding of the sevens also invites the accumulated meaning(s) of seventh day and seventh year (each a “sabbath”), and the jubilee. The numerical seven declares ultimate achievement of sabbath blessing. When Jesus brought this fulfillment, Hebrews described it like this:

“So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience [as displayed by the wilderness generation of Old Covenant Israel]”

(4:9–11).

For Christians, this does not bring back the OT Sabbath (nor should we turn Sunday into a “Christian Sabbath”).⁸ Rather, according to Tom Wright:

“We are called to live in the endless sabbath of God’s new creation, even while the old creation continues to groan in labor awaiting its full redemption.”⁹

This figurative (non-chronological) interpretation

suggested this as the starting date, but then challenged our timeline of world history between then and the death of Christ, claiming the commonly accepted dates are around 80-90 years off.

⁸ This is not to deny the spiritual value of a weekly day of rest from regular demands of life. Spiritual composure able to generate the “fruit of the Spirit” and to escape the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:13-26) is obviously better achieved by a rested, distressed Christian!

⁹ *Scripture and the Authority of God*, p. 172.

⁶ Followers of pre-millennialism also favor a literal chronology. However, they push the “final week” way into the future (even into our future). They achieve this by inserting thousands of years for the “church age” and by not allowing that time to factor into prophetic calculations.

⁷ Philip Mauro, in his writing on Bible chronology,

of Daniel's "sevens" also provides God's answers to the probing questions and pleadings in the prophet's prayer (earlier in Chapter Nine). It stirs my emotions to hear the words that Daniel lifts to God. Over and over, the people own the shame of sin, compounded by ignoring the prophets. Yet, God has been nothing but good to them. Daniel prays amid the trashed rubble that is the ready reminder of God's punishing destruction that fell decades before. Everything remains a mess, and Daniel pleads:

"So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name" (9:17–19).

How truly sad....

But God's time runs parallel to the tragedies of human history. In Sabbath fashion, God's time punctuates human time. People tend to consider it all a bother, and would rather that these special intervals not demand any disruption to regular life—we have jobs to do, money to make, goals to achieve! What, pray tell, is so important to God that He keeps interrupting us?

O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.

The deep meaning of Daniel's sevens holds God's promise to those who suffered the Babylonian trainwreck. The exertion and labor for human notions of success left them exhausted; the pay-off never came, and they were left empty. Everything was broken, trashed. Their confident reach for freedom, after shoving God aside, brought instead shackles of slavery. Every concern that, early in Chapter Nine, was voiced by Daniel, gets addressed

by the seventy sevens voiced by Gabriel. God would bring sabbath rest in Jesus, in whom every "seven" finds its meaning—shackles broken, ruins rebuilt, debts cancelled.

And here we are. The world exerts itself and still gets only poverty. Everything we build breaks. Vast populations live as slaves. God is a bother. We wish He would stop getting in our way to success and progress. No ear is given to the prophet.

And yet, right on prophetic schedule, in Roman times, the Kingdom of God was made "without human hands" (Daniel 2:34):

"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever"

(Daniel 2:44).

There was no need any longer to seek sacred space (Temple) nor to wait for sacred time (Sabbath); all of that was now found in the Spirit-anointed Jesus:

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"

(Matthew 11:28–30).

So, Daniel's heptads do not work out a literal chronology. They carry "sabbath meaning" that settles upon Jesus. God's time dramatically intersected human history in first-century Rome. Tom Wright, to repeat his quote yet again, updates Daniel's pleading to a meaning for our own day:

"We are called to live in the endless sabbath of God's new creation, even while the old creation continues to groan in labor awaiting its full redemption."

HOW THE TEN COMMANDMENTS Relate to *TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY* CHRISTIANS THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS

Charles R. Rose

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Exodus 20:19

You will recall that our last article looked at the command not to steal (Exodus 20:15). I began that lesson by stating, “Nobody likes a thief!” Well, just as no one likes a thief, I know of no one who enjoys having been lied to, or lied about, and probably most who have lived to adulthood have experienced both scenarios in their lifetime. I have known those who are prone to lying just as I have known those who can’t seem to carry on a conversation without garnishing their speech with swearing.

There was this one fellow who would sit for an hour and tell one thing after another, knowing full-well you *knew* he was lying to you. Once while having coffee with an elderly friend at the local coffee shop, he came in and sat at our booth. He told of his flying to some far-off destination with his brother and all they did while there for two weeks. We knew he hadn’t been away from town for more than a day or two in months because we would see him almost daily as he came to the Post Office for his mail. I’ll never forget Ernie’s comment when the fellow left: he looked at me, smiled as he slowly shook his head from side to side and said, “I tell you Charlie, if that man ever told you the truth and learned about it, he’d come back and apologize!”

The ninth commandment speaks of telling falsehoods, and in particular, falsehoods about one’s neighbor. Of course this brings about the age-old question, “Who is my neighbor?” No better answer can be found to that question than that given by the Lord in Luke 10:29-36. Jesus had just answered the query concerning the greatest command in verses 25-28 by saying the greatest commandment of all is to “love the Lord your God with, all your heart, soul and strength,” and the second greatest is to “love your neighbor as yourself. Then, starting in verse 29:

But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Then Jesus answered and said, “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine: and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to

the innkeeper, and said to him, Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you. So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said, "Go and do likewise."

Notice that Jesus does not even hint at the proximity to which these people may have lived to one another. In fact, the road leading from Jerusalem to Jericho was a considerable distance from Samaria, the home of the true neighbor to the man who fell among thieves. Thus, the indication is that we are to treat *all* people as our neighbors.

Galatians 6:10 echoes this thought, *"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."* And let us not forget the Golden Rule: *"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets"* (Matthew 7:12).

With that thought, where would we go to find our neighbors? We have neighbors within our own neighborhood, in neighboring towns or communities, in neighboring states, neighboring countries, and it spreads throughout the world. In essence, this is the teaching of our Lord when He commanded the apostles to bear witness of him to all their neighbors; *"beginning in Jerusalem, then throughout Judea and Samaria, then to all the world"* (Acts 1:8).

T. Pierce Brown, in an article titled "Who Is My Neighbor," published in *The Voice of Truth International*, Volume 18, page 95-96, tells us:

The word "neighbor" in Leviticus 19:18 is from the Hebrew "rea" which is equivalent, to the Greek word "plesion," the word used in the Septuagint version in Leviticus, as well as in all the New Testament references. Although the basic term of the root "pelas" refers to one who is near or close by, anyone familiar even with the English language knows that one may have a friend who is "near and dear to you," or "close to your heart," even though that person is 10,000 miles away. So, we are not surprised

when we see Thayer, one of the greatest Greek-English lexicographers, define the term on page 518 as "any other person," or "thy fellow-man," He defines "to be a neighbor" as Jesus does in Luke 10:29, "to perform the office of a friend and companion.

To put it in the simplest manner we can: Brother Brown said:

"your neighbor is anyone in the world to whom you can do good. The most good you can do for a person is to lead him to salvation in Christ. Therefore, to love your neighbor as yourself necessarily involves the desire and effort to help save other souls just as you would like to be saved."

Therefore, Commandment number 9 forbids bearing false witness against *any* human being.

How does this relate to Christians today? Rather than being bearers of falsehoods, Christians in the twenty-first-century are to be bearers of truth as we *"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15), just as our brothers and sisters in Christ did in the first century.

Now that we have no doubt as to whom our neighbor might be, let us turn our attention to *"bearing false witness,"* and how that relates to twenty-first century Christians.

What does bearing false witness mean?

I doubt that very many Israelites misunderstood the meaning of *"bearing false witness."* They knew this entailed lying, and they knew the penalty for telling any kind of falsehood. Proverbs 6:16-19 mentions *"Six things God hates – Yes seven are an abomination to Him."* Do you know which he mentions twice? *"A lying tongue"* and *"A false witness who speaks lies."* God hates all kinds of lies, which would include gossiping, tale-bearing, slander and anything which tends to injure another.

The problem we have today is we want to categorize falsehoods. There's the *"big black lie"* which will condemn your soul to hell and God just might strike you dead in your tracks if you tell it. Then there are those *"little white lies"* we like to think

God overlooks. You know those “*little fibs*” we have our children tell from time to time. The phone rings and we say, “Hey! If that’s for me, I’m not here!” Or we see someone coming up the drive and say, “Oh no! Here comes old so-and-so! Tell her I’m not home.”

If God allowed us to categorize all falsehoods in this manner, wouldn’t that which was told by Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 be classified as a “*little fib*”? (Acts 5:1-11). After all, Peter said it was their money to do with as they wished (Acts 5:4), and they did bring some of it to the apostles.

Sadly, we have gotten into the “Andy Griffith, situation ethics” mode of thinking. Somehow we have gotten into our minds that the situation justifies the means. That God will not condemn us for this kind of action. In recent years I have read a lot about congregations using the old Andy Griffith reruns as a means of teaching young people moral ethics. One thing stands out in my mind about that show, (other than the silly antics of Barney Fife and Gomer Pyle), is the way lies would be used with the situation. “*Little fibs*” or “*little white lies*” are used in the family situation between Andy and Opie. It teaches “situation ethics.” It’s wrong for little Opie to tell a fib but it’s all right for Andy, Barney, Aunt Bea, or any of the other adult characters on the show to use a little deception when the end justifies the means.

We must always consider the teachings of God’s word above anything else on any subject. As you read Revelation 21:8, notice how the inspired apostle John speaks of those who “*shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*” He says, “*But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murders, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and...*” those who tell the big black lies? NO! That is not what the inspired writer tells us. Rather, “*...all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*” That thought of “*all liars*” means that those “*little white lies*” will condemn one’s soul just as quickly as will the “big black” variety.

God’s word also speaks of those who shall be denied entrance into the holy city, “*there shall by no means enter it. anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie*” (Revelation 21:27). And Revelation 22:15 warns that left outside the gates of that city will be “*whoever loves and practices a lie.*”

One abomination of which Paul spoke in his condemnation of the sinful society in which he lived was they “*exchanged the truth of God for the lie*” (Romans 1:25). The same is true today. And if you do not love and obey the truth of God’s divine word spoken by His Son, Jesus, He will allow you to follow the lies of Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

We preachers often complain people today just will not listen to the word of God as it is being preached. We know if people will just listen and believe all God has said then His word will soften their hearts and they will obey the Gospel and have their sins forgiven. Jesus plainly states the reason people will not listen to God’s word. Listen to Him as he speaks to us from John 8:47: “*He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.*” Look at the context of that statement. Jesus is speaking to people who “*are not able to listen to My word*” (John 8:43). He then explains the reason one is not able to listen is because:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

John 8:44

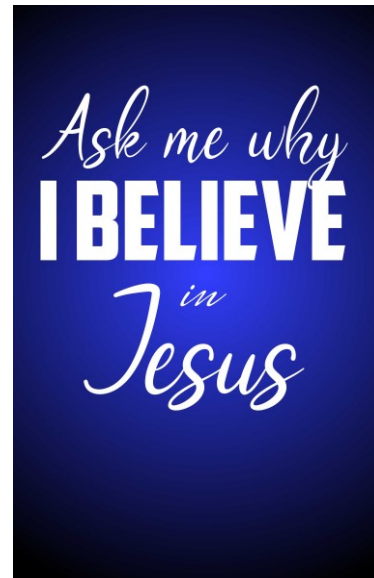
Can we not see in all this the relationship of Christians of the twenty-first century to the ninth commandment? “*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*”

In John chapter eight, as Jesus speaks of Satan as the father of lies, He implies there are two spiritual families in this world. One is either a child of God or a child of Satan, spiritually. Ephesians 3:14-15 speaks of the family of God wearing the name of

our Lord Jesus Christ. This name is obtained when one is “*born again*” (John 3:3, 5) into God’s spiritual family. When one hears the word of God and faith is produced (Romans 10:14-17), repents of all past sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30), confesses the precious name of Jesus (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9-10), and is baptized into His death (Romans 6:3-4), he or she becomes a Christian, wearing the name of Christ and none other. He or she is added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47) which is the church of Christ! And as a child of God will strive to overcome the temptation to tell any kind of falsehood, because God still says, “*You shall not bear false witness.*”

If you are guilty of this, or any sin, through repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sin you can have a brand-new beginning as a child of God. (Acts 2:38).

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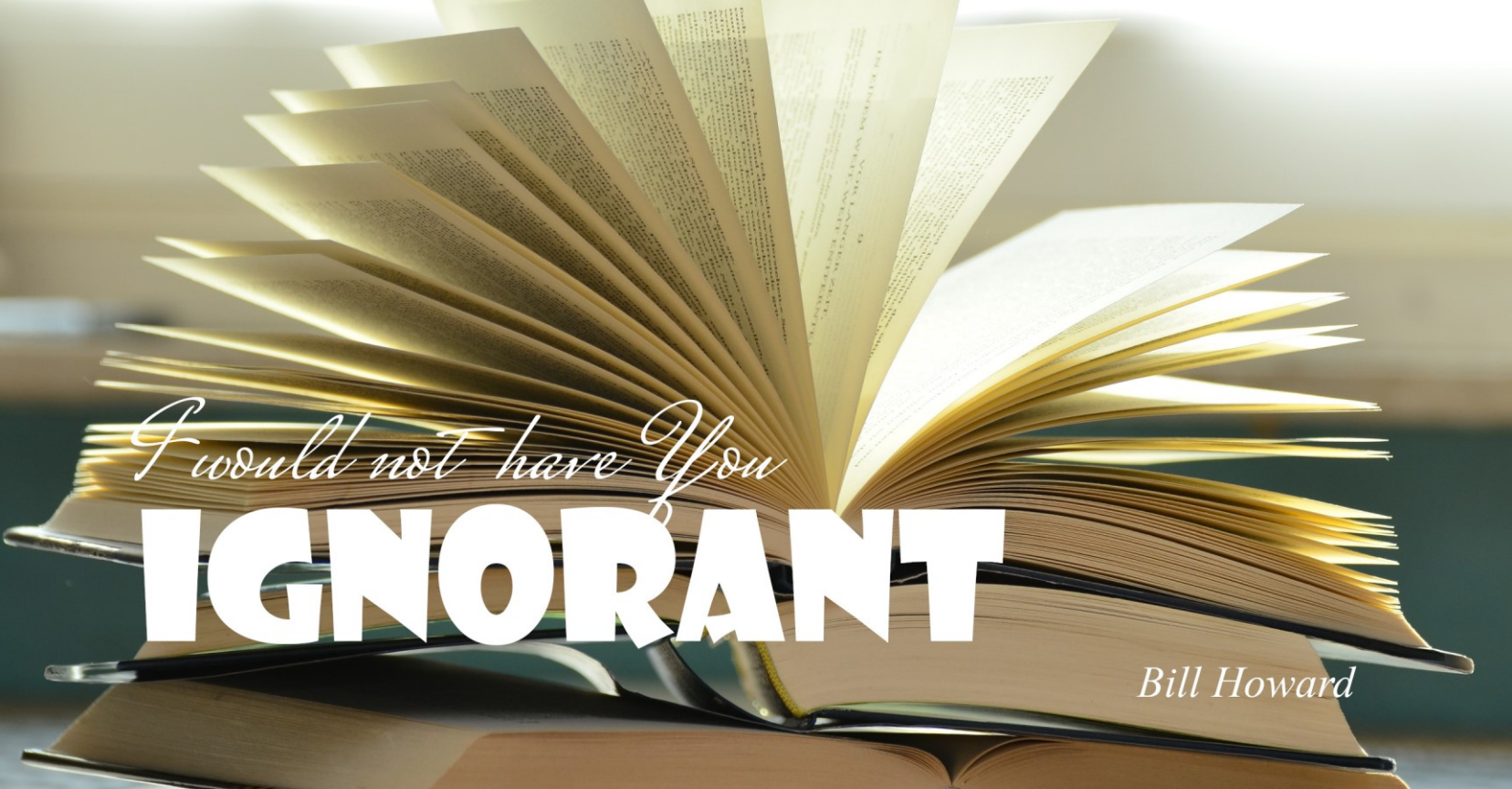


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I would not have You **IGNORANT**

Bill Howard

The phrase in our title, and others similar, are found several times in the writing of the Apostles Paul and Peter. To deduce their intent isn't difficult, it simply indicates there is knowledge which those addressed need to seek. Think about this fact for a moment; ignorance is not a bad thing. It means one is lacking knowledge, unlearned in one or many areas, untrained, unworldly or naïve, etc. The fact is all of us without exception are ignorant about some or many things. Ignorance which we have not faced and dealt with can be dangerous, but ignorance is easily overcome with education and knowledge.

In the secular world, education is critical as we pursue our aims and goals in this life. It prepares us for the challenges we will encounter along the way. Be it in the realm of studying to learn a certain trade or in academia to prepare for a particular profession of interest. Whichever pathway we choose, we must align ourselves with those who are trained to teach in the domain which prepares us to go forward. We do not go to a trade school or apprentice ourselves to a welder in preparation to be a brain surgeon. Neither do we need to go to Yale or Harvard if our intent is to be a plumber. The point is we must have

the proper education in order to fulfill a specific goal, so we seek out a place of education with correct instruction which will prepare us to achieve our goals. Usually, we will spend considerable time and money to reach the goal we have set. However, this is what we know without question: we must be certain that the facts we are receiving are correct. If not, we will not get to where we wish to be. We do not accept suppositions or questionable 'I thinks'; we insist on pure facts.

These are the same guidelines we must come to embrace in the pursuit of knowledge in any area of interest. Biblically, the Psalmist called forth to the Lord to teach him what is correct so he could be sure and safe in his beliefs. Such is the degree of importance to all study of God's will which is found in His book of instructions, the Holy Bible.

Teach me your ways, O Lord, That I may live according to your truth.

Psalm 86:11

As noted in the title of this writing, the necessity of overcoming ignorance was used several times to lead to the teaching of truth. We discern this in one instance of Paul's writing. "Now concerning spiritu-

al gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Corinthians 12:1). We can deduce from the statement that there is misunderstanding among the brethren about spiritual gifts. Paul’s intent is to teach them the truth about these gifts and rectify any misunderstanding. Among those Gentile converts, the Holy Spirit had bestowed gifts (abilities) to teach about the Christ through the gospel which is God’s power to save. There was a diversity of gifts but all from the one Holy Spirit. The gift of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, and the working of miracles were used to bring people to Christ. None had all these gifts, but all had some if the Apostles had laid hands on them to pass the gift, and Paul needed to clear up the confusion. He also pointed out later in this letter that when these gifts were no longer necessary, they would be done away.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; Whether there be tongues, they shall cease whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10.

The importance of teaching is emphasized by the fact that the word “teaching” is used 215 times in the New Testament. The kingdom had been established; the church was in infancy, and truth had to be foremost in all teaching to abolish error on the part of new converts and overcome false teaching by the agnostics, non-believers, and other unknowing and scoffers.

Peter’s first letter to Christians was to encourage them, to remind them they had been once in darkness but had been called out of darkness into the light of Jesus Christ. He indicates their responsibility as Christians is to teach others. “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Peter 2:15). As was pointed out earlier, ignorance is detrimental and must be overcome with teaching. Ignorance of God’s word will condemn us to eternal suffering unless we come to know the truth of His will for us.

Earlier in the same letter, Peter admonished Christians:

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.

1 Peter 1:13-14.

The Apostle Paul had occasion to address the Athenians about ignorance. He had witnessed the entire city worshipping idols. When he was speaking from Mars hill, he told them it was evident they were very superstitious. As he passed by things in the city, he noted their altar with the inscription: “To the unknown God.” To be certain they were not slighting any idol, they erected this altar. Paul used this as an opportunity to teach the Athenians. “To the unknown God, whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him do I declare unto you” (Acts 17:23). This provided him with an opportunity to declare to them that the true God was the creator of all that exists. He made the world. You need not build altars to worship Him. He explained to them: In the true God, we live, and move, and keep on living even as some of your own poets have written. But now, the important thing for you Athenians to know is that God ignored these things when people did not know better. But now, He wants everyone to be sorry for their sins and turn away from them. The reason? Because the day is coming when He will judge the world by the Lord Jesus Christ. (Read Acts 17:15-31). We are not privy to much information after this. We do know that some mocked, some listened and wanted to hear him again, others laughed at the idea of resurrection. Some did believe and among those was Dionysius, who was one of the judges of the Areopagus. What happened in the years to come in Athens, we do not know, but we do know Paul began speaking to them by pointing out their ignorance and expounding to them the gospel of Christ. Regardless of what did or did not happen after Paul was there, he fulfilled his responsibility to the Greeks. He knew that in their present condition they

did not know Christ, and remaining in that condition they would be lost. He could comprehend from what he witnessed they were ignorant about Christ and His saving gospel, so he did what he could to be of help to them.

Another case of ignorance Paul covered in his letter to the Christians of Ephesus. To the Ephesians, he counseled: “I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” This calling came from the word of God as Paul had preached to them the gospel of Christ. He encouraged them to live righteously and remain steadfast. He pointed out that there were those who received gifts of the spirit when they became Christians. He wanted them to use these gifts to the perfecting of the saints, that is growing to full-grown Christians and not remaining as babes in the knowledge of God. They were to use the gifts in their ministry to teach and build up the body of Christ which is His church. He prayed that God would help them to be strengthened by His Spirit, that Christ would dwell within their hearts, and that they would be rooted and grounded in love: love of God, love of the gospel, love for each other. His desire was that these Ephesians would not walk as other Gentiles that refused teaching. Their understanding was darkened, and they were alienated from God because of their ignorance and the blindness of their heart. He told them they should continue to be followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also loved them and gave his life as a sacrifice. They were cleansed by the blood of Christ and no longer alienated from Christ, but now they were co-heirs with Him. Take some time out and read again the letter to the Ephesians; it will truly strengthen you.

Let’s give some consideration to another thought from Peter in his second letter to Christians of Asia Minor. He again shows his concern for his brethren. He did not wish for them to be ignorant about anything that was of concern to the child of God. In this instance, he wanted them to be fully knowledgeable about end times. Among the various congregations there were at times scoffers and unbelievers who

chose to challenge the teaching of God’s word. Peter said to them in the letter that they should know in the last days there would be scoffers walking after their own lusts and would say “where is the promise of His coming,” attempting to cast doubt on the return of the Lord. It has been long delayed. Peter said: “For this they willingly are ignorant.” They discuss time and have no realization of what time is. “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). He is not saying that a day of God’s reckoning is a thousand years in length. He is merely saying the passing of time does not affect those promises God has made or the coming of judgment. It will happen when God decrees. There has been misunderstanding of the intent of this scripture. It has been used to teach falsehoods, but that is the subject of another writing. All we must gain from this passage is that all things will happen when God intends for them to happen.

The Lord isn’t really being slow about His promise, as some people think. No, He is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a horrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything in it will be found to deserve judgment.

2 Peter 3:9-10, NLT

The Christians in the early days of the church and all of mankind since that time need to be fully aware of what the word of God is teaching. There is no reason for having doubt about God’s timetable. The writer of the Hebrew letter told us: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). What does that mean? It means that there will be a judgment of all mankind when God says it is time for it to happen. He didn’t tell us the exact time, but Peter says the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night. That being correct, and it is because that is what God planned,

we will be better off spending time in preparation for the judgment rather than trying to determine when it will happen.

Jesus spoke:

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

John 5:28-29

Paul told the Thessalonians that he did not want them to be ignorant about the day of the Lord.

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1Thessalonians 4:16-17

God's plan in action.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

For I am not ashamed of the Good news. It is the power of God. It is the way He saves men from the punishment of their sins if they put their trust in Him. It is for the Jew first and for all other people also.

Romans 1:16, NLT

The good news is the gospel of Jesus Christ. We learn that Christ died for the sins of mankind, and when we believe this, we will turn from the old life, be baptized into Christ, added to His church which is His body. That body of which He will be the Savior. I would not have you ignorant: these things we must do if we wish for salvation. It is God's way. He made the plan and supplied the Savior. The rest is up to each of us.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

John 17:3

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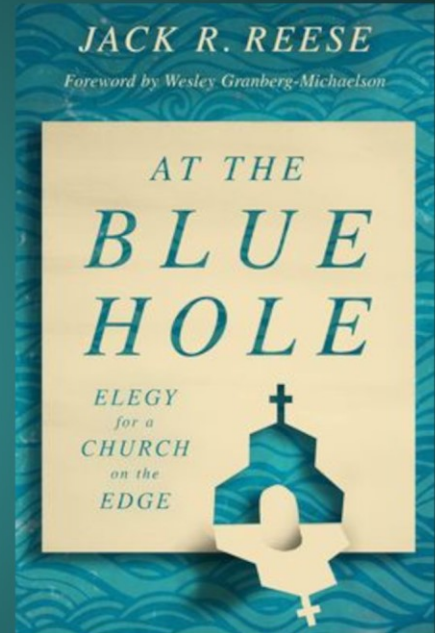
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Dealing with CLOUDY WATER DOWNSTREAM

"At the Blue Hole" a Review Primarily of chapter 2 of Jack R. Reese's book "AT THE BLUE HOLE"

Jim Mitchell



I love excursions into history. When I was first given a copy of *AT THE BLUE HOLE* and told that it dealt with churches of Christ and the American Restoration Movement, I was intrigued. Having quite a number of volumes on the subject, I am always interested in researching more of this history and digging into the subject ever deeper. Unfortunately, the book was not nearly what I had hoped it would be. What troubles me most about this book is that Christians and congregations who do not pay close attention to its content may believe that it is a balanced picture of the past. It is not. It ignores more history than it includes. Its presumptuous over-reach and numerous contradictions found previously in chapter one have prompted further analysis of the rest of its content. This article begins where the previous article ended. I began the review of chapter one with the following statement. I would like to include that statement here as well before we begin to look deeply into the cloudy water of chapter two.

When reviewing any piece of literature there is a need to be as thorough as possible.

In higher education especially, students are encouraged to analyze writings of the authors to whom they have been introduced. Such an approach to the written (or spoken) word should be the norm, not the exception. In fact, Reese himself mentions “critical thinking” in a positive way (p. 14), so it should be safe to assume that he would welcome that approach to this book. Engage, dissect, even debate the preconceptions, assumptions, and conclusions in any material being reviewed. Indeed, just as those in Berea “searched the Scriptures daily” to see if Paul and Silas were stating the truth (Acts 17:10-12), we need to do the same. Truth has nothing to fear from such analysis, in fact it should be welcomed. In reviewing this book, such an approach will be our goal. If statements and positions taken by Jack Reese hold true, then that should be noted. If his statements and positions are flawed, that needs to be noted just as strongly (if not more so).

Why is this second article titled “Dealing with CLOUDY Water AT THE BLUE HOLE”? First of all, at the beginning of chapter 2, we are told

“Churches are broken. Churches are dying. There are no easy answers. That’s what we have tried to say to this point” (p. 36). However, as was mentioned when we dealt with chapter one, Reese earlier stated, “Turns out, most of what we require is already in our possession. We just need a clear sense of what they are and why they are so important.” (p. 5). One might logically think if “most of what we require is already in our possession” (p.5), i.e., answers are readily accessible, that would contradict the idea that “there are no easy answers” (p. 36), would it not?

Although logical consistency was notably absent in chapter one of *AT THE BLUE HOLE*,¹ we shall approach the content of chapter 2 with an open mind. Perhaps the problems with presumptuous over-reaches noted throughout chapter 1 will become less numerous as the book progresses. At the outset of this look into chapter 2, it should probably be stated up front that Reese doesn’t provide any insight throughout these pages into what “*is already in our possession*” or why he believes “*there are no easy answers.*” That information, if it comes at all, will have to be found in chapters 3, 4, 5 and/or the epilogue (including any reference to Scripture). However, to be fair, I need to remind those who read the analysis of chapter 1 that Reese did briefly mention two passages of Scripture in the 35 pages of chapter one.

As we dig into the content of chapter two, we are told early on that “Our framing story for chapter 2 is an ordinary event, at least on the surface.... We will join some Christians on their way to a funeral.” This particular funeral, Reese continues, “marked a turning point in Churches of Christ, though no one could have known it at the time. A mantle of leadership was symbolically passed that day from one preacher to another, from the

peacemaker to the pallbearer” (p. 37).

Peacemaker?

There are several things which need to be pointed out from the context of chapter two. **First**, the idea of a “*mantle of leadership*” being passed “*symbolically*” is an interesting concept. How does one symbolically accomplish such a feat? The two men referenced by Reese throughout chapter 2 had different approaches to the religious challenges of their day. Before his death, T. B. Larimore did indeed become acquainted with a young preacher named Foy E. Wallace, Jr., but Reese mentions nothing in that brief acquaintance to suggest either that Larimore desired to pass “*a mantle of leadership*” to Wallace or that such a “*mantle*” was Larimore’s to give. In fact, from the way Reese both characterizes and quotes T.B. Larimore, one might be hard-pressed to conclude that Larimore believed he carried such a “*mantle*” in the first place. While the usage of *alliteration mnemonics*² such as “*peacemaker*” to “*pallbearer*” can be a great way to remember terms, the question to here be asked is whether or not the relationship and/or leadership role Reese sees between Larimore and Wallace is a genuine assessment or one contrived to have an impact on a particular point of view.

Second, there is a very pertinent question which should be asked regarding the verbiage of Reese concerning “*Peacemaker.*” Does having a gentle, non-confrontational spirit equate to being a “*peacemaker*”? The reason I bring up the question is due to what Reese wrote on page 57.

“Though Larimore had opinions about the issues of his day ... he did not believe they were gospel concerns. He refused to divide the church over them or condemn others with whom he disagreed.... His gentleness and humility, which had marked his entire minis-

¹For multiple examples of the contradictions contained in chapter one of *AT THE BLUE HOLE*, see *Analyzing Water “At the Blue Hole”* by Jim Mitchell [vol. 7, no. 2 The Quarterly (Vol. 7, No. 2) – Cobb Publishing]

²*Alliteration mnemonics* is the association of one word with another based upon both terms beginning with the same letter.

try, appeared to some detractors to be signs of cowardice, or what they considered worse, liberalism. For others, Larimore was a deeply entrenched conservative, stifling growth and subduing the voices of Christian liberty. But in the face of growing public pressure, he would not give in to either side.”

On page 59, Reese notes:

“Larimore was accused by both sides of caving in to the other, of avoiding conflict, of taking the easy way. But his heart for peace-making was, in fact, the difficult road. He took it not as an act of compromise but of conviction. He saw it not as the cowardly way but the Jesus way.”

Note the problems with the point Reese is endeavoring to make. First, if some were classifying Larimore guilty of “*cowardice*” and/or “*liberalism*” and others believed he was “*stifling growth and subduing the voices of Christian liberty*” how does that make him a “*peacemaker*”? Reese never tells us what T.B. Larimore did to get various sides of religious issues together so that true peace might be found between them. In fact, in response to an article from one of his former students, Larimore wrote:

“It cannot follow from the fact that I have never “spoken out” on these or similar matters, or taken part in a bitter controversy over them ... that I am or am not either for or against them ... I have, always, everywhere and under all circumstances, JUST SIMPLY LEFT THEM ALONE:” (p. 58).

Is one truly a “*peacemaker*” when he never ever attempts to get people together to study and talk out their differences or never sits down with them himself to analyze what they believe and teach, but **merely leaves them alone**? How does one define “*peacemaker*” in the first place? Webster’s Dictionary defines it as – “*n. one who makes peace by reconciling parties that are at vari-*

ance.”³ The Free Dictionary defines “*peacemaker*” as “*a person who tries to bring peace, especially by reconciling parties at variance, conflict, or war. A peacemaker can act as a link, a negotiator, or an influencer between parties.*”⁴ The Oxford American Dictionary defines it as “*n. a person who brings about peace.*”⁵ Reese uses “*peacemaker*” in a way which not only ignores (or perhaps misunderstands) the definition of “*peacemaker*,” but in a way which contradicts Larimore’s description of himself.

Third, when Larimore wrote “I am or am not either for or against them ... I have, always, everywhere and under all circumstances, JUST SIMPLY LEFT THEM ALONE,” he describes himself not as peacemaker, but as acquiescent.⁶ The subheading “The Peacemaker” (pages 55-60) is a misnomer by Larimore’s own admission. Surely Reese understands that T.B. Larimore, by his own statement from his July 24, 1897 article in the *Christian Standard*, did not view himself as taking on the role of what can be defined as peacemaker on divergent points of view regarding religious issues. Once again, in his own words, Larimore stated he “JUST SIMPLY LEFT THEM ALONE.” What message does it send when a former Academic Dean either fabricates or ignores the definition of a word pertinent to his point of view, especially when he puts something into the mouth and/or mind of the person whose story he claims to be telling? If accuracy were the goal of Reese, he would NOT have used “peacemaker” as

³Webster’s *Deluxe Unabridged Dictionary* (Simon & Schuster, NY, 1979) p. 1317.

⁴<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/peacemaker>

⁵Oxford American dictionary (NY, Oxford Univ. Press, 1980) p. 491.

⁶Acquiescent is defined by Webster as: “tending to accept or allow what others want or demand” and acquiesce as “the acceptance of something without protest.” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/acquiescent>. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, acquiescent means “willing to do what other people want” <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/acquiescent>

a word descriptive of the above quote of T.B. Larimore. The title of chapter two of “At The Blue Hole” is both flawed and erroneous. It would have arguably been much more accurate to have titled chapter two The AMBIVALENT⁷ and the ANTAGONIST⁸, for there were arguable flaws in the approach of both of these men.

Fourth, when Reese states that Larimore did not see neutrality on such religious issues as “*the cowardly way but the Jesus way*,” is he suggesting Larimore believed Jesus never confronted anyone, but was always neutral and refused to take any position which might have seemed harsh to others? Or is Reese merely stating that is what he thinks Larimore believed? In either case, would not such a position be problematic? What Reese provides is not clear water from “*the Blue Hole*” but water which he has personally clouded as though he were standing on the bank dumping personal wishes and desires into the water “further downstream.” It is decidedly NOT an accurate way to access history.⁹

Was a “symbolic” mantle of leadership actually passed from Larimore to Wallace? The focus of T.B. Larimore was upon: education (teaching in several schools as well as establishing Mars Hill Academy which, between 1871 and 1887 became Mars Hill College), serving as the minister of several congregations, and holding extended Gospel

meetings which lasted for weeks and sometimes months. Though he never wrote a book, there is an extensive collection of his sermons, correspondence, and religious articles which has been preserved and available for those who desire to learn more about his life, his preaching, and his teaching endeavors.¹⁰ By comparison, Foy E. Wallace Jr. was NOT involved in teaching in schools or colleges like T.B. Larimore. However, like Larimore, he was involved extensively in extended Gospel meetings. Wallace rarely served as the minister of any congregation of God’s people, but rather as editor of several religious publications (some of which he began), wrote quite a number of volumes dealing with a variety of religious topics, and engaged in multiple debates. When Reese states “*The funeral (of T.B. Larimore) ... marked a turning point in Churches of Christ, though no one could have known it at the time,*” [emphasis mine, JM] is it possible that such a comparison is as much (if not more) a contrivance of Reese than of reality?

Fifth, on p. 47, Reese writes:

“In 1929 the conscious identity of the churches in this movement was not quite a hundred years old. In the early nineteenth century these churches had come together almost helter-skelter. There was no founding vision, no grand design, no denominational organization or plan. Even though it is commonly referred to today as the Restoration Movement or, more recently, the Stone-Campbell Movement, it was not even a single group. It was certainly not one founded by two men named Stone and Campbell. Rather, there were a collection of mostly independent congregations emerging from several diverse groups and movements.”

Why should Reese seem surprised that the “*Restoration Movement*” did not have a “*founding vision*” or a “*grand design*.” If the intent was to go

⁷AMBIVALENT - “adj. With mixed feelings toward a certain object or situation” (Oxford American Dictionary, p. 20); “*having or showing simultaneous and contradictory attitudes or feelings toward something or someone* : characterized by ambivalence.” (Ambivalent Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster)

⁸ANTAGONIST - “one that contends with or opposes another” (Antagonist Definition & Meaning – Merriam-Webster); “a person who is opposed to, struggles against, or competes with another; opponent; adversary.” (Antagonist Definition & Meaning | Dictionary.com)

⁹What we have now discovered, is that Jack R. Reese is standing over something in the water “downstream” that lies at the bottom of the stream, and instead of pulling it out of the water, he has endeavored to cover it up with wishful thinking and self-contrived ideas. The object which has been submerged is the DICTIONARY.

¹⁰ T. B. Larimore digital archive are available at: Abilene Christian University Special Collections (acu.edu)

back to God's Word, why would a "*founding vision*" be needed? Would not such a vision already be enumerated in God's Word? What "*grand design*" should exist beyond what is revealed in Scripture? Is it possible that Reese does not believe God's word is a sufficient and/or adequate guide in spiritual things? After all, his assessment of Scripture is that "*Scripture is notoriously resistant to everyone interpreting the Bible the same*" (p. 177). Furthermore, Reese is amazed that there was "*no denominational organization or plan*," but almost immediately acknowledges – "*To be clear, their intention was not to become a new denomination*" (p. 47). If their intent was NOT to become a new denomination, then why would Reese be surprised that no "*denominational organization or plan*" existed within the movement?

In the **Sixth** place, using Larimore's funeral as a backdrop for his discussion, Reese asks several questions on page 48 that are at the core of his apparent misunderstanding and/or confusion of the movement about which he claims to be writing. Such misunderstanding and erroneous conclusions are probably to be expected when one is so selective that more history is (intentionally?) ignored than included.¹¹

"While the funeral marked a significant turning point in these churches, there have been many turning points. At each crucial moment, like any traveler approaching a crossroads, they had to make a choice.

"Could the early restorationists, for example, unite believers around common commitments while remaining, say, Presbyterians or Baptists, or would they have to leave those denominations – ironically for the sake of Christian unity? Could the friends and followers of the earliest leaders overcome their differences and unite their causes? (p. 48)

¹¹The aforementioned article reviewing "At the Blue Hole" deals with more with the level of historical material ignored by Reese in chapter one.

As was noted in dealing previously with multiple problems in chapter one of Reese's book, Reese answers his own question later, but by the time one gets to page 92 what he asks on page 48 may have been forgotten. On page 92 he states the ultimate desire of the movement:

"... was not to become a new church but to work within the various denominations for reform. The ultimate objective was unity. But the effect of their efforts was negligible. **Few seemed interested in joining them. Certainly, their old Presbyterian associates were not.**" (p. 92) [emphasis mine, JM]

Reese has answered his own question, even if he doesn't realize it. To follow the Bible only would necessitate leaving man-made confessions of faith and points of doctrine incompatible with God's Word which had become ingrained in denominationalism, would it not?¹²

Seventh, Reese seems not to grasp what is actually at stake in the "*two fundamental impulses of the movement*," and how they do or do not relate to each other.

"Perhaps most important, could they keep together the two fundamental impulses of the movement – the drive to unite believers and the drive to restore the ancient order – when those two passions clashed." (p. 48)

It seems Reese is amazed that "*those two passions clashed*" (p. 48) even though his book indicates that it was the denominational world who failed to welcome those who desired to go back to Scripture in faith and practice. For example, in reference to Campbell's sermon on the law, Reese notes:

Campbell's "Sermon on the Law...directly

¹²Since this point has already been dealt with in the critique covering chapter one, it will not be elaborated on again. It should be noted, however, that the previous article pointed out statements from Campbell and others which answered the questions Reese here asks, but he either did not do enough research to find the answer or perhaps just ignored it.

called into question key doctrines of the Philadelphia Confession. His arguments were in direct opposition to what most Baptists believed. Leading Baptist pastors soon began working to kick Campbell and his churches out.” (p. 95)

Reese acknowledges that it was those among denominational bodies who found themselves at odds with this movement’s desire to return to Scripture for faith and practice, and then writes his book in a way which calls for an opposite point of view. Reese actually contradicts Reese. Among the voluminous quotes from writings connected with the Restoration Movement, which Reese either ignores or of which he is not aware, is the following statement from Campbell.

“When men substituted the incomprehensible dogmas of theology for the simple word of God, and when these, elaborated and systematized in the form of authoritative creeds, became the means of perpetuating division and alienation, it is not strange that some, mistaking these systems for Christianity, should denounce it as false and injurious to society, or that those who loved the truth should regard with aversion those false divisive standards and those sectarian titles and designations by which religious partyism and strife were constantly maintained. While sectarianism had thus, on the one hand, been the fruitful parent of infidelity, it had, on the other, provoked those who perceived its baleful influence to seek its overthrow, and to endeavor to restore to the world the simple gospel as it was preached in the beginning, and presented upon the faithful page of inspiration.”¹³

Eighth, on page 49 of chapter 2, concerning the

¹³Robert Richardson, *MEMOIRS of ALEXANDER CAMPBELL* [Standard Publishing Co. Cincinnati, 1897] vol. 1, pp. 184, 185.

(footnote 8 continued) [Note especially vol. 1, 184-225.] (This quotation is also found in the critique of the first chapter of “At the Blue Hole” but with what Reese wrote in chapter 2, it needed to be included here as well. [JM])

funeral of T. B. Larimore (March 20, 1929), Reese tells us that “as the mourners gathered at the Fairhaven Cemetery singing, ‘In the Sweet By and By,’ tens of thousands of lives across North America had been touched by the man they had come to honor.” Reese informs us that Larimore had written many articles through the years (p. 60), quotes at length from an article Larimore wrote in the *Christian Standard* in July of 1897,¹⁴ and then tells us “Most of the *Standard’s* readers in 1929 had never heard of T.B. Larimore.”¹⁵ So, the writings and influence of such a powerful evangelist were largely erased from memory in 32 years, or is this another example of the type of over-reaching statements we saw over and over again in chapter one now being repeated in chapter two?

Permit me to reference a statement by Reese on page 52 which further illustrates this problem of presumptive conclusions and over-reaching statements found throughout the book.

“The world of 1929, with its motion pictures and car radios, was inconceivable in the year Larimore was born. In fact, **few people in 1843 could have conceived of still photographs** much less movies or automobiles, certainly not ones with radios.” [emphasis mine, JM]

There should be a point in which presumptive writing is replaced with research, especially from an author who has written much and who has even served as an Academic Dean, should there not? How does history match Reese’s assessment on (what might well be) the seemingly insignificant statement above about photography and what Reese describes as the 1843 lack of conception related thereto? According to the Britannica History of Photography:

“The earliest known photography studio anywhere opened in New York City in March 1840, when Alexander Wolcott opened a

¹⁴*At the Blue Hole*, pgs 58, 59.

¹⁵*Ibid.* p. 60

“Daguerrean Parlor” for tiny portraits, using a camera with a mirror substituted for the lens. ... In the late 1840s every city in the United States had its own “daguerrean artist,” and villages and towns were served by traveling photographers who had fitted up wagons as studios. In New York City alone there were 77 galleries in 1850. Of these, the most celebrated was that of Matthew B. Brady, who began in 1844 to form a “Gallery of Illustrious Americans,” a collection of portraits of notables taken by his own and other cameramen. Several of these portraits, including those of Daniel Webster and Edgar Allen Poe, were published by lithography in a folio volume.”¹⁶

So “still photograph” studios began (in the United States) in 1840 and were all over the country by the late 1840’s but, in Reese’s assessment, “few people could have conceived of them in 1843”? I mean this in all sincerity and with legitimate concern for serious writing and research, but if someone is going to be that sloppy with secular history, perhaps they need to be watched extra closely when it comes to dealing with God’s Word and the history of the body of Christ.

Pages 61 and 62 contain an interesting but brief illustration of the Hebrew word “*timshel*,” stating that the word “*gives a choice. It might be the most important word in the world.*” He connects it to a point he made early in the book where he (Reese) thought he was on the correct road, but he was not. Here is the conclusion to his illustration of “*timshel*.”

“In the years following T. B. Larimore’s funeral, most Church of Christ folks did not know they had come to a junction. They were not aware that they were taking a different road. It felt like they were just going straight ahead. But they had changed course. They had made a choice. It would be a while before some would look around and notice the

terrain was different. Timshel.”

Due to: very selective use of historical material, inconsistencies, self-contradictions, the misunderstanding (or ignoring) of definitions, and writing from presuppositional thinking and over-reaching conclusions, I firmly believe “*Timshel*” is an apt description of Reese and his writings. Give him the benefit of the doubt that he is not aware that he has taken “*a different road.*” Although he feels like he is “*just going straight ahead,*” he has indeed “*changed course,*” unless this error-filled course was the one upon which he has always traveled. One can only hope and pray that consistency will one day replace inconsistency, that the true meaning of words will be taken seriously and be the norm, that history (all of it) will be given equal viewing, and that self-contradictions will one day be a thing of the past. Thus far I am as disappointed in the content of chapter 2 as I was with chapter 1. I was hoping for something much, much better.

Pallbearer?

“**The Pallbearer**” is the subheading of the last section of chapter two. Reese turns his attention to one who he states “*would soon be the most powerful editor and preacher in Churches of Christ.*” It is at this point that his attention turns **very briefly** to Foy E. Wallace, Jr. (1896-1979). Why do I state it as “very briefly”? Out of the 30-plus pages in the second chapter, his comments on Wallace cover approximately three. Was Foy E. Wallace Jr. really “*the most powerful editor and preacher in Churches of Christ*”? On page 69, Reese contrasts Larimore and Wallace in a summary paragraph.

“Wallace displayed a different spirit than Larimore and, by so doing, was instrumental in creating a new pattern for those who came after – a new meaning, a new identity. Said more bluntly, Wallace did not merely exhibit less peaceable behavior than Larimore, he consciously and utterly rejected Larimore’s reconciling spirit and worked all his life to undo Larimore’s more openhearted vision of the church.”

¹⁶History of photography - Daguerre, Petzval, Beard, Claudet | Britannica

For a moment, return to the dictionary with me to examine the definition of “*reconciling*.” The Cambridge Dictionary defines it as “*to find a way in which two situations or beliefs that are opposed to each other can agree and exist together*.”¹⁷ The Oxford American Dictionary defines it as:

“1. to restore friendship between (people) after an estrangement or quarrel. 2. to induce (a person or oneself) to accept an unwelcome fact or situation, ... 3. to bring (facts or statements, etc.) into harmony or compatibility when they appear to conflict.”¹⁸

T. B. Larimore described himself in a way which fits neither “*peacemaking*” nor “*reconciling*” and yet Reese attempts to place upon him a role in life which he clearly rejected. Remember Larimore’s statement:

“It cannot follow from the fact that I have never “spoken out” on these or similar matters, or taken part in a bitter controversy over them... that I am or am not either for or against them... I have, always, everywhere and under all circumstances, JUST SIMPLY LEFT THEM ALONE: and can, therefore, never be justly or truthfully counted, in any sense, in that fight.” (p. 58).

Brother Larimore described himself as one who was neither involved in peacemaking nor reconciling for, as he stated, those were not his goals. That’s Brother Larimore’s assessment, not mine. How honest is an author who does such an injustice to those who have passed from this life into the next that they attribute to the deceased something in which they never participated nor had a

desire to do so?

Forgive me from being redundant, but I would like to close the same way I did in the first article

May we never be either afraid or hesitant to analyze, in depth, writings about God’s word and the church of our Lord as thoroughly as possible.

dealing with “*At The Blue Hole*.” Let me state unequivocally once again that it is not my desire for this to be viewed, in any form or fashion, as a personal attack, for it is not. I have never met Jack R. Reese. However, no matter how well intended Reese’s effort might be,

with the way he deals with this material, it might be difficult to receive a passing grade for chapter two of “*At the Blue Hole*” in a freshman level college class. Contextual problems that include things such as a lack of historical research, leading to faulty statements and conclusions; self-contradictions; hasty generalizations; the omission of pertinent facts and quotes (perhaps because they do not fit the desired narrative); and overly inclusive statements are never a healthy approach to any subject. In such writing, “*the result is almost always tragic*.”

At The Blue Hole begins with statements of commendation from 25 academicians, theologians, and religious leaders from a variety of faith groups. I personally know (or have met) 5 of those individuals and consider them friends. I am hopeful that, in their defense, they only gave a cursory reading to Reese’s manuscript before writing their comments since the things problematic in chapter one are multiplied throughout chapter two. May we never be either afraid or hesitant to analyze, in depth, writings about God’s word and the church of our Lord as thoroughly as possible. [As time permits and since we have delved now into the second chapter of this book, I anticipate there may be more to come as we test the water of the remaining chapters of “*At The Blue Hole*.”] May truth always be our quest!

¹⁷RECONCILE | English meaning - Cambridge Dictionary

¹⁸Oxford American Dictionary, (NY, Oxford Univ. Press, 1980) p. 562.



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Jesus' last command for us before leaving the earth needs to become our first priority.

Matt 28:19-20 "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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

WHAT IS SAVING FAITH?

Noah Wall

Faith is one of the most fundamental and important concepts in the Bible. It is essential to salvation and to living a life that is pleasing to God. Properly understanding this concept must be of extreme importance to every God-fearing man or woman. As with anything of great importance, we should turn to the word of God to find the answer.

What is the source of Biblical faith? Many believe that faith is a gift directly imparted by God to an individual without the slightest action on the part of the recipient. However, the Bible says, “*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). Paul elaborates on this farther in 2 Timothy 3:15, where he states, “*From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*” A saving faith comes from knowing “*the Holy Scriptures.*” Faith is not arbitrarily given to those who do not seek it. It is obtained by hearing and knowing the word of God.

How can I know if I have this faith? First, I need to ask the question, “Where did my faith come from?” Did it come from the word of God or somewhere else? If my faith did not originate from the word of God, it is not a Biblical faith.

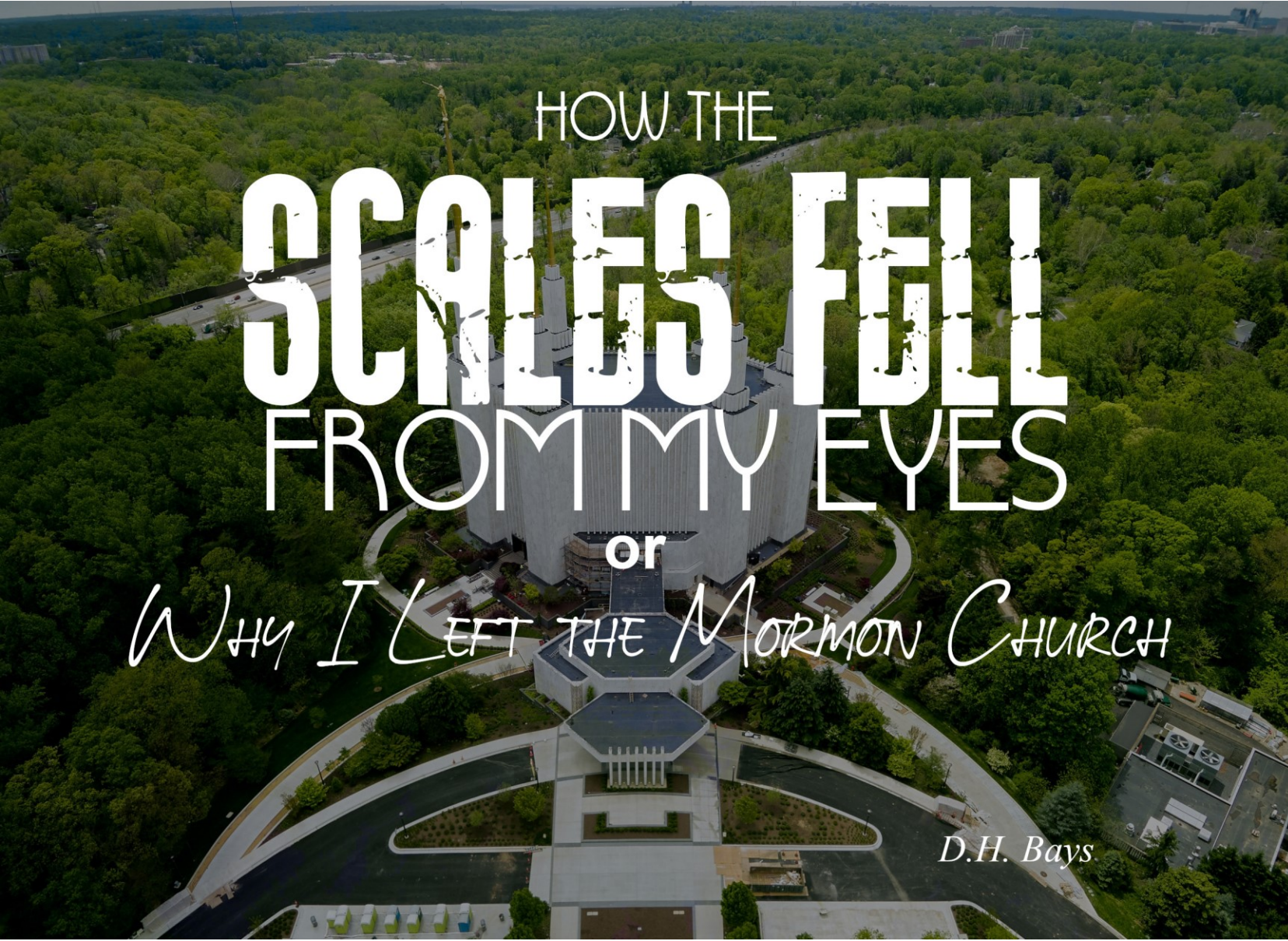
Secondly, I need to ask, “What is my faith in?” Is my faith in the God I read about in the Bible? Do I believe what it says about who He is, what He has done, and what He will do? If not, I do not have a saving faith.

Finally, I need to ask, “What does my faith do?” We can know if we have faith, not by a subjective feeling, but by the objective standard of God’s word. In James 2:14-26, we learn that faith without works is as dead as a lifeless corpse. Faith alone cannot save (14-17), is no better than the faith the demons have (18-19), is useless (20), is incomplete (21-22), does not justify (23-25), and is dead (26). So, asking what faith *does* is a very good question because an inactive faith will not save us.

What kind of works is James talking about that complete faith? He is not talking about works of merit. Paul talks about these in Ephesians 2:8-9, “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*” Paul presents two (theoretical) ways to be saved. One is by works – by doing something by which we attempt to merit (earn) God’s favor. This is not how we are saved. The other is by grace – by God bestowing favor on us who did nothing to merit (earn) it. This is the only way a sinner can be saved.

This grace, however, is conditional. We access God’s marvelous grace “*through faith*”, and this faith must be completed by works – not works though which we attempt to circumvent grace, but works by which we complete our faith to access God’s all-sufficient grace. These works are obedience. Obedience to what though? In Hebrews 11, we read about the Israelites’ faith. In verse 30 we read, “*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.*” When we in faith obey the conditions God places on the gift that He offers, we, just like the Israelites receive His gift through our living, completed faith. For Israel, the gift was Jericho which was received by faith but only after faith was completed by obedience. For us it’s no different – only the gift is different. The gift is salvation which is received by faith but only after faith is completed by obedience. If my faith is the saving faith of the Bible, it will be an active faith – one that does the things God commands for the reasons God commands them.

Faith as defined by the Bible is confidence in what God’s word says about who He is, what He’s done and what He will do. It is unwavering trust that God can and will perform all the promises He has made. Biblical faith is not complete until it acts in humble submissive obedience to what God commands.

An aerial photograph of the Salt Lake Temple, a large white building with a central spire and multiple wings, surrounded by green trees and a paved area. The title is overlaid on the image in white text.

HOW THE SCALES FELL FROM MY EYES or Why I Left the Mormon Church

D.H. Bays

Note: Brother Bays wrote this article several decades ago, and has long-since passed on to his reward. But the story is well-worth reading, and the information useful if you ever meet and interact with someone from the Mormon Church.—*Editor.*¹

It is with pleasure that I undertake to tell the readers what I surrendered for “the creed that needs no revision” and to recount the steps by which I was “led out of bondage to human creeds into the full light of the gospel.”

The “Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” is but one of the many phases that

Mormonism has assumed since the death of its founder, Joseph Smith, Jr., in June, 1844. With the exception of polygamy, the right of presidency, and a few other matters of minor consideration, the doctrines of Mormonism are everywhere essentially the same. It is but just to say, in this connection, that the people of the Reorganized Church are sincere in their protestations against both the doctrine and practice of “plural marriage,” but I cannot say so much for the sincerity of their claim respecting its origin, and their prophet’s relation to the system, for he was certainly the author of polygamy, and practiced what he preached.

In order to a correct understanding as to what I surrendered for the simple New Testament plea, it will be necessary to state categorically what I was, from early childhood, taught to believe. Here is the

¹ This, and over 20 other true stories of conversion from denominationalism to the true church of Jesus Christ can be found in the book, *Finding True Light* (2022, Cobb Publishing).

list:

1. That Joseph Smith, Jr., was a prophet of God.
2. The Book of Mormon, a revelation from God, fully inspired, and of equal authority with the Bible, if not a little superior,
3. The- Book of Doctrine and Covenants, a book of pretended revelations from God through Joseph Smith, for the government of the church, an inspired discipline.
4. The “Inspired Translation,” a pretended translation of the Old and New Testament Scriptures by Joseph Smith, Jr.

All of these “standard works of the church” I gave up for the world’s only book of life—the Bible, the only divinely authorized standard for the government and salvation of men—heaven’s only book of discipline.

Passing from the standard books of the church to a consideration of its doctrines, Mormonism teaches:

1. That the church established by Christ at Jerusalem, on the first day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus, was *utterly destroyed* in the great Roman apostasy—not a vestige of it remained.
2. That, in consequence of this apostasy, God had abrogated all authority to preach the gospel and administer its ordinances.
3. That, in order to restore this lost authority, there must be a new revelation from heaven.
4. That this long lost authority was restored through the ministration of heavenly angels, who laid their hands on Joseph Smith’s head and ordained him to the gospel ministry.
5. That these divine messengers were none other than the apostles Peter, James and John (D. & C., p. 112, par. 5).
6. That no man has authority to preach or baptize, or in any other way minister for Christ, “except he be ordained by someone who hath authority,..., and has been regularly *ordained by the heads of the church*” (D. & C., p. 142, par. 4).
7. That Christ had no church, no people on the

earth, from 570 A. D., when all authority was taken from the earth, till Apr. 6, 1830, when the authority was restored, and the church organized by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

8. That, in view of these facts, the Church of Latter-day Saints is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D. & C., p. 65, par. 5).
9. That this church, with its restored authority and inspired priesthood, is in full possession of all miraculous gifts and supernatural powers of the apostolic church.
10. That the church has inspired apostles and prophets who are endowed with power to heal the sick, cast out devils, speak in unknown tongues, give sight to the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf.

All these things, and many others, they claim actually to perform; and it matters not how corrupt the church, or how utterly depraved its priesthood, each and every Mormon organization, calling itself the only “true and living church,” claims to possess all these marvelous powers to the exclusion of all others. The ungodly Brighamites, the unscrupulous and thieving Strangites, the unholy “Lymanites,” together with the more sedate and tolerable “Josephites,” all claim the power to work miracles.

Added to all these peculiarities of faith and doctrine, the Saints also teach:

1. The gathering of the faithful to Independence, Mo., the place of the New Jerusalem, where a magnificent temple is to be built, and that Jesus will “suddenly come to his temple,” and deliver his people from the power of their enemies, the unholy Gentiles.

2. They also teach “the *law* of tithing.”
3. The blessing of little children by the laying on of hands.
4. The washing of feet.
5. The baptism of the living for the dead.

All of these things the Latter-day Saints teach, and all these things, absurd and unscriptural as they now seem, I was from my earliest childhood taught to believe came directly from God through his

prophet.

Frequently the question has been asked, “How can a man, with ordinary common sense, be made to believe such stuff?” The answer is easy. A cursory view of the religious world as it exists to-day, both Christian and heathen, together with a moment’s serious reflection as to the incomprehensibility of psychological law, will be quite sufficient to show that man is so constituted that he may be taught to believe anything, it matters not how absurd, if only his training is begun sufficiently early in life.

When only about seven years of age, my parents, who at the time were members of the M. E. Church, South, were induced to accept the Mormon faith, and from that time till I reached manhood’s estate, I had been taught all the foregoing tenets of the Mormon Church. And so thoroughly were these principles instilled into my childish mind that, at a very early age, they had become almost a part of my being. So firmly had these tenets become fixed in my mind, that no question or doubt as to their genuineness ever entered my mind.

When my parents first heard Mormonism expounded, polygamy was carefully kept in the background. Nothing but “the first principles of the gospel” were taught. They knew nothing of its existence till they had “gathered” to “the camp”—as the Mormon settlement was called—in the mountain fastnesses of western Texas. Mormonism, in its first aspect, seemed altogether innocent; but, upon a closer examination, as it existed in the “camp” of the Saints, it was anything but attractive. Here they found the leader, Lyman Wight, one of Joseph Smith’s trusted apostles, a drunken old reprobate, living openly with four wives under the same roof, to say nothing of a number of concubines.

When the real condition of things was made known to them, my parents “bolted” the whole Mormon ticket, and began to make preparations to leave “the camp of the Saints” and “the beloved city” of “Zodiac,” as the Mormon village was called, thoroughly disgusted with that particular brand of Latter-day Saintism. It finally developed that a general dissatisfaction prevailed in the camp;

for, when we broke away from the “company,” something like a dozen families joined our ranks, and went with us to Corpus Christi, on the Gulf Coast, in southern Texas.

In this venture the family was financially ruined. After a few years of uncertainty and doubt, during which our finances had very materially improved, other missionaries, representing another phase of Mormon delusion, found us out, and came to “gather up the lost sheep” of the Mormon fold. They represented what they were pleased to call “the kingdom of God,” under the leadership of one James J. Strang, of Beaver Island, Mich., who claimed to be the true successor of “the prophet Joseph.”

Still clinging to the belief that Joseph Smith was in reality a prophet of God, and convinced that it was their duty to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” and having accepted the “testimony” of his emissaries that “King James,” as Strang was called, was the right man in the right place, preparations were at once made for the long, tedious overland journey to Beaver Island.

The large farm and other valuable holdings having been sold for whatever they would bring in spot cash, my deluded father started on “the wild-goose chase” of his life. From our comfortable home, near McGlone’s Bluffs, on the banks of Corpus Christi Bay, in southern Texas, we started for “the kingdom of God” (?!!!) by the overland route. Now a lad of fourteen, I was placed in charge of a huge Texas wagon, drawn by four yoke of long-horned Texas steers. This attractive outfit I drove every square inch of the road between McGlone’s Bluffs to Joliet, Ill., and only for the fact that the broad expanse of Lake Michigan intervened, I should have driven those festive long-horns bodily into “the kingdom.” During this entire journey of some 1,400 miles, and covering a period of more than six months, not a member of the family—not even my mother—ever sat at a table for a meal or slept beneath the shelter of a friendly roof. Tent and covered wagon constituted our only shelter—our only home. In company with several other families, we reached our destination late in October, and were soon settled for the

long, dreary Michigan winter.

At last we were among the Saints (!!) and in “the kingdom”—but, oh, what a kingdom! Instead of the purity and common honesty, which we had reason to expect among a people who made such remarkable claims, we found, with a few honorable exceptions, a veritable “den of thieves.” King Strang, like his Texas compeer, was living with four wives beneath the same roof, and his “household” was supported from the tithes of goods stolen from their Gentile neighbors on the shores of Lake Michigan. In short, a more reckless and unscrupulous band of thieves and robbers were never assembled on so many square miles of American soil

Robbery, theft, and even murder, was carried on to such an extent that forbearance ceased to be a virtue, and the people on the main land finally took matters into their own hands, and drove the last Mormon from the island.

In the meantime, dissension had arisen among themselves, and two of their own number shot their king, inflicting wounds from which he died a few weeks later. The removal of Strang from his island home to Voree, Wis., was the signal for a general stampede of the leaders, and the expulsion of the rank and file by the mob which soon followed, proved to be the death-blow of the Strangite kingdom.

Disgusted with the lawlessness and abominations of Strangism, my father returned to Texas to collect funds with which he might remove his family from such unholy surroundings, and was absent at the time of the expulsion. Being the eldest son, the care of a large family now devolved upon my untrained shoulders.

Upon my father’s return, he experienced great difficulty in locating his now impoverished family, but finally located them near Racine, Wis., distressedly poor, but, fortunately, all alive and comparatively well.

With shaken faith and shattered hopes in all things Mormon, and with faces to the westward, my parents at length found themselves on a farm in western Iowa.

Reorganized Missionaries.

Here, in the early sixties, we were brought face to face with still another phase of Mormonism. This time it was the Reorganized Church, then called the “New Organization.” These “Reorganized” missionaries were looking up such Latter-day Saints as had refused, on account of the corrupt practices, to follow the fortunes of Brigham Young, Lyman Wight, James J. Strang and others.

By this time I had reached an age that enabled me to do a little thinking for myself, so that when the missionaries approached me, I could state my reasons for wishing to have nothing more to do with Mormonism. I frankly expressed my conviction that no system of religion could possibly be of God which included among its tenets the doctrine and practice of polygamy, theft and other evils and manifold abominations, such as Mormonism had developed in such an incredibly short period of time.

These objections were met by the declaration that none of these things were a part of original Mormonism—that they were all innovations introduced by wicked men; that the prophet was not the author of these wicked practices, and never approved them; that, as a matter of fact, they had been introduced by Brigham Young and others after the death of “the prophet and patriarch” at Nauvoo, Ill. Indeed, God had rejected “the old church” because of these very things, and thus rendering a reorganization of the church an absolute necessity.

Convinced of these things, our entire family were now baptized into the Reorganized Church. This time, we felt *sure*, we were on the right track. At least we had not been deceived as to the moral status of the church—it sanctioned none of these grossly wicked things.

In due time, I was called to the ministry, and was “regularly ordained by the heads of the church,” and began to preach the gospel of the “Reorganized Church.” Filled with zeal for the cause I loved, no trial was too severe and no sacrifice too great. Willing to endure any and every hardship for the salvation of souls, I soon found myself in the front rank

of the active, working forces of the church, sharing, as I then believed—and which I have to this day no reason to doubt—the fullest confidence of my fellow-ministers.

My First Disappointment.

When first I became acquainted with the people of the Reorganized Church, I attended their preaching and other services quite regularly, and greatly to my surprise they had what they called the “gifts of the gospel.” At nearly every meeting someone would speak in an “unknown tongue.” Of course, nobody understood it, and in order to be duly “edified,” someone had to “give the interpretation” of the tongue, which usually followed immediately upon the first speaker having resumed his seat. The next moment another would spring to his feet, and in a state of extreme mental excitement, deliver a frenzied, pointless prophecy. Not infrequently have I known a half-dozen or more people to exercise themselves in this remarkable manner during the course of a single evening.

These things profoundly impressed me, and believing these “manifestations of the Spirit” to be genuine, and the people honest, I cast in my lot with the Saints of the Reorganized Church, and gave the cause my hearty support.

Soon after entering the ministry, I found myself up against what to me was a very serious proposition. In their “social meetings,” the preachers, the people, and even little boys and girls, would “testify” that they *knew* the work was of God—they knew it *by the Spirit*, and no guesswork about it. They knew it was true, for God was now “confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16: 20) in these “gifts.” I finally determined that, if these things were among the things knowable, I must know them for myself. I was assured that these “spiritual gifts” were attainable through fasting and prayer. Although engaged in helping my father to harvest his wheat crop, I began my fast with the determination to continue till I had secured the coveted blessing. Like Daniel, with my face turned toward Jerusalem, I prayed morning, noon and night.

Surely the Lord would hear my prayers, and bestow upon my waiting soul “some spiritual gift.” If only I could speak in an unknown tongue, or, still better, could I see the sick healed by the laying on of my hands, then I would *know*. But, alas! none of these things were for me.

I thus continued my fasting and prayer till the morning of the third day, when, from sheer exhaustion, I was compelled to desist. This was a sore disappointment to me. I confided the matter to the minister. ‘What was the matter?’ “These signs shall follow them that believe.” I believe; why do not the signs follow? Why does not the Lord “confirm the word” to me?

Ah! now I have it—the Lord is just trying my faith. When sufficiently tried, the blessing would be received; so said my friends, and so I was led to believe. It was my own fault—the lack of faith, perhaps—and why should I question the Lord’s promises. Reasoning thus, I took up my cross and followed on.

During my ministry, covering a period of twenty-seven years—the best years of my life—I defended the faith of my church in twenty-three public debates of more or less importance, and my friends did me the honor to say that I came out of them all without a scar. And just here I am reminded that a word of explanation is demanded, lest I be misunderstood. It is this:

My friends believed, and I cheerfully took the same view of the case, that my conceded victories over men whose scholarship and native mental endowments were far superior to my own, were very largely, if not entirely, due to the fact that I had the simple, gospel truth on my side. This, to me, was the most reasonable solution of the question that could be offered, and so my faith grew stronger. Not only was this very comforting, but it also confirmed me in the belief that what the world called Mormonism *could not be proved false*. But I have long since learned that this conclusion was fundamentally wrong. The exact truth of the matter is simply this: My opponents were not “onto their job,” as the expressive slang phrase has it. In all my experience I

had never met a man who had made a study of Mormonism—a man who really understood, it. Had my opponents made themselves thoroughly acquainted with Mormon *doctrines* and *methods*, as they are understood to-day by many of our ministers, many a boasted victory would have been turned into positive defeat, and many a soul would have been saved from the delusive snares of Mormon theology.

A Turn in the Road.

During the first ten or twelve years of my ministry, the general current of events set fairly in my direction. A lover of books, and a student of men and things, I sought to become thoroughly acquainted with the teachings of the church, its early history, and the views of its leading men.

In all these things I was reasonably successful and my work went smoothly on, with nothing to disturb my faith in the work and mission of Joseph Smith, the prophet, as I now understood them. But, with the broadening of my intellectual horizon, came broader and clearer views of things spiritual. With these came also an occasional doubt to disturb my peace of mind. But these wicked doubts were persistently brushed aside as temptations of the evil one, in order to destroy my faith and damn my soul. At length, however, I came to a rather abrupt turn in the road. My doubts were more stubborn. They would not down at my bidding, and my troubles were multiplied.

“The Inspired Translation.”

The first serious shock to my faith occurred when I began a comparative study of the so-called Inspired Translation, published by the Reorganized Church in 1867. We had always been taught that the King James’ Version was full of errors and contradictions; that many of the “plain and most precious parts” had been “taken away” by the “mother of harlots,” and that the “new translation” would give us the Bible as it originally came from the hand of God through the inspired writers.

Of all the puerile nonsense ever presented to an

intelligent public, this pretended translation, by the cheekiest of all impostors, certainly caps the climax. It does the grossest violence to every conception of a heaven-inspired production; and, from a literary point of view, it was simply horrible. My peremptory and unqualified rejection of this translation (?) subjected me to some adverse criticisms, but beyond this nothing ever came of it. It did not disturb my faith in fundamentals.

My next trouble was with the “Doctrine and Covenants,” the inspired discipline of the church. Upon a close study of this book, I found many things very difficult to believe. For instance, I could not see why the Lord wished to form a joint-stock company to build a magnificent hotel to be known as the “Nauvoo House,” that “my servant Joseph, and his seed after him,” might “have place in that house, from generation to generation, for ever and ever, saith the Lord” (Doc. & Cov., p. 307, par. 18).

Why should the Lord turn the hearts of his people away from the salvation of souls, and *command* them to build a “boarding-house” for Joseph Smith and his family. It was preposterous in the extreme. I could not believe it. And then, to cap the climax, the whole scheme proved a flat failure. The house never rose above the basement story, and the “Lord’s Boarding-House” stock was worthless, and the people were swindled out- of their hard-earned dollars.

The book is full of such absurdities. Promise after promise is made in the name of the Lord, and not one of them has ever been fulfilled. Time, the great iconoclast, had shattered another idol, and my faith was tottering.

In spite of these terrible shocks to my faith, I still struggled on in the almost forlorn hope that all would yet be made clear. Of one thing, at least, I felt quite sure, and that was, the Bible is true, and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. “*These signs shall follow them that believe,*” is as true to-day, I argued with myself, as when Jesus uttered the words of the Great Commission. In this assurance I found great comfort, and went on preaching the gospel of Mormonism.

While president of the “North Kansas District,”

in the early seventies, came the severest trial I had thus far experienced. My little boy of five summers had sufficiently recovered from a severe illness to warrant my absence from home, and I had gone to Atchison, Kan., to remain over Sunday, when I was to go to the southern part of the State on important business, to be gone several months.

Late Sunday afternoon, a neighbor's boy came down the street on horseback, leading an extra horse (there were no railroads and telegraphs north of Atchison, at that time), and instinctively I knew something serious had happened. My little boy had been scalded in a most terrible manner, and was not expected to live. Riding all night, I reached home in the early morning to find my child in a very critical condition. Late in the afternoon he went into spasms. We had called the elders of the church, according to the custom of the *Saints*, and with fasting and prayer we anointed the child with "consecrated oil" and laid our hands upon him, and, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, "rebuked" the spasms, and "commanded" them to leave the child. (This, to me, now looks like blasphemy. I recall it with a shudder.)

This was repeated several times during the night and following morning, but without effect. The convulsions increased in violence and frequency, and I knew that unless relief came in a very short time, the child must die. The best physician in the county was summoned at once. On his arrival the doctor pronounced it the worst case, with a single exception, that he had ever witnessed. He prescribed for the child, and in less than three hours the convulsions had ceased.

This sad experience taught me the salutary lesson that a few grains of subnitrate of bismuth, administered by a skillful physician, had more power to stop convulsions and save human life than all our faith, and prayers, and "laying on of hands" combined. In this very community I had been preaching—"These signs shall follow them that believe"—and on the strength of this preaching I had baptized many people, and, only a year before, had organized a "branch" of the church.

My neighbors and the new converts had noted our utter powerlessness in the presence of such an affliction, and we were overwhelmed with sorrow and humiliation. Where was the miraculous power of which the Saints had boasted? Why did not "the signs" follow the believer? If these things were to confirm and strengthen the faith of the believer, why did not the Lord come to the rescue, and help us in this time of our greatest distress? These were indeed momentous questions—and questions, too, which the wisest among us could not answer; but everybody could see that the doctor had accomplished by his skill what our faith and prayers had utterly failed to do; namely, saved our boy's life.

Another Failure.

Having convinced myself that the failure was due to a lack of faith on my part, and was, perhaps, a necessary *trial of my faith*, I went right on preaching "these signs shall follow them that believe." Why should I falter? If I had been denied these "gifts," others had received them. Others had "testified" that the sick had been healed, devils cast out, and all this, and what reason had I to doubt their word? They certainly would not bear such strong witness to these things unless they were true—*surely* not.

Young and full of bodily vigor, I shrank from no task, however arduous, and having great zeal for what I believed to be the truth, I proceeded to do the work of two men—that is, work with my hands for the support of my family (for not a man received a dollar of salary in those days as they do to-day) and, as president of the district, do the full work of an itinerant minister, visiting and regulating the affairs of the church throughout my large district.

My friends frequently warned me of the dangers of over-work and a possible break-down, but, heedless of their kindly words of warning, I kept right along till I literally dropped in my tracks. I was a very sick man. For nearly seven months my life seemed to tremble in the balance. Hoping and believing that God in his mercy would yet raise me up, and thus silence all criticism, and enable me to say in truth what I had heard so many others declare,

that I knew the work to be of God, I refused to have my friends call a physician, preferring to depend entirely upon “the ordinances of the church”—that is, the anointing with oil and the “laying on of hands” by the elders of the church (Jas. 5: 14, 15).

For nearly five months this course was faithfully pursued, during which I was “administered to” by all the leading preachers in my district, but all in vain. My condition grew steadily worse, till I was, in the strictest sense of the term, “a living skeleton,” and my friends had about abandoned all hope of my recovery.

Some of the more thoughtful ones among them now began to insist that a physician be called at once. When appealed to, my reply was—“I have no faith in the doctors, and if the Lord, whom I have served, will not heal me, surely the doctors cannot.” But, knowing that, unless a change for the better soon came, I must certainly die, I finally gave my consent, and in less than an hour, good old Dr. Biedelman, of White Cloud, Kan., was at my bedside.

Under his skillful treatment I soon began to improve, and in less than two months I was able to walk from my residence to the doctor’s office, some three blocks away.

While most of my friends rejoiced that I had thus been snatched from the very jaws of death, others—and strange to say, some of the very men who had “administered” to me the most frequently—would come into my house and upbraid me in a manner amounting to abuse, because I had permitted myself to be treated by a physician.

“For years,” said one of these Job’s comforters, “we have been preaching ‘*these signs shall follow them that believe*,’ and now you call a doctor, and thus give our preaching the lie.”

“My brother,” I replied, “for the past seven months I have been made painfully aware of the fact that ‘these signs’ did not ‘follow,’ and my friends thought it better that I should live at the hands of a *doctor*, than to die under the hands of *the elders*.” I heard no more from these men about the “signs” following believers.

Reflections:

I believe a man can know his own heart, at least better than it can be known by any other human being—and if I know my heart, I was striving with all my powers to serve God to the very best of my poor abilities —sacrificing everything of a worldly nature, that others, by my labors, might be brought to a saving knowledge of the truth, as I understood the truth. Knowing this, why would God permit me thus to be stricken down?

Was it to try my faith? Impossible. If, indeed, the gospel I was preaching was the *only* gospel that would save men, and the church I represented *the only church* that God would acknowledge as his, why would he permit me thus to be afflicted when he knew the inevitable result must be the utter overthrow of my faith in what I was then preaching? I never could understand it, and my faith never fully recovered from the shock it then received, although, as usual, I tried, and partially succeeded in convincing myself that it was all because of a lack of faith on my own part.

Again taking up my cross, I resumed, as soon as my health would permit, the active work of the ministry. Encouraged by my successes and the kindly words of commendation from a host of friends, I continued in the service of the church until October, 1877, when I was appointed “in charge” of the “Southwestern Mission,” including all of Texas, and some of the adjacent territory.

I remained in charge of this work for two years (1878-1879), and was returned to the same field again, by request, in 1884. On account of failing health, I was compelled, after a few months, to abandon the work and return to my home in Iowa. This was my last work as a representative of the Reorganized Church.

My first year’s work in Texas was remarkably successful. After two hard-fought battles in public discussion, at Stockdale, in Wilson County (some of the Stockdale people may remember them), I baptized many people and organized a church. The same was true at “Oak Island,” near the Madina

River, south of San Antonio. I mention these incidents only to emphasize what I am about to relate.

The year following (1879) an epidemic of pneumonia prevailed all through that section of the State. As a result I was called to administer to the sick by day and by night. I had taught the people when sick to “call for the elders of the church,” and that, anointing with oil, “the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up” (Jas. 5: 14).

Naturally enough, they reposed great confidence in their minister, and quite as naturally I felt a great solicitude for both their bodily and spiritual welfare, and so went to them with all humility and prayer, that the sick might be healed and the Word confirmed. During the year I kept a faithful record of all these “administrations” and noted the results. I was made to tremble for the faith of these new converts. In all of the two years of labor—the most faithful and earnest I could give—not a “tongue,” not an “interpretation,” and above all, and most important, *not a single case of healing*. But in spite of these things, most of the converts, so far as I know, have managed to retain their faith.

From these experiences, and scores of others of like character, together with my constant association with the leading men of the church, I finally became thoroughly convinced that the boastful claim of the church to be “endowed with power from on high,” and by virtue of this its ministers, and others, were able to “cast out devils,” speak with tongues and “heal the sick,” was the sheerest assumption. They have no such power, all their boastful claims to the contrary notwithstanding.

Having administered to the sick, and that repeatedly, with nearly every prominent man in the church, including the prophet himself, covering a period of fully twenty-five years, I am in a position to know they are utterly powerless to perform what they advertise.

In spite of my earnest, persistent and prayerful effort during all these years, I was constantly and painfully aware of the fact that I possessed no miraculous power. I could speak no language I had not learned, no sick were healed under my hands, no

blind were restored to sight, and no devil was ever “cast out” at my command. If, as they claimed, other men really possessed these marvelous powers, why would a loving, impartial Father withhold them from even the weakest of his children? Is he a respecter of persons? Surely not. Then, what was the trouble? Something must be Radically wrong.

The Turning-Point.

I had now reached the most critical period in my entire religious life. Turned adrift upon the turbulent sea of doubt, like Noah’s dove, I found no solid ground upon which to set my foot. False claims, deceptive theories and elusive dreams had well-nigh destroyed my hopes, and made shipwreck of my faith.

Disappointed, discouraged, filled with doubts and fears, I retired from the ministry and quietly set myself about the task of reviewing the entire groundwork of my faith.

In this work of review I spent the greater part of five years. Having prepared myself to defend my faith against the assaults of its enemies, I had left the exposure of its defects and follies—if such it had—to my opponents.

But in my re-examination of Mormonism as a system of religious thought, I determined to place myself in the attitude of an *opponent*, and in this way see what I could do towards proving its claims to be false, with the result that I was simply astonished at both the amount and character of the evidence I had been able to array against the entire system.

Without entering into details, it is deemed quite sufficient to say I arose from this careful investigation with the firm conviction that “conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity,” Mormonism was at once the child of corruption and fraud.

In A Dilemma.

From childhood I had been carefully taught that all religious bodies, both Catholic and Protestant, were sworn enemies of the truth, and that the Saints were the only people on earth whom God would

ever acknowledge as his own. All except the Saints must finally be lost—shut out from the presence of God and the glory of his power. But now I had learned to my entire satisfaction that the very people who made the loudest claims to be the only people of God, were not what they professed to be—that they did not have any more—indeed, not as much—of what is usually called “spiritual power,” than the people whom they so roundly denounced.

Indeed, some of what are still regarded by people of the Reorganized Church as the most remarkable cases of healing in its entire history, have since turned out to be deliberate frauds. One instance of this character must suffice for this occasion:

“Blind Fanny.”

At a semi-annual conference held at “Parks’ Mills,” just east of Council Bluffs, Ia., October, 1875 or 1876—if my memory is not at fault—occurred what is regarded as the greatest miracle in the annals of the Reorganized Church. The case was this:

Each day during the conference, a rather delicate little woman was observed to be walking the streets of the tented city (for it was a great camp-meeting) led by an attendant. A little inquiry developed the fact that it was “Blind Fanny.” She represented herself to be a member of the “Christian Church.” Her husband, who was also attending the meeting, was a Methodist. She had heard of the marvelous healing powers of the church, and, desiring to know more about it, attended the conference.

During the “social meetings” there were remarkable “manifestations of divine power”—“tongues,” “prophecies,” “healings,” etc., etc. One evening “Blind Fanny” arose in the audience, and, after a short address, said to the man in charge of the meeting: “Bro. Brand, I now understand why I have not been healed of my blindness, when administered to by the elders, and that is, I have not obeyed the gospel—‘my passport is not signed,’ and I want you to baptize me to-morrow morning at 8 o’clock.”

At the hour appointed, in the presence of more than a thousand people, she was baptized. I stood

beside the minister to render any needed assistance. The baptism was performed in the millpond, in plain sight of the multitude. As she neared the bank I extended her my hand and assisted her from the water. The eccentric preacher, E. C. Brand, with the water streaming from his clothes, filled out a blank certificate of baptism, and handed it to her. To the great astonishment of the multitude, “Blind Fanny,” raising the certificate so that all might see it, in a clear, strong voice read the document in the hearing of all the people. The whole audience was electrified—a great miracle had been wrought in their very presence.

The *Saints’ Herald* published flaming accounts of the marvelous occurrence, and it found its way into some of the secular papers. “Blind Fanny” wrote poems about it, and told the story to every congregation of the saints for years afterward. At last I had been the witness to a great miracle, and I felt much gratified.

One thing, however, occurred that caused people to wonder. Soon after her baptism, her husband seemed displeased, and insisted on returning to their home, but the once blind but now seeing Fanny refused to accompany him, and so he went home without her. He was a hardhearted man to treat his wife thus. In fact, we all thought he had a devil in him as big as a three-year-old woodchuck.

A few years afterwards I had occasion to visit Deloit, Ia., where the couple lived, and was invited to dine with them. After dinner the wife went out to do a little shopping. I had long desired to talk to this rebellious man about rejecting the power of God, and this was my opportunity.

“Brother Earnst,” I began, “I have long wished to talk with you about the marvelous healing of your good little wife. Nobody has a better knowledge of the facts than what you possess. You have impoverished yourself in procuring the best treatment that medical science could afford, but all to no purpose. Your wife was totally blind. Nothing but the power of God could restore her sight. You were an eyewitness of her miraculous healing. This certainly is enough to convince any sane man that what we

teach is true. How can you longer stand out against the truth? How can you longer resist such overpowering evidence of the truth of this latter-day work?"

"Bro. Bays," said he, after a moment's pause, "I seldom speak of this matter, but as you press the question so closely, I feel that I must speak. You think it strange that what your people call 'the healing of Blind Fanny' did not impress me more seriously. But when you know the truth you will not be surprised at my course. The *real truth of the matter is, my wife never was*

blind. Before going to that conference she could see to do her housework just as you have seen her do today, and she could see well enough to do

plain sewing, and that is all she can do now. As God is my witness, she cannot see one whit better now than before she went to that conference."

It was now my time to be astonished; and subsequent investigation only served to strengthen the conviction that the whole thing was a deliberate fraud.

It was the last straw that broke the camel's back, and this piece of deception was, in my case, the last "straw." My faith in Mormonism was gone forever.

At this juncture I was brought face to face with another, and still more serious difficulty. I found myself fast becoming skeptical—even doubting some things which by many are considered fundamental in Christianity. Relative to these matters I reasoned thus:

The people with whom I have been associated religiously all my life, have claimed to be able to "heal the sick," cleanse lepers, give sight to the blind, and even to raise the dead, and yet I have found all these things to be *absolutely false*—deliberately and wickedly deceptive.

Argument.—If the Latter-day Saints, professing to have power to perform the same class of miracles with those of the apostles, have stated deliberate falsehoods with the intention to deceive and mislead

the people, how am I to know but the same methods had been employed by those professing miraculous powers in apostolic times? How are we to know that a genuine miracle had been performed? And if no miracle had ever been wrought by the apostles, then it follows as a logical necessity that "the word" could never have been confirmed "with signs following," and the gospel therefore cannot be true.

In such a case, what assurance have we that the somewhat ingenious mythical theory invented by

Strauss, or the more brilliant but less probable conception of Renan, may not in reality account for the origin of the story of the resurrection

of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels? And if this be true, then is Jesus not risen—"and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain," and the apostles "are found false witnesses," and the world is left "without hope and without God in the world." And thus I had reasoned from a false premise to an erroneous conclusion.

From this materialistic point of view, how unutterably sad—how dark and dreary the outlook! Not one scintillation of light—not one ray of hope to fall upon the pathway of human life, or penetrate the dreadful gloom of one eternal night.

While these doubts and fears continued to assail and perplex my troubled soul, I was, indeed, "of all men most miserable." Under these circumstances I felt there was but one avenue open to me, and that was I must openly and formally withdraw from the church. And to do this I knew would be to sever the ties of a friendship made sacred by the associations of a quarter of a century. Men whom I had learned to love because of their many sterling qualities—because of their social purity and moral excellencies of character—I knew would never be to me in the future what they had been in the past. To sever these almost life-long relations, was the one great trial of my life. But duty, stern and relentless, pointed the

It is the boast of Mormonism that "once a Latter-day Saint, a man is spoiled for any other church," and, as a rule, that is true.

way, and the step must be taken.

Accordingly, at a General Conference of the Reorganized Church, held in April, 1892, I resigned my ministry and formally withdrew from the church. Because I had the courage of my convictions and frankly expressed the doubts which so distressed me, relative not only to Mormonism, but also as to the miracles of the apostles, it has afforded, and no doubt still affords, some of my erstwhile friends and co-laborers great pleasure to apply to me the epithets—"agnostic," "*infidel*," etc. No subsequent explanation as to a change of view—no declaration as to present convictions and sentiments—has ever sufficed to remove the stain. To this day I am branded by the Saints as an "apostate," pure and simple.

Naturally enough, it was some time before I got my bearings. These doubts and fears continued to harass and disturb me till happily I made the discovery that all my troubles were but the legitimate result of a false theology, based upon a false exegesis of certain Scriptures, prominently among which are Mark 16: 15-20, and I. Cor. 12: 1-11.

When these passages were correctly understood, all my troubles vanished, as a morning mist before the sun. I had always been taught to believe that "these signs," referred to by Mark, were among the indispensable, inseparable concomitants of the gospel.

But when I had made the discovery that no such teaching can be found in the Great Commission—not even by "reading between the lines"—my troubles were forever at an end, so far as miracles are concerned. Instead of teaching that "these signs" were to be perpetuated throughout all subsequent ages, the language of Jesus, as recorded by Mark, may fairly be regarded as conveying precisely the opposite view.

The *object* of "these signs," as stated in verse 20, is declared to be for the purpose of "confirming the word." The great central truth of the gospel is the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. This fact was confirmed to the "witnesses" by his personal appearance after his passion, and to others after his

ascension by "many infallible proofs" in the form of "these signs."

When the apostles preached that "this Jesus whom God hath raised up" from the dead, was truly the long-expected Messiah, the people demanded, as they had a right to do, some proof for a thing to their minds wholly incredible. To satisfy this reasonable demand, the apostles in the commission are authorized by the Master to say: "These signs shall follow them that believe"—that is, believe on Jesus through the word of the apostles. Hence, believing the teaching of the apostles concerning the Christ, the people became obedient to the word; and having from the heart obeyed the commands of the gospel, the promised "signs" followed. And thus Mark, years later, was able to write of the apostles:

"And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and *confirming the word* with signs following."

And thus the Word—the fact that Jesus rose from the dead—was confirmed, and being once confirmed was confirmed "once for all," and was, therefore, for all ages and "unto all peoples and nations and kindreds and tongues," under the whole heavens, and hence there could be no need of reconfirmation.

When these self-evident truths dawned upon my mind, how plain it all seemed. Then I began to see men as trees walking—and then it was I began to realize that the scales of sectarian blindness were beginning to fall from my eyes. How thankful I was! What joy now began to spring up in my heart!

The beautiful sunlight of an intelligent faith had entered my heart and had driven the gloomy shadows of doubt and despair from my troubled soul. Now, at last, I could, like Thomas of old, look up into my Redeemer's face and exclaim, in all the ecstasies of a new-born soul, "My Lord and my God!"

How I Came to be a Christian Only.

It is the boast of Mormonism that "once a Latter-day Saint, a man is spoiled for any other church," and, as a rule, that is true. Few, very few, indeed,

leave that church and go into any other. With their faith in Christ destroyed they break away from all religious restraints and seek a congenial refuge in agnosticism, Spiritualism, or in downright, aggressive infidelity.

Only for the grace of God and the exercise of a little common sense, I fear I should at this very moment be wandering far, far away from a loving Father's house. But I thank God to-day, as never before, that I have been saved from the fate of a faithless, aimless wanderer upon the face of the earth.

In the days of my belligerency, I held more public discussions with Christian ministers than with all others combined. This gave me an excellent opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with the simple gospel plea, and the movement for the restoration of the Christianity of Christ and the apostles.

When I began to get my bearings after the abatement of the terrible storm through which I had passed, I began the performance of another mental operation, having in view the purpose, this time, to carefully separate the truth from the great mass of error which I was now conscious of having imbibed. To do this, a rule, a system, became a matter of paramount importance. In both legal and medical practice there is employed what is termed the "exclusive method" or "system of exclusion." The rule is to exclude all things "which do not stand in the light of known facts, till but one true diagnosis can remain."

Having discarded all books of human theology and discipline—for I had come to distrust them all—and taking the Bible as my only standard in the determination of all things religious, I began the work anew. Under this common-sense rule my work was simplified and made easy, with the result, as a matter of course, that everything sectarian had to go—Mormonism with the rest, together with all the fine-spun theories built upon that system.

When my task was completed I was profoundly astonished at the results. Not only had everything manmade and sectarian gone by the board, but I had made the astounding discovery that in every essential feature of the "scheme of redemption" I was in

substantial agreement with my old enemies, "*the Campbellites*."

This, to be sure, was by no means what I had expected, and yet I was glad in my heart to be assured that I had at last found the plain, simple, gospel truth—that truth which alone can make men free. If there is one blessing for which one may justly be more thankful than for any other, that blessing, in my case, is expressed in the word *liberty*.

For the first time in my entire religious experience am I able to stand erect in my heaven-born right of intellectual manhood, and proclaim myself a *free* man. Hitherto my freedom of thought and liberty of action had been confined within certain definitely prescribed limits. Outside of these a man is not allowed to think—or, if he dares to think, he must keep his thoughts to himself, for the moment he gives utterance to the thought, he is liable to be called before the "authorities" to give an account of himself for his audacity.

When I was freed from the domination of an autocratic priesthood and found myself standing in the unobstructed sunlight of God's eternal truth, then, and not till then, did I come to realize that no self-styled prophet, priest or king had any right to interpose himself between God and man. God the Father, and *Jesus the only mediator*, is the divine key-note of the whole Bible, and henceforth I shall, by the grace of God, "stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

Thus equipped, and with my feet firmly planted upon the rock Christ Jesus, my greatest joy, my supreme delight, is to hold aloft the banner of our risen Lord and invite men and women to rally beneath its blood-sanctified folds, and press valiantly on to certain and glorious victory.

Already I find myself well adown the western slope of life's rugged hill, and with the sun full in my face, and the shadows, still sharp and distinct, growing longer, and longer, as life's sun hastens towards the horizon of its cloudless setting, I am joyously, steadfastly, looking forward to the setting of life's earthly sun, as but the dawning of God's eternal day to my tried and waiting soul.

Losing IT ALL

Adam Cozort



Some in his family had turned against him. Men once perceived as his closest companions were now his enemies. He was forced to flee his home with no certainty of where to find safety. His people had turned against him by the thousands and were actively helping his enemies. Even strangers along the road were cursing his name to his face.

This is the plight of David in Second Samuel 15-17. It is a bleak picture. David's son Absalom has fomented a rebellion against his father that has reached into every quarter of the kingdom, even into the closest confidants of the king. Finally, Absalom gathered an army and took Jerusalem, forcing the king to flee for his life with a few trusted friends and family.

This is the backdrop of the third psalm. By all accounts it was written while David was fleeing from his son. David said many at that time were professing, "there is no salvation for him in God" (3:2).

Yet, as David faced this great time of trial and despair, he knew that there was one person to whom he could turn for assistance. The Lord is described in this psalm as his shield, the lifter of his head, and the one who sustained him (3:3, 5).

Because of the strength the Lord provided, David said he was not afraid of the many thousands who set themselves against him (3:6). Ultimately, the king of Israel claims, "Salvation belongs to the Lord" (3:8).

The third psalm illustrates what our mindset should be in the midst of losing it all. There will be times in life where it seems that everything is falling

apart, and there may be occasions that come where everything is truly coming down around our heads. Yet, there is a place of hope and peace.

There is One to whom we can turn for salvation. In the context of this psalm, salvation is not being used in the eternal sense of Heaven and Hell. Instead, it is from the perspective of being saved from the current distress.

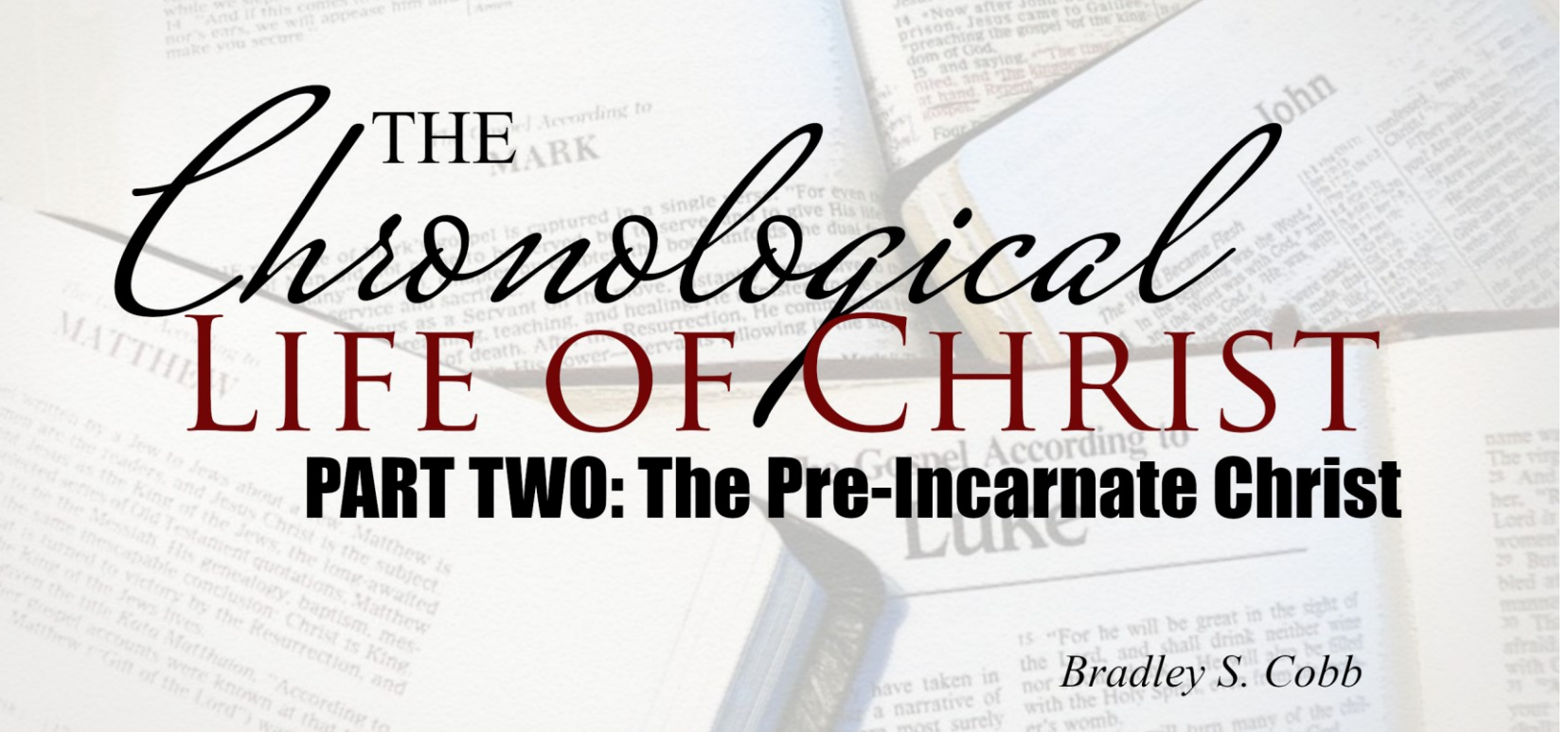
David lauds God as the one who lifted his head back up. He says that when he cried, the Lord answered. Because of his trust in the Lord, he was able to lie down and sleep, for the Lord sustained him.

The king of Israel, in the midst of his darkest days, when he was losing it all, kept his trust and confidence in the Lord. In response, the Lord provided. Absalom's rebellion was defeated (2 Samuel 18). David returned to his throne in Jerusalem and continued to lead Israel.

Remember the faith of David when you are losing it all.



Scan the QR code with your phone and see a short video where Adam goes more in depth on Psalm 3.



THE *Chronological* LIFE OF CHRIST

PART TWO: The Pre-Incarnate Christ

Bradley S. Cobb

It is difficult to find a good way to describe Jesus *before* He was Jesus. He didn't have that name given to Him until after He was born (Matthew 1:21, 25). The same thing goes with calling Him *the Son*, because (regardless of what Catholic theologians claim) He did not take on a role as *son* until he was born.¹ It seems that John understood the potential conundrum when he began his gospel account.²

In the beginning was the Word

John is intentionally echoing Genesis 1:1, which starts, “In the beginning, God...” With that, and what John brings up in verses 2 and 3, it is obvious that the “beginning” under consideration is the beginning of creation. But it is more interesting even than that.

In Greek, often they leave out the definite article (in English, it is the word “the”) when there is only

¹ There are some theologians in the past who claimed Jesus didn't become God's *Son* until His baptism, after which God declared, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matthew 3:17). This is most frequently found among Unitarian groups, but it is by no means a universal belief among them.

² There is nothing wrong with referring to Jesus before He became Jesus as “Jesus” or “Christ,” because Paul did that very thing in Philippians 2:4-5.

one of something. John *actually* wrote, “In beginning was the Word,” because there is only one beginning. And it is the same in Genesis 1:1—literally, “In beginning, God...”

So, not only was *God* [the Father] present at the beginning of creation, but so is *the Word*. This means *the Word* pre-dates time. Before anything was created, *the Word* existed.

Some ancient Greek writers (specifically Heraclitus) popularized the idea that everything in creation came from and was held together by the *Logos*, the Greek word John uses for *Word*. The Stoics grabbed onto this idea, and taught that events were not random, but that they were orchestrated by the *Logos*. They believed the *Logos* is what gave someone the concept of right and wrong.

Philo, a Jewish philosopher from Alexandria Egypt, a couple hundred years before Jesus' birth, posited that the *Logos* was the Reason of God. William Barclay summarizes Philo's views this way:

In Alexandria there was a Jew called Philo who had made it the business of his life to study the wisdom of two worlds, the Jewish and the Greek. No man ever knew the Jewish scriptures as he knew them; and no Jew ever knew the greatness of Greek thought as he knew it. He too knew and used and loved this idea of the *Logos*, the word, the reason of God.

He held that the Logos was the oldest thing in the world and the instrument through which God had made the world. He said that the Logos was the thought of God stamped upon the universe; he talked about the Logos by which God made the world and all things; he said that God, the pilot of the universe, held the Logos as a tiller and with it steered all things. He said that man's mind was stamped also with the Logos, that the Logos was what gave a man reason, the power to think and the power to know. He said that the Logos was the intermediary between the world and God and that the Logos was the priest who set the soul before God.³

So when John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word ..." he was using language and ideas which were well-known in both Greek and Jewish worlds. Much like the Apostle Paul used the Athenians' worship of "the unknown God" to teach the truth about God and Jesus, John uses the pre-existing ideas of "the Logos" as a starting point to teach the same thing.

And the Word was with God

If you just read this part, you might get the impression that there were two separate entities at creation: one of them was God, and the other was *not* God. But that isn't what we see (especially as we read the rest of the verse).

The word translated "with" always shows some kind of connection. The same word (*pros*, in case you're interested) is elsewhere translated *against* (...lest you should dash your foot against a stone") and *among* ("...they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing). In each of those instances, it shows a connection or interaction.

We could legitimately translate this section, "the Word was connected to God [the Father]," or "was together with God [the Father]."

But all confusion is cleared up—or ought to be—

³ Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible: John* (e-Sword edition), notes on John 1:1.

with the last part of John 1:1.

And God was the Word.

You probably did a double-take when you saw how I worded the last part of verse 1 above. I did it that way because, literally, that is how the Greek reads. Literally, in order, it says *God was the Word*.

Greek is a funny language. The order of words in a Greek sentence doesn't matter—unless you want to emphasize a specific word, in which case you put it first (like "Blessed are the pure in heart..."). You could have a 17-word sentence, and the subject might end up being the last word in the whole thing.⁴ So why bring this up?

The subject of the last part of John 1:1 is *The Word*. But the word *God* is put first in order, meaning the *God-ness* of the Word (the *Logos*) is what John is emphasizing.

So, who is this mysterious *Logos*, the *Word*? That answer is simple enough, because verse 14 says:

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Who is called "God with us" (Matthew 1:23-25)? Who is called God's "only begotten Son" (John 3:16)? The *Word* is how John describes *Jesus*.

If you've ever seen a Jehovah's Witness Bible (the *New World Translation*), you may have seen how they mistranslate this verse to say, "And the Word was a god." Note the lower case *g* and the insertion of the indefinite article *a*. They had to do this if they wanted to hold on to their belief that Jesus was not God, but was created *by* God. But whether or not it should be translated as *the* God, or *a* god completely misses the point. John is stressing the *nature* of Jesus as deity, not trying to identify Him as the Father.

Paul says it this way:

⁴ If you want to learn more about how the Greek language works, check out *The Original Essentials of New Testament Greek* by Ray Summers (Available from Cobb Publishing).

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God [or “being in very nature God”], did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped [held onto] (Philippians 2:5-6).

All this to say, John 1:1 shows that Jesus (as *the Word/Logos*) existed before creation, that He was in intimate connection with the Father, and that He was deity.

The same was in the beginning with God.

John repeats the information to make sure we get the point that Jesus didn’t just come into existence when He was born to Mary. Jesus existed before any human beings existed, for He was “in the beginning with God.”

All things were made by Him.

The Greek word translated “all” is quite interesting. It means *all*. When John says “*all things* were made by Him,” that means *everything*. No exceptions. Everything that was created was created by the *Word*.

The word “made” means “brought into being.” That means it didn’t exist before, but that the Word/Logos brought it into existence.

Jesus, thousands of years before He would wear the name “Jesus,” was creating the planet He would later call home (for 33 years), creating the food He would eat, creating the mountains He would pray on, creating the human beings that would be His ancient ancestors.

And lest we miss the point that Jesus, as the *Word*, created everything, John says the same thing in a different way:

And without Him, no created thing was created.

The King James Version says it this way:

And without Him was not any thing made that was made.

Of all the created things, there is not one—not a single one—that was created without Jesus creating it.

This creates quite the conundrum for the Jehovah’s Witnesses, for they claim Jesus was created. The only way that could be true, according to John, is if Jesus—before He existed—created Himself. Absurd.

What does this mean for us today?

John opens his gospel account with a clear declaration and defense of Jesus’ pre-existence and deity. He later quotes Jesus as saying, “Verily, verily I say to you, ‘Before Abraham was, I, I AM’” (John 8:58)⁵—Jesus Himself claiming to pre-exist Abraham, and also using the name Jehovah gave back in Exodus 3 at the burning bush: “Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me’” (Exodus 3:14).

John also shows Jesus saying, “Unless you believe that I, I AM, you shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).⁶

All this together means that if we want to be saved, an absolute requirement is believing in the pre-existence of Jesus and the deity of Jesus. Jesus made that a prerequisite for salvation.

Some additional information

Since this overall study is focused on the Life of Jesus *as a human*, we won’t be spending much time dealing with the potential Christophanies (appearances of Jesus before His incarnation) in the Old Testament. But here are some places you might look to see what Jesus was doing between Creation and His first Coming. Fair warning, there are a variety of opinions on which of these (if any) are actual Christophanies. But there is enough evidence to convince a large number of Bible students that these are pre-incarnate appearances of our Lord.

⁵ The Greek here is *ego eimi*. Literally, it is I (*ego*) I AM (*eimi*).

⁶ Most translations say, “unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins.” But there is no word in the Greek of this verse for “he.” Jesus literally says, “Unless you believe that I (*ego*), I AM (*eimi*), you shall die in your sins.”

The Angel of the LORD

It is thought by many that the Angel of the LORD in the Old Testament is a pre-incarnate version of Jesus. One of the main reasons is that the Angel (literally *Messenger*) of the LORD makes claims to deity and takes credit for doing what is elsewhere ascribed to Jehovah.

It is the Angel of the LORD who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, whose presence caused even the dirt to become holy (Exodus 3:2-5).

It is the Angel of the LORD who spoke to Abraham and said, “now I know you fear God, because you have not withheld your son, your only son from me” (Genesis 22:11-12).

It is the Angel of the LORD who spoke to Hagar and said, “I will multiply your seed” (Genesis 16:9-10).

It is the Angel of the LORD who said to the Israelites, “I made you go out of Egypt, and have brought you to the land which I swore to your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.... But you have not obeyed my voice. Why have you done this? Therefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you...” (Judges 2:1-4).

There are many other passages, but this sampling should suffice to get the point across.

The Captain of the LORD's army

In Joshua 5, the new leader of Israel saw “a man” confronting him, sword drawn. Joshua asked, “Are you for us or our adversaries?” The reply was, “No, but as Captain of the LORD's host [army] I have come.”

If it stopped there, one might think this is just a high-ranking angel. But it doesn't end there.

Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshipped, and said to him, “What says my lord to his servant?”

So Joshua appears to worship this person, and calls himself the servant of this man, who he calls “lord” (Hebrew, Adoni). But the response from the Captain of the LORD's army seals the deal for

many:

“Take off your shoe from your foot, because the place on which you stand is holy.”

What being is so amazing that even the dirt becomes holy when He is present?

Melchizedek

This interesting biblical character shows up once in Genesis, is mentioned in Psalms, and then some very interesting things are said about him in Hebrews.

- Melchizedek blesses Abram (better known as Abraham), and the greater always blesses the lesser (Hebrews 7:7)—thus Melchizedek was greater than Abraham (Genesis 14:18-19).
- Melchizedek is the king of Salem, which, being translated, means “King of peace” (Genesis 14:18; Hebrews 7:2).
- Melchizedek brought out bread and wine (some believe this prefigures the Lord's Supper) (Genesis 14:18).
- Jesus was made a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 6:20; Psalm 110:4). Would Jesus' priesthood be after a human order?
- Melchizedek was both king and priest (Hebrews 7:1).
- Melchizedek was “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but made like the Son of God; he abides a priest continually” (Hebrews 7:3). Some claim this means he didn't get his priesthood from his ancestry—and they may be right—but that isn't what it says.
- His priesthood was greater than the Levitical priesthood, because through Abraham, Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:9-10).

It must be noted, for the sake of showing both sides, that Hebrews 7:11 and 15 both say Jesus is “another priest” after the order of Melchizedek.

Some concluding thoughts on Christophanies

We know *for certain* that Jesus (as the *Logos*)

was actively involved in Creation. We know *for certain* that He was born and lived a life as a human. If the above possibilities are not appearances of Jesus prior to His incarnation, then we really have no idea what He was doing for the thousands

of years between Creation and Incarnation. Certainly He wasn't sitting in heaven, twiddling His thumbs. He had to be doing *something*. And perhaps some of the above give us part of the answer

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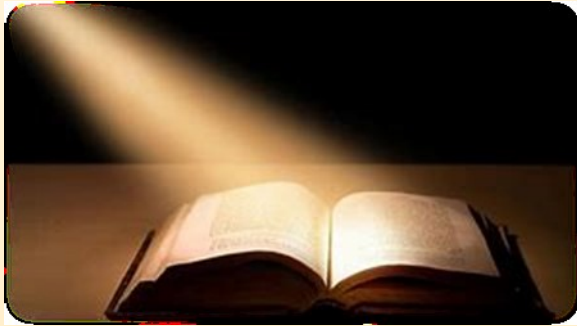
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1 CORINTHIANS 3

A new translation and commentary

Matthew Shaffer

“And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as if to spiritual men, but rather as to fleshly men, as infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able. Even now you are not able, for you are still fleshly. For where there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and do you not behave according to your humanity? For whenever someone says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apollos,” are you not human?

Therefore, what is Apollos? What is Paul? We are servants through whom you believed, and each has what the Lord gave him. I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth; thus, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but rather God, who causes growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are one thing, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own work. For we are workers of God, and you are

God’s field, and God’s building.

According to the grace of God that was given to me, I laid the foundation like a wise master builder, but another is building on it. Let each one who builds be careful how he builds, for no one is able to lay any other foundation than the one that has already been laid, which is Jesus Christ. And if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, and straw, then each one’s work will be made visible, for the day will make it clear, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire will test what kind of work belongs to each one. If anyone’s work, which he has built, remains, he will receive a word. If anyone’s work is consumed by the fire, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone corrupts the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, which

temple you are.

Let no one deceive himself – if anyone among you seems to be wise in this present age, let him become a fool so that he can become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written:

‘He catches the wise in their own craftiness’

And again:

‘The Lord knows the thoughts of those who are wise – that they are empty.’

So that no one should boast in men, for all things belong to you – whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things that are, or things yet to come – all things belong to you. But you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.”

[I have no special notes to make about the translation of this chapter. All of the translations I have compared agree in the meaningful substance of this chapter and only differ in matters of style.]

Let Him Become a Fool ***Comments on 1 Corinthians 3***

Introduction

In the first two chapters, Paul laid out the principles of Christian unity, then demonstrated the nature of the wisdom and strength that sustain us in the gospel. God has chosen to save us through something counter-intuitive – a crucified Christ – something that seems foolish and weak to us, so we can see that God is operating from a different kind of logic than we understand. We are not in a position to judge or critique God’s logic, but we can learn from it. God’s Spirit has, through revelation, taught us how to think as God thinks – something that we could not know without His help. According to our natural, human state, we cannot discern what God has accomplished in His Son. If we learn what the Spirit will teach us, we will be able to discern as if we have the mind of Christ.

Now that he has established these things in principle, Paul turns his attention to the practical application. It is one thing to prove that we *should* abandon human wisdom and follow God’s Spirit alone, but it is another thing entirely to accomplish it. How

can we set aside our preconceived notions about what is logical and what is not? In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul begins to answer this question – using the divisions in Corinth as an example.

1-4

There is spiritual wisdom, and it is taught by God’s Spirit to those who will learn from Him, but that was not where the Corinthian Christians began. Paul told us before that he had determined not to use human wisdom when he taught the Corinthians, since he perceived that they needed to understand the fundamentals first – they needed to learn to trust in God’s power, not to reason about esoteric subjects (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). There is much that can and should be built on this foundation, but the foundation must come first. Therefore, he could not speak to them as spiritual men – people whose minds were prepared to reason through the spiritual truths of God’s word – but he had to treat them as spiritual infants. They needed milk, sustenance that would help them develop on a foundational level until they were ready for solid food.

But they had not matured. They were not ready to keep growing. They had been born, spiritually, when they were baptized, but they had yet to grow out of infancy. Paul knew this because they were experiencing divisions based, in part, on human leaders and egos. God’s spiritual wisdom will never tear His people apart through jealousy and strife, so the presence of these kinds of divisions made it clear that something less than divine was driving their decisions.

This means that their factions – however good and right their chosen “ringleader” or rallying point might be – were human in nature. Paul and Apollos were both worthy of respect as faithful leaders among God’s people, but those who learned from them had a responsibility to recognize them as servants of God, not the originator of the gospel, their salvation, or their enlightenment. They were right to accept what Paul taught because of Christ, who stood behind the gospel of Paul. They would be wrong to follow Paul because of *Paul*. He was not right because he was Paul, he was right because he

belonged to Christ.

5-9

Paul drives this point home by comparing himself and Apollos to farmers working in a field. If Paul planted a seed and Apollos watered it, could either of them claim that they made the seed grow? Certainly not. They would each have served a role that helped to create an ideal environment for the seed. Paul would have labored to find and till good soil that would allow the crop to grow without interference from roots, rocks, overly packed soil, or any other obstacle. Likewise, Apollos would have continued to care for the seed as it grew, making sure it had plenty of water to feed the process. However, neither of them could claim that they *made* the plant because neither had the power to *make* a seed, nor give it the innate ability to grow. Only God has that power. All the planting and the water in the world would accomplish nothing if the seed did not exist in the first place.

Likewise, Paul and Apollos had labored in the Corinthian congregation to plant the seed of God's word and nourish its growth, but no one could give either of them the credit for the existence of a congregation in that place. They had to begin with a seed, something which neither of them had the power to create or cause to grow. Paul's preaching planted the seed when he first arrived in Corinth, and Apollos' work watered it as the congregation grew, but neither had the power to make Christians by their own will. They were only able to use what had been given to them. The real power lay in the word itself.

This does not mean that the work of Paul and Apollos was meaningless, it just means that their work was secondary to the work of the word itself. Each would receive a reward as a faithful worker for God, because they had helped to create and maintain an environment where the word could grow.

10-11

Paul switches metaphors here, changing from a farmer's field to a building. This metaphor allows him to describe the Corinthians' own role in light of

the lessons he has brought out so far. God's work is like a building, which must be built to completion after the foundation has been laid. Paul has only started the work, and they are a part of the ongoing process.

Paul says that the foundation which he has laid is the only one that *can* be laid for this kind of work – Jesus Christ. This is the same concept that he discussed above with the idea of milk and of solid food; it is impossible to reason through the weightier questions of Christianity without first understanding the foundational truths and powers that stand behind the gospel. If we do not trust in God's power, or in the cross of Christ, we do not have the tools we need to carry on His work. The foundation must be laid first, and everything else must be built on top of it.

We need to be aware of that fact because the productive work that we do as Christians builds on that foundation – the things that we teach and develop in our own Christian character. It is important that we build in a way that matches the foundation. It does not make sense to build a shoddy, temporary structure on top of a firm foundation. If we do, our work will vanish when the first great test comes, while the foundation will remain – a memorial to a work left unfinished.

12-15

When we serve productively as God's workers and build on the foundation of His Son, there is a possibility that some of our work will be imperfect. The imperfections may arise from any one of several factors, whether from our inexperience, our naivety, or our ignorance of any part of God's word. This does not disqualify us from God's service, but it does force us to come face-to-face with our own shortcomings and our need for growth.

Everyone who builds on the foundation of Jesus Christ will either produce work of good quality or work of poor quality. At times, we may use gold, silver, and precious stones, but at other times, we may use wood, hay, or straw. All of these things will be tested by fire, and only those that share the same nature and substance as the foundation will survive.

Those who built the parts that perish in the fire will not be cast out as worthless, but they will be forced to recognize the imperfections in their own work and grow beyond them. God will not cast us out because we have yet to grow, but the process of growth will be painful. We will suffer loss, especially when we realize that we have done or taught something wrong among God's people, but God can save us from our weakness.

I do not know what kind of work Paul has in mind in this chapter – whether he is referring to converts brought to God through a Christian's work, or if it is more general than that. In fact, I do not think it matters very much for the point that Paul is making. The emphasis in this passage is on those who work for God, not on the work that they do, and we need to be careful not to make the metaphor say any more than it is designed to. Paul wants to show us what it means to be a faithful, productive worker for God, and sometimes that means being able to recognize the fact that we have failed even while trying to serve Him. Those who do well will receive their reward, but a faithful worker is also willing to face his mistakes and grow by them, no matter how difficult the process is. Serving God is not about immediate perfection, but rather a steady growth toward perfection.

16-17

The story is quite different for someone who intentionally or carelessly corrupts the people of God. Someone who is sincerely trying to be productive in God's work but makes a mistake – even several mistakes – can grow past those imperfections. However, if someone determines to cause harm to God's congregation, the temple where His Spirit dwells, God will destroy him without mercy. No one can fool God, and no one who wishes to harm the faith of God's children can disguise themselves as a sincere worker who simply needs to learn. There is a measurable difference between the two.

18-20

Thus, sincere workers will be patiently taught and allowed to grow despite their imperfections,

while malicious malefactors will be judged and destroyed. We can see clearly in this system that no human wisdom or will can overcome God. We must either accept help from Him, or be opposed by Him. We can judge for ourselves which side we would rather be on. It is better to admit our own foolishness and submit ourselves to learn from God than to insist on our own ability to find a way in this life.

Thus, those who think they are wise are well counseled to become fools. If we think that our work is perfect and that we are uniquely capable of giving God's people what they need, our arrogance needs to be brought back down to earth. We need to humble ourselves. Only then can we learn true wisdom from God. We can only learn after we admit how much we do not know.

Paul quotes from Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11 to demonstrate this point. If we think we can fool God by our own craftiness, we will find ourselves caught up in a much cleverer trap of His design, wrought out of our own schemes. We need to learn from Him, not the other way around.

21-23

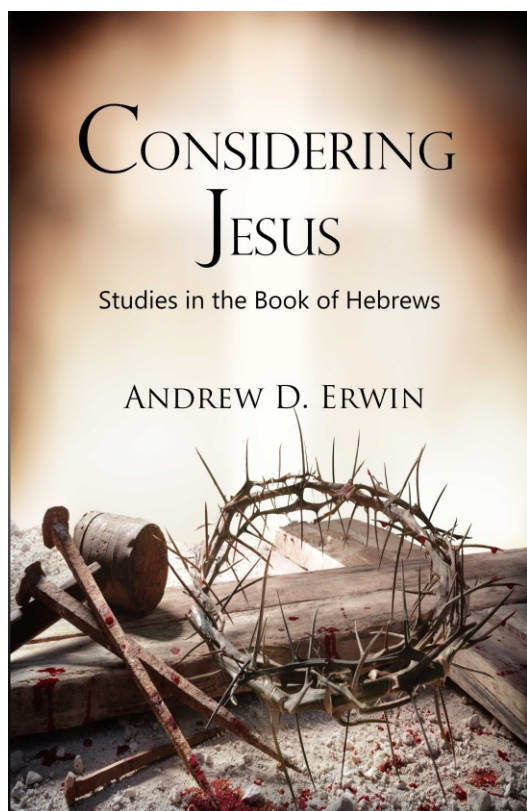
Paul concludes the chapter by reminding us what the point of this whole discussion has been – it will accomplish nothing if we identify ourselves as followers of a human being, even a very capable one. Paul and Apollos had no power to save apart from God, so there was nothing for the Corinthians to boast in by claiming to belong to one or the other. In fact, in God's plan, Paul and Apollos actually belonged to those whom they served. They were servants, not masters.

Likewise, the Corinthians were not their own masters. All things – Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life, death, things that are, and things that are yet to come – all of this had been given to them for their salvation and their glorification, but they belonged to Christ. They would have nothing if their Master had not given it to them. He, too, would not have His authority if He did not belong to God.

Let us, therefore, become fools so that we can become wise.

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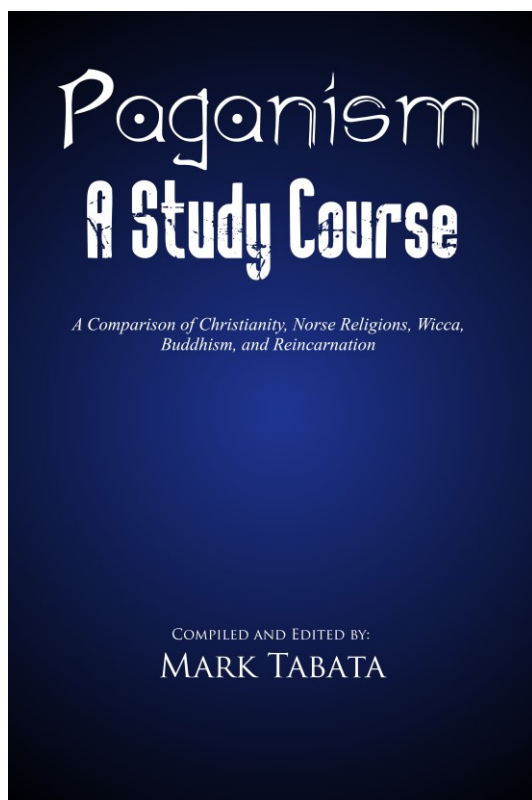
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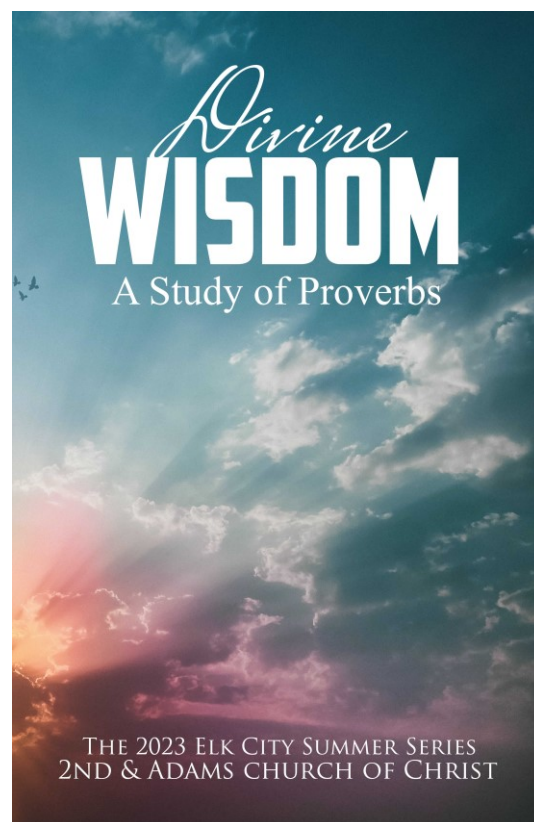
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The Lord was Pleased to Crush Him: A Study of Isaiah 53 (by Bradley S. Cobb). A commentary on what may be the greatest chapter of prophecy in the Old Testament. (note: title may be subject to change)

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YOU WILL NEVER FALL

Bill Howard

What a beautiful thought that would be if we knew for an absolute fact that we cannot and will never fall out of the Father/child relationship we were born into when we were baptized into Christ. That relationship assures us we are going to be among the chosen who will enter heaven for eternity. Evidently, there is a reason to believe it is realistic. Peter made the statement, and he was an inspired teacher of God's word. He would not utter or write an untruth, would he? Let's consider his words. A few sentences into the second letter he wrote:

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust

2 Peter 1:2-4

To the obedient are given exceeding great and exceeding precious promises. Exceeding means above and beyond, so His promises portend that which is greater and more precious than we are capable of fully understanding. Peter's words are this: one of the promises which we consider is that He has given his children all things that pertain to glory and virtue. How precious that is; how just and good. How much greater could it be? *Grace and peace be*

multiplied to you. The abundance of God's grace we see constantly in the bountiful blessings He bestows on us. Grace that brings us salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ. Peace that passeth all understanding (Philippians 4:7). The comfort of having peace in our lives. Jesus said: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). Because of the grace and peace, we can know there is no reason for fear. Jesus said there is no reason for our being afraid.

With these thoughts in mind, let us hear the words of the Apostle Paul. He wrote to the Corinthians: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the mind of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Corinthians 1:9). The exceeding great and precious promises are no longer a mystery for Christians. We are fully aware of them, and they are an integral part of our lives every day.

Let's now go back to Peter and hear more of the passage we quoted as we began this writing. He alluded to the Christian's salvation and spoke to them about adding Christian virtues to their lives.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to our faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For IF THESE THINGS be in

you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, YE SHALL NEVER FALL.

2 Peter 1:5-10

Peter admonishes them to be diligent, try hard to prove that you are really among those God has called and chosen, then it is not likely that you will stumble and fall. Now, we have put everything into context. We cannot pick out one phrase or thought and have the complete story. This is an extremely dangerous practice of some in the religious world and those who believe in universal salvation. Sadly, for them if they do not learn differently and correct the situation that they are in, it will be detrimental to their future. Paul leaves no question about the fact that one can fall: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). We need to be cautious and not be overly confident in ourselves because we can fall from grace and be lost. He also wrote to the Romans: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). John said, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). The precious promises of which we wrote earlier begin to bless the individual at the time of their obedience to God's will. When we are baptized into Christ our sins are forgiven, and we are cleansed in baptism by the blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. We are new creatures. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This is our new life.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3-4

We are God's children. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 6:17a). What a precious promise this is: sharing sonship with Jesus, being heirs with Him all things of God the Father.

One of the great promises made to Christians is found in the writing of John. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3). This is living eternally, forever in the presence of God and all the saved. Something we should strive diligently to obtain, and we can: but only through Jesus Christ. He said: "I am the way the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Jesus also promised a crown for the faithful Christian. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10b). Because of God's grace and love for His creature, the promises are ongoing and will never fail.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God

2 Corinthians 7:1

We know that the promises are exceeding great, so Paul says to the Corinthians. These promises have meaning: we are talking about living forever in the presence of our Creator, so let's turn away from everything wrong, whether of body or spirit, purify ourselves and give ourselves to God. John admonished the family of God:

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called sons of God: therefore, the world

knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.

1 John 3:1-3

We are dealing with God's promise of eternal life; nothing in this life can be of greater importance to us than this. We have learned the truth about God, about His Son Jesus Christ, the kind of truth that changes lives, the truth of eternal life cannot be denied, and we can have eternal life if we choose. God promised this before the creation, and He cannot lie. Paul to Titus: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). The writer of the Hebrew letter exhorted: "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:12). The Greek word translated here as slothful means indolent, sluggish, attributes not fitting for the Christian. We have put on Christ; we are renewed in the spirit of our mind. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

Paul admonished Christians: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). To the Romans, Paul wrote:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:1-2

God requires from each of his children their reasonable service. He does not ask from us that of which we are incapable of giving.

Christ gave His life as a sacrifice to overcome sin and Satan. We who have been cleansed by the blood

of Christ then must be willing to present our bodies as a living sacrifice as well. We will sacrifice certain things to be holy and acceptable to God. We will refrain from participating in worldly lusts, we will cleanse our minds and dedicate our lives to service, to prayer, to worship and not allow ourselves to conform to the worldly enticements. We must be constantly on guard against the wiles of Satan whose greatest delight is to witness a child of God falling away from the church. Peter warned: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Yes, it can and does happen. When Peter said ye will never fall he was telling the truth, the truth with responsibilities attached. Requirements that challenge us so we will be faithful and not miss the reward of eternal life with the Father. If we do not meet the challenges, we can fall and be lost.

The writer of the Hebrew letter admonished:

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Hebrews 10:22-25

This will keep us close to God and safe. He continued:

For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries

Vs 26-27

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

V 31.

This means eternal condemnation. It must be this

way; God is not a respecter of persons.

Yes, we will fall; occasionally, we will fail because we are human. To say we will never fall is not true. But God's love and grace has given us help and hope. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Again from Romans "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). However, we have an advocate, someone to plead our cause. Hear John again:

My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 2:1

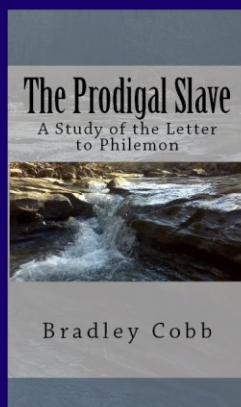
If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

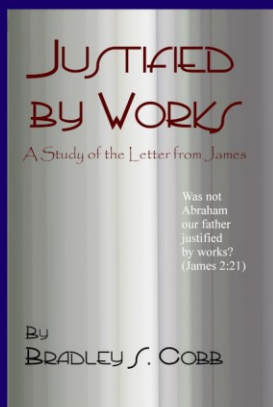
We were cleansed by the blood of Christ when we were baptized into Him. The same cleansing blood is available to us when we sin. We were made new once, we can be renewed again. The Apostle Paul told the Galatians because of their situation that Christ had become of no effect to them and they had fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4). Do not let this be said of you. If Christ is of no effect, we are lost.

These are the facts; we each choose how we intend to deal with them.

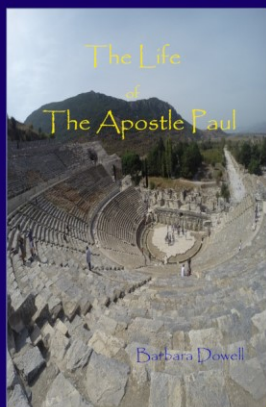
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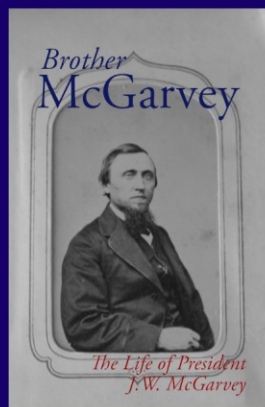
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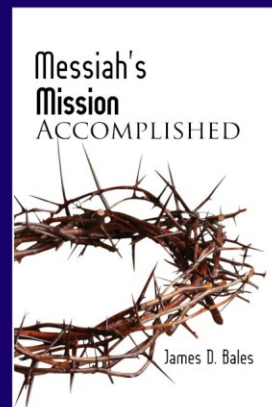
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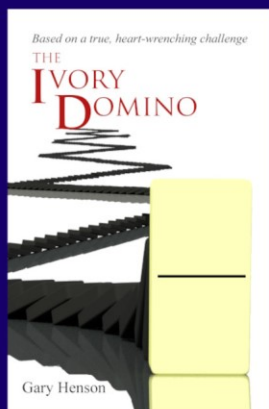
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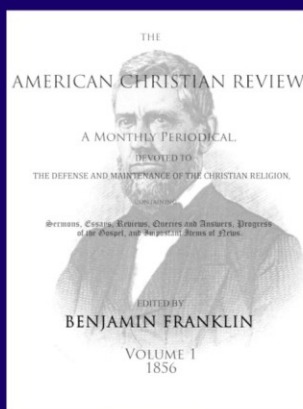
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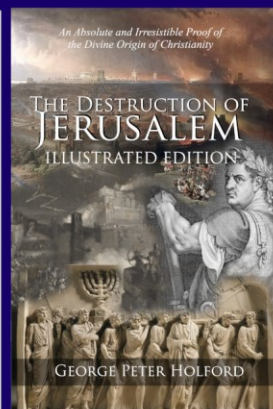
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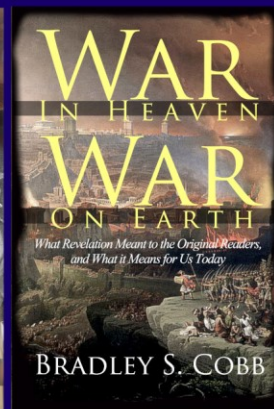
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WHAT HINDERS ME *From Being* BAPTIZED?

Gerald Cowan

A man reading the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 53 asked the evangelist Philip to explain it to him. Philip began there and taught him concerning the Christ. Eventually the man said, “Here is water, what hinders (prevents) me from being baptized?” Philip’s simple-sounding answer was far more complex than it seems. “If you believe with all your heart you may.” The man then responded by saying, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” (Acts 8:36-37). Based on this, many believe a statement of belief in Jesus as God’s Son is the only requirement before baptism. I remember a man, the son of an elder in a certain congregation, self-declared as my nemesis and intent on finding a way to discredit me as “the preacher,” sent a randomly selected 5 or 6 year old boy from a “Spiritual Headstart” program down the aisle to tell me he wanted to be baptized. When I asked him why, he (as prompted by the sender) said, “Because Jesus is the Son of God.” I sent him back

to his seat and told the congregation we appreciated the boy’s good heart and willingness to do what he was told to do and that we prayed he would maintain interest in knowing Jesus so that at the right time and conditions he could be properly baptized. The man and his cohort of supporters who sent the child on this inappropriate mission were outraged that his request was not granted. It was obvious that they did not understand what allowed baptism if present and disallowed it if absent.

I have many times witnessed a preacher or other baptizer ask the candidate for baptism, “Do you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God?” If the person says yes, the baptizer raises his right hand over the person’s head and says something like this: “By the authority vested in me, based upon your confession of faith, I now baptize you...” This can be a travesty of baptism on several levels and may not rise to the standard set by God.

All questions about salvation and Christianity must be answered from the New Testament. Churches are not allowed to change doctrines or applications to suit themselves. We cannot require more or accept less than God stipulates in His Word. We will consider briefly the proper use of scripture before attending to the specifics of faith, repentance, self-denial, and personal commitment that must precede baptism.

Proper Understanding and Application of Scripture.

God's word has many commands. If it is commanded it must be obeyed. We must not leave out anything God says for us to believe and obey. God's word does not give *specific* commands for everything. But we must not add our own requirements and commands (Revelation 22:18-19). God's word gives a lot of information – principles and standards by which one can determine what to do or not do. We must not change the meaning of words to suit our own understanding or desire (Galatians 1:6-8). Read all the scripture that applies to a subject or a question. No one part contains everything one needs to know about any topic. Baptism and salvation is a prime example. We must also appreciate the silence of scripture. Lack of attention to some specific in one reference does not mean it is not required or important if it is mentioned in other references. Look, for example, at faith. Faith is not mentioned in Acts 2:38. Repentance is not mentioned in Mark 16:15-16, Acts 8:36-37 or 18:8, etc., but both are mentioned often elsewhere. How many times must a point be repeated in order to be valid and binding? One unambiguous mention may be enough. We must not treat an outline or brief summary of a sermon (which is what we often have in the New Testament writings) as a complete doctrinal treatise. We have only abbreviated sketches of sermons of Peter (Acts 2), Stephen (Acts 7), and Paul (Acts 13). But what are the *many other words* Peter spoke in Acts 2:40? What did Philip say when he preached Jesus to the Ethiopian Queen's treasurer (Acts 8:35)? What did Paul say when he continued his message

until midnight (Acts 20:7)? We must not assume that a detailed and comprehensive treatment of any or all aspects of a subject was given to any or every audience by any or every speaker. Preachers often preach from an outline of "speaking points," though some prefer to read a pre-written full text sermon. In scripture what we usually get is a synopsis, perhaps an outline, but seldom if ever a verbatim, every-word rendition.

Even Jesus' remarkable sermon on the mount (Matthew chapters 5, 6, 7) is an outline, not a full-text verbatim rendition apparently hours long in delivery. Too long for one sermon? A crowd of thousands did not seem to think so — they listened all the way through and marveled at the power and authority of his words (7:28-29). Why do so many of our sermons not get that kind of attention and response? Perhaps because of the modern demand to make it all squeeze together in under 25 and not more than 30 minutes. It can be irritating and frustrating when noisy gossip and a few "get 'em in a happy mood" jokes take away sermon time, but one is still expected to quit by the allotted time. We leave out essential connecting parts and use references that do not make a whole and that the audience cannot fit together for themselves. We give bits and pieces, we give insufficient disconnected or isolated "proof texts" that do not by themselves provide a coherent message, do not in their own context teach what we are trying to make them teach. As some have said: a text taken out of context can become a pretext, teaching error, causing confusion. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Preachers and teachers confidently claiming to speak authoritatively about something they do not understand or fail to make understandable? That is a source of confusion (1 Timothy 1:7).

Application to the point: What must one know before being baptized? We must assume sufficient information was given to and understood by candidates for baptism in the conversion examples. We must assume the scripture references are enough now to instruct us adequately too. Nothing has changed from New Testament times to the present,

nor will it ever change. Perfect knowledge of all things is not required at any point. No one was or is required to be baptized again after learning more of the truth. Grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:16-18 in its context) was addressed to Christians, not to those seeking to become Christians. Compare also Ephesians 1:18, 3:1ff. We have examples of people who were baptized with only a rudimentary knowledge of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 5:12-6:2). There is no command or example of being baptized again after adding more knowledge.

It seems certain that there is a minimum requirement of knowledge and understanding which must be verified before one is baptized. No one was baptized before being instructed (Acts 8:36f, 10:34-48, 16:30ff, etc). No proxy or surrogate person can believe, repent, or obey for another person. Being induced or forced to say some words or do some act does not qualify as either faith or obedience. Before we attempt to establish the “minimum requirement,” we must define the terms and show their relationship to the over-all plan of salvation.

Faith, Repentance, Self-Denial and Commitment to Christ must be Expressed or Implied before Baptism.

FAITH is knowledge, belief, and acceptance of the gospel. (Mark 16:15-16). It includes:

- Faith/belief in God. Hebrews 11:6, Romans 1:19-20.
- Faith/belief in Christ. John 1:11-12, 8:24, 14:1; cf. Acts 8:36-37, 18:8; John 14:1-6.
- Faith/belief in the Holy Spirit. Acts 19:1-5; Romans 8:1-17.
- Faith in and obedience to the gospel of Christ. Romans 1:15-17.

SELF-DENIAL (Luke 9:23) is yielding to a master or Lord other than oneself.

- It is not a matter of denying oneself the essentials of life and forgiveness of sin.
- It is not refusing to enjoy the pleasures of forgiveness and freedom in Christ.
- It is a matter of confessing and submitting to

Jesus as one's own Lord (Master and ruler), giving up control of one's life and activities to him.

Luke 9:23; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Peter 3:15.

REPENTANCE (Luke 24:47, 13:3 & 5, Acts 2:38) needs a more precise and inclusive definition than we usually give it.

- Repentance is not sorrow or regret but is produced by godly sorrow and remorse or regret. (Do a word study on three pertinent words in 2 Corinthians 7:8-10. *METAMELOMAI* is regret, remorse. *ELUPESA* is sorrow which leads to *METANOIA*, repentance.)
- The English *repent* is literally to re-think, to change one's mind. But Greek *METANOIA* is much more than that.
- In positive terms, repentance is turning away from one thing, person, program, plan, or way to another. Turning *from* self, other masters, or other saviors, and turning *to* Jesus as the only Lord and Savior. Turning from other doctrines or ways and turning to the gospel of the Lord as the only way. Turning to the Lord and his gospel implies willingness to obey him in everything.
- On the negative side, repentance is the correction of personal error and deficiency as it is known or becomes known. This has overtones of self-denial. At least it is self-correction and appropriation what the Lord provides.
- Faith without works is dead (James 2:17-26), so repentance without evidence of it (correction of error and implementation of truth) is also dead. (Matthew 3:8, 2 Cor. 7:10-11).

Knowledge and acceptance of the truth of the gospel will lead every honest person to **COMMITMENT**, both to the gospel and to the Lord who gave it.

- Commitment is a willingness to take the Lord at His word and on His own terms. Matthew 10:32-33, Romans 6:16-17.
- It is a willingness to give oneself to the Lord, on His terms and in accordance with His word. Romans 12:1-2, compare 2 Timothy 1:12.
- The confession of Christ which one is called upon to make is not just an admission that (one believes) Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Acts 8:36-37 is not the “pattern” for such a confession. One must not only confess the identity of Christ, but also one’s acceptance of and commitment to Him as LORD. Romans 10:9-10, Luke 6:46, 1 Peter 3:15 NASB, NIV.

- Three necessary implications of such a confession and commitment are repentance, obedience, and self-denial. Confessing Christ as Lord and committing oneself to him implies obedience to him in all things whatsoever he commands or requires. So, of any action, one must be able to say, “I am doing thing because the Lord asks me to do it, and I am committed to Him.”

All these things are part of one’s ongoing **CONFESSION** of relationship to Jesus. Matthew 10:32-33, Romans 10:9-12

The Results of Self-Denying, Penitent Commitment, Based upon Confessed Faith, and Relationship to the Lord and the Gospel.

It makes possible one’s baptism into Christ and His church (Galatians 3:27, 1 Corinthians 12:13). Baptism accomplishes, signifies, and seals . . .

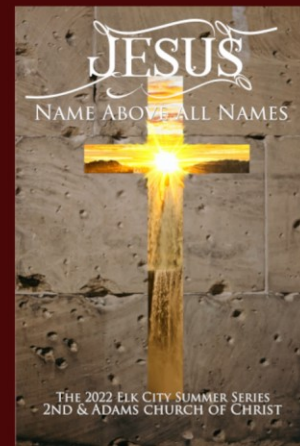
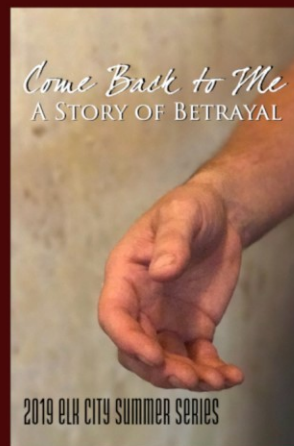
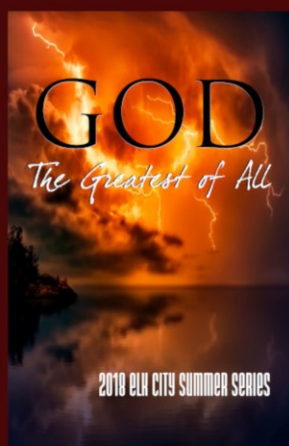
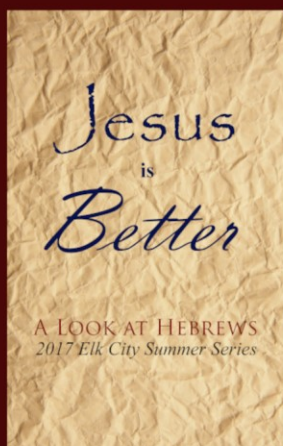
- Salvation. Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:47, 16:30-31.
- Forgiveness, remission of sins. Acts 2:38.

- Commitment to Christ. Rom. 6:1-4 and 16-17.
- Identification with Christ. Buried with Christ, raised to walk in a new life (Romans 6:1-4); Put on Christ, (Galatians 3:27); Partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).
- Addition to and fellowship in the church of the Lord. Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Corinthians. 12:13.
- Personal access to all spiritual blessings in Christ. Ephesians 1:3.

Conclusion:

One who has a basic grasp of the truth of the gospel and is willing to obey it as evidence of personal commitment to Christ is allowed to be baptized. If one does not meet these minimum requirements (faith, repentance, self-denial, and personal commitment), his baptism will not be valid. There is no biblical or logical warrant for repeating baptism based upon increased knowledge, improved commitment, or appointment to a position or office or position in a church congregation. If you have not been baptized into Christ what hinders you from doing it now?

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BAPTISM

John Krivak

For many Christians, baptism (for remission of sins) is the enduring essence of salvation. If you were to ask, “*what is your hope of making it to Heaven?*” they will quickly claim sin-remission in baptism as confident guarantee. Even after many years—even decades later—baptism still captivates and enthralls!

There is something better than baptism.

But first, I should state plainly that baptism for remission of sins is true doctrine, and that it has an indispensable role in our practice of evangelism (Acts 2:38). This doctrine, as set forth in the Bible, is taught and practiced almost exclusively by (us) Restorationists. No, it is not the *doctrine* that I downplay when promising something better. Rather, it is the “personal experience” of baptism (that each of us calls “my baptism”). Moving forward in Christian maturity, does “my baptism” become the anchor of faith? Or, does that vital experience give way to something better? Baptism is a “finish line” that crosses ultimate victory. Should it not also be regarded as the “starting blocks” of a new race?

What about sins after baptism?

Baptism simply cannot carry the weight that we might expect from it. Consider an obvious limitation of baptism. In the fourth century, some began to advocate pushing baptism to the latest time possible—optimally, even to the death-bed. Especially, you might research the baptismal experience of Augustine (354-430 AD). Why this delay? Because the ancients understood (as we do also) that only accumulated sins are washed away in baptism. Future sins are not touched by baptism. So, some in ancient times reasoned: if baptism is pushed off to the very end of lifespan, it will cover a whole lifetime of sin. In this, the ancients failed to understand that another remedy—after baptism—is provided by God.

Event versus Relationship

We should not be surprised by the limitations of baptism. We said it is powerless against future sins. There is a reason for that. The reason has to do with the purpose and function that God designed for baptism.

Baptism is an “event” that begins a “relation-

ship.” There is a ready analogy in our culture. A “wedding” (event) begins a “marriage” (relationship). At first, the wedding gets huge attention. It might even seem to outshine the day-to-day humdrum of the married life that follows. Daily meals are no longer a wedding banquet, and the important guests go back home. Yet quickly and increasingly, the marriage begins to achieve its enduring purpose(s). But marriage is the ultimate goal; the wedding is just the way it gets started! As years and decades pass, the wedding event is less frequently remembered. Old photos and anniversary celebrations¹ keep alive the sacred memory of that event. The wedding always will remain important for what it began. But with every passing year, the marriage now gets greater focus.²

Let’s just say it: there is nothing better than sharing relationship with Jesus. That living and vibrant covenant is even better than baptism!

Now, suppose a certain man carried every discussion of his marriage back to the wedding. His fixation is on that event and he seems stuck there. Even decades later, it’s all about the details of that day—as though nothing since matters. Why, that day is spoken of more than she is! To hear this man talking, his bride apparently never became his wife (except by legal pronouncement). There is no mention of what the resulting marriage has accomplished, of the children born to it, of challenges faced and joys remembered. Why does discussion not go, instead, to that relationship? Doesn’t all of this seem rather odd?

You see what this is getting at, right? Baptism is an event—an event designed to touch off a relationship. Given that purpose and function, baptism is of extravagant value. But once the relationship (with Jesus) begins to accomplish its own purposes and

functions, there is much more to talk about. Baptism was merely the event that got this better thing started.

Like the spigot.

When plumbing was new technology, it was a true marvel. A man set off for Arabian lands to demonstrate a spigot to a sheik. The wealthy ruler took his seat surrounded by a large entourage. When the valve knob was turned, out gushed water in endless supply. The sheik was beyond astonished, and immediately paid for a large number of spigots. When they arrived, he turned the knob. Nothing came out. Thinking he had been cheated, he was furious! It was then explained to him that a complex network of pipes connected the spigot to a water source—a well, a spring, a tank, a cistern.

Baptism (for remission of sins) is like the spigot. It connects to an abundant source of grace, mercy, and forgiveness. And what is the source? It’s Christ Jesus! The source of baptism’s power to save is His gospel—His crucifixion into death and resurrection out of death. And, what connects that Source to people (the plumbing, if you will) is a covenant relationship. Remember the distinction between event and the relationship? Well, the same plumbing connects the Source both to the “event” (baptism) and to the “relationship” (covenant). Once you enter the covenant (through baptism), you are connected to Jesus in a saving relationship. You are now “in Christ.” The spigot has achieved its limited purpose. Now, you have something better!

You have heard the promises of baptism. Now hear the promises of covenant:

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: “I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more”

¹ My wife and I regard January 12, the anniversary of our baptisms, as our “spiritual birthday”.

² Remember the royals, Charles and Di? They had the grandest *event* ever. Yet their *relationship* was hardly a marriage.

(Hebrews 8:10–12, NASB).

That requirement to “know the Lord” is not about head smarts—it is covenantal knowing (like Adam “knowing” Eve in Gen. 4:1). To know the Lord is to share the living relationship that we call the New Covenant. Likewise, to “walk in the Light” (in 1 John 1:5-9) expresses essential covenantal activity, meaning something like “remain true in loving faithfulness”:

This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth, but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

On His side of the covenant and also on ours, remission (or forgiveness) of sins welds us together. At the Last Supper, while explaining the symbolic grape juice, Jesus declared: “...*this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many **for forgiveness of sins***” (Matthew 26:28). The covenant (a form of relationship) provides forgiveness, because it anchors in the Cross-shed blood of Jesus on the one side—His side. On the other side of the relationship—our side, a convert answers the call to covenant with “responsive death” in baptism: “*Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38). The death of Jesus and the baptism-death³ of

³ The responsive death belonging to baptism is not made explicit in Acts 2:38. Presumably, the converts on Pentecost were taught the same baptismal theology as found in Romans 6.

a Christian convert are connected—in these two Scriptures—by the forgiveness (or remission) of sins. The forgiveness that began at baptism continues in the covenant.

Baptism is initiation. Judaism features washings that had to be repeated, over and over—for every new contamination; a new washing. Beginning with John the Baptist, baptism emerged as a once-for-all-time washing. Here, outsiders become insiders. Baptism is the initiation event into the New Covenant.

What relationship (covenant) with Jesus looks like

Like a diamond, the dynamics of covenant have many refractions of brilliance when held up to light. A covenant is the reciprocal exchange of love and faithfulness. It is Lordship, and responsive obedience. And yes, there is room for uniquely individual expression. One person feels close to God when singing hymns in the fellowship of the “covenant community” (church); another prefers to meet God in solitary while surrounded by the beauty of the natural world.

God’s own expectations for His partners in covenant are common among us all. These are clearly set forth by Jesus. We answer His crucifixion and resurrection by dying and rising ourselves! Dying and rising? Why, that’s the gospel, isn’t it? On the Cross, Jesus met covenant demands with a martyr’s faith—and by that, also He showed what it means for us to be faithful. This is the “two-cross gospel.” Jesus was crucified (for us); and we (for Him) are to take up our own crosses. This cross-death comes to stand for a total self-surrender that is mutual between the Christian and Jesus. And, corresponding to the gospel experience of Jesus, a resurrection awaits everyone who dies with Jesus (2 Tim. 2:11-13)! Suspend on the Cross, He was showing us the way (Heb. 12:2)—we follow by also dying and rising. God looks for this, from us all, from baptism onward.

Now, our covenant-death looks somewhat different than actual crucifixion (real nails, real cross). In Romans 6, Paul describes this in three aspects—we

die to sin (vs. 2, 10-13, 15, 17, 22); we die to self (v. 6); we die with Christ (v.3-5, 8). The death “to sin” (empowered by the Holy Spirit) demands that we say no to sin and temptation. Death “to self” means that we surrender control of our lives to Jesus, as our Lord. And finally, we die “with Jesus”.⁴ When we die (to sin and to self), it is as though Jesus on His Cross is no longer alone there. Not any longer! His death and ours (in covenantal exchange) are fused together. As Paul says of his own death: *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me”* (Galatians 2:19–20).

So, the essence of the covenant relationship is a pattern of dying and rising that we share with our Lord. Life presents many opportunities to die—to sin, to self, with Jesus. His promise is that we will rise again after each death. We face every such challenge together. Jesus goes into these situations with us. Sometimes we fail, yet very often we are victorious as He was. But even our failures are not fatal, if we face them in covenantal righteousness (confession, repentance, rededication). We cannot be perfect (nor is perfectionism demanded), but we can relate responsibly. He loves us and forgives graciously:

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we re-

ceive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

(1 John 3:18–22).

Paul’s New Covenant relationship with Jesus, following his own baptism, was built on this “dying and rising” model. In fact, Paul not only had been crucified with Christ. He declared, *“I die daily”*⁵ (1 Cor. 15:31). This model is set forth yet again in Philippians (3:10-11), *“...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”* So, when Paul speaks of Christian hope, he does not look back to baptism; he looks to Jesus in the present and in the future. Dying and rising, again and again!

A lively covenant relationship with Jesus is even better than baptism, knowing that you have made a total self-surrender for each other. In each case, “death” leads to resurrection—a rising to newness of life that never ends. The indwelling Spirit empowers your win over sin (and there is continuing forgiveness of sins). You need only to honor the covenant with renewing love and faithfulness. Your covenant Partner is so strong, so righteous, so faithful. So Divine!

Baptism was a momentary event. The covenant with Jesus goes on forever: *“...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20). This is even better!

⁴ The Scriptures describing the believers’ death indicate thoughtful deliberation and conscious determination. They “count the cost” first. Death is never said to have been accomplished for them (by God) without their knowledge and awareness. It is inconceivable that one might say: *“You mean to say that I was crucified with Christ fifteen years ago, and never even knew it?”*

⁵ This “daily” factor indicates that ours is not also a literal crucifixion. We remain strangely alive afterward! This “alive after dying” phenomenon is also expressed “daily” repetition of Luke 9:23, and in becoming the paradoxical “living sacrifice” of Romans 12:1, and also in describing those who die with Christ as “they who live” in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. There can be only one explanation—every act of dying, by a disciple, results in finding life again, because the power that raised Jesus now raises them, each and every time!

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PSALM 73: THOSE FAR FROM GOD

Johnny O. Trail

Psalm 73 deals with a theme common to those who seek a godly existence. Throughout history God's people have wondered, "Why to the wicked prosper and the servants of God suffer?" The Psalmist understands the struggle the faithful had in finding God's presence in situations where wickedness seems to prevail. The Psalmist, like all other inspired writers of God's holy writ, approached people and situations in an honest fashion—even when things seem to be running contrary to God's plan.

This Psalm is written as a "confessional address" to God. The general structure is a question of faith aimed at instructing God's followers to avoid disparity between a prosperous wicked person and faithful ones suffering, though living in a devoted fashion to God and His commands.¹ The psalmist does not want to be guilty of misleading God's people in the matter of the wicked prospering. He says in Psalm 73:15, "If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children." This is true of all who attempt to speak on behalf of God. We must make sure we represent Him correctly from His word.

Suffice it to say, we live in a world covered in spiritual darkness. Wickedness prevails, at times, because the world prefers darkness over light (John 1.5). Since Satan wants people to prefer things over God, the ways of the worldly will always seem easy and thriving. Psalm 73:12 says, "Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches." Moreover, wicked people are very shrewd at practicing ungodliness (Jeremiah 4.22).

This Psalm is an *inclusio*.² That is, it contains

thoughts that are bracketed by the idea of God's goodness despite the struggle that the psalmist had reconciling the righteousness of God with the iniquity that he observed around him.³ Psalm 73:1b says, "Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart." Per the *inclusio*, the closing of this Psalms says something almost identical. Psalm 73:28 reiterates, "But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works."

One of the beautiful things about this Psalm and the Bible is the whole is the honesty that is contained therein. Instead of sugarcoating a world lost in wickedness, the Psalmist bemoans the affluence of the wicked and wonders about the judgement of God. In their arrogance, the wicked assume God is unaware of their evil practices. Ps. 73:11 says, "...How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?' Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches." Ultimately, their logic is flawed.

When one judges happiness by worldly standards and carnal delights, he is judging situations through the wrong microscope and he will always arrive at the wrong conclusions. Psalm 73:3 says, "For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked." The psalmist understands, as Chris-

also known as **bracketing** or an **envelope structure**, which consists of creating a frame by placing similar material at the beginning and end of a section..."

³ Tucker, Dennis W. and Grant, Jamie A (2018). *The NIV Application Commentary*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids. "This common Hebrew poetic technique is known as an *inclusio*—basically a bracketing function that draws the reader's attention to the key theme of the poem or text...we should remember that this poem is ultimately about a god who is good. Even when confronted with the inconsistencies of life and the judgement of God, the reader is encouraged to remember that this God is a good God." Pg. 60

¹ Mays, James Luther (1994). *Psalms, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, John Knox Press, Louisville, pg. 240.

² <https://findwords.info/term/inclusio>. "[In] biblical studies, **inclusio** is a literary device based on a concentric principle,

tians should too, that this can create doubt regarding the judgement of God and a view that engenders envy of those who prosper in the wake of ill-gotten gain. Psalm 73:2 says, “But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped.” His honesty is refreshing to any person who has grappled with the same theological question.

In the Christian realm of reasoning, our mistakes can be a blessing.⁴ The psalmist reasoned about his fault while meditating in the presence of God and arrived at a conclusion that drew him nearer to God. Psalm 73:17 says, “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.”

When one fails to meditate upon the spiritual and moral challenges that permeate our world, he will always end up with the wrong conclusions. Psalm 73:13-17 says, “Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning. If I had said, ‘I will speak thus,’ Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me—Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.” Like the psalmist did in a temporary fashion, one can be left with the conclusion serving God is done in vanity.

The problem the Psalmist started with in contemplating the wealth of the wicked is the standard of judgment. When Christians judge worldly people and Christian people by the standards of humankind, there will always be a sense of disparity in worldly blessings. This might be the meaning behind Luke 16.8b, “...For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.” Thus, there “seems to be a naivete among God’s people that often hinders their worldly success.”⁵ This was a myopic understanding of the nature of blessings. The psalmist saw their current

prosperity and forgot their terrible future. He saw their outward display of peace and missed their discomfited souls.⁶

At the close of his mediation, the psalmist is embarrassed by his lack of discernment and worldly examination of prosperity. He says, in Psalm 73:21-22 “Thus my heart was grieved, And I was vexed in my mind. I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.” Any consideration of problems devoid of God’s instruction, causes one embarrassment. It is foolish to envy evil people.⁷

While worldly people might prosper according to worldly standards, their ultimate judgment is tragic. Psalm 73:27 says, “For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry.” The psalmist had rather be near God and suffer with His people than be far from Him and “perish.”

In closing, the greatness of God is not defined by the prosperity of the wicked. It is not defined by the suffering of the pure in heart. The good portion is to be understood exclusively in the presence of God—whether in suffering or in prosperity.⁸ This is a sharp distinction between a carnal view of “good” and God’s idea of “good.”

That which is seen is not the final word in judging true righteousness and evil.⁹ There will be a day when God’s judgement will reign above all worldly wisdom and standards of carnal success. Revelation 20:12 says, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”

⁴ Campbell, Roger, ed. (n.d.). *Spurgeon’s Daily Treasures in the Psalms*, “Wrong Conclusions.” Kregel Publications.

⁵ Coffman, Thomas Burton (1992). *Psalms*, vol. 2. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, pg. 2-3.

⁶ Campbell.

⁷ Ash, Christopher (2020). *Psalms for You*. The Good Book Company, UK. Pg. 147

⁸ Mays, pg. 243

⁹ Ash, pg. 146

REASONS I BELIEVE

Andy Robison

*People often ask me,
“Why do you believe...
why do you believe
and follow Jesus?”
That is when I tell them
the reasons I can give
for knowing that my Savior
with God in heaven lives.*

Evangelism in today's post-Christian culture begins with Christian Evidences: Convincing people of the reasonableness of belief in God, the Bible, and the Christ. Fascinating are the reasons to believe Jesus of Nazareth really was raised from the dead. Were it not for *a priori* anti-supernatural bias, that event would be accepted widely as the best-attested fact of history.

This author, upon being taught these evidences years ago, wanted to do what little he might be able to do to help people remember those beliefs. He is without a scholarly terminal degree, but reads. He tries to write hymns, knowing they teach (Col. 3:16), and embed in the memory great truths. So, he attempted setting to very basic music a rudimentary wording of four great evidences of the resurrection of Christ.

*I believe that Jesus who was crucified,
just as the prophets prophesied,
left the tomb unoccupied*

with angels in His stead.

Jesus was like no other religious leader to pop on the scene. His birth, presence, life, death, burial, and resurrection were predicted in the Old Testament. Some have counted over three-hundred prophecies that all were fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Prophecies included Him having a forerunner (Mal. 4:5-6), there being infanticide in an attempt to get Him (Jer. 31:15-16), His birthplace (Micah 5:2), His spirit (Isa. 42:1-4), His suffering servanthood (Isa. 53), His manner of death (Psalm 22:16), the gambling for His clothes (Psalm 22:18), His death with criminals but burial with the rich (Isa. 53:9, 12), and His glorious resurrection (Psalm 16:10). This is why Paul could say that “Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day *according to the Scriptures*” (1 Cor. 15:3-4, emphasis mine). These prophecies came hundreds of years in advance. This is proven because the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the completed Hebrew Scriptures) was published in 250 B.C. from Alexandria, Egypt. As if all that were not enough, God created a whole nation to record a special genealogy all the way back to the first man, predicting His coming lineage all along (Matt. 1; Luke 3; Gen. 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Psalm 89:3-4).

The New Testament was completed within a couple of generations of the events it claims to have

recorded. This is significant, because historians say it takes at least two generations for legends even to begin to develop. Why? Because within those generations there are too many people still alive, or only one degree removed from those who saw the miracles. If fraudulent material were written too early, it would be invalidated and discredited.

Yet, the Gospel accounts and the letters all survived voluminously. Historical textual criticism has two great factors to consider—number of early manuscripts and proximity in time. Other works from about the time of Christ survive to us, unquestioned as to their validity. Yet, in many cases, the earliest manuscripts are a thousand years after the events—plenty of time for copyists to make errors. How can it be known what was originally intended? That's where the number of manuscripts come in. By comparing them, scholars get an idea of what was originally written. Authors like Caesar, Plato, Tacitus, Pliny, Suetonius, have their numbers of manuscripts at about seven to twenty, with the earliest being 750 to 1100 years from the time of the original.

The New Testament, by contrast, has its earliest manuscripts within twenty to thirty years of the New Testament's purported completion, and there are 5,000 of them to compare.

Thus, the New Testament recorded these wild events—miracles—and the early readers not only accepted them, they were zealous in making sure they were preserved as fact. The fulfillment of prophecies proves that Jesus was like no other historical figure, and quite obviously far and above any religious leader.

*I believe He showed Himself to witnesses—
to those who would attest to His
true presence in the midst of them,
the many who beheld.*

Another layer of evidence, then, is in the witnesses of Christ. The reliable historical document that is the New Testament includes records of His appearances to Mary (Matt. 28), the ten (without Judas and Thomas) (John 20), the eleven (adding Thomas) (John 20), the two on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24), and the seven disciples who went fishing (John 21). Paul, writing 1 Corinthians within thirty years of the events, claimed Jesus appeared to “over five hundred brethren at once,” then gave a chal-

lenge, “of whom the greater part remain to the present” (1 Cor. 15:6). In other words, Paul is telling readers those witnesses were still living at the time of writing and they could be questioned. The number of witnesses is astounding.

Why are no witnesses recorded in secular literature? One would not expect such. Secular literature was biased in favor of the mythological Roman gods. They tacitly acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth and His existence and the belief that He did great things, and that people follow Him as a resurrected Savior, but they are vehemently against acknowledging the truth of those beliefs. The New Testament, on the other hand, is quite admittedly biased towards believing these things.

How can one sort out the truth with all this bias? The same way modern news consumers must. One consumes “news” from the perspective of the left on one station and the right on another station. While perspectives and interpretations of events differ widely, one can still find out that something happened.

All the evidence of the witnesses would obviously be biased. “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard!” (Acts 4:20). Their testimony is overwhelming. People do not have hallucinations in groups. Jesus did not swoon on the cross, then stay in an airless tomb for parts of three days, push the rock away, and come out strong enough to deceive people into following Him. Those fanciful explanations of unbelief do not stand to reason. He is risen!

*I believe they preached Him in Jerusalem
as resurrected Son of Man,
and enemies could not reprimand
the truth of all their claims.*

The verified book of Acts, written within a generation of the events it records, reminds that Peter preached the resurrection of Christ only seven weeks after His death had taken place, and in the same town, to the same people who had early called for Christ's crucifixion. This is no legend developed centuries later, no fanciful story from some far-off place. This is an “in-your-face” challenge. He quotes from Psalm 16, where David wrote as if He were to be resurrected (a common prophetic tool). Peter points out that David's body could still be found in His tomb (1,000 years later!), but Christ's

tomb was empty and He could not be found (Acts 2:23-32). Nobody could deny it. They could not produce the body. Three thousand that day admitted the truth by giving their lives to Him (Acts 2:41). The movement spread quickly. Why? The only explanation is because it was true.

*I believe disciples suffered sword and flame;
they gladly bore the pain and shame
to magnify the holy name
of Christ, their risen Lord.*

Many people die believing a lie. Radical Islamic leaders hide in bunkers while sending impressionable young people to do the dirty work of suicide bombings. In the case of Christianity, it was the leaders who selflessly and boldly perished in the face of opposition. History records that all of the remaining of the twelve (not Judas), except perhaps John, died martyr's deaths, refusing to recant their belief in the resurrection of Christ. (Matthias and Paul would later add to that number.) Why? Were they lunatics (to borrow from C.S. Lewis's trilemma problem)? It is hard to swallow that all eleven of them were so. Were they liars? Eleven fellows dying violent deaths to perpetrate a lie? That doesn't happen. Some were crucified. Some were beaten to

death and thrust through with spears. They could have avoided it all if they just said, "No, we stole the body; He didn't rise." But they had to speak what they had seen and heard.

Therein are four great reasons with which to begin when telling people a reason for the faith that is in you: Prophecy, witnesses, the early preaching of the empty tomb, and martyrdom.

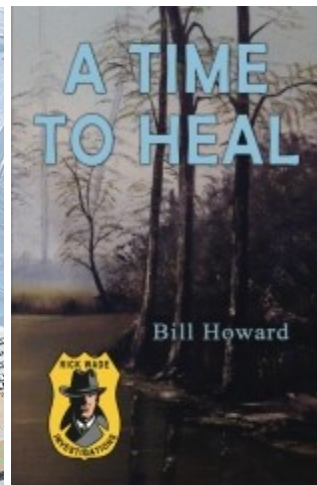
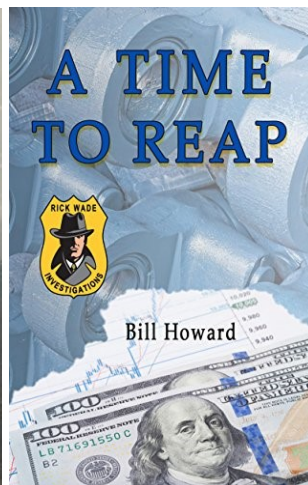
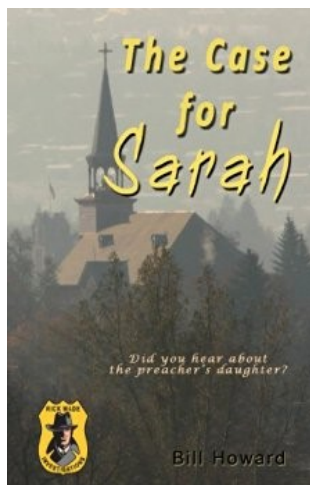
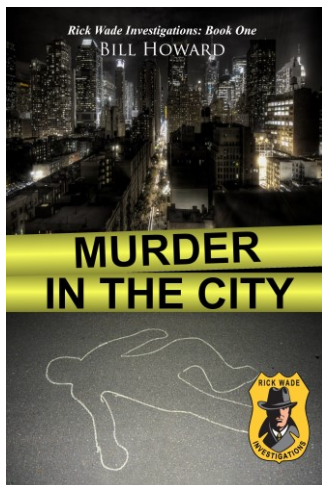
*This one great fact of history
I'll cling to all my days,
that one day I may see Him,
when with Him I am raised.*

Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection that will take place at the last day (1 Cor. 15:22-24; John 5:28-29). Those who follow Him will be transformed (Phil. 3:20-21) to be "like Him" and "see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

The resurrection of Christ is more than the most well-attested fact of history; it is the only hope of all humankind.

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Reasons I Believe

A.R. Unison

Andy Robison

Peop - le of - ten ask me, "Why do you be - lieve?"
(for D.C.) When the peop - le ask me

Why do you be - lieve and tol - low Je - sus?"

That is when I tell them the rea - sons I can give for

know - ing that my Sav - ior with God in heav - en lives.

1. { be - lieve that Je - sus who was cru - ci - fied; Just
be - lieve He showed Him - self to wit - nesses; To
2. { be - lieve they preached Him in Je - ru - sa - lem; As
dis - ci - ples sur - fered sword and flame; They
I be - lieve

as the pro - phets pro - phe - sied; He
those who would at - test to His true
re - sur - rec - ted Son of Man; and
glad - ly bore the pain and shame to

After verse 1's repeat, D.C. Al Fine

left the tomb un - oc - cu - pied, with an - gels in His stead; And
pre - sence in the midst of them, the ma - ny who be - held. So
e - ne - mies could not re - pi - mand the truth of all their claims. And
may - ni - ty the Ho - ly name of Christ, their ri - sen Lord. This

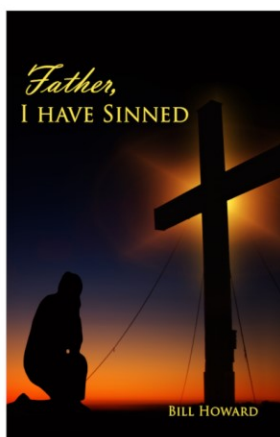
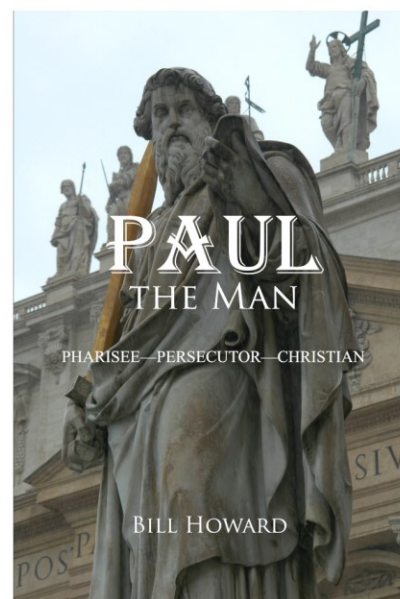
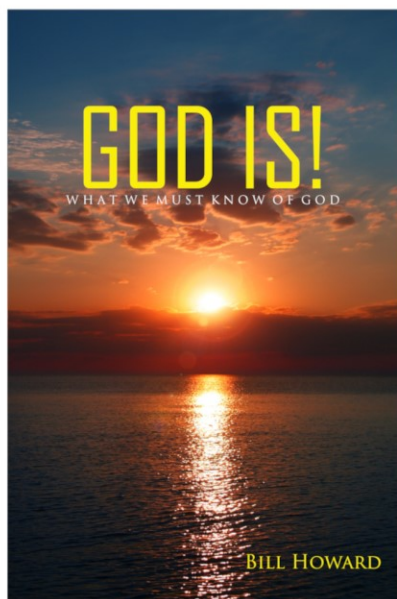
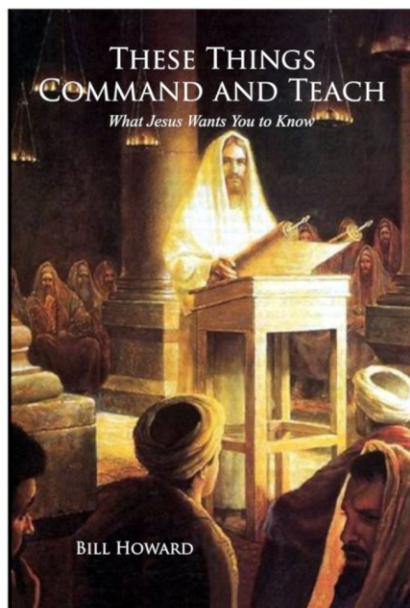
one great fact of his - to - ry I'll cling to all my days, That

one day I may see Him, When, with Him I am raised. That

one day I may see Him, When, with Him I am raised.

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Books for new and growing Christians



By Bill Howard
These books can all be purchased
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BEHoward1930@aol.com

QUOTES TO CONTEMPLATE

On Preaching Christ

If I am to preach the faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. Am I only to preach faith to those who have it? Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners.

Charles Spurgeon

On How God Speaks

[B]e admonished, my friends, to open your Bibles and to hearken to the voice of God, which is the voice of reason. God now speaks to us only by his word. By his Son, in the New Testament, he has fully revealed himself and his will. This is the only revelation of his Spirit which we are to regard. The popular preachers, and the popular systems, alike render the word of God of none effect. Some of them are so awfully bold as to represent it as “*a dead letter.*” According to them it ought never to have been translated; for the reading of it in an unknown tongue, if accompanied with some supernatural power, with some new revelation of the Spirit, would have been as suitable to the salvation of men, as though read in our own tongue. The jarring elements of which their systems are composed, do, however, by the necessary laws of discordant principles, in the act of combustion reflect so much light as to convince us that the *written word* is the last appeal. Let us make it the first and the last. It comes to us in the demonstration of the Holy Spirit, and with the power of miraculous evidence. The word of Jesus Christ is “*spirit and life.*” “*The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword,*” yea, it is the **SWORD** of the Spirit: it is the spirit of his mouth. “The entrance of thy word, O Lord, giveth light, and makes the *simple* wise.”

-Alexander Campbell,

Christian Baptist (Vol. 1)

On The Certainty of the Resurrection

[I]t appears that [Pilate] gave them permission for the Roman guard to stand watch. Whichever the case, it would make no difference because the power of the Almighty God would raise Jesus if there were ten thousand Roman soldiers and an avalanche of boulders in front of the tomb.

Bill Howard,
The Portal (2023)

On Easy Religion

In a day when many wish to view the Christian religion as being a nearly effortless religion, scriptures like this call us back to the true nature of the faith. It seems ... to be rather insulting to God to think that He would have allowed His Son to suffer and die only to give man a religion which expects nothing, requires nothing, and accomplishes nothing as far as true reformation of will and renewal of mind is concerned.

Andy Erwin
Consider Jesus: A Commentary on Hebrews (2023)

On Religious “Existing”

I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist... But I am afraid, lest they should exist only as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power.

John Wesley,
founder of Methodism

On Amusements

Card playing for amusement was another fearful evil which I was led into. It has since appeared to me to be an invention of Satan, to waste time, bewitch the mind, and lead to gambling, which has ruined so many, both for this world, and the world to come.

-Mark Fernald,
Autobiography

On “The Word Only”

No one believes more firmly than this writer that true religion is begun, carried on, and completed by the Holy Spirit—but it is continued and completed in the same way that it begins—through *the Word*. The phrase “through the Word” does not mean the *Word only*. The preposition *through* expresses medium—it is the Spirit working through the Word. There is a wide difference between ‘the word only’ and the phrase ‘*only through the word*,’ and common honesty behooves certain preachers and professors—and some papers and bulletins—to desist in making false charges and discontinue their misrepresentations.

Foy E. Wallace Jr:
Mission and Medium of the Holy Spirit.

On Proper Interpretation

Any inspired interpretation, or use of the figure, in an argument or teaching, will decide its meaning.—In Rule 1 we have the author’s interpretation, which, of course, must be admitted by everyone. But this is based upon the same principle. If we concede that the writers of the New Testament were inspired of God, then we must accept any application of Scripture that they have made. To deny their exegesis of any passage is to deny the authority by which they spoke.

D.R. Dungan,
Hermeneutics (Updated 3rd Edition)

On Our Picture of God

Do you really think it does the Lord justice when our picture of Him is based on paint instead of power, on drawings instead of Deity?

Danny E. Davis,
Closer to God

On James W. Harding and Instrumental Music

J.W. Harding ... for twenty years been an elder in the Court Street church in Winchester, Kentucky, which he had helped to establish. But in 1887 he and fifteen of the most consecrated members were driven out of the congregation by those who were

determined to have an organ. A delegation visited Harding to issue the ultimatum.

“We love you, Brother Harding, and you know we do,” they said, “but if it must come down to a choice between you and the organ, we are going to have the organ.”

...It was not an overflowing love of music, or a feeling that mechanical tones are worth more than human souls. But the organ was a symbol of social prestige. Congregations seeking respectability it lifted up at one to the level of the old and fashionable groups like the Catholic and Episcopal churches. With its social aura it became a musical idol, like Jeroboam’s golden calf, exalted above the unity of the kingdom and the plain word of the Lord.

Lloyd Cline Sears
*The Eyes of Jehovah:
The Life and Faith of James A. Harding*

On Catholicism...by Catholics

“Writers of the fourth century were prone to describe many practices (i.e., The Lenten Fast of Forty Days) as apostolic institutions which certainly had no claim to be so regarded” (*Cath. Ency.*, III, 484).

“One is forced to admit that the gradual corruption of Christianity began very early” (*Cath. Ency.*, XII, 414).

Quoted in *Catholicism Against Itself*, Vol. 1,
O.C. Lambert.

On God’s Providence in the Restoration

I believe the body of people to which we belong were raised up at a peculiar time by the direct providence of God. They rose up in three distinct organizations [Stone/O’Kelly/Jones], hundreds of miles apart, unknown to each other, nearly at the same time. These organizations for years remained unknown to each other. And when they became acquainted, they found but little variation of doctrine or practice between them. When has any other religious body thus risen? No history presents a parallel.

David Millard

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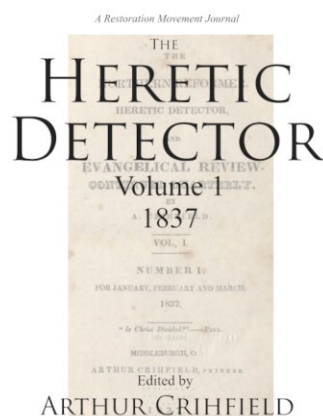
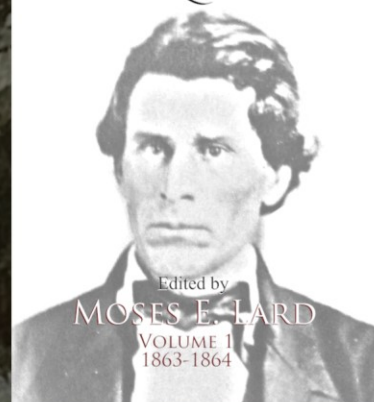
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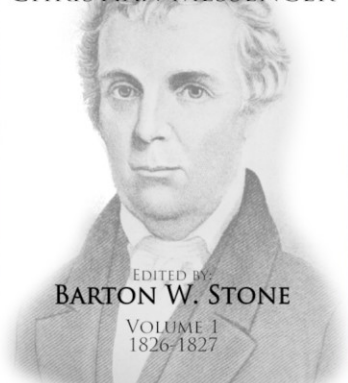
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EDITED BY
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CHRISTIAN RECORD



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CHRISTIAN REVIEW

EDITED BY:
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VOLUME 1
1844

I Want to be More Like Jesus

Raymond Elliot

In the hymn, “More Like Jesus,” the first stanza’s lyrics are:

“I want to be more like Jesus,
And follow Him day by day;
I want to be true and faithful,
And every command obey.”

Our beloved Savior is worthy of our imitation. After all, He is the perfect example. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:21, “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.” The apostle Paul encouraged the Christians in Corinth to “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Here are some of the characteristics of Jesus we should instill within our lives.

Jesus submitted.

Jesus stated in John 8:28, “I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true...” The eternal Word was willing to leave heaven to be made lower than angels and to suffer on Calvary for our sins so we could be saved (Hebrews 2:7; Philippians 2:5-8). And, near to the ending of His life on this earth, He prayed, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:36). So, from eternity to His death on the cross, Jesus was submissive to the will of His Father.

Jesus served.

“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Our Lord also said, “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him” (John 12:26). There-

fore, Christians should have a ‘servant heart.’ The apostle Peter wrote, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10).

Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). We know God desires all men to be saved (2 Pet 3:9). It is the mission of the church to preach the gospel to all the world, beginning where we are (Matthew 28:19-20). The church of our Lord is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). We can teach the word publicly and from house to house as Paul did (Acts 20:20). We can support mission work in foreign lands; and preach and teach the gospel of Christ by every expedient method to reach the lost in every country.

Jesus was compassionate.

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). Jesus had compassion on the 4,000 men, beside women and children who followed Him and fed them (Matthew 15:32, 38); and, the 5,000 men besides the women and children” who had followed Him, and He also healed their sick (Matthew 14:13-21). The apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 3:12-13 that Christians should “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another....” True compassion is not just to ‘feel sorry’ for someone but to make an effort to help the person in need.

Jesus prayed.

Here are a few times when Jesus prayed: “Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’” (Luke 3:21). Jesus “often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16). Jesus prayed before choosing 12 of the disciples to be apostles: “In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12). Of course, there is the prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane as recorded in John 17. In Matthew 26:39, Jesus prayed, saying, “O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” And while Jesus was on the cross he prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). We are to “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). Also we are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We should “Continue earnestly in prayer” (Colossian 4:2).

Jesus forgave.

Jesus was indeed merciful and forgiving. He told the paralytic, “Child, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5); when a sinful woman bathed the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiped them with her hair, Jesus said, “Your sins are forgiven” (Luke 7:48). Even more compelling is the way that Jesus forgave those who sinned against him directly. For Jesus, forgiveness was not automatic, it was intentional, a conscious choice. After the Roman soldiers scourged and nailed him, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34). Jesus taught His disciples to pray: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15). As Christians, we are to be forgiving.

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Jesus loved.

We can never love as our Lord Jesus Christ loved while on this earth. It is expressly stated that Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:3, 5); the rich young ruler (Mark 10:21); and His disciples (John 13:1; 15:9, 12). Though not explicitly stated, it’s believed John called himself “the disciple whom the Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). But the greatest manifestation of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ was at Calvary when He shed His precious blood for the sins of the world. “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9). Our Lord shed His blood for all of mankind and His desire is that all would believe in Him and obey the gospel of Christ so the blood could wash away their sins.

Therefore we should love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-38). We are to love our Savior who died for us: If you don’t love Jesus, you won’t have Jesus. Paul says: “He who does not love the Lord, let him be accursed” (1 Corinthians 16:22). We are to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). And, “Let brotherly love continue” (Hebrews 13:1). Jesus taught we should love our enemies—even those who persecute us (Matthew 5:43-44). Though we cannot attain to the degree that Jesus loves, nevertheless, we should strive to be “More and more like Jesus, I would ever be, More and more like Jesus, My Savior who died for me.”



LIMITING GOD

Johnny O. Trail

God can save any person at any time in any way He chooses. We have not limited God, but He has limited us.¹ God was not limited in the manner that he saved Noah, or cleansed Naaman from his leprosy, but He did dictate the way this salvation and cleansing would happen—in compliance with His will.

We should be glad that God has limited the way one can be saved. One would not want to stand before God on the day of judgment and have Him change the standard of salvation. No person would want to hear God say, “I have changed my mind.” God will not act in a capricious manner.

We know He will not do this because He is faithful and true. Hebrews 10:22-23 says, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” When God makes a promise to humankind, it *will* be fulfilled according to His plan.

¹ Whiteside, Robertson L. (1955). *Doctrinal Discourses*. Inys Whiteside, Denton, pg. 188.

Along these lines, some individuals offer the thief on the cross as a proposed exception to the requirement of baptism (Mark 16.16; Matthew 28.19). One of the major problems with arguing that one can be saved in the same manner as the thief on the cross is that God has not deemed that as a means of salvation under the New Covenant. Christ had the authority to forgive any person that He wanted during His earthly ministry—He was God incarnate. Without Christ being present (i.e., in the flesh) to forgive someone, we cannot effectuate our salvation in the same way as the thief on the cross.

This limitation is a blessing, because one desiring to become a Christian knows exactly what to do. A “straight and narrow” pathway is one that is well-defined in nature. Matthew 7:13-14 says, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

The book of Acts is sometimes known as a “book of conversions.” It contains several examples of people who were baptized as a means of salvation and having sins washed away (Acts 22.16). These well-defined examples propel the honest Bible stu-

dent to one conclusion. One must be baptized to have eternal life.

Furthermore, the opponents of baptism for salvation (1 Peter 3.21) sometimes say, “So you are saying that a person on his or her deathbed, who has not been baptized, cannot have eternal life?” These arguments are devoid of logic and truth. This is an emotive argument. Emotive is defined as “arousing or able to arouse intense feeling.” This is offered to dissuade one from maintaining the correct, biblical assertion that one must be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2.38).

This type of argument is centered around the end of a person’s life or some tragic set of events that leads to a sudden, unexpected death. Theoretically, the person referenced in these analogies had many opportunities to obey the gospel prior to their death. Sadly, the hypothetical person mentioned in these analogies did not become a Christian before passing away.

To commandeer their argument (for those who take a “faith only” position), what if the same person never expressed faith and offered the “sinner’s prayer” for salvation? They would be just as lost (using denominational reasoning) as the one who neglected baptism in a timely fashion. The faulty

reasoning of our religious neighbors falls apart at this juncture.

The most tragic thing that can happen to a person is for them to die lost. This is compounded by trusting in teachings that fail to reveal the truth about baptism. One can be “sincere” about a conviction and be sincerely wrong. Paul sincerely believed he was doing the right thing when he persecuted Christians and opposed Christ. Acts 26:9 says, “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”

When one perverts the truth or changes it in any fashion, he is not doing any person a favor. The truth has the ability to set one free, but a lie keeps one in bondage and darkness. John 8:31-32 says, “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”

In no way does teaching the truth limit the power and omnipotence of God. In outlining what we must do to be saved, He has limited our responses to Him. In doing so, He provides the one converting to Christ great assurance that He will act in the way he has promised. To do otherwise, would be against His character and nature.

Ouch... (by Curtis Hartshorn)

In South Kitsap, Washington a 66-year-old man, who shall remain anonymous, was changing a tire on his old Lincoln Continental. The lug nuts came off except one. None of the tools he tried would budge it. Finally, he went inside and got his 12-gauge shotgun. Standing a couple of feet in front of the tire he took aim and attempted to shoot lug nut off. The lug nut was unfazed, and the man spent the rest of the day lying on an operating table as doctors removed buckshot from both of his legs.

This story could prove valuable to you if you ever find yourself tempted to shoot a lug nut off a Lincoln Continental. Knowing this story could save you a lot of pain. You might not ever find yourself in this situation, but you could still benefit from the moral of the story. “Don’t get impatient and do something stupid.” Or you could be a skeptic. You could decide you don’t believe the story and go try it for yourself. Having this knowledge is not enough. It’s what you do with the knowledge that makes a difference in your life.

The Bible instructs us to learn from the mistakes of others. In 1 Corinthians 10:11 we are told, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction...” The reason we have the Bible is so we can read, listen and learn. We can discover things that are displeasing to God, see the good and true path, and avoid choices that bring us heartache and grief. Pay attention today. Let God’s wisdom replace your own, because if you lean on your own wisdom eventually your plans will backfire.

HOW JESUS IS PICTURED IN JOHN'S PROLOGUE (JOHN 1:1-18)

Jake Schotter

Throughout the New Testament, we learn about Jesus through a myriad of perspectives. Whether it is Paul seeing Christ as the word of the prophets being fulfilled (Romans 1:2-3), Christ descending from heaven into the world as a great humiliation and display of great humility (Philippians 2:1-11), or it could be Christ coming to defeat Satan (Hebrews 2:14), or as a sacrificial offering for men's sins (Hebrews 10), as the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14; 1 Timothy 1:15), or a host of other passages including the historical narratives of his birth in the beginning chapters of Matthew and Luke.

However, in John 1:1-18, John provides us with what is going on behind the scenes before Christ's birth. The birth of Christ is not only a historical reality but is also rich theologically. This passage answers the question, "Who is this child born in Bethlehem?" John takes us into the very mind of God, shifting us into eternity, leaving time itself. Frederick Dale Bruner wrote, "John presumes to go behind and beyond creation to what and to Who preceded it." We must ask the question, "Who is Jesus?" John gives us six answers or aspects to help us answer this question.

Picture 1: Jesus is the Eternal One (1:1a)

John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word." In these opening verses, our minds are stretched to even conceive of the truths they express. John tells us as he begins this Gospel that his intention is to focus on the Savior and, ultimately, to believe in Him and to be saved by Him (John 20:30-31). He does this, here, by taking us past creation to the preexistence of this eternal One. When John does this, Jesus is already existing in eternity in the presence of God before anything is created.

Are we sure of this "beginning," though? I believe we can be confident this is the "beginning" of Genesis 1:1. It is in *the* beginning, the only beginning we know about. Before the creation there was

no beginning, no time because there is no start of anything – God exists eternally. In other words, John is stating that when the beginning began, the Word already was. This is hard to grasp, we cannot completely fathom this. Instead of understanding it, we accept it by faith. When the heavens and earth were created, the Word already existed. From all eternity, God was already there. In Proverbs 8, there is a personification of wisdom that could be applied to the Word:

When He established the heavens, I was there; when He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, when He made firm the skies above, when the springs of the deep became fixed, when He set a boundary for the sea so that the water would not violate His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth; then I was beside Him, as a master workman and I was His delight daily, rejoicing always before Him.

Verses 27-30

Picture 2: Jesus is Equal With God (1:1b-4)

John tells us, first of all, that this Word is eternal. He then proceeds to tell us that in eternity, the Word was with God. The Greek literally means face to face with God, on a level of equality, not under God, not looking up to Him, not above and looking down on Him, not on the side, but face to face with the living God. The eternal One is in intimate, personal, equal communion with the eternal God.

So, why is John using the word "word?" Why focus on this term? What is its purpose? The Jews understood the Word of the Lord as that revelation which came forth from God. The power, will, mind, purpose, design, and plan of God were revealed and embodied through His Word. So, He is saying that it has been revealed to you in a very personal way. This was also convincing to the Greeks because the Greeks saw the "logos" as the creative directing force, the power by which men think and reason.

Therefore, John, by using the term “word” is appealing to both worlds. He is saying this revelation has come to you and you can know Him. The Word is here, and it is eternal and equal to God.

Now, verse 2 doesn’t add anything new to verse 1 but it unites the thought there: “He was in the beginning with God.” How can he sustain and verify this thought, though? This is a major and marvelous claim he just made. How can he defend it? He would write in verse 3, “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being.” The great proof that the Word is God is that the Word created. Whoever creates all that is, is God. Whoever made everything is God. Said positively, “all things came into being through Him,” and negatively, “apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being.”

So, the Word is eternal and equal with God. He made everything, including life. “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind” (v. 4). Obviously, if He was the Creator, in Him is life. If He was the One who made everything that is, then life came from Him. The Word is none other than the eternal God who made everything. As Paul preached in Acts 17, “The God who made the world and everything that is in it... He made from one man every nation of mankind... for in Him we live and move and exist.” As Creator, Jesus, the Word, is equal with God.

Picture 3: Jesus Enlightens the Darkness (1:4-5)

The living Word, then, is the living God fully expressed in the darkness. Where is the darkness? Notice verse 4, “the life was the Light of mankind” and verse 5, “the Light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not grasp it.” You can see it put together. The light in verse 4 and the light in verse 5. Mankind in verse 4 and darkness in verse 5. Darkness is the world of mankind. The light came into the world of man and it is dark. It’s dark because it’s a sinful world, a world dominated by Satan.

Yet, John says, “the Light shines in the dark-

ness.” Light shines in the darkness because darkness cannot put out the light. The darkness cannot extinguish the smallest match with the tiniest flicker of light. It is the light of life, the living God, invading human darkness, and verse 5 says the darkness could not put it out. Move forward to chapter 3, John would write,

The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, so that his deeds will not be exposed. But the one who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds will be revealed as having been performed in God.

Verses 18-21

John expands on the thought that the Light came into the world and men loved the darkness rather than light but even in their love of the darkness, the darkness could not put out the light. Mankind can try to deny the Light but they cannot extinguish it!

Picture 4: Jesus was Expected Through John’s Testimony (1:6-11)

Jesus is the promised One. John wants to prepare the way, to put it as Mark would state it, for the One to come after Him. John would be the last prophet, after 400 years of silence during which there was no prophetic voice. He came into the world for one reason—he was sent by God to announce the coming of the Messiah, the coming of the Light, the coming of the Life, the coming of the living Word. That was his task, as verse 7 explains: “He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe in Him.” In John 5, Jesus gave several witnesses to His defense and John was one of them (John 5:31-35, 39-47).

Jesus’ expectation and announcement of His arrival were given “so that all might believe through Him” (v. 7). “Believe” is a key word in the Gospel

of John, appearing nearly 100 times. It's the essence of everything, to put faith in, to account as true. It's accepting the living Word and all that He is and all that He has done.

John the Baptist knew that He was not the Light. "He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light" (v. 8). John the Baptist testified about himself in John 3:28-30:

"You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.' He who has the bride is the groom; but the friend of the groom, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly because of the groom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. He must increase, but I must decrease."

A good question to ask, then, is "Well, since when does the light need an announcement? Why would you have someone tell people that the light is on?" You wouldn't need to, but people are blinded by their sinfulness. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: "Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they will not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). So, verse 9 says, "This was the true Light that, coming into the world, enlightens every person." The coming of the Light literally shatters the darkness, enlightening every man that comes into the world. Jesus, in John 8:12, forcefully declared that He was "the Light of the world."

Even though this is true, men tragically reject Him all of the time. Therefore, John wrote, "And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, so that his deeds will not be exposed." Although a Messiah was expected, He was still rejected. John would say that Jesus "was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, and yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not accept Him" (vv. 10-11).

Israel is a good possibility here for the identity of those who reject Jesus Christ. However, it would be reasonable to see this include the whole world of people who reject Christ. Israel's rejection and collaboration in the murder of her Messiah was a common theme in apostolic preaching and repeated throughout John's gospel. When Peter preached the first Christian sermon on Pentecost, he mentioned this rejection explicitly:

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a Man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death... Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified"

Acts 2:22-23, 36

This is also mentioned in Acts 3:13-15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:38-39; 13:27-29. Yet, some did not reject Christ!

Picture 5: Jesus Embraces Those Who Believe (1:12-13)

The conjunction "but" is small, but it does mark a dramatic shift. The world's hatred of God and rejection of Christ in no way overrules or frustrates God's plan. Psalm 76:10 says, "For the wrath of mankind shall praise You; You will encircle Yourself with a remnant of wrath."

"But as many as received Him." Those whom God willed for salvation before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9) will, in faith, embrace Christ. "Receive" comes from the Greek word *lambano* which could be translated as "take hold of" or "grasp." To receive Christ is more than a mere intellectual acknowledgment of His claims. The last part of verse 12 refers to those who "received... those who believe in His name."

"His name" refers to the totality of Christ's being, all He is, and all He does. Thus, it is not possible to separate His deity from His humanity, His being Savior from being Lord, or His person from

His redemptive work. Saving faith accepts Jesus Christ in all that Scripture reveals concerning Him.

Now do note what the Scripture teaches so clearly: though people cannot be saved until they receive and believe in Jesus Christ, leading them to the waters of baptism, salvation is nonetheless a sovereign work of God on the dead and blind sinner. Salvation comes because God alone gives “the right to become children of God.” It is not because of race or ethnicity (“blood”), not of personal desire (“will”), or by any man-made system (“man”). Rather, it is “but of God.”

How do you know this? How are you able to see the Light? You look to Jesus.

Picture 6: Jesus is the Embodiment of Grace and Truth (1:14-18)

Commenting near the end of the First century, John would write that he did, indeed, witness the life and ministry of Jesus Christ:

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was revealed, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was revealed to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:1-3

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brothers so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people

Hebrews 2:17

What a Savior we worship! Jesus is eternal and equal with God. He enlightens the darkness, was expected in prophecy, embraces those who believe, and is the embodiment of grace and truth.

Conclusion

This is how John’s magnificent book opens up

with these pictures. They express the most profound truths in the universe in the clearest terms possible. Though easily understood by a child, these Spirit-inspired words convey a truth beyond the ability of the most mature-minded to fathom: the eternal, infinite God became a man in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The identity of Jesus Christ is a truth we must absolutely stand firm in as Christians.

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D.H. Bays was a former Mormon, whose conversion story is found in the pages of this very issue!

Alexander Campbell was a writer, editor, debater, preacher, and antagonist to all who loved established denominational religion. If you want to know more about his life and read some of his writings, check out TheRestorationMovement.com and start looking around!

Gerald Cowan. Outliving contemporaries is not all it's cracked up to be, not necessarily an accomplishment. Some fragile hope persists that something worthwhile may yet be done. My want to is not diminished. My how to and my can do often let me down. At the risk of overestimation I want to think I may still find something worth saying, worth repeating while hoping someone else will agree.

Adam Cozort is the proud father of enough boys to make a basketball team. He and his wife (and sons) live in Alabama.

Raymond Elliot and his precious wife, Virginia, are both 88 years old and have been married 68 years. He says: "We are thankful for God's grace and providence in our lives. We attended Alabama Christian College in Montgomery, AL. I began 'full-time' work in 1958 with various churches of Christ, mainly in central and southeast Alabama with the exception of two years in Savannah, GA. We now live in Prattville, AL where I preached nearly seventeen years. I have been blessed by congregations

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Johnny O. Trail preaches for the Hillcrest church of Christ in Springfield, Tenn. He has preached the gospel for over 32 years. He and his wife, Jada, have been married for almost 25, and they have three sons Matthew (22), Nathan (20), and Noah (14). He has a B.S. in Political Science from MTSU, a Master of Ministry degree from Freed-Hardeman, and a Master of Divinity from Lipscomb. He completed his Doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy from Amridge University in 2011. He is a state licensed marriage and family therapist with offices in Murfreesboro (at the Walter Hill church of Christ) and Springfield. He is an instructor at the Nashville School of Preaching and Biblical Studies.

Noah Wall is an expert hog-hunter, dedicated Christian, and good friend. And the editor lost the bio he sent...

Bradley S. Cobb wishes the pizza shortage was over with completely. He is currently researching for a lecture he will be giving in February at the college he dropped out of.

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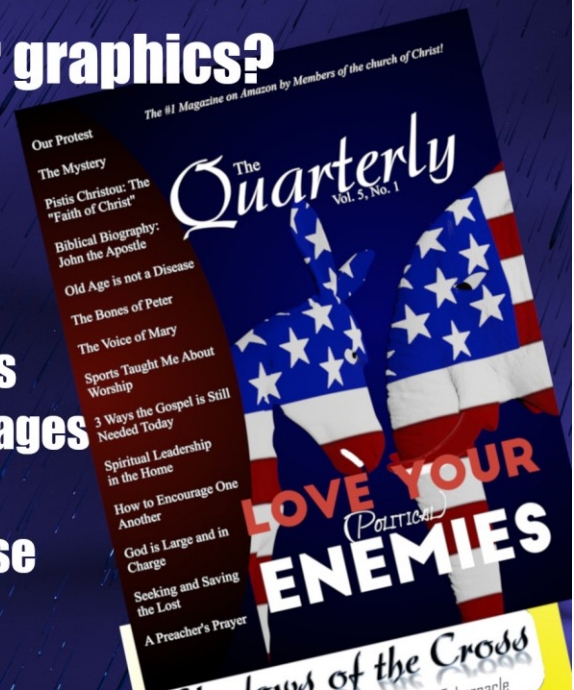
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